

**A Comparative Study on the Work and Life of Rural Farming
Women in a Mountain Area and a Plain Area in China**
— with Reference to the EU Discussion on Agricultural Development
and Climate Change

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Summary

The present study aims to show the disparity of farming women's living and working conditions between different areas with different landforms. I selected farming women in villages of a mountain area in western China and a plain area in eastern China to elaborate on how large the gap in farming women's situation is across diverse areas in China.

By comparing the situation of rural women in these two regions, the result shows that the working conditions and material lives of farming women in the plain area are much better. The local economic development level in the plain region is higher than that of the mountain region. As the rural development of the plain area is at the halfway point of modernization, the lifestyle of rural women in the plain area is influenced by both traditional and modern culture. From a cultural sociological perspective, their situation reflects the cultural lag in rural communities. The similarities of women's situation in the mountain area and the plain area include five aspects: gender-based division of labor, family-centered life, independent old-age support, poor education and lack of environmental awareness.

Regarding factors influencing rural women's lives, it was found that geographical features, regional economic development, social support, traditional gender ideology, and Chinese farmers' life philosophy are the most obvious factors.

Since environmental issues are often neglected in agricultural and rural development in China, the present study also focuses on the relationship between farming women, agriculture, and the environment. Due to the lack of environmental knowledge, rural women damage the environment unconsciously when they are farming. Meanwhile, their health is badly influenced by the polluted environment.

Compared with China, agriculture and rural communities in most countries in the EU develop better with positive policies, and thus offer would be a good reference for the development of agriculture and farming women in China.

Zusammenfassung

Die vorliegende Studie zielt darauf ab, die Unterschiede der Lebens- und Arbeitsbedingungen der landwirtschaftlichen Frauen zwischen verschiedenen Bereichen mit unterschiedlichen Landschaftsformen zu zeigen. Ich wähle die Frauen in den Dörfern der Bergregion im Westen Chinas und die Frauen in einem Flachland-Gebiet im Osten Chinas, um zu näher auszuführen, wie groß die Schere der Situation der landwirtschaftlichen Frauen in den verschiedensten Bereichen Chinas ist.

Durch den Vergleich der Situation der Frauen auf dem Land in diesen beiden Regionen zeigt das Ergebnis, dass die Arbeitsbedingungen und materiellen Leben der Landwirtschaft-Frauen in dem Flachland viel besser sind. Die lokale wirtschaftliche Entwicklung des Flachlands ist höher als die von der Bergregion. Da die Entwicklung des ländlichen Flachland-Gebiets auf halbem Weg der Modernisierung ist, wird der Lebensstil von Frauen im ländlichen Flachland-Gebiet sowohl von traditioneller als auch von moderner Kultur beeinflusst. Aus kultureller soziologischer Perspektive spiegelt ihre Situation die kulturelle Verzögerung in den ländlichen Gemeinden wider. Die Ähnlichkeiten der Situation der Frauen im Berggebiet und der Frauen im Flachland umfassen fünf Aspekte: geschlechtsspezifische Arbeitsteilung, familienzentriertes Leben, unabhängige Altersversorgung, schlechte Bildung und Mangel an Umweltbewusstsein.

In Bezug auf Faktoren, die das Leben der Landfrauen beeinflussen, ist es zu finden, dass die geografische Merkmale, regionale wirtschaftliche Entwicklung, soziale Unterstützung, traditionelle Geschlecht-Ideologie und die „Lebensphilosophie“ der chinesischen Bauern sind die offensichtlichsten Faktoren.

Da Umweltfragen häufig in der Landwirtschaft und der ländlichen Entwicklung in China vernachlässigt werden, konzentriert sich die vorliegende Studie auch auf die Beziehung zwischen landwirtschaftlichen Frauen, Landwirtschaft und Umwelt. Aufgrund der Mangel an Umweltwissen, schädigen Frauen in ländlichen Gebieten die Umwelt unbewusst, wenn sie die Landwirtschaftsarbeiten durchführen. Inzwischen ist

ihre Gesundheit stark von der verschmutzten Umwelt beeinflusst.

Im Vergleich zu China entwickeln sich die Landwirtschaft und die ländlichen Gemeinden in den meisten Ländern der EU mit positiven Politiken besser, und somit würde es eine gute Referenz für die Entwicklung der Landwirtschaft und der landwirtschaftlichen Frauen in China bieten.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Topic background

At present, China's agricultural development and rural women's development have attracted a lot of academic attention. Through studying the current situation of rural farming women in one mountainous and one plain area, this dissertation analyzes the causes of gender inequality in Chinese rural areas and how regional differences influence rural women's lives, as well as the interplay between rural women and the environment.

Ever since "Reform and Opening up" policy¹(*gai ge kai gang* in Chinese) and carried out in 1978, the country has gradually let go of population mobility controls. A great amount of the rural surplus labor force have surged into the cities, and at the same time the number of farming women is gradually increasing. They are the products of social transformation, and their lives are also going through great changes during the process of China's social transformation. This kind of change is reflected in every aspect of their lives, for example, in their material living conditions, marriage and family life, health and old-age support issues, etc. Overall, with social development, the life quality of the rural women has greatly improved. However, compared to city residents, the living conditions of the rural residents still lag behind. The welfare of rural farming women, who face a lot of difficulties and challenges given the background of modernization, is especially bad. Through it may be said peasants have had the hardest lives in China, women have had the hardest lives in rural areas, taking per capita annual net income as an example. The widening income gap between urban and rural areas gives rural women the lowest wages. With the rapid speed of development, Chinese people's living standards have improved markedly. But the development of rural areas is not keeping pace with that of urban areas. Figures released by the National Bureau of Statistics of China in 2011 show that the per capita annual net income of Chinese rural areas increased from 2253 Yuan (282 Euro) to 6977 Yuan (873 Euro)

¹ "Reform and Opening up", one of basic state policies for China, was put forward by Deng Xiaoping (22 August 1904 – 19 February 1997). "Reform" refers to changes in politics and economic structure in China. With this policy, the class struggle in China had ceased and a market-based economy system was introduced. This policy, to some extent, is a symbol of the end of planned economy. "Opening up" means that foreign trade and investment through joint ventures were encouraged. (Retrieved from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/5237748.stm>, access in 20.02.2016). In addition, the strategy for agricultural development had been changed so that farmers had more choices. They could continue growing or find jobs in urban areas. To sum up, "Reform and Opening up" has promoted industrialization and urbanization and accelerated economic growth in China. The implementation of "Reform and Opening up" is, thus, regarded as a turning point of China.

between 2000 and 2011. While in the same period, the per capita annual net income of urban areas has quadrupled. It rose from 6280 Yuan (785 Euro) to 23979 Yuan (2997 Euro). Most alarming is that the per capita annual net income of female workers 67.3% and 56% of that of male workers in urban areas and rural areas respectively.² It is said that women's annual net income in rural areas is on average 3907 Yuan (488 Euro). This disparity in incomes forces rural women to live in humble conditions.

This study focuses on farming women who can be classified into two main groups: left-behind women (group 1), and women doing farm work and living together with their husbands in villages (group 2). According to Chinese academic literature, the "left-behind women" are those who stay in rural areas while their husbands leave to work in cities. Since 2007, China's rural left-behind women have drawn extensive attention from scholars. Regarded as a vulnerable group, left-behind women shoulder double burdens--doing farming and running households. They represent a large group in China; according to statistics, the number of women-left-behind was up to 47 million in 2010.³ Compared with left-behind women, women in Group 2 live together with their husbands in rural areas and they can often share farm work with their husbands. However, the majority of them are middle-aged and their adult children work in urban areas. Thus women in this group mostly have to look after their grandchildren and do housework. From a gender perspective, they do more than their husbands given the gendered division of labor. Nevertheless, Group 2 is often neglected by society, and their livelihood is not better than that of left-behind women. Generally speaking, with traditional culture and gender ideology Chinese farming women nowadays assume heavy burdens, live frugally with money and lack many resources in their daily life. In other words, the working and living conditions of farming women are very tough and have rendered rural women socially weak. That is why I have focused my attention on this group.

Among existing studies on rural women, the majority of the researchers mainly focus on three groups: female migrant workers, women-left-behind, and older females. Since female migrant workers and older rural females aged over 70 are not among the objects of this study, it is unnecessary to go into detail. On studies on left-behind women, scholars often focus on the causes of women staying in villages, the feminization of agriculture, intimate relationships, and the psychological state of

² Tang Jialei, "Large Gender Wage Gap in China," October 21, 2011, http://www.china.com.cn/news/2011-10/21/content_23688232.htm

³ Zhang Li. "The Number of Women-left-behind Has Been Up to 47 Million," People's Daily Online, July 13, 2010, <http://gongyi.people.com.cn/GB/12124923.html>

left-behind women and social support.

There are three primary reasons for women staying in villages. The dual household registration system (*hukou*) as a tool of social control constrains rural people. With this system, rural residents cannot enjoy the same social welfare as city residents even if they migrate to cities. The costs of living in cities are higher for rural people. It is difficult for the whole rural family to migrate to cities. To save money, old people and children who cannot work must stay in the villages. When they need to be looked after, the responsibility usually falls upon rural women.⁴ Indeed, traditional gender ideology⁵ and the gender division of labor also influence rural women's mobility. With the traditional sexual division of labor, the majority of males flow to cities to engage in non-farm sector work while their wives tend to stay in the villages to do farming and housework. Lastly, some researchers think that because women lack professional skills and are physically weaker than male laborers, the range of jobs they can do in the cities is limited.⁶ Given the Chinese gender wage gap, if only one person from a rural household can go outside and work in urban areas, the male working outside would be seen as a rational choice.

FAO (Food and Agricultural Organization) reports that "while the proportion of the labor force working in agriculture declined over the 1990s, the proportion of women working in agriculture increased, particularly in developing countries."⁷ China is no exception. This trend is called the "feminization of agriculture". It is believed that chief among causes of this is the hysteresis of rural female labors' non-agricultural transfer.⁸ That is, the phenomenon occurs along with the appearance of left-behind women. As a coin has two sides, feminization of agriculture has both positive and negative impact on left-behind females. Rural women become the mainstay of agricultural production, which highlights the significance of rural women to agriculture. It may be helpful for them to enhance their social status.⁹ However, its shortcoming is bigger than its merit.

⁴ Zhu Haizhong, "The problems of left-behind women in the context of institution," Northwest Population Journal 01, no.4 (2008):79-87, 86 (in Chinese).

⁵ Li Xu et al., (2010). "The plight of left-behind women and its solutions," Rural Economy 02, 2010: 22-27, 26 (in Chinese)

⁶ Xiang Liping, "Women-left-behind: a vulnerable group needs to be taken seriously," Guangxi Social Science 01,2006: 44-49, 45 (in Chinese)

⁷ Lastarria-Cornhiel S., "Feminization of agriculture: Trends and driving forces," November, 2006. p.2
Retrieved from:

http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDRS/Resources/477365-1327599046334/8394679-1327599874257/LastarriaCornhiel_FeminizationOfAgri.pdf

⁸ Wen Huacheng, "China's feminization of agriculture: level, causes and influence," Population Journal 04,(2014): 59- 68, 65 (in Chinese)

⁹ Meng Xianfan, "Rural women during the transformation of rural labor," Social Science Front 04, (1993): 19- 27, 26 (in Chinese)

Women taking part in agricultural production contribute less to the household income than their husbands working in non-agricultural sectors. The income disparity is weakening women's bargaining power for marital equality.¹⁰ Furthermore, feminization of agriculture forces rural females to play multiple roles and assume a double burden.

Many researchers indicate that the intimate relationships and psychological states of rural women become worse after their husbands leave. Left-behind women and their husbands live apart for a long time, which has a negative influence on their intimate relationships.¹¹ When husbands are working in urban areas, they seldom go home because of high travel expense. Over time, though, they lack communication and mutual understanding. Moreover, the separation brings feelings of loneliness to both husband and wife. Consequently, the mutual affection between them becomes passive or even alienated. As to the psychological state of left-behind women, a study reveals that most left-behind women have high perceived mental stress, and the separated marital life puts women in sexual deprivation. Additionally, after the husbands' migration, women experience and increase in negative emotions.¹²

Consanguinity and regionalism play essential roles in the network of rural women's social support. The network consists of family, neighbors, friends, and kinsfolk. Support extends beyond that gathered from their in-laws, especially in emotional and financial respect. Neighbors and friends also offer assistance, where neighbors provide support more in production while friends provide emotional support.¹³ And kinsfolk mainly offer advice and financial support for hometown-remaining (left-behind) women.

Taken together, studies on left-behind women are numerous while the range is wide. However, the existing research analyzes the situation of left-behind women generally only based on secondary sources and researchers usually lack primary sources.¹⁴ Furthermore, the majority of studies neglect the diverse characteristics of

¹⁰ Zuo Jiping, "Feminization of Agriculture, Relational Exchange, and Perceived Fairness in China: A Case in Guangxi Province," *Rural sociology* 69, no.4 (2004): 510-531, 511

¹¹ Xiang Liping, "Women-left-behind: a vulnerable group needs to be taken seriously," *Guangxi Social Science* 01, (2006): 176-177, 176 (in Chinese)

¹² Wu Huifang, Ye Jingzhong, "Analysis on the psychological impacts of husbands' migration on the women left at home in rural China," *Journal of Zhejiang University (Humanities and Social Sciences)* 01, (2010): 09-15, 11 (in Chinese)

¹³ Lv Fang, "Support networks for women staying behind in villages: based on a study of 2414 rural women in 66 counties spreading in 16 provinces," *Collection of Women's Studies* 09, (2012): 34-39, 36 (in Chinese)

¹⁴ Wu Huifang, "Research review on left-behind women," *China Agricultural University Journal of Social Sciences Edition* 07, (2009): 18-26, 19 (in Chinese)

women-left-behind, such as the age, family economic status, family structure, personal experience and the personal information of women's husbands, etc. and stress the homogeneity of women-left-behind.¹⁵ To fill the gap, my study is mainly based on empirical materials and the individual information collected through interviews. The specific research strategy will be discussed in the section on research design (1.5).

Few scholars have given descriptions of the overall living conditions of the left-behind women, and the regional difference is a factor that has always been neglected. Regional difference is an important feature of rural China and a very important research object of rural sociology. There are many differences among different rural regions, such as eco-environment, village outlook, life style, production mode, historical tradition, customs, and habits, etc.¹⁶ Given these regional differences, there is still a big disparity among the living situations of the farming women in different places in China. Since much research has failed to take regional factors into account, it is difficult to understand the differences of general situations of rural women in different areas. On account of this, I sampled farming women in one mountainous area located in the south of Shaanxi Province and one plain area located in the middle of Shandong Province. From a geographical perspective, mountainous areas in China including upland and hills account for 69.1% of the whole continent while plain areas account for 12%. They are the main terrain features of China. In mountain areas with frequent natural hazards, poor quality of land and poor accessibility, industrialization of agriculture is developing slowly, and most poor rural communities are situated in mountainous areas. In contrast, the plain areas in China are the biggest food producers, with their superior physical environment and the greater degree of mechanized agriculture. The quality of life of farmers is comparatively better than that in mountain areas. Moreover, Shaanxi province belongs to western China while Shandong province is situated in the eastern China. From the perspective of regional economic development, the western part of the country is lagging far behind the east. Through making a comparison between less developed rural regions in Shaanxi province and developed

¹⁵ Wu Hui Fang, "Research review on left-behind women," *China Agricultural University Journal of Social Sciences* Edition 07, (2009): 18-26, 19 (in Chinese)

¹⁶ Gui Hua, He Xuefeng, "On the regional difference of rural China: a structure of theory of middle range," *Open Times* 04, (2013): 11-17, 15 (in Chinese)

rural regions in Shandong province, the obvious regional gap of rural development, as well as the heterogeneity and homogeneity of rural women in these two regions, can be found. Through analyzing the dissimilarities, we can find the factors influencing rural women's livelihood. Accordingly, more targeted measures could be taken to resolve regional problems. Meanwhile, the similar difficulties rural women are facing can be regarded as general problems of farming women which should be taken seriously.

For studies on rural women in China, the relationship between environment and rural women is often neglected by researchers as well. With rapid economic development and modernization, nowadays environmental problems become more and more severe in the world. Problems as water pollution, land deterioration, the reduction of arable land and global warming are threatening the survival of human beings in direct and indirect ways. For example, one of most serious environmental problems is air pollution. About 3.3 million people who die of dirty air each year in the world and most of the victims are from Asia.¹⁷ In China, smog has frequently occurred in recent years. Especially in the north of China, the smog is more serious than in other areas, as a large amount of coal is burned for heating in winter. In Beijing, when heavy smog comes, the number of patients suffered from respiratory diseases continues to increase.¹⁸ Farmers also contribute to the haze by burning straw after the autumn harvest.¹⁹ In a sense, agriculture is a primary source of environmental pollution. Large-scale, mechanized highly-technological agriculture will place a heavy burden on nature. For farmers, widespread irrigation is an effective way to increase yields.²⁰ However, it can cause several environmental problems with the increased evaporation, such as water logging, a reduction of essential minerals, and salinization.²¹ In China, a large number of rural women staying in villages nowadays are engaging in agricultural production. Their agricultural activities are closely related to environment, and they take responsibility for managing and conserving natural resources like arable land, forest,

¹⁷ Verdreckte Luft toetet Millionen. FrankfurterRundschau, September 18, 2015

¹⁸ Haze in Beijing caused respiratory disease and the number of patients is increasing. Beijing Morning Post, February 23, 2014

¹⁹ Thick haze in China could be there for days, authorities warn, CNN news, November 10, 2015

²⁰ Dankelman, I., Davidson, J. (2013). Women and the Environment in the Third World: Alliance for the Future (UK: Routledge, 2013), 03

²¹ Ibid.

energy, etc. In addition, the environment also has an effect on rural women's health. They may suffer from diseases caused by polluted air, water, food and so on. Accordingly, I have added environmental issues to the research content of this study to explore the current environment conditions of rural areas and examine the interplay between farming women and rural environment.

The experience of rural development in Europe can be a good reference for China. Nowadays, rural areas of Europe represent 93% of the territory in EU-27 and more than half of the population lives in rural regions.²² The situation is similar to that in China, which also has extensive rural areas with large populations. It is well known that European countries, especially western European countries, are mostly developed and have finished the transformation from traditional society to modern society. In the process of transformation, they also have had to tackle many environmental problems. During social and economic development, agriculture is a significant sector which also relates closely to environment. Since 1958, the European Community has paid close attention to agricultural development. It has carried out various policies and taken many measures to boost rural development and improve the quality of life of people living in rural districts. Particularly in Western Europe, real achievement has been made with the implementation of those policies. It formed a clear and stable pattern of agricultural development, which allows agriculture in Europe a higher level of modernization. Also, the majority of rural people in Europe nowadays are living a better life compared to farmers in developing countries. Admittedly, not all of the policies are perfect, such as the Common Agricultural Policy. Although it makes European agricultural products more competitive in the world, new environmental problems have arisen at the same time.

China is still experiencing modernization reforms, including in its agriculture and rural communities. In this process, China is facing a variety of challenges. Rural women are experiencing some difficulties in their lives, which turn out to be obstacles to rural women's development and rural development. Additionally, it is urgent for China to

²² Buchenrieder, G., & Möllers, J, Structural change in Europe's rural regions: Farm livelihoods between subsistence orientation, modernisation and non-farm diversification, Studies on the agricultural and food sector in Central and Eastern Europe. (2009), 03

develop competitive agriculture sector and devote herself to sustainable agricultural development. Although the level of economic and social development level between China and Western European countries differs strongly, rural China is now experiencing similar problems that Western European countries had previously faced. In looking to the experience of EU member states, practical solutions to problems rural China, including women's development, can be found.

1.2 Research questions, content and contribution

Rural farming women as an important group can promote the development sustainable agricultural development and rural communities. The present study shows the diverse living environment of rural farming women in different regions of China and reveals the effects of social change on rural women's lives. Through comparing working and living conditions of rural women between a mountainous area and a plain area, the present study aims to examine out difficulties of rural women's lives in different regions, factors influencing the situation of rural women and put forward suggestions for improving rural women's lives and promoting sustainable agricultural development and rural community development. This research seeks to answer the following questions: (1) What are the differences between rural women's situations in the mountain area and plain area? (2) What are the similarities among rural women's conditions in both areas? (3) Which factors affect rural females' working and living conditions? (4) What are the major challenges existing in the lives of rural women in China? (5) How to improve rural women's lives and promote rural development?

At present, there is a lack of a sociological assessment index system which can be used for evaluating rural women's work and life. By referencing quality of life measurement, I select several indicators to describe working and living conditions of Chinese rural women.

There is still no sociological theory on quality of life (QOL).²³QOL measurement is often used for evaluating people's health.²⁴ The World Health Organization's quality of life assessment is widely applied in medical studies to describe the patients' quality

²³ Ferriss, Abbott L. "The quality of life concept in sociology." *The American Sociologist* 35.3 (2004): 37-51, 49

²⁴ The WHOQOL group, "The World Health Organization quality of life assessment (WHOQOL): development and general psychometric properties." *Social science & medicine* 46.12 (1998): 1569-1585, 1569.

of life. This health assessment covers “key physical, psychological, social and spiritual domains of life.”²⁵ WHOQOL group claims that all of the important aspects of quality life are involved in these domains.²⁶ David Felce (1994) summarized the definitions and measurement of quality of life. He concludes that “quality of life is the sum of a range of objectively measurable life conditions experienced by an individual.”²⁷ Four primary dimensions of health-related QOL are supported by a variety of studies: physical wellbeing, functional wellbeing, emotional wellbeing and social wellbeing.²⁸ According to David Felce, “these may include physical health, personal circumstances (wealth, living conditions, etc.), social relationships, functional activities and pursuits and wider societal and economic influences.”²⁹ In brief, an ideal measurement of QOL should include both objective and subjective indicators. With reference to the indicators mentioned above, I selected both objective and subjective indicators and classified them into eight aspects to describe the situation of rural women: individual basic information, working conditions, material living conditions, family life, leisure time and social relationship, health issues, influence of policy and environmental issues. The specific indicators are described as follows:

(1) Individual basic information: age, educational background, marital status, family size;

(2) Working conditions: geographical environment, agricultural activities, hours of labor, types and numbers of crops and livestock, labor division, part-time jobs;

(3) Material living conditions: annual income of household, sources of income, household expenditure, consumption pattern, dwelling conditions, owning rate of household appliance, traffic conditions and access to market;

(4) Family life: basic information about husband (age, work, education background), how the couple met and got married, family property management, decision-making, housework, family structure, relationship between generations, old-age support, family values, life satisfaction;

(5) Leisure time and social relationships: leisure activities, social contact;

²⁵ The WHOQOL group, "The World Health Organization quality of life assessment (WHOQOL): development and general psychometric properties." *Social science & medicine* 46.12 (1998): 1569-1585, 1569.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Felce D, Perry J, "Quality of life: Its definition and measurement," *Research in developmental disabilities* 16, 1(1995): 51-74, 54.

²⁸ Cella, David F. "Quality of life: concepts and definition." *Journal of pain and symptom management* 9.3 (1994): 186-192, 188

²⁹ Felce D, Perry J. *op. cit.*, p.54

- (6) Health issue: physical status, health insurance, hospital conditions;
- (7) Influence of policy;
- (8) Women's role in environmental protection.

At present, empirical studies concerned with rural women are few. This dissertation with field investigation provides primary material data about farming women, which is helpful for further studies on Chinese farming women. What are the working and living conditions of farming women in different areas in China? How does the physical environment shape rural women's life? What is the interplay between farming women and environment? Until now, there has been no research to answer these questions. The aim of this study is to the answers.

This study looks at rural women in a mountainous area and demonstrates the livelihood of rural women in such an area. Among current studies, there is little sociological research focused on this group. Since villages in mountainous areas are remote, rural females living in mountainous regions are easily neglected. It is hard for researchers to do field investigation in mountainous areas. Firstly, its geographical features make it difficult to find villages located in mountain areas. Secondly, rural communities in mountainous areas are comparatively closed off. In other words, villagers are often reluctant to communicate with strangers. This increases the difficulties of empirical social research. Thus, this study shows the situation of farming females in a mountainous area to better understand this group. At the same time, the study aims to call public attention to these women.

Thirdly, this study analyzes gender discrimination in rural society and reveals the cultural system based on gender inequality. Some difficulties that rural women face are caused by this kind of culture, such as the burden of housework, pressure from traditional views of child bearing, impartial labor division, etc. To resolve these problems, it is necessary to probe into the causes. This research lays the foundation for changing this situation.

To promote agricultural development and improve environment and rural females' living conditions, the study puts forward some suggestions with reference to EU discussion on these issues. Through review of agricultural policies including agri-environment measures of the European Union, guidance can be found for China to

take more effective measures to solve rural problems.

1.3 Theoretical perspective

Gender theories and value-attitude-behavior model can provide useful tools to interpret rural women's experience and analyze challenges or difficulties they go through in their lives.

The concept of "gender" was first put forward by an American anthropologist Gayle Rubin in 1976, and it is distinct from the concept of "sex". From the perspective of sociology, the concept of gender is social and the concept of sex is biological. Gender theories emphasize the influence of nurture rather than the influence of nature. The basic reasons for discrimination against women are based on social system, laws and values, which serve as sources of heavy political, cultural and economic pressures on females. Moreover, gender theory indicates that the roles and status of females and males should be analyzed in the context of society and culture. To some extent, the expected behaviors depend on the roles people are playing. People's behaviors are performing according to social norms which can guide the behaviors in specific situations. The privileges and responsibilities that a status confers are also determined by social norms.³⁰ To promote equality between men and women, a social system which can contribute to the creation of an equal social environment should be established. Gender theories, which expose the radical reasons behind gender inequality, are the significant theoretical support of feminist movements. Generally, gender theories can be classified into two categories: gender theories mainly focus on intimate sphere and gender theories pay attention to public sphere. To analyze rural women's life experience and gender inequality issues, this study mainly adopts theories on sexual stratification and gender theories on housework.

1.3.1 Theories on sexual stratification

Randall Collins, an American sociologist, published an essay titled "A Conflict Theory of Sexual Stratification" in 1971, conflict theory to analyze the problem of sexual stratification. Collins suggests male dominance in sexual property is the

³⁰ Wharton A S, *The sociology of gender* (Malden: Blackwell, 2005), 6.

foundation of sexual stratification. There are two key variables of sexual stratification: the use of force and the bargaining power. These two variables determine the nature of sexual stratification.³¹ Based on biological differences between males and females, men are physically stronger than women. When the men can use the force freely, they play a dominant role in both society and family.³² As a result, the distribution of social resources tends to be unequal. Women possess weak bargaining power due to the lack of social resources. They are regarded as sexual objects and controlled by men, and men usually view sexual property as a kind of honor which motivates the men to struggle for the dominance continuously.³³ In the agrarian society, the gender stratification performed more obviously than that of other types of societies.³⁴

Rae Lesser Blumberg's theory denies the importance of variables in Collin's sexual stratification theory.³⁵ Blumberg (1984) focuses on women's relative economic power in the distribution of resources.³⁶ She argues that "the control of economic resources by men and women at 'nested' levels ranging from macro (the state) to micro (the family) are the most important (although not the only) factor." Women's economic rights are determined by women's status. If men dominate public sphere, women cannot obtain more rights within the family. In contrast, if women have more power in the public sphere, it also can increase their family rights in the household. According to Blumberg, integrating women's economic rights with their influence in politics is propitious to decline those policies against women.

An important feminist theorist, Janet S. Chafetz (1988) believes that women's economic dependence contributes to the increase of men's superior power in the family. Men can use this power to avoid the housework that they do not wish to do.³⁷ She asserts traditional gender roles and unequal distribution of material resources are the two main factors that produce gender inequality. The women who have more

³¹ Collins, Randall, "A conflict theory of sexual stratification," *Social Problems* (1971): 3-21, 9

³² *Ibid.* p.13

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Margaret Gonsoulin. (2005). *Women's Rights and Women's Rites: Religion at the Historical Root of Gender Stratification*. Retrieved from: http://www.sociology.org/content/2005/tier1/religion_gender.pdf p.6

³⁵ Blumberg, Rae Lesser., "A general theory of gender stratification," *Sociological theory* 2.3 (1984): 23-101, 31.

³⁶ *Ibid.* p.37

³⁷ Chafetz, Janet Saltzman, "The gender division of labor and the reproduction of female disadvantage toward an integrated theory," *Journal of Family Issues* 9.1 (1988): 108-131, 115

responsibility for the family have less equal opportunity in the distribution of material resources.³⁸ Traditional gender roles are reproduced from generation to generation.³⁹ Among adults, males play dominant roles in the family and society while females are subordinate. The children usually replicate their parents' behaviors according to appropriate gender roles.⁴⁰ In this way, the traditional gender roles are maintained. People's behaviors are often affected by this gender pattern. As a result, men will obtain more material resources than women do, which further creates the unequal distribution of power. Under this circumstance, even if women have jobs, it is very difficult for them to compete with men. Further, this situation maintains the gendered division of work in public spaces.

1.3.2 Gender theories on housework

Traditionally, social and public spaces are regarded as more important areas which are the world of men and the intimate space is viewed as a less important area that is the world of women. The value of household services provided by women is often neglected by people. In the traditional world, especially in rural China, women's activities are circumscribed. They have less opportunity to liberate themselves from their families and to engage in public affairs. They have sacrificed much more than men for the family. However, all they have done is regarded as their obligation. Rae Lesser Blumberg (1981) examined the status of rural women. She indicates that social relations of production in agrarian societies are very unequal.⁴¹ Women are often regarded as "non-productive".⁴² Rural women's work, including "keeping kitchen gardens, tending small animals, and spending long hours processing grain crops, cooking, making necessary equipment, and bringing fuel and water", becomes invisible.⁴³ Why do women have to provide more household services? As mentioned, women's positions in the family are inferior to that of men who are generally considered to be the heads of the

³⁸ Chafetz, Janet Saltzman. "Feminist theory and sociology: Underutilized contributions for mainstream theory." *Annual Review of Sociology* (1997): 97-120, 108

³⁹ Johnson D P. *Contemporary sociological theory: An integrated multi-level approach* (New York: Springer Science & Business Media, 2008), 447

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* p.448

⁴¹ Blumberg, Rae Lesser, "Rural women in development: Veil of invisibility, world of work," *international journal of intercultural relations* 3.4 (1979): 447-472, 456

⁴² *Ibid.* p.457

⁴³ *Ibid.*

households. When males finish their work and return home, they regard themselves as the “king” in the family. Even though some husbands do a little housework, they do not view it as their obligation; they may do it out of interest, curiosity or as a favor. However, women always regard housework as their duty. Housework is unpaid and invisible. The significance of housework is often ignored. Dorothy E. developed the standpoint theory and emphasizes the importance of everyday support.⁴⁴ Women’s contribution to domestic work, as a kind of support, is valuable for family and society.⁴⁵ Housework, such as cooking, cleaning and taking care of children, brings important economic benefits to the family.⁴⁶ Also, when a wife performs the majority of household tasks, her husband is afforded opportunity to “create and sustain the institutional structures of society.”⁴⁷

1.3.3 Value-attitude-behavior model

Value-attitude-behavior model indicates the relationship between attitudes, values and behaviors. Values determine people’s attitudes while attitudes influence people’s behaviors. In analyzing Chinese farmers, He Xuefeng (2008) indicates that traditional values are the foundation which influences farmers’ behaviors. He classified the values of peasants into three types: ontological values, social values and basic values. Ontological value refers to the value of the kind of being the being is.⁴⁸ He classified values of peasants into three types: ontological values, social values and basic values. Ontological value refers to the value of the kind of being the being is.⁴⁹ It is the reflection of meaning in life as well as the foundation for governing one’s life. For Chinese peasants, the basic of meaning of life is to carry on the family line. In other words, the meaning of individual life will be continued through proliferation. The second type is social values, which is about the social relations between people and the individual’s niche and how the individual is viewed within the social group. Social values are acquired by individuals from their societies. For Chinese peasants, social

⁴⁴ Johnson D P. Contemporary sociological theory: An integrated multi-level approach (New York: Springer Science & Business Media, 2008), 432

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Blackburn, Robert M. "Is housework unpaid work?" *International journal of sociology and social policy* 19.7/8 (1999): 1-20, 6

⁴⁷ Johnson D P. op. cit., p.432

⁴⁸ He Xuefeng, “Types of value of Chinese peasants and their correlation,” *Open times* 03, (2008): 51-58, 51

⁴⁹ Harold J A, *An Introduction to the Love of Wisdom: An Essential and Existential Approach to Philosophy* (University Press of America, 2004), 207

values are the honor and obtained from society by the effort of individuals premised on abiding by the consensus of the majority of members of society. The third is basic values, which mean the essential material resources which humans need to prolong survival. It indicates the relations between human and nature.⁵⁰ When people live in extreme poverty, survival will be the most important for them. The ontological values and social values will be meaningless. With social and economic development, quality of life improves. When people have enough resources to maintain lives, ontological values and social values will increase. According to He Xuefeng, “in current China social values are misplaced by people.”⁵¹ Instead of ontological values, social values are always regarded as the basic meaning of life. This theory can be used to analyze the phenomenon in rural China which has become a heavy burden of rural residents including rural women. It can also explain the relations between rural women and the environment.

1.4 Research design

1.4.1 Objects of research and definition of rural women

This study looks at farming women who engage in agricultural production. Due to China’s household registration system (called *hukou* in Chinese)⁵², it is necessary to distinguish between left-behind women and farming women. According to the household registration system, citizens are divided into two groups: city residents and rural residents. Any person born and registered in a rural area will be a rural resident with a rural *hukou*. Once a *hukou* is confirmed, it is difficult to change. Even if a rural resident migrates to a city to work, he or she would have difficulty changing the identity from a rural resident to a city resident. No matter where they are working, rural women refer to those who were born in rural areas and register their *hukou* in rural areas.

Therefore, rural women include both female workers migrating from the countryside to urban regions and women staying in rural areas. Married women staying in rural areas can be divided into two groups. The first group are women who stay in villages while their husbands work in cities; often they are called left-behind women. The second group

⁵⁰ Yang Hua. The destination and the meaning of rural women’s life (Beijing: Press of China University of Political science and Law, 2012):26

⁵¹ He Xuefeng, “Types of value of Chinese peasants and their correlation,” *Open times* 03, (2008):51-58, 51

⁵² *Hukou* system as a policy is introduced specifically in chapter 2 (Part 2.1.3).

includes women who stay with their husbands. In addition to their farm duties, some women in this second group may also do part-time jobs around villages or in cities. The farming women of the present study include both groups.

1.4.2 Sites of study

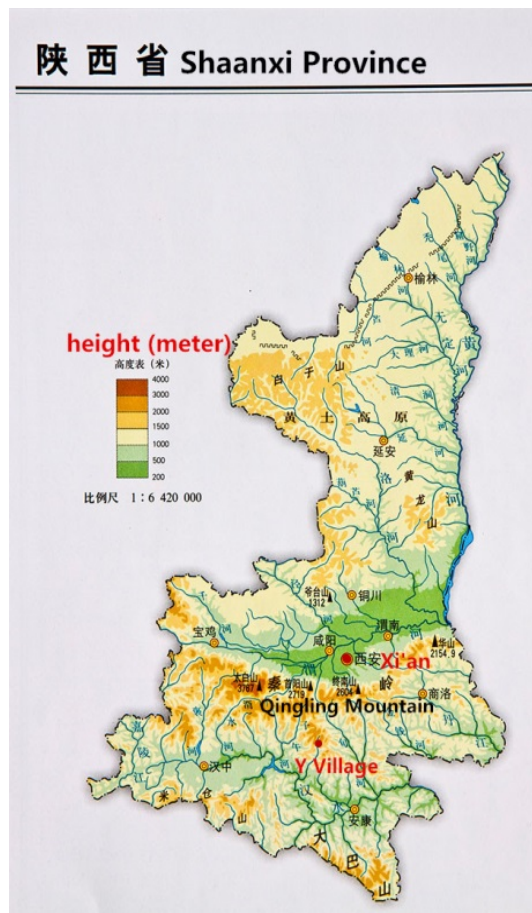
In this study, I selected four villages in total: one village in the mountainous area and three villages in the plain area.

In the mountainous area, I chose Y village⁵³ in Zhenan County, Shangluo City of Shaanxi Province, which is in the middle part of the Qinling Mountains, southeast of Shaanxi Province, near the border with Hubei Province. The capital city of Shaanxi Province is Xi'an, which is the nearest city from Y village. The location of Y village is shown below. In recent years, Zhenan County has been regarded as one of the most poverty-stricken counties in China. It has 204 villages, and Y village is one of the poorest villages among these villages. It is far away from the city, as it is surrounded by huge mountains. The village features mostly mountainous and hilly region and has little cultivated land.

Y Village a semi-humid climate and the average annual temperature is 12.2°C. Here one can find the most well-preserved natural forest, and walnuts and chestnuts are the local specialty. Y village is one of the 17 villages which not connected by highway in Zhenan County⁵⁴ and it is difficult for villagers to communicate with other areas, due to the limitations of the mountainous area and the level of economic development. It is a very lonely village. It seems to have no relation with modernization. The villagers in Y Village continue to live a traditional life. They go out to work at sunrise and return home at sunset. People work on the land with rude agricultural implements and ancient farming methods. The muddy country roads and houses of clay suggest that this is a place “neglected” by modernization.

⁵³ Based research ethics and privacy protection, the names of all villages and interviewees are anonymous.

⁵⁴ Official website of Zhenan County: <http://www.zazf.gov.cn/> (Accessed in 10.04.2013)



There are 271 households in this village. For ease of management, all the villagers are divided into 8 groups and each group has a group leader. The population of the whole village is about 1000, including 478 females. 297 females in this village are married and 70 girls are school-aged pupils. Most of the married women stay in the village. The annual per capita net income of a peasant in this village was 4100 Yuan (approximately 585 Euro) in 2011.⁵⁵ People there scratch out their living from the soil. The economy in the village is a totally self-sufficient small peasant economy. Villagers have a small piece of land and grow some maize, wheat, soybeans, cabbage and other kinds of vegetables. In the village, everyone has 1 mu⁵⁶ of land. This means the production of the crops is very low. Villagers can earn a little money by selling their farm products.

In the plain area, I selected X village, B village and Z village, which belong to Linyi County of Dezhou City in Shandong Province. Located on the east coast of China and downstream of the Yellow River, Shandong Province takes up a total area of

⁵⁵ Figures in this paragraph were offered by village secretary of Y village.

⁵⁶ Mu, a unit of land, 1 mu = 0.07 hectare = 666.67 square meters

157,100 square kilometers, nearly 1.64% of China's total area. It is a large province in China. The plain areas of Shandong Province account for 55% of its total area.⁵⁷ Shandong is one of the big economic provinces in China. It has the second largest population and is the birthplace of Confucian culture. Dezhou City lies in the northwest part of Shandong province, serving as a transportation hub for the whole country. Linyi County is under the jurisdiction of Dezhou, 50 km to the west. From there it is 60 km to Jinan city in the south, 300 km to Beijing and 200 km to Tianjin in the north, 100 km to Binzhou Wharf and 300 km to Qingdao Wharf to the east. It sits in Bohai Economic Rim and the Yellow River Delta. Linyi County has a total area of 1016 square kilometers, with a population of 541,900, including an agricultural population of 340,300, non-agricultural population of 201,600 and female population of 262,700, making up 48.47% of the total population.⁵⁸ Linyi County is a part of the Yellow River floodplain; it is rather flat and high in the south and west and low in the north and east. It has a semi-humid monsoon climate in the warm temperature zone and there is a clear distinction between the four seasons. The rich light resources, long sunshine duration and strong light intensity all provide an advantageous condition for crop growth. Up to the end of 2012, the area of land in Linyi County reached 1.5245 million mu (101633 ha) and available areas that are flat, rich and of high quality equal to 1.4467 million mu (96446 ha). Linyi County is in possession of 780,000 mu of arable lands, which abound in wheat, corn, cotton, fruit and vegetables, etc.⁵⁹ It is a typical agricultural county, granted status as a national commodity grain base and production base of vegetables accessible to Beijing, and was awarded "National Advanced Unit in Grain Production" by the State Council in 2011. The location of Linyi County is shown below.

⁵⁷ Figures about Shandong Province come from followed website:

http://baike.baidu.com/link?url=BB3aiz94nC4uP5npecOCn8DIVFjbfvWyp5S1-1D85pbff1dxc_a0JV8_C9eiG7PbttiRCowLh-i5dJoPKAzLxsKqJJQdm6VVM89YWFHHnIP_n8dAsPhz-OUQmZUhulljAkQKjrYD1f4egShGOHI-xNS87lZcMwfbosO-bZzl04ndjb2fbzXghQw8H6kdFLR. (Accessed in 12.03.2013)

⁵⁸ Official website of Dezhou City: <http://www.dezhou.gov.cn/> (Accessed in 13.04.2013)

⁵⁹ Official website of Linyi County: <http://www.linyixian.gov.cn> (Accessed in 13.04.2013)



According to a survey, the average income of the county farmers reached 9660.54 Yuan (1420 Euro) in 2013, living consumption index was 4155.3 Yuan (611 Euro), food consumption spending 1566.99 Yuan (230 Euro) and clothing consumption 301.27 Yuan (44 Euro). There are 8 towns governed by Linyi County, and the 3 villages selected for the investigation are members of C town. C Town is 9 km distant from the county, administrating approximately 80 natural villages. The land here is flat and the soil is rich, along with a mean annual precipitation of about 600 millimeters.⁶⁰ Enjoying the exceptional advantages of the Yellow River, the town is abundant in water resources and the Yellow River Diversion Project is carried out throughout the town. In addition, about half of the villages are located in the oil region that is rich in natural gas and oil resources and is an important oil base for the west SL Oilfield.

Reasons for choosing these villages are as follows. Firstly, there are large differences between rural areas in the mountainous region and the plain region in terms of economic development, local culture, resources, environment, etc. Y village in the mountainous area is a poor village from an undeveloped area. Women in this village are living a tougher life than women in other areas. The other three villages in the plain area belong to Shandong Province, one of main provinces for high-yield agriculture. The gap between villages in these two different areas is huge. Through comparing women's situations in these villages, factors influencing agricultural development and women's

⁶⁰ Official website of Linyi County: <http://www.linyixian.gov.cn/> (Accessed in 10.04.2016)

welfare can be easily found. Also, the obvious disparity of rural development between different regions can be found, which may draw more public attention to the plight of vulnerable groups in poor areas.

Secondly, I chose these villages because I have some acquaintances living in these villages or they have relatives in the villages. Through an acquaintance, local introductions can be made personally and this is helpful to diminish the interviewee's senses of restraint. Villagers are often reluctant to communicate with strangers. In China, the village is a basic social unit while it is an acquaintance society. It means that members of this kind of communities consist of acquaintances. Villagers are mostly relatives in rural society. In many villages of China, males in the same village often have the same surname. In Chinese rural communities, consanguinity and regionalism are seen as the most important relationships. As Fei Xiaotong said, "The 'guest' residents cannot be regarded as having entered the village group, because they often do not have the same rights as the residents. They are not seen as 'insiders' and cannot be trusted."⁶¹ As a stranger without an official permission for staying in the village temporarily, it is essential to be introduced by an acquaintance in the village.

In addition, I chose only one village in the mountainous area while choosing three villages in the plain area. The geographical environment is another reason. The population density of the mountainous area is much lower than the plain area. As I mentioned before, rural residents are scattered in the mountains. Interviewees were difficult to find in just one village. In Shandong Province, the three villages are located near each other so they are easily found. Furthermore, through investigations in three villages in the same county, homogeneity of farming women in places with the same landform can be tested.

I got to Y village on the 15th of September in 2013 and I stayed for ten days during the peak corn harvesting season. From the 1st of June 2014 to the 24th of June 2014, I got to X village, B village and Z village. When I conducted my investigation in those villages, I was living in the home of an acquaintance and when I was staying in these three villages, villagers were busy harvesting wheat.

⁶¹ Fei X, Hamilton G G, Wang Z. *From the soil, the foundations of Chinese society: a translation of Fei Xiaotong's Xiangtu Zhongguo, with an introduction and epilogue.*(US: University of California Press, 1992), 124

1.4.3 Data collection and research method

The research methods of this study involve both literature research and field research. Since the situation of rural women is not only determined by objective or financial factors such as geography, local economic development, family income, etc. but also by regional culture, institutions, values, etc., rural women's working and living conditions cannot be evaluated only by quantitative methods. Many phenomena should be analyzed with qualitative approaches which can explore the "inner life and understand personal circumstances of societies".⁶² It is found that many feminist studies used the multiple and mixed methods and approaches.⁶³ Therefore, I collected both quantitative and qualitative data and do this study through the followed methods: structured interviews, participant observation, narrative, positionality and field notes.

Face-to-face interviews are regarded as "the most flexible form of data collection method".⁶⁴ In this study, interviewing is one of the primary approaches to collecting data. Doing interviews requires several steps. To gather data more effectively, I conducted structured interviews. The first step is designing a questionnaire. According to the aims of this study and the research questions, I designed 60 open-ended questions for interviews in the mountainous village and 72 questions for the plain villages. Each interviewee would be asked to describe her daily life through these questions, which refer to local basic information, the interviewee's individual information, working conditions, material living conditions, family life, leisure time and social relationship, health status and environmental awareness. All indicators I mentioned above (in part 1.2) are involved in these questions. The second step is selecting interviewees. It was the busy season for farmers when I got to the study sites. Therefore, rural females were not always at home. It is difficult to conduct systematic sampling or stratified sampling. Female villagers were selected by snowball sampling method. The sites of interviews were not limited. It could be conducted at home, in the fields or somewhere else. The third step is conducting interviews. I communicated with interviewees in light of the

⁶² England, Kim VL., "Getting personal: Reflexivity, positionality, and feminist research," *The Professional Geographer* 46.1 (1994): 80-89, 82

⁶³ Alasuutari, Pertti, Leonard Bickman, and Julia Brannen, eds, *The SAGE handbook of social research methods* (US: Sage, 2008), 329

⁶⁴ Denzin N K, Lincoln Y S, *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (US: Sage, 2011), 317

questionnaire and record the dialogue by taking notes and taping. Each respondent was interviewed in a private environment. Names of interviewees have been changed to ensure anonymity. I finished seventeen interviews in the mountain area. In the plain area, I finished thirty interviews in total. Nine interviews were done in X village, eleven interviews in B village and ten interviews in Z village. The last step is arranging the data. When the investigation finished, the interview tapes were transcribed verbatim and translated into English.

Participant observation can help us to measure the completeness of data gathered in other ways and let us know what orders of information escape us.⁶⁵ Through participant observation, I observed rural females' appearances, characters, daily activities they engaged in, interaction with others, etc. As such data which are hardly collected or neglected in interviews can be gathered in this way. Furthermore, some information that may have been misunderstood in the interviews can be corrected by participant observation. Besides, gender inequality issues sometimes cannot be reflected from the answers of respondents because they probably do not realize the gender discrimination. Therefore, participant observation is a necessary approach. At the study sites, I was staying in one of the residents' homes in each village, and I was permitted to observe females' daily lives and sometimes join their activities such as cooking, doing farm work and so on. Through this process, I could observe women's behavior and how they are treated in their daily lives. In each family, after I did several interviews I chose two or three days to observe them individually. On one hand, it helped me to check the data gathered in interviews, on the other hand, I was able to supplement missed data. In the meantime, I made notes according to my observation, which provided another type of data.

Narrative is one of important methods in social research, which researches the story (mostly the individual's life experience) told by the researched.⁶⁶ In my study, this method can be used to analyze rural women's life experiences and cultural issues. According to life story told by farming women, I mainly focus on the content of the

⁶⁵ Becker, H., & Geer, B, "Participant observation and interviewing: a comparison. *human organization*", 16, no.33 (1957): 28-32, 28

⁶⁶ Denzin N K, Lincoln Y S, *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (US: Sage, 2011), 448

story and their attitudes toward some events.

Since the experience and knowledge of the researcher will have a great effect on the fieldwork, the position of researcher in the process of investigation is important. Fieldwork is regarded as “a dialogical process in which the research situation is structured by both the researcher and the person being researched” (England, Kim VL., 1994)⁶⁷ Linda McDowell noted that researcher should recognize and consider their own position as well as the position of the researched, and integrate this into the research practice.⁶⁸ “Feminists of many kinds have elaborated their own role in the complex relations of power by exploring their ‘position’ and frequently ascribe the politics of knowledge production to a geography of ‘positionality’.”(Gillian Rose, 1997)⁶⁹ There is a great distance between my hometown and the selected sites. I had never lived in the countryside, so I did not know much about the local culture before I started my fieldwork. Thus, the reflexivity arising from the investigation would affect positively on learning situated knowledge. Before I started my fieldwork, I corrected the expressions of the questions into the local colloquial expression with the help of my acquaintance in the village. I was introduced to the villagers by the acquaintance, so my visit would be accepted more readily. I explained to female villagers that I was a student doing research on rural women’s living and working conditions and I hoped they could tell me more details about their lives. During my interactions with villagers, I learned the local customs, the values of local people and how they conducted their life. The situational knowledge was generated through this experience, which is helpful for conducting interviews and makes interviews more flexible. Situational knowledge is also useful for understanding interviewees’ answers and their thoughts as well as helpful for further interpretation of interviewees’ behaviors in the study.

I made field notes when I employed the methods I mentioned above. It is a method combined with other methods for supplementing data. For the field investigation, field notes are essential approach for recording things about rural women, the research

⁶⁷ England, Kim VL., "Getting personal: Reflexivity, positionality, and feminist research." *The Professional Geographer* 46.1 (1994): 80-89, 82

⁶⁸ Rose G., “Situating knowledges: positionality, reflexivities and other tactics,” *Progress in human geography* 21, no.3(1997): 305-320, 305

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* p.308

experience and encounters in each field site. In this study, I also used simple statistical analysis. As this is a qualitative pilot study, the sample size is very small. I only used descriptive statistics to describe some features of the interviewees. In other words, basic individual information of interviewees, such as age, education background, marital status, the number of children, etc., was analyzed by this method to learn the demographic characteristics of rural women in study fields.

1.5 Representativeness of research sample and limitations of the research

Compared with quantitative research, the sampling procedures of qualitative research are more flexible, and the number of the samples is not the more, the better. But it is necessary for a pilot study to gather more information. The principle of information maximization was adopted during the investigation. In light of my research questions and purpose, I defined the range of information which should be collected. I collected data by methods I mentioned until no more new information could be collected. The result of my investigation indicates that farming women in the same village exhibit apparent homogeneity. Similar information was often obtained after I had done ten interviews in one village. In this way, typical features of farming women in Shaanxi Province and Shandong Province can be shown without being representative for rural women.

However, samples from selected villages cannot represent all the farming women in China, as China is a country with a huge land area. Rural women themselves are a large group. The number of left-behind women alone is 47 million. The number of farming women is obviously far more than this figure. Furthermore, the situation of rural communities in different areas is complex, and four villages cannot represent all of villages in China. This is one of the limitations of this study. Nevertheless, one of the contributions of this study is that it faithfully reflects the significant disparity in rural women's welfare and agricultural development between different regions with different levels of social and economic development in China.

Another limitation of this research is that it doesn't refer to the most private issues of farming women's marital life, such as domestic violence, sex, etc. I tried to learn the situation of violence in rural areas. However, this topic was hard to pursue during

interviews and the authenticity of the information about domestic violence offered by interviewees cannot be totally ensured. On one hand, rural women are so conservative that topics like this are taboo. They are not willing to talk about these issues, in particular with a stranger. On the other hand, lacking fieldwork experience, I hadn't gained their trust entirely, which should be improved in further research.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

In chapter 2 of this thesis, I introduce the background of agricultural development, rural development in mountainous areas and plain areas in China and the general conditions of rural women in the context of China's social transition. The first part of this chapter discusses the current development situation of China's agriculture in space and time dimensions. It discusses the current status of agricultural development in China with reference to the historical perspective, and it gives three primary reasons for the late development of agriculture in China followed by an overview of rural and agricultural policies. Regarding space, it introduces the situation of agricultural development in different regions. The second part of chapter 2, describes the physical environment in both mountainous areas and plain areas and the development gap between these two kinds of regions, followed by a discussion of general problems in these areas. The last part of chapter 2 explores the conditions of rural women in the process of social transition.

The empirical part of this dissertation consists of two chapters (chapters 3 and 4), in which the situations of farming women in a mountainous area and a plain area are described. The description of the working and living conditions of farming women mainly consists of five parts. The first part is about general information about interviewees. The second part, it analyzes the relationship between the natural environment and females' agricultural activities, hours of labor, gendered division of labor and local agricultural policies. The third part mostly examines the material living conditions of rural women. The fourth part describes rural women's family lives through several aspects, such as basic information about their husbands, marriage background, family property management, decision-making, housework, family structure, relationship between generations, old-age support, family values, etc., along

with a cultural analysis. The final part concludes with a description of leisure life and health conditions of farming women.

Chapter 5 compares the situation of farming women in the mountainous area and the plain area based on the result from case studies in chapter 3 and chapter 4. It summarizes the dissimilarities and similarities of rural women's situation in different terrains. In the first part of chapter 5, it finds that the differences between farming women in these two regions are mainly in four aspects: working conditions and household income, living circumstance, nutrition and health status and influences of local urbanization policy on rural women. The second part describes the similarities between these two groups. The phenomenon of feminization of agriculture occurs in both regions, and gender-based division of labor is similar. For rural women, they all center their lives around families; in their old-age support the women are dependent on their children. Most of the women received little education, and they lack environmental awareness.

Chapter 6 gives an overview of rural women's living and working conditions and rural development in EU member states followed by a summary of environmental problems in China with reference to EU discussions on agricultural development and climate change. This chapter has three parts. The first part describes the conditions of farming women in Western Europe and Eastern Europe. Based on gender theories, it analyzes gender inequality in rural areas in Europe. The second part reviews the rural development strategy of the EU. It focuses on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), LEADER approach and agri-environment measures of the EU. The last part looks at the current environmental problems in China with an analysis of the problems and a reference to EU discussion on related issues.

The concluding chapter summarizes the result of the village case studies and the comparative chapter along with the research questions of this study. It then elaborates the policy implications of the dissertation. Finally, it puts forward open questions and points out the potential for further studies.

Chapter 2 Agriculture, villages and rural women in China

Agriculture is an old economic activity in which humans work. It is the cradle, origin, and symbol of human civilization. After the appearance of human beings, it goes through thick and thin together with human beings. China, a country with a population of 1.3 billion, it is also a big agricultural country.. For thousands of years, the development of agriculture, the countryside, and farmers in China has formed a long history of agricultural civilization. However, in recent years, with the continuous development of industry and tertiary industry, agricultural development has lagged far behind. Development of rural areas cannot follow in the steps of urban development and modern development. Judging from the present condition, developmental problems of rural areas mainly focus on three aspects, namely agriculture, the countryside, and farmers. More than an economic issue this is a complex social problem and has become a barrier that cannot be ignored on the path to Chinese modernization. At present, it is an important problem that urgently needs to be solved in Chinese society.

2.1 Agricultural development in China

I discuss the current developmental situation of Chinese agriculture from two dimensions, namely time and space. The time dimension is also the vertical dimension and the historical dimension. China has enjoyed thousands of years of agricultural civilization. To a large extent, both the current developmental situation of Chinese agriculture and future developmental trends are affected by history and bear the traces of history. Therefore, the current developmental situation of Chinese agriculture can be more clearly understood from the historical perspective; the spatial dimension is also the horizontal dimension. It divides China into several areas according to different geographic features. Levels of agricultural development in different areas are also different.

2.1.1 Current situation of China's agriculture

From the perspective of technology, agricultural development has four stages: primitive agriculture, traditional agriculture, modern agriculture and information

agriculture. Primitive agriculture is the initial stage of global agricultural development and is the stage closest to the natural state. People use rough farming tools and adopt production modes such as gathering, slash and burn, and nomadism to do simple agricultural work. Production efficiency and productivity levels are very low.. Traditional agriculture took the longest time in China. Around 200 BC, a set of traditional agricultural techniques was formed. During this time, iron farming tools were gradually popularized. Plows, shovels, hoes and other farming tools with different functions were invented. The ox-drawn plow technique, which could replace manual labor, was widely spread, which promoted the agricultural development greatly. Compared with primitive agriculture, the productivity level of traditional agriculture was higher. However, traditional agriculture was not without its disadvantages to. For example, the production scale of traditional agriculture remains small; production technology still lags behind; it can only satisfy the development of a self-sufficient small-scale peasant economy. Under the background of industrialization, the agricultural production of modern agriculture mainly uses modern science and technology and the scientific management method, which reduces production costs, enhances production efficiency, and conducts agriculture with mechanization and marketization. Information agriculture is the newest form of agricultural development. As the name implies, information agriculture applies modern information technology to agricultural development and shares agricultural information sources.

It is worth noting that agricultural development continues to modernize due to technologies improving, environment goals should be involved in agriculture modernization. Nowadays many countries realize that development of environmentally friendly agriculture is necessary for human beings and sustainable social development. In 2015, the Chinese central government advocated that agricultural modernization should be promoted on the premise of environmental protection. The direction of agricultural development in China should be sustainable agriculture. However, there are still two major problems in China's agricultural development. Firstly, the agricultural modernization level is comparatively low. Modernization essentially depends on technological development. Currently, agricultural production in most plain areas has been mechanized, but mechanization doesn't mean modernization. Most importantly, it

still lacks the advanced or innovative technology to ensure environmental protection. Environmental problems caused by agricultural production are severe. In the mountainous area, farmers still do farming work with traditional tools. Nevertheless, the excessive use of pesticides and fertilizers also pollute the environment. Natural resources, such as water, soil, etc. have been damaged during agricultural production, which is another problem of Chinese agriculture.

China's Modernization Report 2012 issued by the Chinese Academy of Sciences suggests that agricultural development in China still lags behind. By calculating three indexes, namely the ratio of added value of agriculture, the ratio of agricultural labor force and agricultural labor productivity, specialists from Chinese Academy of Sciences point out that "in 2008, the level of agricultural development in China differed about 150 years with England, 108 years with America, 86 years with Germany, 64 years with France, 60 years with Japan and 36 years with South Korea."⁷⁰ In Western countries, the direction of agricultural development has been transferred to functional agriculture or sustainable agriculture while China's agriculture is mostly still in the extensive model. Technologies which can boost production are usually encouraged while green technology has not been widely spread.

China is the biggest agricultural country in the world. The agricultural development of China not only affects the social development of China but also affects the development of the world. Under the background of globalization and rapid changes in China, the countryside, agriculture and farmers of China can no longer develop in isolation. Especially concerning environmental issues, ecological destruction will threaten the existence of human being. It relates to everyone in the world. Therefore, promoting modern and sustainable agricultural development has become an important mission in the process of the modernization of China.

2.1.2 Reasons for China's agricultural late development

Regarding China's current situation, there are several reasons for late agricultural development.

Firstly, from the perspective of production conditions, China's rural population base

⁷⁰ Economy Observation: <http://www.eeo.com.cn/2012/0515/226420.shtml>, May 15, 2012

is large according to the survey data of the United Nations FAO, in 2011, the total population of China is 1.37 billion, of which the rural population accounts for 49.5%.⁷¹ Farmland area per person is small due to the implementation of the family contracted responsibility system.⁷² It fixed farm output quotas for each household, and divided the land into small pieces operated by individual households. On the sub-miniature scale of the agricultural production mode, with the family as the production unit, it is hard to realize mechanization and industrialization. According to the countryside statistical yearbook of 2012 in China, the number of rural people in 2011 reaches 656.56 million accounting for 48.73% of the total population in this country.⁷³ However, according to the second national land survey data launched on December 30, 2013, the total national cultivated area amounts to 1135.385 million hectare, about 2.030,77 billion mu and the per capita area of cultivated land reaches 0.101 hectare (1.52mu), which is less than half of the worldwide per capita share.⁷⁴ In circumstances of small production scale and low production efficiency, dispersed agriculture brings much less economic benefit than organized industry. Traditional agriculture faces more market risks than industry, because traditional agriculture relies more on the natural environment and natural disasters can have a crushing impact on traditional agriculture. In this manner agriculture becomes a kind of weak industry compared with burgeoning industry.

Secondly, from the perspective of history, the strategic prioritization of heavy industry carried out in the 1950s in China impeded the development of peasants and agriculture to a great extent. At that time, industrialization was highly encouraged by many scholars, and it was regarded as the central part of economic development.⁷⁵ Compared with industry, agriculture developed slowly and was unable to contribute much to economic development in a short time. Agriculture could at most play a supporting role in industry development; for example, it provided the industry with raw materials, labor force and so on. Based on such theoretical background, many

⁷¹ United Nations FAO database

⁷² See p.35.

⁷³ China Countryside Statistical Yearbook: part 3: gender situations of countryside and basic conditions of agricultural production.

⁷⁴ Peasant Daily, 'The area of arable land in China is 2.03 billion mu' (in Chinese). 2013-12-31

⁷⁵ Ye Yangbing, "Discussion on the strategy of heavy industry priority carried out in the period of first five years," Social Science Research 05, (2002): 119-124, 120 (in Chinese)

developing countries pursuing rapid economic development ignore agriculture while developing industry with great efforts, and China was no exception. In the 1940s, the economic structure of China was struggling. In 1949, the gross national product of industry and agriculture was only 46.6 billion Yuan and the per capita income was 66.1 Yuan. Agriculture gross product accounted for 70% of the gross product of agriculture and industry while industry gross product was 30% and the gross product of heavy industry only accounted for 7.9% of the gross product of agriculture and industry.⁷⁶ More importantly, heavy industry in China at that time lacked variety and no independent machine building industry of its own. Most factories stressed mining and primary material production. Such an abnormal economic structure not only affected the independence of the national economy and national defense to a great extent but also seriously impeded the development of industry and the whole national economy.⁷⁷ To promote the development of the national economy, improve Chinese economic structures and strengthen the independence of the economy in China, priority was given to heavy industry. During the period of the first five-year plan (1953-1957), the government developed an important plan: developing China from its earlier agricultural beginnings to a country boasting advanced industry. In the first five-year plan, it was asked that in the aggregate investment of fundamental construction of 42.7 billion Yuan, the investment in agriculture, forestry and water conservation reached 3.26 billion Yuan accounting for 7.6% of the investment and the investment reached 24.85 billion Yuan accounting for 58.2% of the aggregate investment in the industrial sector, in which light industry accounted for 11.2% of the total amount and heavy industry 88.8%.⁷⁸ However, the Chinese government did not realize that the strategy was only suitable to change the serious backwardness of the heavy industry in China in a short time. On the contrary, this strategy was regarded as a long-term and fixed pattern of economic development. In the five fundamental tasks put forward in the state economic development plan of China from 1958 to 1962, the first task was to continue heavy industry-oriented industrial

⁷⁶ Editorial Committee of Economic Yearbook of China: 1981 Economic Yearbook of China, Economic Management Press, 1982: 04 (in Chinese)

⁷⁷ Ye Yangbing, "Discussion on the strategy of heavy industry priority carried out in the period of first five years," Social Science Research 05, (2002): 119-124, 120 (in Chinese)

⁷⁸ The First Five-Year Plan (1953-1957) for the Development of the National Economy of People's Republic of China. (Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1955), 24 (in Chinese)

construction.⁷⁹ Consequently, as heavy industry developed, it remained the priority of development even when it was not a weak sector, which would cause a structural imbalance in the economy of China in the 1960s and 1970s, thus leading to the stagnation of the development of light industry and agriculture.

Thirdly, from the perspective of institutions, the rural and urban dual household registration system derived from the strategy of heavy industry priority isolates urban and rural areas, confining peasants to the land and making farming their only way to make a living and accumulate capital, which actually exploits peasants and sacrifices the development of agriculture. The rural and urban dual household registration system came into effect in 1958 due to the strategic prioritization of heavy industry. Since the heavy industry is a capital-intensive industry with a huge scale of investment, it can't create many employment opportunities.⁸⁰ Hence, in this period, the government not only tried all they could to prevent peasants from going to urban areas but also encouraged many educated young people from urban areas to move to the countryside. So was born the household registration system (*hukou* system). The rural and urban dual household registration system separates rural residents from urban residents in terms of registration and management, controlling the movement of urban and rural populations via the examination and approval system of population migration and system of settling down by certificate, which is mainly aimed at avoiding irrational addition of the urban labor force and blind outflow of the rural labor force. The social benefits based on the rural and urban dual household registration system also create a significant distinction of social welfare between rural areas and urban areas. For those workers engaged in agricultural production, the benefits that the government provides are minor profits based on agricultural products produced on lands, while those occupied in industry can enjoy special subsidies, such as a housing allowance, pension insurance allowance, unemployment insurance allowance and medical care allowance. The shunt of the economic system makes the income of peasants lower than of those who are engaged in industry and commerce in cities. Then, peasants face a much heavier burden than urban

⁷⁹ Yu Youjun & Li Yuanjiang, *Socialism: from the theory to the practice* (Guangdong Education Press, 2011): 185 (in Chinese)

⁸⁰ Lin Yifu, "Urban Development and rural modernization in China," *Journal of Peking University: edition of Philosophy and Social Sciences* 39, no.4 (2002): 12-15, 14 (in Chinese)

residents. They have to undertake the expenses of housing, medical care and education of children all by themselves in addition to the costs of daily life and farming investment. With the dual household registration system, citizens are given different identity from birth that cannot be changed easily. The heritable identity separates people into “urban population” and “rural population”. Registered permanent residence not only restricts social mobility but also becomes a symbol of social status. The dual household registration system cuts off the free mobility between city and countryside. Citizens are endowed with a distinct social status that they cannot change for a long time. Also, according to the place in which they are born, they enjoy different rights and treatment as well as different obligations they have to undertake. It sacrifices the interest of agriculture and farmers, although it becomes the guarantee of industrial development in the 1950s. Meanwhile, it causes a gap between cities and countryside in many other social areas.

Generally speaking, due to various historical reasons and reality conditions, the agriculture in most parts of China is developing slowly, the degree of modernization remains low, and there are significant urban-rural economic development and income gaps. The traditional countryside will be confronted with great challenges in the process of social transformation and high-speed economic development. Compared with western countries, the vast rural population is an enormous difficulty and challenge in the process of urbanization and modernization of China.

2.1.3 Rural and agricultural policies in China

As previously mentioned, agriculture development was unheeded between 1949 and 1962. The Chinese government began to implement a policy of “agriculture first” after 1962, a large investment was made in agricultural development, and a steady increase in the supply of modern inputs to the communes.⁸¹ The government carried out some policies in succession after the 1980s, which are of great benefit to agriculture, including, for instance, the Household Contract Responsibility System, encouragement policy for peasants finding jobs in the urban area, New Rural Co-operative Medical

⁸¹ Chen, K. I., “Agricultural modernization in China. Current history (pre-1986),” 77 (000449), 66, 1979 Retrieved from: <http://search.proquest.com/openview/8ba788674f6da10cbcf94d52b5f1a83a/1?pq-origsite=gscholar> (Accessed in 13.04.2014)

System, farm tax-exemption, support policy for family farms, and so forth.

The Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) is known to have been very damaging both to the economy and society. Although agricultural production was not severely affected peasants tumbled into poverty. Because of the planned economy, there was no relationship between personal agricultural production and the living standard of peasants. All agricultural products produced had to be handed to the country. Farmers were even semi-starved with only a little food distributed by government evenly. Consequently, the initiatives of farmers were seriously dampened. By 1983, the Household Contract Responsibility System was fully implemented. The land was measured, dived into small pieces and was allocated to farm households. Since the land remained collectively owned, peasants have the right to contract and manage land. As to agricultural production, they handed a certain amount over to the country and collectives, and they could own the remainders of products themselves. Someone who was able to produce more food could get more profit. In this way, farmers' initiatives were aroused. The people's commune that had been operated for twenty years was dead and buried at the end of 1984. The core of the household production responsibility system is land contracted management right which is written in the property law as a new right. Whether the rural land system based on household production responsibility can survive and continue depends on the implementation of the contractual right of land. According to China's current relative laws, contractual right to land has become farmers' structural power of legal undertaking, holding and using income distribution and limited good circulation within a limited period. Its powers and functions are centered on the three aspects of contracted land long-term use rights, autonomy in production and management and right circulation of contract operation. Its essence is a combination of land use rights and the operational production organization system of the contractor. In reality, contractual right of land has been the core of China's current farmland property rights system.

Since its introduction in 1978, the household contract responsibility system has no doubt been a significant reform in rural China. It involves each farmer's interest, survival, and development, and also, it has dual influences on Chinese rural women. On one hand, the household contract responsibility system liberates the productive forces

and mobilizes the working enthusiasm of farmers, including rural women to the utmost. During the period of people's cooperatives, rural women were often arranged to undertake some marginalized work or respond to some calls to engage in the physical labor like men. The Household Contract Responsibility System viewed each farm household as a unit. It's easier to communicate and coordinate during the process of agricultural production. Women could do the farm work according to their physical effort. Nonetheless, every coin has two sides. The new system posed challenges for rural females. Since the implementation of the household contract responsibility system, periodic adjustment of farmland has been made in some areas due to family population change, which is carried out every 3 to 5 years. Land in the village is per capita allocation. When a woman is married and lives in her husband's village, her land in her home will be taken back, and she will be allocated farmland in her husband's home when the next land adjustment is made. Therefore, before the next land adjustment, the newly married woman has to do farming for her husband's family without any land-use rights. In addition, since 1998, the land contract period has been extended to 30 years, and most areas choose to adopt the principle of "not adding land with added population; not reducing land with reduced population" for simple management, which is to say the land area a family owns does not change with the family population change caused by marriage, birth or death. A family will not gain more land due to marriage. Although there is no change in women's land rights, from a practical perspective, women who have married to other villages cannot possibly go back to her original village to farm her land, and in the process loses a very valuable site of production.

China's *hukou* system (household register system) is one of the major tools used by government to control the population mobility.⁸² Until 1984, the "temporary" migration was allowed and rural labor force could flow to urban areas.⁸³ The central government points out in Notice from Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee on Rural Work of 1984:

"In 1984, each province, autonomous region and direct-controlled municipality can

⁸² Chan, K. W., & Zhang, L. "The *hukou* system and rural-urban migration in China: Processes and changes," *The China Quarterly* 160, (1999): 818-855, 819

⁸³ Fan C C, "Rural - urban migration and gender division of labor in transitional China," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 27, no.1 (2003): 24-47, 26

choose some market towns as experimental units, and it's allowed for the farmers with self-care rations who work, do business or run service business in market towns to settle down in market towns".⁸⁴

There are two important factors for the rural and urban dual *hukou* system to have become slightly flexible. The first is the implementation of the household contract responsibility system. It gives peasants the right to arrange their farm work and time as they already had land contract and operation rights. Secondly, with the reform and opening up policy being carried out and urban large-scale infrastructure construction, there was a sharp increase in demand for labor, especially in service sector. Migrant workers (i.e. people of agricultural registered permanent residence working in cities or local township enterprises) came into being during this time. However, in the late 1980s, enterprises were not allowed to employ migrant workers on their own. If they needed to employ migrant workers, they had to submit an application to the labor administration department and wait for it to be accepted, which meant there were limited chances for peasants to work in cities. Until 1992, when the reform and opening up policy stepped into a new developing stage, the urban labor market then fully opened and enterprises gained the right to employ workers independently, which provided plenty of jobs for peasants working in cities. From a gender perspective, with the increasing number of peasant workers, the number of women left behind became increased as well.

The new rural cooperative medical system was made in 2013, and was gradually spread around rural areas throughout the country. By 2008, the new rural cooperative medical system was popularized rural areas nationwide. At present, it is the medical security system which is specific to rural areas in China. The medical security problem in rural areas, in other words, the inequality of medical security in urban and rural areas comes from the urban and rural dual *hukou* system. The urban and rural dual *hukou* system is not only a simple registration system of residents' formal residences. One of its most direct effects on urban and rural residents is the differences in social welfare between urban and rural areas, that is, the social security system is completely different between urban and rural areas. As previously before, the social security system in urban areas is relatively complete, while there is only minimum living security and a simple

⁸⁴ Literature Research Center of the CPC Central Committee, The selected important literature since the twelfth national people's congress (Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1986): 435 (in Chinese)

cooperative medical care system for rural people. The medical system has a great influence on residents' living standard and quality of life. Since the 1990s, the medical security problem in rural areas has become serious.⁸⁵ In rural areas, the phenomenon of "poverty caused by diseases" is often seen. The health problems of peasants could not be solved, which had a negative influence on development of rural areas and peasants. Since 2003, the government has begun to improve the medical care system in rural areas, which forms the basis of the new rural cooperative medical system. In 2010, this system covered all rural residents throughout the country. The new rural cooperative medical system adopts the financing mode of personal payment, collective support and government funding. In 2014, the rural average insurance premiums paid by residents themselves were 90 Yuan per person per year. The medical expense reimbursement proportion of serious diseases is up to 70%, which meets peasants' pressing needs of seeing doctors to some extent. However, because the new cooperative medical system is mainly a comprehensive arrangement for serious disease, medical expenses of minor illnesses are still mostly paid by peasants themselves. In addition, at present, there is a shortcoming that cannot be neglected in this system: it is only suitable for peasants' registered permanent residences. Migrant workers who have left for urban areas still have a hard time getting reimbursed for medical expenses related to seeing doctors far from home.

Abolishing agricultural taxation, which has profound influences on rural and agricultural development in China, is a historical decision in the rural developmental history of China. Since January 1, 2006, China officially abolished Regulations for the Agricultural Tax. This means that the agricultural tax, which had been in place for over 2,000 years, has been abolished thoroughly. Before 2006, all units and individuals engaged in agricultural production or having agricultural income had to pay the agricultural tax. According to Regulations for the Agricultural Tax of the People's Republic of China issued in 1958, the normal annual output was the calculation standard of agricultural tax. The statutory highest agricultural tax rate over the country

⁸⁵ Yajing Liu & Ronglin Zhang, "The reform of new rural cooperative medical system in China and its implications," *Journal of Shandong University: edition of Philosophy and Social Sciences*03, (2010): 144-151, 148. (in Chinese)

was 15.5% of the normal annual output.⁸⁶ According to each province's specific economic developmental situation, each province made relative adjustments based on the nationwide average tax rate. In addition, according to each region's actual demands, agricultural surtax could be imposed. With the increase of agricultural output, the average tax rate was adjusted constantly. Before the abolishment of agricultural tax, the nationwide average tax rate was 2.5%.⁸⁷ From the perspective of agricultural development, the abolishment of agricultural tax enhanced the productivity of peasants, reduced agricultural production costs and increased market competitiveness of agricultural products. For peasants, the abolishment of agricultural tax radically reduced peasants' burden, and increased peasants' income indirectly. However, on the other hand, the abolishment of agricultural tax gave rise to some new problems. For example, solving the rural collective economic debt could no longer depend on imposing agricultural tax, especially in central and western regions with low levels of economic development, and many counties and towns could not repay their debts, which led to the deterioration of rural public services.

In addition, the Chinese government has regarded agricultural development as the most significant issue in recent years. From 2004 to 2015, the government constantly issued the CPC No.1 Document⁸⁸ with the theme of agricultural development within these 12 years.⁸⁹ For example, in January, 2004, to address the situation of slow continuous growth of peasants per capita income, the government issued *the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council's policy advice on promoting the increase of peasants incomes* as the CPC No.1 Document in 2004;⁹⁰ in order to enhance agricultural infrastructure construction and to improve overall agricultural productivity, *the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council's policy advice on further enhancing rural work and improving overall*

⁸⁶ Wang X & Shen Y, "The effect of China's agricultural tax abolition on rural families' incomes and production," *China Economic Review* 29, (2014): 185-199, 190. (in Chinese)

⁸⁷ Li Jiaming & Li Feng "The rise and decline of agricultural tax in China," *Friends of Accounting: Taiyuan* 19, (2010): 83-86, 85. (in Chinese)

⁸⁸ The first policy document, issued by CPC each year, is generally a programmatic document and often attracts public attention in China.

⁸⁹ http://english.agri.gov.cn/news/dqnf/201502/t20150203_24952.htm (Accessed in 06.08.2015)

⁹⁰ http://www.gov.cn/test/2006-02/22/content_207415.htm (Accessed in 06.08.2015)

agricultural productivity was issued in January, 2005;⁹¹ the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council's advice on promoting the construction of the new socialist new countryside was issued in February, 2006, and so on.⁹² From the Central Documents No.1 within recent three years, the government will promote agricultural modernization construction as the key point of development. The CPC No.1 Document of 2013 "gives priority to diversifying production patterns."⁹³ The scale of agriculture allowance funds will continue being enlarged and the newly-added allowance will focus on such new-type business entities as specialized households, family farms, farmers' cooperatives and so on. Environmental issues have been discussed in this document. According to CPC No.1 Document of 2013, measures for environment protection, such as continuing to implement the Grain for Green Project⁹⁴, recycling garbage, establishing sewage disposal systems and so on, have to be taken in 2013.⁹⁵ In the No.1 Document from the national central government in 2014, it suggested that national grain reserve system should be improved and a target price system be established. Target price system means that the government will give consumers an allowance when the market price of agricultural products is too high, and give the producers an allowance according to the price difference when the market price is lower than target price in order to secure the benefit of farmers. In addition, it points out that the grain reserve poses a significant challenge, especially for such a large country of grain production and a country of large population as China.⁹⁶ The CPC No.1 Document of 2014 indicates that while developing towards modernization, the climate crisis has become a serious problem and has great impact on national agriculture production. Thus, it encourages the promotion of that green agricultural development, the natural Forest Protective Project, and the continuing implementation of the Grain for

⁹¹ http://www.gov.cn/test/2006-02/22/content_207406.htm (Accessed in 06.08.2015)

⁹² http://www.moa.gov.cn/ztzl/yhwj2014/wjhg/201301/t20130129_3209958.htm (Accessed in 08.08.2015)

⁹³ <http://english.cntv.cn/program/newshour/20130131/104718.shtml> (Accessed in 20.05.2016)

⁹⁴ "To restore China's degraded environment, the government launched an environmental restoration project named the 'Grain for Green' Project (GGP) in 1999" (Cao S, Xu C, Chen L, et al, 2009). Before 1999, many farmers in China destroyed large-scale forest to increase their land, which had badly damaged ecosystems. This project aims to protect "agricultural land on steep slopes or heavily degraded land to forest lands or grassland" (Peng H, Cheng G, Xu Z, et al., 2007).

⁹⁵ Caixin Website: <http://china.caixin.com/2013-02-01/100488452.html> (Accessed in 12.04.2015)

⁹⁶ <http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2014-01-19/181729288658.shtml> (Accessed in 07.08.2015)

Green Project, and the popularization of biological control techniques.⁹⁷ In the CPC No.1 Document of 2015, it is proposed that China should increase the level of rural infrastructure, promote the equalization of rural and urban fundamental public services, lead and encourage social capital to turn to the construction of rural areas. In addition, environmental protection issues are referred to again. It suggests that measures have to be taken to resolve environmental problems, such as popularizing biological fertilizers and pesticides with low toxicity and low residue, continuing to protect forest resources, recycling straw, popularizing saving technologies, protecting biological resources, etc.⁹⁸

From the policies I mentioned above, it can be seen that Chinese government has put an emphasis on agricultural development and is beginning to pay attention to environmental protection in the process of modernization. On the other hand, it does concede that agriculture remains a great challenge for China's development. There is still a lack of effective measures to improve the environment during agricultural development, although this issue has been noted in the programmatic document.

2.1.4 Agricultural development in different regions in China

China is a huge country and the social and economic development level is very different in different regions. There are three methods to describe the features of continent of China: according to administrative description, "China can be divided into six areas, i.e. North China, Northeast of China, East China, South China, Southwest of China and Northwest of China";⁹⁹ According to economic development level, China are "divided into three regions, i.e. East China including Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei, Liaoning, Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, Shandong, Guangdong and Hainan, Middle of China including Shanxi, Jilin, Heilongjiang, Anhui, Jiangxi, Henan, Hubei and Hunan, West China including Chongqing, Sichuan, Guizhou, Yunnan, Tibet, Shaanxi, Gansu, Qinghai, Xinjiang, Guangxi, Inner Mongolia, etc.";¹⁰⁰ According to geographical environment, it can be separated into four areas: north area, south area, Qinghai - Tibet area and northwest area. Qinghai-Tibet plateau forms the division among Qinghai-Tibet area, northwest area, and south area. The division between north

⁹⁷ Xinhua Net: http://jckb.xinhuanet.com/2014-01/19/content_487974.htm (Accessed in 12.04.2015)

⁹⁸ Sina Website: <http://finance.sina.com.cn/china/20150201/190721447869.shtml> (Accessed in 12.04.2015)

⁹⁹ Pu Shanxin, The research on reform of China's administrative division (Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2006), 78 (in Chinese)

¹⁰⁰ Liu Zhongying, Division of Economic Regions of China (Changchun: Northeast Normal University, 2007), 17 (in Chinese)

area and south area is Qingling Mountains- Hwai River. In this study, the mountain village I selected is located in north of Qingling Mountains. Qingling Mountain-Hwai River is an important boundary.¹⁰¹ North area and south area are located in north and south of this boundary respectively. These two areas show obvious differences in many aspects, such as natural environment, geographical features, life style of residents and regional cultures.



Generally speaking, regardless of the method of division, each region has its own history, regional culture, environment and economic development level, which are causes of regional differentiation in China.

From the existing research, most scholars tend to adopt the second partitioning method to study the developmental differences between eastern China and western China.

¹⁰¹ Chen Bin. General division of north and south of China (Beijing: Science Chinese, 2015), 104 (in Chinese)

The study results show that the rural social development level in China keeps decreasing along the area of Beijing, Zhejiang and Shanghai, the southeastern coastal area, northeastern area, middle area and western area.¹⁰²

There are big differences in economic development level between eastern and western areas, and the inequality of economic development in western area leads to the fact that the development capacity of western areas falls behind that of eastern area.¹⁰³ This kind of inequality results from the opening-up policy issued at the end of the 1970s, that is, the opening-up of China will be carried out step by step from south to north, from the east coast to the western lands. Although the policy conformed to national conditions at that time, it also led to a definite fact that there is too big economic a development difference between eastern and western areas. At the beginning of carrying out the policy, most of the investment in society was inclined to flow to eastern area and a series of preferential policies about capital and credits, listing of a company, and capital market in southeastern coastal area were made. This made the investment benefit eastern areas much more than that of western areas. Although the government created the policy for the development of western regions in 2000, aiming to use the spare economic development capacity of eastern coastal areas to improve the economic and social development level in western areas, it has been difficult to narrow the big gap between the two areas in such a short time. According to statistics, total output value in western areas adds up to 8,140.849 billion Yuan, accounting for 20.29% of the national output value, while total output value in eastern areas adds up to 24,842.344 billion Yuan, three times that in western areas.¹⁰⁴ Many factors such as economic development, social development, resource endowment and geographical environment in the region decide the agricultural development level in the area. The big economic development level gap between eastern and western regions had great impact on the development in

¹⁰² Long PingDong, Li Tongsheng, Miao Yuanyuan, etc, "The spatial distribution and types of the development level of Chinese agricultural modernization," Beijing: Journal of Geographical Sciences 69, no.2 (2014): 213-226, 220 (in Chinese)

¹⁰³ Li Tiande & Xiong Hou, "The Analysis of the Unequal Phenomenon of Economic Development between Eastern China and Western China," Journal of Southwest University for Nationalities (Social Science Edition) 26, no.3 (2005): 183-186, 185 (in Chinese)

¹⁰⁴ Yang Jinying, Zheng Huan & Fang Xingming. "The theoretical analysis and empirical validation of the disparity of development among eastern China, Central China and Western China," Beijing: Economic Perspectives 8, (2012): 63-69, 65. (in Chinese)

eastern and western countries. Whether in the industrialization level, country industrialization level, agricultural modernization level, urbanization level or in the aspect of peasant income, there are big gaps between the two regions. Taking Shandong Province and Shaanxi Province as examples, a research study found that in 2011 the agricultural modernization development of Shandong Province ranks eighth among 31 provinces and cities of China, while in Shaanxi Province, which belongs to west china, it ranks twenty- second.¹⁰⁵ The study points out how agricultural modernization developed well in east China, followed by central China, but it continues to fall behind in west China.

In addition to social factors such as history and policy orientation, the differences in the level of agricultural development level between regions are also associated with natural geographical conditions. According to results of one study, the prominent regional differences in the overall agricultural development level in eastern, middle, and western areas are consistent with the ladder distribution of physical geography and geomorphology in China. The comprehensive agricultural development level in eastern areas is the highest, while that in western areas is the lowest.¹⁰⁶ However, I believe that the study of regional comparison and topography comparison is quite necessary for the study of the countryside, since agricultural development and physical geographical environment are closely related to the economic development level in that region. Different natural conditions and the economic environment decide regional characteristics of agricultural production, and even influence living conditions and lifestyle of rural people in that region. Therefore, the study of rural areas cannot be generalized as a whole, and it is the same with the study of rural women. In rural areas of different regions and different forms, there are different current conditions, and the living condition of rural females and the difficulties they face during the development process of urbanization are different. In the present study, I introduce the view of social geography to study the working and living conditions of women in eastern plain rural

¹⁰⁵ Long PingDong, Li Tongsheng, Miao Yuanyuan, etc, "The spatial distribution and types of the development level of Chinese agricultural modernization," Beijing: Journal of Geographical Sciences 69, no.2 (2014): 213-226, 224. (in Chinese)

¹⁰⁶ Lu Chunxia, Xie Gaodi, Cheng Shengkui, "The disparity of agriculture development among eastern China, central China and western China," Beijing: China Population, Resources and Environment 13, no.6 (2004): 97-100, 98 (in Chinese)

area and western mountainous rural areas, analyze the living condition gap between women in western and eastern rural areas of different economic development levels. My aim is to pursue a new direction for such kind of research and to add more research significance to this study. In general, plain regions are developing faster than mountainous regions while the economic development level in eastern areas is higher than that of western areas. Many factors such as different speeds of development in the two regions lead to the big difference in living standards of rural women in these regions. Studying the difference can not only provide a policy basis for promoting comprehensive development of rural women in different parts of China. It is also significant for studying a more balanced development of western and eastern rural areas in China and eliminating the gap of wealth among rural areas.

2.2 Villages and rural development in mountain areas and plain areas

Village, in Chinese, is called *cun*. There are two kinds of villages in China: administrative village and original village. The administrative village is the primary level in China's administration system. There are five levels in the administration: province, city, county, township and administrative village. A province has many cities, a city includes several counties, a county administers some towns and the like. According to statistics, there are more than 700,000 administrative villages at present. Original village in Chinese is called *zi ran cun*. It is a geographical concept and means settlement. It is formed naturally when people gather and live in one place for a long period. People living in one village usually have the same surname, because they come from the same forefather. Almost all the villagers are relatives. The population size of each original village is different. Some villages have more than thousands of persons while some of them only have a few people. Villages in plain areas are always larger than in mountainous areas. The number of original villages is far bigger than that of administrative villages. Generally, one administrative village includes several original villages. Villages appear in various terrains all over China. The current situation and development of villages vary widely in different terrains.

2.2.1 Physical environment in mountainous areas and plain areas

China's terrain features mountainous and hilly areas. Plain areas make up only

12% of total land while mountains areas account for 60%.¹⁰⁷ In a broader sense, mountainous areas include hills and hilly uplands. Mountainous areas with approximately 66,360 square kilometers account for 69.1 percent of the whole territory of China. In 2010, the population of mountainous areas was 608 million, which represents 45 percent of the population in China. Among this, the population in non-farm sectors is only 129 million. The rate of urbanization in mountainous areas is 21 percent which falls below the national average (45%) for the same period.¹⁰⁸ In Eastern China, there are 76 impoverished counties, more than half of them located in mountainous areas; mountainous areas in Western China with 55,203 square kilometers account for 81.09 percent of Western China while representing 83.18 percent of mountainous areas in the whole of China. There are 306 impoverished counties. Meanwhile, 85.03 percent of the land of these poor counties is mountainous.¹⁰⁹ From these data, it can be seen that mountainous terrain is the key to poverty. The majority of impoverished villages located in mountainous areas, especially in Western China, the poverty in mountainous areas is widespread. The phenomenon that mountainous areas are relatively poorer is normal in China.¹¹⁰ Hence, against the background of modernization, the subsistence of rural farmers in mountainous areas requires immediate attention.

The mountainous areas in China represent two-thirds of the whole continental land area, which is distributed between 28 provinces. Especially in the northeast of China, northwest of China, southeast of China and southwest of China, the mountainous areas are comparatively larger than other areas. It is well known that mountain areas have abundant land resource. However, most of the land is of low-quality soil in mountain areas and is unfit for farming. Instead, the land is suitable for developing forestry and animal husbandry. That is to say, arable land resources in mountainous areas are scarce,

¹⁰⁷ Bao S, Chang G H, Sachs J D, et. al., "Geographic factors and China's regional development under market reforms, 1978–1998," *China Economic Review* 13, no.1 (2002): 89-111, 94.

¹⁰⁸ Deng Wei, Fang Yiping, Tang Wei, (2013). "The influence of strategy of urbanization in mountain areas and its development," *Bulletin of Chinese Academy of Sciences* 28, no.1 (2013): 68-70, 70 (in Chinese)

¹⁰⁹ Feng Shuangguang, "Research on problems of the mountain rural economic synergical development based on the public choice," Chengdu: Southwestern University, (2012): 49 (Doctoral dissertation, in Chinese)

¹¹⁰ Hunzai K, Gerlitz J Y, Hoermann B., "Understanding mountain poverty in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas: regional report for Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan," *International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)*. (2011): 58

which is one of the causes of poverty in mountainous areas. Biological resources are also varied in mountainous areas, which are the natural habitat of wild animals. Meanwhile, they are the main area of distribution of original natural vegetation. Furthermore, mineral resources are rich in mountainous regions. As some mountain regions are of scenic beauty, they provide advantageous conditions for tourism development, such as Jiuzhai Valley, Hua Mountains and the Mountains of Guilin. Nowadays, they are already famous tourist spots.

In addition, the ecological environment in mountainous areas is complex and vulnerable. As a result, mountainous areas have frequent natural catastrophes and the environment is easily damaged by human activities. In recent years, many natural disasters have occurred in mountainous areas of China. For example, in 2010, mud slides buried Zhouqu County in Gansu Province. The county is located in a mountainous area, and the mud slides were caused by heavy rain. According to the report, it rained 97mm in forty minutes. The length of the mud slides was five kilometers and the width was three hundred meters. The area it flowed past was leveled in a few minutes. 1481 people lost their lives during the disaster.¹¹¹ There are several reasons for the mud slides: Zhouqu County is located in the folded belt to the west of Qinling Mountain, and the mountain body is so broken that it became easy to trigger geological hazards. The Wenchuan earthquake in 2008 resulted in loose mountain body in Zhouqu County, and it was difficult to recover in a short time. In 2010, most areas of China suffered from continuous drought so that the rain easily penetrated the soil-rock mass.¹¹² The environment in mountainous areas is very damageable. It is hard to restore when the soil and vegetation are destroyed. Some of the natural disasters are also triggered by human activities. Taking Tongshan county in Hubei as an example, from 1958 to 1980, due to political and human factors there had were several deforestation events, which destroyed about 100, 000 cubic meters, so the area, population, and the biodiversity of the forest ecosystem were cut a lot in this region, and the stability and self-adjustment of the ecosystem were severely curtailed. At the same time, there have

¹¹¹ China newsThe Mud Slides occurred in Zhouqu County in Gansu Province : http://www.chinanews.com/gn/z/gansu_nishiliu/ (in Chinese), August 08, 2010

¹¹² Qu Xiaobo, Zhang Tao, Liu Xinhua, etc.. "The Causes of the mud slide in Zhouqu County on 8th of August in 2010," Beijing: Meteorology 10, (2010): 102-105, 103 (in Chinese)

been 30 droughts in this region since the 1960's, and that had some direct effect on the deforestation.¹¹³ Therefore, it is a big challenge for mountainous areas to deal well with the relations between human being and nature, and achieve sustainable development.

Currently speaking, areas with higher levels of agriculture development and agricultural modernization are generally located in plains in East China. There are three large plains in China, i.e. the plain in the Northeast of China, plain in North China (which is named Huabei Plain) and the plain beside the middle and lower Yangtze River. Among them, the plain in the Northeast of China is the biggest one, across Jilin Province, Liaoning Province and Heilongjiang Province. This plain with high quality of soil is approximately 300,000 square kilometers and the climate is very suitable for farming. Huabei Plain involves Beijing, Tianjin and the province of Hebei and Shandong, is an important and large agricultural, economic, and cultural region.¹¹⁴ The climate of Huabei Plain features a warm temperate continental climate. Sunshine is sufficient for the whole year.¹¹⁵ Most of the plain has subtropical vegetation. With fertile soil, it is one of the most important areas for food, cotton and oil production. This district is a significant traffic hub through the North and South of China as well as connecting the eastern and western of China has an accessible transportation. It is among the developed regions of China. Taken together, as plain areas have a large scale of farmland, high quality of soil, sufficient sunshine, abundant water resource and accessible transportation, they are suitable for growing crops and developing modern agriculture.

2.2.2 Development gaps between rural mountain areas and rural plain areas

In light of the natural conditions of mountainous areas and plain areas, it can be seen that plain areas are more appropriate for scale production and developing modern agriculture, whereas mountain areas are fit for forestry and animal husbandry. Plain areas based on their superior physical environment, have become the main areas of food production in China while mountain areas and have become the most impoverished

¹¹³ Zhong Xuebin & Liu Chengwu, "The change of environment system in poverty mountain area and measures for the sustainable development of agriculture—take Tong County of Hubei Province as an example," *Journal of Huazhong Normal University (Natural Science Edition)* 35, no.3 (2001): 365-368, 366 (in Chinese)

¹¹⁴ Thomson A M, Izaurralde R C, Rosenberg N J, et al. "Climate change impacts on agriculture and soil carbon sequestration potential in the Huang-Hai Plain of China," *Agriculture, ecosystems & environment* 114, no.2 (2006): 195-209, 196

¹¹⁵ Institute of Geographic Sciences and Natural Resources Research: Features of Climate in Huabei Plain of China (in Chinese). http://www.igsnr.ac.cn/kxcb/dlyzykpyd/zybk/qhzy/200610/t20061011_2155337.html. (Accessed in 10.11.2015)

regions. According to the yearbook of rural statistics 2012, the economic development in 2011 of mountainous rural areas and rural plain areas are surmised in the following table.

Table 2.1 Comparison of agricultural development in the mountain area and plain area

Indicators	Mountain areas	Plain areas
Number of counties	895	649
Population size in the end of 2011	320,100,000	392,870,000
Administrative area (sq km)	4,240,000	2,610,000
Mechanical power output in agriculture (kw)	193,000,000	417,640,000
Added value of primary sector (billion Yuan) ¹¹⁶	1045.8	1724.5
Agriculture (billion Yuan)	579.9	1005.5
Forestry (billion Yuan)	89.4	37.7
Animal Husbandry (billion Yuan)	297	477.9
Fishing industry (billion Yuan)	57.2	151.2
Sown area of crops (ha.)	40,118,000	63,218,000
General budget revenues of local government	376.1 billion Yuan	725.4 billion Yuan
General budget expenditures of local government	1225.2 billion Yuan	1415.9 billion Yuan

From Table 2.1, we can see that though the administrative area of the plain is smaller than that of the mountain area, the population of the plain area is larger than that of the mountain area, and it indicates that the population density is larger in the plain areas. The total power of agricultural machinery is the sum of rated power of all agricultural machinery. Agricultural machinery is the equipment and devices used in planting, animal husbandry, fishery, initial processing of agricultural products, agricultural transportation and the capital construction of farmland.¹¹⁷ The total power of agricultural machinery indicates the level of agricultural mechanization while the higher level of agricultural mechanization shows the higher agricultural labor productivity to a great extent. In 2011, the total power of agricultural machinery was 417.64 million kilowatts in the plain areas, and that was twice as much as that of the mountain areas,

¹¹⁶ The current rate of exchange in 2014 is 6.8 Yuan to the Euro.

¹¹⁷ China' State Statistical Bureau: http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/zbjz/201310/t20131029_449446.htm (Accessed in 14.04.2013)

and it shows that the level of agricultural mechanization in plain areas is much higher than that of mountain areas.

The first industrial added value presents that the product growth in value compared to the previous years in the field of agriculture (including planting, forestry, animal husbandry, and fishery). In 2011, the first industrial added value in mountain area was 1045.8 billion Yuan, including the agricultural added value 579.9 billion Yuan, and the animal husbandry added value 297 billion Yuan, while the first industrial added value in the plain areas was 172.4 billion Yuan, including the agricultural added value 1005.5 billion Yuan, and the animal husbandry added value 477.9 billion Yuan. The added value of agriculture and animal husbandry in the mountain areas and plain areas are higher than that of the other fields. By comparison, we can find that the added value in agriculture, animal husbandry and fishery are higher than that of mountain areas. Judging by the planted area of crops, there is no doubt that the area planted with crops on the plain is larger than that of mountain areas, and that is because the cultivated area on the plain is much larger than that of mountain areas. The general budget revenue of local finance includes about 20 kinds of taxes, such as added-value tax, consumption tax, business tax, corporate income tax, and individual income tax as well as profits of state-owned assets and income from administrative fees, and so forth. While the general budget expenditure of local finance includes construction capital expenditure, agricultural expenditure, expenditure for forestry, water conservancy and meteorological expenditure, education expenditure, as well as science expenditure and so on. In 2011, the general budget expenditure of local finance was more than its general budget revenue both in plain and mountain areas. Moreover, the deficit in mountain areas is more serious than that of plain areas. By comparing various indexes in the table, it can be seen that the rural economic development on the plain is better than that of mountain areas.

2.2.3 General rural problems in mountain areas and plain areas

The problems of rural development in mountain areas are as follows: First of all, the geographical environment in mountain regions is constrained regarding the development of farming. This is the main reason that poverty in mountain areas is more

serious than in other geographic areas. Lack of arable land is one of the main causes of poverty in mountain areas. Although biodiversity is a visible feature in mountain areas and mountain areas with unique terrain have a variety of natural resources, for instance, forests, mineral resources, wild animals, etc., there is little arable land, and the climate is variable. Peasants usually make a living by farming. Land for them is the most significant living resource. The land is provided with low quality in mountain areas, because of high altitudes and rarified air. The lack of arable land and variable climate sometimes even leads to hunger. The physical environment of the mountain areas leads people to live in poverty, and worse infrastructure has a negative effect on people's development. Most mountain rural areas are located in remote mountain gullies with poor traffic conditions and poor access to information. There are not even any smooth roads in many mountain villages, so it is difficult to transport material and human resources. Moreover, the lack of vegetables and fruits leads to single-nutrient and irrational nutrition patterns among people in mountain areas. In mountain areas it is often cold and wet and the health care and housing conditions are poor, leading to equally poor health conditions. The villages in mountain areas are dispersed and relatively closed off, so they hardly communicate with each other, and it is more difficult to communicate with the outside world or to be in touch with modern civilization. Due to the lack of teaching infrastructure and poor quality of education, the farmers in mountain areas have lower levels of education, and they are unwilling to accept new things, and even today, they still employ less modern methods of agricultural production. The rural people in mountain areas are in a state of poverty in survival and development, and the overall development of the areas lacks guidance from government. As a country with a large mountainous area, China currently has no laws or regulations on mountain area development, and this lack of institution is an important cause of a series of ecological, social and economic issues.¹¹⁸ The absence of national policy results in the disorderly development of mountain villages, and the unsound development planning system in mountain area results in a slow process of urbanization. Consequently, they are unable to achieve social development. They finally become a

¹¹⁸ Deng Wei, Fang Yiping, Tang Wei, "The influence of strategy of urbanization in mountain areas and its development," *Bulletin of Chinese Academy of Sciences* 28, no.1 (2013): 66-73, 68 (in Chinese)

forgotten corner. Lastly, with the increasing population, excessive exploitation of natural resources and worldwide climate change, the ecosystems of mountain areas have become weaker and unstable. The conflict between human and nature is intensifying.

Notwithstanding the fact that agriculture and the economy in plain areas, especially in the east of China, outperform other geographical areas, there are still some serious problems in rural plain concerning modernization. Most seriously, the environmental problems (for instance, shortage of water, pollution, etc.) are becoming apparent in many plain areas, which threaten food security, agricultural development as well as the health of residents. The water resources are limited. While the rapid development of cities and industries need huge amounts of water, the supply of water resources for agricultural production has obviously decreased.¹¹⁹ There is less water for irrigating crops in plain areas. As a result, the output of agricultural products will be negatively influenced. Another consequence is that safe drinking water can't be guaranteed for people living in some plain area with the rapid population growth and the quality and quantity of groundwater decreasing. Pollution in plain areas is also a significant issue that must be explored. A study shows that, the nitrogen fertilizer-use has been increased for higher crop yield in the North China Plain areas in recent years.¹²⁰ It leads to pollution of ground water and soil directly. Once the soil is contaminated with nitrogen, it will only completely recover on its own after thousands of years. Rather than a unique problem of the North China Plain, however, this is a normal phenomenon in most of the areas in China. In addition, land fragmentation is an urgent problem to deal with in plain areas. The common phenomenon, that a household has more than one small and separate plot of land, is called land fragmentation.¹²¹ The Household Responsibility Contract System, which came into effect in the 1970s, meant to evenly divide lands into several parts for individuals and then make the agricultural production based on each household. To some extent, it exacerbated China's land fragmentation problem. For

¹¹⁹ Liu C, Xia J, "Water problems and hydrological research in the Yellow River and the Huai and Hai River basins of China," *Hydrological Processes* 18, no.12 (2004): 2197-2210, 2200.

¹²⁰ Hu, K., Huang, Y., et al., "Spatial variability of shallow groundwater level, electrical conductivity and nitrate concentration, and risk assessment of nitrate contamination in North China Plain," *Environment international* 31, (2005): 896-903, 896.

¹²¹ Nguyen T, Cheng E, Findlay C, "Land fragmentation and farm productivity in China in the 1990s," *China Economic Review* 7, no.2 (1996):169-180, 169

plain areas, great population pressure caused by large population density is another reason for land fragmentation. Compared with mountain areas, however, the land fragmentation problem of plain areas needs to be solved soon. Based on the flat terrain and better natural conditions for crop growth, plain areas are more suitable for developing modern agriculture and realizing agricultural mechanization. But land fragmentation may reduce the production efficiency and cause waste of land resource, so it is a significant barrier for mass agriculture development. Also, the problem of the surplus rural labor force in plain areas is ongoing. There is a large rural population in China, and the oversupply of labor in rural areas is a common phenomenon, especially since new agricultural technology has been extended to plain areas. As machine replaces manpower and the limited cultivated areas require less labor force while township enterprises supply fewer jobs, the surplus rural labor force will continue to grow. A large amount of surplus rural labor force flows into cities, recovering the vacancy of traditional urban employment positions and enhancing the mobility of urban and rural resources and production factors. From the other side, it must also be noted that the transfer of the rural labor force transfer accelerates pressure and presents a series of problems such as crowded population, heavy traffic jams, and housing shortages. Aiming at solving these problems, the Chinese government, at present, is attempting to implement the Local Urbanization policy and wants to improve non-agricultural employment and then to remold geographic space and urban-rural relationship. This is a new attempt to solve the surplus rural labor force transfer problem, but may face new challenges.

2.3 Rural women in the context of China's transition

Since reform and opening-up, China has stepped into a period of transition from traditional society to modern society. However, rural women are still comparatively vulnerable in Chinese current society.

Migrant female workers are women born in rural areas who pursue jobs in cities. Most of them are young and single. They usually work in service sectors, for instance, restaurants, hair salons, massage salons, etc. Some female migrant workers work in the factories in coastal areas, like Guangdong and Zhejiang Province. They are doing the

hardest or even dirtiest jobs that urban women never want to do. It is difficult for female migrant workers to find a decent job with a high salary, because of their inferior status and lack of education.¹²² They are one of the marginalized groups in urban areas, and face more difficulties than male migrant workers in their urban life. First and foremost, they suffer double discrimination in urban areas. Chinese traditional ideology brings women inferior status in both family and society while the *hukou* system (household registration) makes the rural population into an ‘underclass’ from when they are born. As a result, female migrant workers not only occupy a subordinate position compared to the men but also are discriminated against by urban residents. Second, they can’t be identified in the respect of social identity. They are called “*nong min gong*” (peasant workers) in China, which means they are not actual peasants or urban workers. They are working in worse conditions than urban workers but never have equal social security. Their social identity is regarded as between peasants and urban workers. Factories employing female migrant workers often benefit from this dubious social identity. Rural female workers are not recognized as official workers in factories, and they are badly paid. They can work in cities for only a few years; when they reach the legal age for marriage, they are called back by their parents. After they get married, the majority of the woman will stay in the village and look after the family. For cities, rural female workers are ultimately strangers who only have a short stay. Their contribution to cities goes largely unacknowledged. Last, gender identity is clear for them. As a female, daughter or wife, they should be obedient in the context of traditional ideology. In Ngai Pun’s book *Chinese Female Workers*, the author described the living and working conditions of female migrant workers. She suggests that female migrant workers are marginalized in the city as well as constrained by patriarchal culture. Ngai Pun recorded a chat with a woman kitchen helper named A Jin.

A Jin said: “do you understand how to be a woman? You will never know that until you have experienced suffering. There is a long way to go for you. Do you think you can be happy after you get married? Well, you won’t. You will feel lonelier when the time comes. You will find that the family you are living with is not yours, but belongs to your husband. It never belongs to you. Your mother-in-law will keep an eye on you all the time and find fault with your work, and no one can

¹²² Fan C C, “Rural - urban migration and gender division of labor in transitional China,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 27, no.1 (2003): 24-47, 28

help you, not even your husband. Most importantly, if you have not brought forth a boy after two years of marriage, you cannot imagine what a severe life you will have. And villagers will always gossip behind your back..... What can you do when you are old? Undoubtedly, the factory won't employ you. For women, family is the most important thing".¹²³

From the chat we can see that rural female workers clearly realize their traditional gender identity. In the context of patriarchy, married women don't have a sense of belonging. On one hand, women are no longer seen as a family member of their natal family when they get married. On the other hand, they cannot fully become part of their husbands' family. As A Jin said, they will feel lonelier when they get married. In addition, women are under great pressure due to son preference. This is not the only characteristic of female migrant workers, but of all the women from rural areas.

Women left behind are a huge group in the countryside in China. Industrialization and urbanization obviously drive the massive rural-urban migration. Many male laborers and young single female laborers flock to the cities. However, there are still a large number of women staying in villages. According to statistics, there are fifty million women left behind in China today.¹²⁴ From this, the phenomenon of feminization of agriculture appears unavoidable. The majority of young and unmarried women leave home to find jobs in the city while lots of married women are staying at home and taking part in the agricultural production. In other words, most of the female migrant workers are single and almost all the women staying in villages are married. Generally, young rural women work in the cities as female migrant workers after they have graduated from junior or senior middle school. They marry in their early twenties. Afterwards, they continue working in urban areas until they have a baby. Some of the young mothers usually look for new jobs in cities when their children are one or two years old. Their mothers-in-law will help them to take care of the children. When the older generation is no longer able to care for the children, women who are working away from home will quit their jobs, come back and stay in rural areas as women left behind. This is the life for common rural women, from which we can see that women's roles often vary based on the needs of their families. Meanwhile, males are generally

¹²³ Ngai Pun, *The call of the new working class of Chinese women workers* (Hong Kong: Ming Pao Publishing Ltd, 2007):136 (in Chinese)

¹²⁴ News: http://www1.cau.edu.cn/art/2015/6/15/art_8779_381049.html (Accessed in 20.03.2015)

not influenced by the changes in the families. Men migrate to cities in search of work and they can work in urban areas for many years as breadwinners. However, women have to center their lives around their homes. This has been the typical mode of cooperation between females and males in rural families. Women gradually do more farm work, and now they are of great importance to the agriculture production in this mode of cooperation.

Doing farm work independently can bring positive effects to left-behind women, especially for the women who have never engaged in economic activities independently. It can increase their independent consciousness and improve their abilities to deal with difficulty alone and to some degree, they can gain more management and decision-making power in principal family matters. However, we should also focus on the negative effects of the feminization of agriculture. Left-behind women always play multiple roles in the household and shoulder a double burden. On one hand, they must take care of children, do all the housework, and sometimes look after the elderly. On the other hand, women staying in rural areas without husbands may do more agricultural work including the tasks that traditionally performed by men.¹²⁵ More importantly, they earn less money while doing more work. That is to say, their reward is not proportional to the effort. As farmers in China ordinarily only have small-scale land, they can get a little money from agricultural products. On the contrary, the cost of growing is very high including buying chemical fertilizer, irrigation, weeding, etc.

In addition, rural women do all the housework. However, they get neither material rewards nor respect for housework. While women left behind do lots of work, they have to depend on their husband financially. From a gender perspective, the poor situation of women is at the root of male chauvinism and unequal gender division of labor in the household.

Heavy and trivial work involving both farm work and house work cost women much time so that they always neglect relationships with family members. Children are affected most immediately. Women seldom communicate with their children and put emphasis on feeding instead of nurturing, let alone children's mental health. Children in

¹²⁵ Davin D, "Migration and Rural Women in China: A Look at the Gendered Impact of Large-Scale Migration," *Development: Critical Concepts in the Social Sciences* 2, no.5 (2000): 655-665, 660

rural areas without good family education and communication are vulnerable to physical illness. More seriously, a lack of education, as well as the father's long-term absence, may lead to criminal behavior. Second, the divorce rate among women left behind has increased in recent years. Some rural males work in cities for several years and never come back. Long distance and little communication bring bad blood between them and have a negative influence on the marriage. Being long separated in two places, couples are lacking regarding their sex life and communication. Thus they are indifferent to each other; and it may easily lead to extramarital affairs, especially for male rural migrant workers who work in cities for a long time. As they work alone away from home and have a dull life, they more easily fall into temptation (such as emotional affairs) and break up their marriages.

Lastly, the social support network of left-behind women is mainly based on blood lineage and geographical relationships and exhibits a serious lack of institutional social support networks such as government and social organizations. However, for vulnerable groups like left-behind women, they will have a hard life when facing difficulties in life and a lack of opportunities of self-development without the government's attention and social organizations' support. This shortage of institutional social support has a concentrated expression in the government's weak support in education, medical care and safety for left-behind women, which could not relieve their life pressure.

In conclusion, under the social modernization background, left-behind women are facing various survival difficulties, which may leave a serious effect not only on their self-development but also the development of rural society. They are the comprehensive result of China's urbanization, urban-rural dual system structure and traditional conception of gender.¹²⁶ Judging from the present condition, differences between China's urban-rural dual system structure and urban-rural development level cannot be changed in short time, so rural migrant workers coming to cities for jobs may always exist and thus the left-behind women, a huge vulnerable group in an already vulnerable population. Addressing and developing sustainable solutions for these populations poses a great challenge for China's social development process.

¹²⁶ Gao Yan, "The living conditions and development of left-behind women," *Journal of Huaiyin Teachers College* 3, (2009): 500-503, 500 (in Chinese)

By elderly rural women, I mean females who are above 70 years old and living in rural areas. From the gender perspective, no matter rural elderly female or male, they both face the same survival problems, which are medical care and elder care. The detailed provisions of the rural cooperative medical care system have been described above, so there is not necessary to refer to them again. What is worth mentioning is that, for the rural elderly, especially who live in remote mountain areas, they may break down from overwork in their younger days. As mountain areas have severe climate conditions, elderly workers are more susceptible to serious diseases as they advance in age. However, the medical care expenses for treatment of serious diseases are almost astronomical figures for those without pensions. Although the rural cooperative medical system can apply for reimbursement of 70% expenses, the remaining 30% is still unaffordable for elderly workers. At that time, they have to depend on their children for their medical care fees and support in their old age. According to the data of China's Ministry of Civil Affairs, there are 9.4 million seniors who could not take care of themselves in China, among which rural people account for 7.64 million.¹²⁷ However, some of the rural elderly people are living an inferior and helpless life. As their children are working in cities, they have no one to look after them. Afraid of being burdensome, some with serious diseases choose suicide because of heavy economic pressure.

Overall, the problems of agriculture, farmers, especially the problem of rural females' development, are serious in the process of China's transition. Social development, to a large extent, has improved rural women's lives. In the meantime, women are under huge pressure. They are constrained in villages, depending on their husbands while the development of agriculture is also restricted. Compared with industrial modernization, agricultural modernization is proceeding slowly. With the support of government, modern agricultural technology is being popularized in rural areas with good environmental conditions. However, in most remote rural areas the development of agriculture still lags behind. The problem of agricultural feminization and population aging is becoming serious. In these areas, elderly people and women with less training or education are the mainstays of agricultural production. Indubitably,

¹²⁷ Xinhua Net: http://news.xinhuanet.com/mrdx/2015-06/15/c_134326081.htm. (Accessed in 06.15.2015)

this has a negative influence on agricultural development. Rural women relate closely to rural development, agricultural development, and environment improvement. Thus, the obstacles in rural women's lives cannot be ignored.

Chapter 3 Working and living conditions of rural women in one mountainous area in Shaanxi Province of China

3.1 General information on interviewees

3.1.1 Age composition

In this investigation, the ages of interviewees range from 35 to 55. There are five women below 40 years old and five women over 50 years old. Most of women's ages are between 40 and 49, making up 47.1 percent of the total (see Table 3.1).

Table 3. 1 Age of Interviewees in the mountainous village

Age	Frequency	Percent
30-39	5	29.4
40-49	8	47.1
over 50	4	23.5
Total	17	100.0

There are nine females left behind in the village while their husbands are doing odd jobs in urban areas. Seven females are living together with their husbands in the village, three of them are over 50 years old and one woman's husband is working in the town as a civil servant. It is worth mentioning that there is no woman under 30 years old among the interviewees. In fact, there are very few young females staying in the mountain village. Nowadays, the majority of women from the lower economy backgrounds in both urban and rural areas tend to marry the men with better economic conditions or higher social status. In the marriage market of the countryside, males are stratified by the household locality and family economic status.¹²⁸ Because of the remote household locality and poverty, males with low literacy in mountain villages are often seen as “the underclass” in the marriage market. As a result, it is difficult for them to find a wife. For young girls in the mountain villages, they are eager to find a husband outside mountains and pursue a better life.

¹²⁸ Li Zhiqiang, “The sociological analysis on the stratification of rural marriage market for the youth,” *Contemporary Youth Research* 03, (2013): 123-126, 125 (in Chinese)

3.1.2 Literacy level

Among 17 interviewees, 14 women have completed merely two or three years of education, accounting for 82.4% of the total sample. One woman is illiterate, and another two women graduated from senior middle school (see Table 3.2).

Table 3. 2 Literacy level of interviewees in the mountainous village

Literacy level	Frequency	Percent
primary school	14	82.4
senior middle school	2	11.8
Illiterate	1	5.9
Total	17	100.0

It can be seen from the table that the majority of women have a limited educational background. Ms. Liang G, one of the interviewees has never even been to school. The interview with Ms. Liang G¹²⁹ on this problem is as follows:

“Ms. Liang G: I am 45 years old. I have never been to school. I am illiterate.

Interviewer: Why did not you go to school?

Ms. Liang G: I have too many brothers and sisters so my parents couldn't afford the tuition fees.

Interviewer: None of the children in your family have been to school?

Interviewer: No, we haven't. There were too many children in my family. Some of them have been to school for just two years. Some of them, like me, have never been to school. We started to make money when we were very young. We earn our living by manual labor. Some of them found jobs in the city. Some of them raise sheep in the village.”

Until the 1970s, China had a high and relatively stable birth rate of around six children per woman, except during crisis periods.¹³⁰ However, the level of economic and social development was relatively low at that time. The Cultural Revolution (1966 - 1976)¹³¹ made China slip backwards. The majority of citizens were living in poverty.

¹²⁹ See the appendix, p. 52

¹³⁰ Bongaarts J, Greenhalgh S., “An alternative to the one-child policy in China,” *Population and Development Review*, (1985): 585-617, 585

¹³¹ Cultural Revolution in China was a large scale political movement launched by the first chairman of People's Republic of China Mao Zedong. It began as “a struggle between Mao Zedong and other top party leaders for dominance of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and went on to affect all of China with its call for ‘continuing revolution’.” This political movement lasted from 1966 to 1976 (Jonathan Spence, retrieved from <http://iis-db.stanford.edu/docs/115/CRintro.pdf> access in 20.02.2016). Consequently, almost all the common people were involved in the Chaos. Cultural Revolution put sands in the wheels of China's economic growth as well as undermined the educational system. Citizens were living in poverty.

Especially in rural areas, people were extremely poor. Coupled with high fertility, lots of rural residents could not afford school fees. They couldn't even get enough to eat. In this investigation, several other respondents with primary education explained that they quit school also due to poverty. They have so many siblings that their parents could not afford all of the school fees, taking Ms. Li F as another example.

“Ms. Li F¹³²: I am 52 years old. I have completed two years of education.

Interviewer: Why did you only have two years of schooling?

Ms. Li F: I was born into a poor family. And I have five sisters and three brothers. Our parents could not pay the tuition fees for all of us.

Interviewer: How about your brothers? How many years have they been in school?

Ms. Li F: They also had two or three years of schooling.”

Additionally, an interesting phenomenon can be noted that almost all the interviewees' literacy is lower than their husbands' and a large percent of male villagers have secondary educations (see table 3.3).

Table 3. 3 Literacy level of respondents' husband * Literacy level of respondents

		Literacy level of respondents			Total
		primary school	senior school	illiterate	
Literacy level of respondents' husbands	primary school	2	-	-	2
	junior school	11	-	1	12
	college or above	-	2	-	2
	Illiterate	1	-	-	1
	Total	14	2	1	17

In the mountain village, females tend to marry males who receive more education than their own. Among 14 interviewees with primary school education, 11 women's husbands have junior school education, only two women's husbands have lower literacy, and one respondent's husband is illiterate. Two interviewees have a high school diploma while their husbands have the college degree.

To sum up, there is a low literacy rate among females. It is a main constraint on improving rural women's skills for agricultural production. At the same time, low literacy has a detrimental influence upon their self-development.

¹³² See the appendix, p. 46

3.1.3 Marital status and family size

As mentioned above, all the respondents in this investigation are married. In the remote countryside, early marriage and early child-bearing are commonplace. Most women get married when they are in their late teens or early twenties. In Y Village, the median age for marriage among the women interviewed is 22. Among these interviewees, the minimum age for marriage is 18 while the maximum age is 26.

Regarding family size, the normal family size in selected village includes four family members, i.e. a couple and two children. That is to say, families with four members account for a very big proportion of all families. Three generations living together under one roof is not very common (see Table 3.4). Compared to the past, family size is decreasing, and the number of nuclear families is increasing. Undoubtedly, family planning policy contributes to the reduction of family size. In addition, the increase in nuclear family implicates that the family structure is being simplified, and the relationship between family members is changing. Instead of multigenerational relationships, the conjugal relationship in a family becomes more and more significant.

Table 3. 4 Family size in Y village

Number of family members	Frequency	Percent
3	3	17.6
4	10	58.8
5	4	23.5
Total	17	100.0

3.2 Working conditions of farming women

With the implementation of the urbanization strategy, a large-scale rural workforce has shifted to non-agricultural industries, especially the rural male workforce. With this phenomenon having occurred, a new group—left-behind women developed in rural areas. In Y village, female villagers can be classified into three groups: left-behind women, women between 50 to 70 years old and women over 70 years old. The first group is left-behind women. These women usually play leading roles in families. They take responsibility for sustaining the family through farming. Every day, they assume a heavy burden and live frugally with money and other resources. The second group

includes women between 50 to 70 years old. Their husbands once worked in the city as manual workers. When they were too old to do the hard physical work in the city, they came back and started to do farm work with their wives. Meanwhile, their adult children began searching for a job in urban areas. As a result, women in this group can do the farm work with their husbands. However, they still have other tasks to perform, like looking after their grandchildren. The third group is elderly women over 70. As women in the third group only do a little farm work, I do not involve them into my research study. I mainly focus on the first two groups in this investigation.

This study describes working conditions of rural women in several aspects, such as the means of agricultural production, the division of labor, working hours and agriculture policies. Means of production generally involve land, tools, factories, infrastructure, raw materials, etc. For agricultural production, the means of production include the area of land, the number of livestock and different types of agricultural tools. Among them, the land is an essential resource in agricultural production and as such it is central for the survival of rural residents. Labor tools determine the efficiency of production and the workload of farmers. Therefore, farming women's working conditions are closely related to farmland and labor tools. Moreover, this study will analyze the labor division from a gender perspective. Labor division can reflect the difference in gender status, family strategy and the relationship between husbands and wives, so in this study it is regarded as an important indicator to describe farming women's working conditions. Working hours is another essential indicator to judge whether rural females are overloaded. Lastly, agricultural policy is a factor which can reflect government support for farmers. Good policies and effective measures are beneficial to alleviating the burden on female peasants. Therefore, agricultural policy is one of the vital factors to evaluate rural women's working conditions.

Since the 1990s, a large number of young labor force in countryside flocked to urban areas.¹³³ In Y village, almost all the young people and most of the middle-aged men are working in the central metropolis of Shaanxi Province, which is called Xi'an. As a result, children, middle-aged women and the aged are left behind. This is a big

¹³³ Liu, Jieyu, "Ageing, migration and familial support in rural China," *Geoforum* 51 (2014): 305-312, 305

challenge for middle-aged women. Concerning their working conditions, they are working harder than ever. They must look after all the land belonging to the household. When other family members are working away from home, women left behind undertake nearly all of the farm work.

Among the total 17 interviewees, eight interviewees do all of the farm work. In this group, the husbands of six women are working away from home. One woman's husband is disabled so that he cannot help his wife to do farm work. Another interviewee's husband is a civil servant working in the town. It's worth noting that all their husbands' are under 50 years old. There are also eight interviewees who do the farm work together with their spouses. Seven of the women's husbands are over 50 years old. Three husbands below 50 years old work in the village. One is a group leader of the village, another one is the village chief, and the other is operating a shop and a minibus in the village (see Table 3.5). Only one interviewee said that she did not do the farm work. She had worked in Xi'an before 2013. She had just come back to the village and was going to do farm work in the next year.

Table 3. 5 Age of interviewees' husbands * career of their husbands in recent years

		Career of Interviewees' Husbands in Recent Years					total
		Doing farm work at home	Doing odd jobs in the city	Having a business in the village	Having other jobs	Having no job	
Age of interviewees' husbands	30-39	-	3	-	-	-	3
	40-49	-	3	1	2	1	7
	over 50	3	3	-	1	-	7
Total		3	9	1	3	1	17

3.2.1 Agricultural production

As for the area of land, the cultivated land in this village is small at present because of the Grain for Green Program and its geographical features. Every household has about 3.41 mu (0.22 ha) of land on average, which is used to grow food crops and some vegetables. The yields of these food crops are only enough for home consumption. There are two chief kinds of grain crops in this village: wheat and corn. The yields of

food crops are small since villagers are allocated a limited area of land, and the quality of the soil is poor. The most common vegetables grown include potatoes, peppers, cabbages and soy beans. These vegetables are also only for home consumption as it is inconvenient for rural women to buy vegetables at the market. Additionally, farmers are raising some livestock and fowl, which supply them with meat and eggs.

According to the collected data, the ownership rate of agricultural machines is very low. Nine interviewees indicated that they had never used farm machines and only three interviewees often utilize small machines. Rural women lack the knowledge and ability to use these tools. Unlike with household chores, they cannot learn a new and better method for growing crops and managing their land. They usually use primitive and simple agricultural tools and grow crops using old and simple ways and skills. In addition, they always overuse chemical fertilizer to increase the yields of crops, which threatens the environment and food security. However, most of them are not willing to change the current ways of growing and would rather plant and manage their farms with conservative techniques of agricultural production to avoid risks, such as the losses attributable to misuse of new techniques. Consequently, the efficiency of agricultural production cannot increase and agricultural production cannot develop in a more environmentally-friendly direction.

3.2.2 Labor division

With the transition of young rural labor, the small peasant economy and traditional household mode of production have been influenced profoundly. Women staying in rural areas gradually become an important force in agricultural production. The traditional labor division in rural households is that the man works on the land while the woman looks after the house. However, this mode of labor division was broken when a large portion of the rural male labor force flocked to the cities. As a large number of young and middle-aged male rural laborers quit agricultural production, middle-aged women whose physical strength is a little inferior to that of those people have to replace them to engage in agriculture. Then a new mode of labor division — with men working in the cities while women do farm work has developed.

In this investigation, eight interviewees have children under 18 years old. Among

these women, one woman's husband is a civil servant, another woman's husband is operating a small business in the village, and the other women's husbands are all working away from the village. It can be deduced that villagers tend to choose the male breadwinner model when they have minor children. The male breadwinner model in the traditional ideology is viewed as an ideal model of the family, in which father is expected to be a provider and protector while mother is expected to be a carer and producer.¹³⁴ Particularly in rural areas, the man often works in the urban areas and earns more money than the woman in order to guarantee that they have enough money to maintain their life. The woman stays in the village, looks after their children, does housework and works on the farm to ensure they have enough food to eat. Left-behind women are occupied in agriculture, which makes them more important nowadays in agricultural production. Nevertheless, their contributions to family income are far less than their husbands' on account of the limitation of the agricultural resources they own.

Middle-aged women whose ages range from 50 to 70 are another group in this village. Compared to left-behind women, middle-aged women's workload in agricultural production is less, because they can share the farm work with their husbands. Regarding labor division in agricultural production, most of them mentioned that the division of labor is not clear. They generally do the same work as their husbands do: sowing, cultivating, watering, harvesting and storing grain are common tasks. However, feeding animals, doing housework and looking after their grandchildren are additional tasks solely for women. As a result, middle-aged women have to do more work than their husbands. From this perspective, the labor division is unequal, and the middle-aged women are working with heavy burdens as well.

3.2.3 Agricultural policies

There are several policies implemented in the village and related to the development of the village.

Firstly, the Grain-for-Green Program has an important influence on Y village. Since 1999, China has launched the Grain-for-Green Program in all mountain areas.

¹³⁴ McDonald, Peter. "Gender equity, social institutions and the future of fertility," *Journal of the Australian Population Association* 17.1 (2000): 1-16, 3

“The program aimed to increase vegetation cover to over 32 million hectares by 2010, of which 14.7 million hectares would be converted from cropland on steep slopes back to forest and grassland.”(Liang Y., et.al, 2012)¹³⁵

At present, this program is still being implemented in mountain areas. It is one of most effective environmental policies in China. It has a significant influence on Western China, as the majority of mountain areas are situated in Western areas. As has been mentioned, Western China is known for its lagging economy and its vulnerable ecological environment. Before the program was implemented, farmers in these regions cut down huge areas of forest due to the shortage of farmland. Many trees were grown on steep slopes. Farmers cut down the trees and turned the forest into farmland. Meanwhile, they ploughed up large areas of grassland. This has resulted in severe soil erosion and flooding. To protect the forests and improve the environment, this program has been launched in mountain areas in China. No doubt, Y village is covered by this program. Before 1999, farmers in Y village had more cultivated land. Due to the implementation of the Grain-for-Green Program, they have planted trees on some farmland. That is to say, they returned some farmland to forest. As a result, everyone in the village has only one mu (0.07 ha) of land. According to the area of returned land, farmers can get subsidies from the government. In Y village, they can receive 70 Yuan (about 10 Euro) every year for returning one mu of land.

The second policy relates to the seeds subsidy. For the purpose of encouraging farmers to grow with fine crop seeds, the government provides them a subsidy in the form of seeds. They can get 10 Yuan (about 1.4 Euro) per mu. In addition, seventy percent of the cost of wheat seeds can be reimbursed by the government.

Since Y village is one of poorest villages in China, the government has provided special funds for infrastructure construction, including funds for road improvement and water supply. In June of 2010, the State Development and Reform Commission appropriated 1,600,000 Yuan (about 228,571 Euro) to Y village for expansion of the road. With this project, twenty-five kilometers of road were planned for expansion. To solve the problem of drinking water in Y village, the government drew up a plan at the beginning of 2013. They planned to solve this problem within two years.

¹³⁵ Liang, Yicheng, et al. “Does household composition matter? The impact of the Grain for Green Program on rural livelihoods in China,” *Ecological Economics* 75 (2012): 152-160, 152

When I asked the interviewees whether they have benefitted from the related agricultural policies, most of them complained that they got very little financial support or almost nothing. I talked with Ms. Zhao O¹³⁶, who is the leader of the women's federation in the village about this problem. She responded at each household had received the agricultural subsidies. However, the subsidy income is tiny for farmers so that they often overlook it. Consequently, the effects of subsidies are limited.

3.3 Living conditions of rural women

3.3.1 Household income

According to the collected data, the main sources of income in Y village are agricultural production, adult children's wages and husbands' wages from working in cities. During the investigation, five interviewees counted agricultural production as one source of household income. At the same time, twelve interviewees counted their husband's wages as the main source of family income.

Most of the women expressed that the agricultural production can only maintain household consumption generally. Moreover, women who regarded agricultural production as one of their main income sources also identified their husband's wage as another main income source. It is evident that the spouse's wage is an essential source of household income while the income from agricultural production is not enough to support a family independently. Some interviewees said although they are engaging in farming, they cannot make money and have to depend on their husbands or even adult children.

Y2¹³⁷:

“Interviewer: What are the sources of income in your family?”

Ms. Sun B: Leaving the village to work. He (her husband) has a job in the mine. My children are working in Xi'an. I stay at home alone and grow crops. I don't make money.”

Y10¹³⁸:

“Interviewer: What are the sources of income in your family?”

Ms. Liang G: We don't have income. We raise cows and then sell them to make a little

¹³⁶ See the appendix, p. 77

¹³⁷ See the appendix, p. 9

¹³⁸ See the appendix, p. 53

money. Living in a rural area is miserable. We cannot make money any other way. Now we can't do the hard work in the city as young people do. We are dependent on our children. They make money and send some money to us. With their support, we can to keep the wolf from the door.”

The data show that women who stay at home contribute little to their household income. On one hand, they cannot earn much money by selling agricultural products. On the other hand, much of the housework that they do is invisible as well as unpaid. Consequently, most of the rural women are not financially independent although they have done a lot for their families.

3.3.2 Household expenditure and rural women's attitudes to consumption

Residents in Y village lead a frugal life. Like the majority of poor rural residents in the developing countries, they “derive a substantial part of their income from own production,”¹³⁹ and their purchasing power is insufficient. From the investigation, it can be seen that the main household expenditure in Y village can be classified into four categories: food, children's schooling, living goods and medical care. They respectively account for 31.4%, 22.9%, 17.1% and 14.3% of total responses (see Table 3.6).

Table 3. 6 Main expenditures of household

The main expenditure	Responses	Percent
Living goods	6	17.1%
Food	11	31.4%
Medical care	5	14.3%
Children's school fees	8	22.9%
Clothes	1	2.9%
Gifts	3	8.6%
Other things	1	2.9%
Total	35	100%

Note: This is a multiple-choice question. 17 Interviewees had given me 35 responses in total.

For the consumption structure of rural women, the cost of the necessities of life makes up a larger proportion of household expenditure. They mainly spend on the things which can support their survival, such as food, medical care, and living goods.

¹³⁹ Capéau, Bart, and Stefan Dercon. Prices, local measurement units and subsistence consumption in rural surveys: an econometric approach with an application to Ethiopia. No. 1998-10. Centre for the Study of African Economies, University of Oxford, 1998. p.1 <http://www.csae.ox.ac.uk/workingpapers/pdfs/9810text.pdf> (Accessed in 03.05.2013)

Secondly, they tend to spend on children's education, an essential expenditure. However, rural women spend very little money on themselves. For example, they show little interest in clothes. Most interviewees said "I seldom buy clothes. I am not particular about how I dress." They spend very little on clothing. They buy clothes only when they do need them or for celebrating the Spring Festival. Some women never buy clothes for themselves. Their adult children sometimes buy clothes for them when they come back and visit them. To some degree, they spend more money on family than on themselves. This implies that rural women regard family as the center of their lives. For rural women, the goal in life is not accumulating wealth or self-development, but the reproduction of the family. In their lives, they mainly focus on the new generation.¹⁴⁰ Their aim in earning money is not for individual consumption, but for feeding children. Hence, rural women's consumption values and the distribution of wealth in rural areas are restrained strictly by traditional family ethics. The core of traditional family ethics is the responsibility to future generations, or in other words, carrying on the family line. This strong sense of responsibility drives them to dedicate themselves to the family and raising children. Simultaneously, this sense of duty eliminates their motives of egoism while it encourages altruism.

3.3.3 Dwelling conditions and ownership rates of household appliances among rural women

Generally speaking, housing is a basic need for residents, and their housing conditions are mainly influenced by the development of local economy. Therefore, housing is usually viewed as a factor which can reflect the level of local economic development.¹⁴¹ In Y village, almost all the villagers live in mud-clay houses. The floor space of each house is about 100 square meters on average. The building materials of this kind of house are natural and cheap. However, the house is often humid, and its simple roof is apt to leak when it rains. As a result, the mud-clay house is seen as a symbol of poverty in China. In this village, a large number of villagers are living in mud-clay houses and most of the houses were built in the 1970s or 1980s. Some houses

¹⁴⁰ Chen Hui, "Guorizi": The farmers' life philosophy--familism in daily life in Huangyan village, Guanzhong district. East China University of Science and Technology, (2013),85 (Doctoral dissertation, in Chinese)

¹⁴¹ Wang Ying, "The housing conditions of rural residents in China," *Economic Geography* 12, (2006): 197-200, 199 (in Chinese)

were built more than 50 years ago. Villagers have not built new houses in recent years because of their poor economic conditions. Some of them can only repair the house at most. During the investigation, only three interviewees stated that they had bought a new house in the town. It often can be found that most households put agricultural products, tools, and chemical fertilizers in the living room at random. It makes the room messy and dirty. The indoor environment is negatively influenced.

Like the most villages in China, houses in this village do not have an indoor toilet or heating system. All the toilets were dry toilets built in the backyard. This is a kind of simple toilet without water-borne sanitation and night soil treatment. There is only a manure pit embedded under a squatting pot in the toilet. Conceivably, it is foul-smelling and supplies a breeding place for flies and maggots. At the time of writing, there is no flushing toilet in this village. Bathing facilities are simple as well. Villagers fix a hanger into the ceiling of the toilet and hang up a bucket with a small hole under it. Before they take a shower, they must bring enough warm water into the toilet and pour the water into the bucket. As for heating, they do not have radiators. In the bedroom, there is a kang bed. It is made of bricks and connected to a cooking stove for heating.¹⁴² Its interior cavity, leading to a chimney, channels the exhaust from burning coal and uncompressed biomass fuels.¹⁴³ The indoor environment is easily polluted by this structure. In winter, they often put a charcoal brazier in the middle of the living room as a heating installation. In fact, it is very dangerous since the charcoal brazier may produce a kind of toxic gas (nitric oxide). Moreover, sparks from the burning charcoal could easily set off a fire.

In Y Village, women cook with earthen stoves, also made of bricks or clay. The stoves burn solid fuels, such as cattle manure, wood, and charcoal.¹⁴⁴ Although the induction cooker, rice cooker or electric stove can replace the earthen stove completely, the latter is still in wide use in this village. Before they cook meals, they must collect firewood, cut it, and make a fire. Cutting firewood is very hard work for rural women, as it consumes much of their physical strength. Thus, earthen stoves increase women's

¹⁴² Hongjuan, Qu, et al. "A comparison study of urban and rural residents' indoor environmental consciousness during decoration in northern China." *Indoor and Built Environment* 16.6 (2007): 556-562, 559

¹⁴³ Wei, Wen, et al. "Emissions of carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide from uncompressed and pelletized biomass fuel burning in typical household stoves in China." *Atmospheric environment* 56 (2012): 136-142, 136,137

¹⁴⁴ Luo Xiaojun. News: The dust in smoke from kitchen chimneys. *Looking East Weekly*. 2014-01-27 (in Chinese)

workload invisibly. Additionally, utilizing an earthen stove is harmful to women's health. In 2011 research was conducted about women using solid fuels in rural areas. The respondents were women over 30 years old who did not smoke. The results showed that women using solid fuels are at greater risk of suffering chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases.¹⁴⁵ Another study about chronic bronchitis in women using solid biomass fuel reports that there is a significant linear relationship between the prevalence of chronic bronchitis in rural women and domestic air pollution mainly caused by biomass smoke.¹⁴⁶

Y Village is narrow and long, and its geographical characteristics are karst landform. The ground water and spring water is very limited. Villagers have great difficulty obtaining drinking water. For the present, they are drinking the water from an untreated well. The water from the well is shallow ground water with low self-cleansing capacity. To some degree, well water contributes to solving the problem of drinking temporarily. However, it can be easily polluted by microorganisms, heavy metal and fluoride¹⁴⁷ and "excessive intake of fluoride may result in a slow, progressive crippling scourge known as fluorosis."¹⁴⁸ Therefore, long-term well water drinking will undoubtedly affect rural residents' health.

In terms of the ownership rate of household appliances, the rate of TV, washing machine and fridge ownership is 100.0%, 94.1% and 52.9% respectively (see Table 3.7). The ownership rates are low for household appliances which can save time in cooking, such as rice cookers, induction cookers and so on. Among these appliances, the ownership rate of rice cookers is higher than others, accounting for 35.3%. Finally, ownership of TVs and washing machines is higher in this village, whereas the ownership rate of other household appliances which can save time and physical strength in cooking is lower.

¹⁴⁵ Ma Liying, "The investigation on utilization of solid fuel and women's health in winter in rural areas of Gui Zhou Province," *Science and technology of Environmental Protection* 01, (2013): 4-9, 3 (in Chinese)

¹⁴⁶ Akhtar, Tasleem, et al. "Chronic bronchitis in women using solid biomass fuel in rural Peshawar, Pakistan." *CHEST Journal* 132.5 (2007): 1472-1475, 1473

¹⁴⁷ Xv Xiajun & Zong Dongliang, "The research on the test items of well water," *Water Conservancy and Hydropower in Rural China* 02, (2006): 25-28, 26. (in Chinese)

¹⁴⁸ Maheshwari, R. C. "Fluoride in drinking water and its removal." *Journal of Hazardous materials* 137.1 (2006): 456-463, 458

Table 3. 7 Owning rate of household appliances in Y village

Household appliances	Responses	Percent of Case
TV	17	100.0%
Fridge	9	52.9%
Washing machine	16	94.1%
Electric pan	2	11.8%
Rice cooker	6	35.3%
Induction cooker	1	5.9%
Total	51	300.0%

Note: This is a multiple-choice question. 17 interviewees had given me 51 responses in total. All of interviewees have TVs. As a result, rate of TV ownership is 100%. Nine interviewees have fridges. Accordingly, the rate of fridge ownership is 52.9%.

The reasons for this are threefold: first of all, some villagers' economic conditions don't permit them to buy other household appliances except the basic ones. A second possible reason is that they don't have enough consciousness of easing rural women's workload in households. In fact, the rice cooker, induction cooker, etc. are much cheaper than a TV or washing machine. Objectively, the majority of families can afford them; another reason might be that they are used to cooking with earthen stoves. Although the earthen stove waste energy and time, rural residents are accustomed to using them. This links to traditional lifestyle. For rural residents in the mountain area, to accept the modern culture and change their lifestyle is difficult.

3.3.4 Traffic conditions of the village

Due to the lack of highways and industry, the mountain village lags further behind the outside. According to statistics, nowadays the rural highways amount to 2.9 million kilometers in total in China. The township roads are 95,000 kilometers and country roads 1.47 million kilometers.¹⁴⁹ However, there is only one road connecting Y village with the town, and it is very narrow. Due to lack of maintenance, the road has become muddy and rough. It takes one hour to walk from the village to the town. Moreover, there is only a private minibus running between the village and the town. It is operated by one of the villagers. The price of a ticket is very high and without supervision, the bus is often overloaded. During the investigation, I found that the majority of the households have a motorbike. However, only a few women can ride the motorbike. The

¹⁴⁹ Li Yinxing, "The research on the evaluation of quality of rural residents' lives in Ji Lin Province," Ji Lin University, 2012: 36 (Doctoral dissertation, in Chinese)

male villagers can usually go to town by riding a motorbike. For female villagers, their husbands can take them to town by motorbike when their husbands are at home. But when their husbands are not at home, females have to take the crowded minibus. What is worst of all is that the road condition is very poor when it rains so that the minibus cannot travel on the road. Under these circumstances, women have to walk to the town. It usually takes about 2 hours to go there and back. Thus, the difficulty of road travel has a more negative influence on rural women than men. It also takes villagers a long time when they want to go to the city. The road between the town and the county spirals around the mountain. It takes three hours by bus from the town to the county. The nearest city to the county is Xi'an, which is the capital of Shaanxi Province. It takes about 2 hours and 40 minutes to travel from the county to Xi'an by coach. As a result, it is difficult for villagers in Y village to go to the city. Also, villagers who are working in Xi'an can seldom go back home. The terrible traffic conditions of Y Village could be a negative factor influencing the relationship between left-behind women and their husbands.

3.4 Family life of rural women

Generally speaking, the woman will experience a significant role transition with marriage. In the family where she was born, she is a daughter. When she gets married, she becomes a wife and then becomes a mother. Within Chinese traditional gender ideology, the family will be the center of woman's life after she has realized the role transition. Therefore, family life is the most important part of a married woman's life. In this research, I probe into rural women's family life by learning their marital status, family property ownership, decision-making regarding family affairs, housework, gender concepts, family structure, and so on.

3.4.1 Marital status

In traditional Chinese society, arranged marriage was universal. Arranged marriage is a type of marital union where the husband and wife are generally proposed by their parents or grandparents rather than by themselves.¹⁵⁰ A woman has no right to choose a

¹⁵⁰ Jodi O'Brien. *Encyclopedia of Gender and Society* (US: SAGE Publications, 2008): 40-42

husband for herself. However, the development and transformation of society put an end to feudal marital customs which had endured for several millennia and had a great influence on women's status in family and marriage. The rise of women's status is a mark that can distinguish between modern and traditional women.¹⁵¹ In this investigation, only two respondents' marriages were arranged by their parents. Other respondents met their husbands on blind dates. A blind date is a social engagement between two persons who have not previously met, usually arranged by a mutual acquaintance. If they get on with each other after the blind date, they decide whether or not to marry. Thus, women begin to have the right to decide in marriage. This change indicates that the status of women in family and marriage is rising. Nevertheless, early marriage is still a big problem in this village. The average age of marriage of interviewees is 21.76. It is well known that early marriage usually expose women to early and excessive childbearing, which limit women's liberty and opportunities for self-development.¹⁵² The heavy burden of raising children causes women to get lost in household chaos at a very early age. Moreover, early childbearing and excessive childbearing can easily drive the family into poverty and then they cannot provide the children with enough medical care.¹⁵³ Lack of medical care becomes an important factor which has a pernicious impact on children's health. Such an environment makes it difficult to escape poverty.

3.4.2 Family property management and decision-making in family affairs

Family property management and decision-making in family affairs are key elements reflecting the status of family members. In the traditional agricultural society in China, the wife did not have the right to own or manage property. Women in traditional agricultural society did not take part in the agricultural production, and they lacked in almost all economic resources. On the other hand, the unpaid housework caused women's contributions to the family to be frequently neglected and forced women to depend on their husbands. In this investigation, it can be found that women

¹⁵¹ Du Fangqin, Wang Zheng.M. Women and gender from the perspective of history (Tianjin: People's Publishing House, 2004), 42 (in Chinese)

¹⁵² Vlassoff, Carol, "Gender inequalities in health in the third world: uncharted ground." *Social Science & Medicine* 39, 9 (1994): 1249-1259, 1249

¹⁵³ Ibid.

and their husbands have co-ownership of family property, and they can control it to some extent. Some women can even manage the family property independently. Only one woman complained that her husband manages the property himself. Due to the stagnant development of the regional economy, residents in Y Village don't have much property. For them, the most vital property is household income. In interviews, the family property refers to family income. The interviews about property management follow.

Y9¹⁵⁴:

“Interviewer: Who is managing your property?”

Ms. Li I: We don't have much property. Nothing has to be managed. And he (Ms. Li I's) brings the money back every month to maintain the family. We have a little money.”

Y11¹⁵⁵:

“Interviewer: Who is managing your property?”

Ms. Li K: No one is managing the property. Sometimes he earns one or two thousand Yuan and brings it back. We manage it together. It is such little money that we have hardly any money left after paying school fees and buying living goods.”

As mentioned above, there are also some women managing family income independently.

Y10¹⁵⁶:

“Interviewer: Who is managing your property?”

Ms. Liang G: I am managing our property. I dealt with all of his (Ms. Liang G's husband's) wages when he had a job.”

Y12¹⁵⁷

“Interviewer: Who is managing your property?”

Ms. Cao L: He (interviewee's husband) makes money outside and brings it to me. I keep the money.”

Among seventeen interviewees, only Ms. Liu F does not manage the family income.

“Interviewer¹⁵⁸: Who is managing your property?”

Ms. Liu F: He (Ms. Liu F's husband) is managing. I cannot manage it. Take the money for example. He often stays in the town because of his work. I often stay at home in the village. Buying living goods in the town is convenient. You know, there are few kinds of things in the shop in this village. He often buys things in the town. So I never keep the

¹⁵⁴ See the appendix, p. 48

¹⁵⁵ See the appendix, p. 60

¹⁵⁶ See the appendix, p. 54

¹⁵⁷ See the appendix, p. 64

¹⁵⁸ See the appendix, p. 29

money. I use what he buys. When I visit relatives, he gives me some money (to buy gifts) sometimes. I am not making money, so I never keep the money. He buys what I need. That is enough for me.”

There are three reasons for Ms. Liu F’s financial dependence. Ms. Liu F’s husband is a civil servant with a higher wage than other villagers. Obviously, his contribution to family income is far more than Ms. Liu F. Coupled with the decent job and traditional gender ideology, her husband may have a superiority complex, especially in the family. In the household, her husband plays a dominant role, and Ms. Liu F is dependent and cannot control family resources.

Generally speaking, family affairs include both important and trivial affairs. Affairs like buying or building a house, huge investments or loans of money, buying expensive items, the rearing of children, the problems of taking care of elderly parents and so on constitute important affairs for a family. In contrast, trivial affairs refer to other things which are not important but related closely to daily life.

Interviews suggest that in Y Village men usually decide the important family affairs while women decide the trivial things. Generally, women with poor education depend on their husbands and adore them. When a decision needs to be made on the important affairs, women often bow to their husbands’ decisions. The related interviews follow.

Y2¹⁵⁹:

“Interviewer: Who makes the decision when it is something important?”

Ms. Sun B: He makes the decision. Everything hinges on his decision. I am not involved in decision-making. In fact, there is nothing important to decide in my family.”

Y4¹⁶⁰:

“Interviewer: Who decides on important matters in your family?”

Ms. Zhang D: He makes the decisions. I don’t care.”

When women meet with small problems in their daily life, they resolve them and make decisions themselves without their husbands’ agreement. For example:

“Interviewer¹⁶¹: Who decides on important matters in your family?”

Ms. Cao L: He decides the important matters. He doesn’t care about trivial things. So I can make the decisions on those trivial things.”

In a few of families, when the husband is making a decision, he shows enough

¹⁵⁹ See the appendix, p. 11

¹⁶⁰ See the appendix, p. 19

¹⁶¹ See the appendix, p. 64

consideration for his wife's opinion. They even make decisions together. This indicates a small change from traditional gender ideology. In most of the households, women are starting to be involved in family decision-making.

“Interviewer: Who decides on important matters in your family?”

Ms. Li I¹⁶²: Both of us. We often take counsel together when there is an important matter.”

As rural males usually move to the city in search of work and they have less time to stay at home, rural women have opportunities to make decisions about trivial things. In absence of males, they can deal with family affairs as well. Moreover, when women make decisions on all of the trivial things that have a big influence on the family, men don't need to make any additional effort. Thus, men are willing to leave the trivial things to women. But regarding decision-making on important affairs, men normally play a leading role. This is affected by the traditional gender concepts in rural areas.

3.4.3 Housework

Influenced by the patriarchal ideology which has been sustained for millennia in China, both men and women believe that housework is a kind of feminine work. Until now, in rural areas the situation of women doing almost all the housework has not changed.¹⁶³ Women must do heavy farm work while they have to do all the household drudgery. Thus, Chinese rural women are shouldering a double burden.

It can be seen from this investigation that the opinions of people in rural areas are that women should do all the housework, like washing clothes, cooking meals and so on. On the contrary, men don't need to do any housework. Therefore, housework is still distributed by gender. Besides, left-behind women must do all the work whether it is farm work or housework. They have no choice but to do all the heavy and light manual work. The interviews about housework are as follows:

Y4¹⁶⁴:

“Interviewer: How do you distribute the housework?”

Ms. Zhang D: I do all the housework. In the village, men never do housework. They don't even wash clothes.”

¹⁶² See the appendix, p. 48

¹⁶³ Jiang Xiao, “Changes of Rural Women's Social Status in The background of non-agricultural-transformation,” Zhejiang Normal University, 2011, 24 (in Chinese)

¹⁶⁴ See the appendix, p. 20

Y15¹⁶⁵:

“Interviewer: How do you distribute the housework? Do you do all of it yourself?

Ms. Zhao O: We work on the land together. When he has no time to do the farm work, I seldom work on the land as well. As to the housework, such as looking after children, washing clothes, I do it myself.”

Y16¹⁶⁶:

“Interviewer: How do you distribute the housework? Do you do all of it yourself?

Ms. Wang P: Yes, I do all the housework and farm work. He often works in the city. I stay at home, so I do lots of the housework and farm work.”

In rural areas, the distribution of housework between men and women is not equal. Superficially, nowadays women are encouraged to participate in social labor without any resistance. Nonetheless, there is an invisible prerequisite that women cannot give up housework when they are working. As a result, women’s burden is heavier than before. The role played by woman changed from a single role (i.e. house helper) into dual roles (i.e. social laborer and house helper). With outside (such as government, feminist organizations) intervention, women’s status has improved in the public sphere. However, the family continues to belong to the intimate sphere. Gender inequality in the family is difficult to resolve by outside intervention, especially in rural areas. Women in rural areas always regard the housework as their own responsibility, and they have little awareness of fighting for gender equality. They often endure in silence or never realize that they are treated unfairly.

3.4.4 Family structure, relation between generations and old-age support

With the implementation of the one-child policy, the size of the Chinese family began to decrease. With the minimization of family size, the family structure became simpler. The number of nuclear families is increasing while the number of stem families is declining and joint families have almost vanished. In this village, most of the families are nuclear families. When adult children get married, they live separately from their parents. Meanwhile the, family size gets smaller and smaller. In this investigation, more than half the family groups consist of a couple and two children.

Relationships between generations can be classified into two kinds of relationships. One of the relationships is the relation between women and the elderly, and the other one is the relation between women and children. As women separately from the elderly after marriage, they have few conflicts with the elderly. Married women and the aged

¹⁶⁵ See the appendix, p. 79.

¹⁶⁶ See the appendix, p. 87.

get along well. When the aged can look after themselves and do the farm work, women will pay little attention to them. However, when the aged are ill, women have the obligation to take care of them. In the case below, Ms. Li H¹⁶⁷ must stay at home all day and look after her mother-in-law who is suffering severe illness. She felt pressure because of this.

“Interviewer: What do you mainly have to do for the older generation?”

Ms. Li H: I look after her almost all day long. The stroke left her paralyzed on one side of her body. It condemned her to a wheelchair. His brother’s wife and I look after her together. We leave her outside in the morning, in the evening, we take her back home. We tie a rope to the wheelchair. She can snatch at the rope and do some exercise. It is good for her. So these two years, I cannot leave home. I must stay at home to look after her.

.....

Interviewer: Do you feel stress or pressure in your life?

Ms. Li H: Pressure? Yes, my mother-in-law’s illness is the only one point that worries me. She cannot look after herself, and I dare not leave her. It often darkens my mood.”

Regarding the relationship between women and children, I would like to put emphasis on raising and nurturing. Traditional ideology deems that children are the hope of the future for a family. Parents usually try their best to create better nurturing environments for children. In fact, family education has a strong influence on the development of children. Parental values and mode of thinking have an impact on the formation of a child’s character. In general, rural women who have low literacy levels place more attention on raising children than nurturing children whereas rural women who have higher education levels place more importance on the children’s education. The present investigation found that although almost all the interviewees think education is very essential to children, they don’t know how to direct children to acquire more education. Moreover, women who are poorly educated are not able to tutor their children. Heavy farm work and housework take up the bulk of their time and energy so that they don’t even have a chance to communicate with the children, which has an adverse effect on the children’s growth. Given the many limitations, rural women remain unaware of the inherent laws and features of different stages of children’s growth. When young children want to quit school, women usually adopt a negative attitude. Children who are reared by grandparents have the same problem. There are two cases below reflecting rural women’s two different attitudes toward children’s education.

¹⁶⁷ See the appendix, pp.44

Y13¹⁶⁸:

“Ms. Wu M, 47 years old, completed 2 years of education.

“My first son is married and already has a child. My daughter is operating a restaurant in Xi’an. She only finished primary school. (Why?) She did not want to study. I tried to persuade her to go to school but failed. Having a higher degree of education would be good for finding a job. But she did not want to go to school. I let it go. But I think it is enough for her to have six years of education. Now she leads a good life operating the restaurant.”

Y6¹⁶⁹:

“Ms. Liu F, 38 years old, has a senior high school education.

Interviewer: What do you think about the education of children?

Ms. Liu F: I support them as long as they are willing to study. Now they are going to school in the town. If they can be admitted to a university, I will be very happy. But it depends on their ability. My first girl said that she wants to go to the university in London which is called Har...v...

Interviewer: Harvard University? It is in America.

Ms. Liu F: Right! Harvard. It is good to have a great dream. So far until now, she is doing well at school. She wins a prize every year because of her high scores. It depends on one’s fate...”

Thus, it can be seen that the mother’s literacy level may have an impact on children’s education.

In Y Village, women who have an average age of 50 have to look after grandchildren and help their children to manage the land since their children are married and are working in urban areas. There is a steady cooperative tie between the middle-aged women and their adult children: the older generation takes care of the household while the young couple is working in the city. Women at about 50 years old begin to look after grandchildren just after they have brought up their own children. In addition, they have to manage the young couple’s land with their husbands. Unlike young women, they can do the farm work with their husbands. However, they cannot do more heavy manual work. Their physical strength is weaker than before. Therefore, doing farming is still a heavy burden. Furthermore, the traditional gender ideology in rural areas believes that cooking meals, looking after babies and doing other housework are the tasks of females. Undoubtedly, taking care of grandchildren becomes a task for middle-aged women. It also can be seen in this kind of family that women’s husbands who are about 50 years old come back from the city. Their only main daily task is farming, but women must do a lot of things, like doing the farm work with their husbands, taking care of grandchildren, washing clothes, feeding animals and so on. In

¹⁶⁸ See the appendix, p. 67

¹⁶⁹ See the appendix, p. 31

fact, the burden of middle-aged women is no lighter than that of young women. Compared to their husbands, they remain required to do more trivial things.

After the age of 70, both women and men have little physical strength or energy to take care of the household. They contribute less and less to the family and finally are marginalized. Meanwhile, their adult children are about 50 years old. They no longer find jobs in the city and come back to the village and begin to help the next generation. At that time, the elderly (persons over 70 years old) begin to live alone. According to the traditional custom in rural areas, the aged can live together with one of their sons, but nowadays, most of the elderly live alone. They work on the land and cook for themselves when they are in good health. When they are ill, their daughters-in-law have to look after them. As to pensions, the elderly can get only 60 or 70 Yuan every month, which is not enough for them to live on. As a result, they must continue to do farm work and make agricultural products for home consumption. When they are too old to farm, they have to depend on their children.

3.5 Leisure and social contact of rural women

Leisure time is also called free time. A person's time is usually spent in three kinds of activities: paid labor, unpaid household labor such as cooking, cleaning, child minding, etc., and personal care.¹⁷⁰ Apart from the time spent in these activities, the rest of one's time is called "free time".¹⁷¹ Free time is quite significant for daily life. Although it depends heavily on the individual, activities which are of benefit to personal development have a great impact on one's health and psychological well-being. So they are necessary for everyone. Leisure mirrors the quality of one's life and the level of social development. In rural areas, poverty and backwardness make women's leisure tedious.

According to statistics, almost half of the interviewees have very little free time. They spend most of their time looking after the household, and they have little time even for rest. Inconceivably, some of the women could not understand the meaning of leisure. When I asked what they usually do in their leisure time, they answered that

¹⁷⁰ Goodin, Robert E., et al. "The time-pressure illusion: Discretionary time vs. free time." *Social Indicators Research* 73.1 (2005): 43-70, 46

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

mowing and feeding animals are their main leisure time activities. From this, we can see that they don't have enough time to enjoy any entertainment. Additionally, most of them are poorly educated, and they are influenced by more traditional thinking. They lack the demand for knowledge-based consumption and are not even able to read. Rural women can only take part in a few of leisure activities such as chatting with neighbors, watching TV and playing cards or mahjong. As they live in a very small community and their leisure is prosaic, rural women's isolation prevents them from keeping up with the times. A village which lies in a remote mountain area is too much of backwater. Women's social networks are small as well. Their social life is simple. The main social activities for them are visiting and chatting with friends or relatives and helping neighbors. When the interviewees answered the question "who do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life", only neighbors and relatives were referred.

The majority of women think they communicate with neighbors most frequently. During interviews, most of the women said that they turn to their neighbors first when they need help. Especially in the busy season, the interaction between neighbors demonstrates that they are willing to help each other in agricultural production. Such mutual help is based on interpersonal relationship ties.

"Interviewer¹⁷²: When you need some help, whom will you contact first?

Ms. Zhang D: Relatives. Sometimes when I want to find someone to help me do the farm work, I will contact someone unmarried. But someone like that is difficult to find these past two years. I also contact neighbors. It is said that a close neighbor is better than a brother far off. As neighbors, 'you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours'. We help each other."

From the perspective of social capital, women in the village have a very small social network, which causes them to have only a single type and low qualities of social capital.

"social capital describes the features of social organizations, such as social institutions, networks or associations, less institutionalized networks of friends, relatives and acquaintances (or private social networks) and civic engagement, that enable knowledge gathering and information exchange."(Katungi, E., et al., 2008)¹⁷³

The results of the present investigation show that rural women's private social networks feature neighbors and relatives, who are strongly homogeneous. The

¹⁷² See the appendix, p. 31

¹⁷³ Katungi, Enid, Svetlana Edmeades, and Melinda Smale, "Gender, social capital and information exchange in rural Uganda," *Journal of international development* 20.1 (2008): 35-52, 36

homogeneity becomes a disadvantage in rural women's access to information and different resources.

To summarize, the social networks of rural women are small and the quality of rural women's leisure is low. We can understand this according to the theory of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Maslow has set up a hierarchy of five levels of basic needs, which are as follows: physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, esteem needs and needs for self-actualization.¹⁷⁴ According to the sequence, the person does not feel the latter need at more complex levels until the demands of the former one at the lower levels have been satisfied.¹⁷⁵ As a small mountain village, the economy develops slowly and the material life of villagers is disadvantaged. They have to do work all day long to make a living. A rural woman pays more attention to the economic value which is brought by agricultural products. Hence, she tends to overlook social contact and leisure.

3.6 Health and safety issues

Health is a foundation and guarantee of a happy life. This section will describe women's health conditions in three aspects, i.e. physical condition, the frequency of going for physical examinations and medical insurance.

3.6.1 Physical condition and frequency attending physical examinations

Rural women's physical conditions deteriorate with age, as rural women are doing heavy farm work for years and their health habits are poor. The results of the investigation show that women aged over 45 years are usually in poorer health. In daily life rural women lack preventive care and hygienic knowledge, and they seldom go for physical examinations. Even when they feel sick, they merely go to the drugstore to buy some medicine instead of seeing a doctor. One study on rural women's health education reveals that the awareness rate for prevention of diseases and rural women who access pre-natal and post-natal care services only account for 49% of all respondents.¹⁷⁶ Meanwhile, the medical conditions in rural areas are poorer, and there is a shortage of medical equipment. Even more importantly, the majority of medical

¹⁷⁴ McLeod, Saul, "Maslow's hierarchy of needs." <http://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html> (Accessed in 23.03.2014).

¹⁷⁵ Huitt, William, "Maslow's hierarchy of needs," Educational psychology interactive, (2004) <http://tabacco.t-a-b-a-c-c-o.org/?p=2314> (Accessed in 10.06.2013)

¹⁷⁶ The Research on Rural Women's Health, "Women's Federation in Lian Yungang." <http://www.lygwoman.com> (Accessed in 06.07.2013) (In Chinese)

staff in rural areas are poorly trained. In the interviews, some women complained they were in poor health. However, when they went to the hospital in the town or even in the county for an examination, the doctor could not find the cause of the disease. As a result, lots of rural women have given up on seeing a doctor in the town or county. When they have a serious illness, they will go to the hospital in the city. Evidently, the medical services don't work well in rural areas.

Y1¹⁷⁷: Ms. Zhao A is 50 years old. She got a pain in her side. To save money, she did not go to see a doctor. She just takes some medicine when she feels terribly ill.

“Interviewer: Are you in good health?”

Ms. Zhao A: I am in poor health. I got a pain in my side. I didn't know what caused it. The doctor said the pain was caused by a slipped disc. I felt dizzy. The doctor said it was high blood pressure. We (the interviewee and her husband) are both in poor health. The doctor said ‘You have to receive medical care at the hospital.’ I think it is enough to take some drugs when I feel terribly ill. I asked him (her husband) to go to the hospital. But he did not. My second son said that he could apply for a loan for his father's medical care. He (her husband) disagreed and asked ‘How are you going to repay it? You earn little. It is not even enough for you to get married.’ My second son said ‘I am in no hurry. The most important thing is curing your disease.’ I said ‘you are already at a late age for getting married. How can you say that? It will be too late when you want to marry.’ My first son got married when he was 23 years old. The next year he had a baby. His child is four years old now. My second son is already 25 years old. It will be a great relief for me when my second son gets married.”

For Chinese peasants, the basic of the meaning of life is carrying on the family line. This is regarded as one of the most important tasks of their life. In rural areas, parents have to spend a large amount of money on betrothal gifts for their son's marriage. Most families in Y Village are too poor to afford it. They even have to borrow money from relatives or friends. Therefore, to save money, parents are often reluctant to see a doctor when they are ill.

Y8¹⁷⁸: Ms. Li H is 46 years old. She got a pain in her back. She said the root of the trouble cannot be found.

“Interviewer: Are you in good health?”

Ms. Li H: No, I got a pain in my back. I went to see a doctor, but they did not know what was causing the pain. I went to the hospital in town and even went to Xi'an to see a doctor. But none of them knew the cause of it. In addition, my leg is also sore.”

Y11¹⁷⁹: Ms. Li K is 42 years old, she also got a pain in her back and the cause of her illness cannot be found, either. Even though she often feels unwell, she has to work every day.

¹⁷⁷ See the appendix, p. 05

¹⁷⁸ See the appendix, p. 45

¹⁷⁹ See the appendix, p. 61

“Interviewer: Are you in good health?”

Ms. Li K: No, my health status is not good.

Interviewer: How often do you go for a medical examination?

Ms. Li K: Several months ago, I went for a medical examination. My back always hurts. After the examination, I took some antibiotics. Then I had to continue to do the farm work. I can't stop working. Even in my spare time, I must feed the sheep. The doctor in the town cannot find out what causes my illness. Last year, I went to the county to see a doctor, but the cause of my illness was not found out there either.”

3.6.2 Medical insurance

In 2002, the Chinese government carried out a policy to set up a new rural cooperative medical system aimed at alleviating the financial burden of peasants suffering serious diseases. The new rural cooperative medical system is, in fact, a kind of medical insurance, offered and supported by the government. Peasants are encouraged to buy this insurance. The fund of the insurance is mainly granted by government. Peasants only need to pay a little money. Starting from 2012, each peasant can obtain 240 Yuan (34 Euro) from the government every year as the subsidy for medical insurance while peasants only need to pay 60 Yuan (8.5 Euro) per year for the insurance.

In the investigation, it was found that this new kind of insurance has covered all of the villagers. Because of differing levels of economic development in different areas in China, the amount of expenses covered by the medical insurance is different in different areas. In Y Village, 70% of medical expenses can be covered, while villagers need to pay 30% of expenses for serious disease. To some extent, it eases the burden of farmers in medical care. At the same time, some problems still can be seen in the process of promoting the new rural cooperative medical system. For example, most rural women lack basic insurance knowledge due to their poor education. They don't know what insurance is or how the new rural cooperative medical system operates. When some female villagers were talking about the new rural cooperative medical system, they complained that it was a waste of money to pay 50 or 60 Yuan for it every year. They thought it useless to them. Some women were taking a short-term view, and they deemed themselves to be in good health at present as they seldom get ill. As such, they felt it was not necessary to buy the insurance. For these varied reasons, some rural women are not satisfied with the new rural cooperative medical system.

Regarding reimbursement, the new rural cooperative medical system mainly

reimburses most of the costs of treating serious disease while rural residents pay most of the costs of minor illnesses. There is also a gap between the rich and the poor in rural areas. When the poor residents suffer from a serious disease, they cannot afford the cost of medical bills, even when 70% of the expense has been covered by their insurance. For the rich villagers, this insurance is definitely beneficial to them. It helps them to save a lot of money. From this perspective, the new rural cooperative medical system has not solved the problems thoroughly for poor rural residents. Instead, it may widen the gap between the poor and the rich in rural areas.

Y1¹⁸⁰: Ms. Zhao A's husband suffered serious disease and needs a surgery, but they cannot afford the enormous expenses.

"Ms. Zhao A: We (she and her husband) do the farm work together. His health is not good. He is suffering from disease, so I do much more work than he does. Now he is doing odd jobs in the village. I tried to persuade him to undergo heart surgery, but at last, I failed. He didn't want to.

Interviewer: What is the reason?

Ms. Zhao A: It will cost a lot.

Interviewer: Do you have medical insurance?

Ms. Zhao A: Yes. But even so we have to pay a lot of money for the surgery. We cannot afford such an enormous expense.

Interviewer: How much money do you need for the surgery?

Ms. Zhao A: It depends. The better one costs 300,000 Yuan or 400,000 Yuan (42,857 Euro or 57,123 Euro), the cheaper one costs 200,000 Yuan (28,571 Euro). Generally, we have to pay at least 100,000 Yuan (14,285 Euro) when the medical insurance refunds part of the expense. My elderly son already has a child, and my second son is old enough to get married. We have to save up money for him."

It is difficult for farmers to understand the policy due to the lack of health insurance propaganda. The present investigation found that some of the interviewees don't know which kinds of disease are covered by insurance, the rate of reimbursement, or even how the insurance operates. When rural residents go to the hospital or the drugstore, they don't know exactly how much money can be reimbursed by insurance.

Y9¹⁸¹: Ms. Li I, 52 years old.

"Interviewer: Do you have any medical insurance?

Ms. Li I: Yes, I have medical insurance. But it is useless.

Interviewer: Why?

Ms. Li I: I bought medicine...showed them my insurance card...I bought two kinds of medicine...then I still had to pay 30 or 40 Yuan (4 Euro or 6 Euro). They told me some

¹⁸⁰ See the appendix, p. 1

¹⁸¹ See the appendix, p. 50

of the expenses have been covered by my insurance. But I still spent a lot.”

What’s more, some rural women believe that the money they have paid for their insurance is saved in an account temporarily, and when they pay medical bills, the insurance gives the money back. In other words, they think that the expense covered by the insurance is only 50 or 60 Yuan, and they finally have to pay almost all their medical bills. The reason why they have this belief is that they have insufficient knowledge about the new rural cooperative medical system or they don’t understand the meaning of insurance thoroughly.

Y11¹⁸²:

“Interviewer: Do you have any medical insurance?”

Ms. Li K: Yes, I buy it every year.

Interviewer: How much do you have to pay out-of-pocket for treatment with this kind of medical insurance?

Ms. Li K: I pay all the expenses. Medical insurance is useless. It doesn’t refund me more money when I see a doctor. I spend 50 or 60 Yuan a year on insurance. When I go to see a doctor or buy some medicine, only 50 or 60 Yuan can be refunded by insurance in a year in total. I must pay the rest of the total expense. Actually, I get no benefit from medical insurance.”

3.7 Women’s self-image

Since the transition from the matriarchal society to patriarchal society, most traditional societies have been androcentric, including Chinese traditional society. With the development of modernization, the ideology of “females as inferior to males” is withering away in modern society. However, in undeveloped areas including Y Village, people have fewer chances to learn about modern culture so that some modern ideas cannot be accepted by rural residents. Female inferiority is still common in these areas, and as such, females are dependent on males. On the whole, they are dominated by men. And they lose themselves and positive self-esteem. Their sense of being includes self-awareness and public perception or public self-consciousness. In this study, I examine women’s gender consciousness, confidence and women’s participation in public affairs.

3.7.1 Gender consciousness

The awareness of gender power relations is an element of gender consciousness.

¹⁸² See the appendix, p. 61

Both man and woman learn and strength the gender power relations in everyday life.¹⁸³ People who lack gender consciousness are seldom aware of the unequal gender relations or never want to change it.¹⁸⁴ For women, the obstacles of development of gender consciousness might be “the structure of their relations with other women and with men”¹⁸⁵ and the stereotypes they learnt from the last generation. The mode of agricultural production is very traditional in Y Village, and mainly depends on physical strength. Women’ gender consciousness is weak and conservative. In some women’s opinions, men are superior because they are stronger, or they have higher levels of education. From the perspective of traditional agricultural production, it can be easily understood. In the process of urbanization men leave home to search for jobs in the city as they have much more strength to do heavier manual work while women stay at home, do farm work, and look after the children. Staying in rural areas for a long time cannot enlarge women’s horizons and cannot improve women’s abilities. Consequently, women always believe that men are superior, and they often ignore their own power. This problem has been discussed during the interviews, and several representative opinions of the interviewees follow.

Y6¹⁸⁶:

“Interviewer: What’s your attitude towards the idea of ‘men manage external affairs while women deal with internal ones’?”

Ms. Liu F: In some families, the woman manages external affairs. For my family, he is more educated than me after all. It is my destiny only to deal with internal things. After all, we were married and formed a family. In addition, I am less educated. I can only be a housewife. He manages all the external affairs. If I disputed that with him, other people might laugh at me. My tasks are washing, cooking, and looking after the children and the parents. His mother (her husband’s mother) had heart disease and stayed here for ten years. I always looked after her. Now that she has passed away, I do nothing at home, except farm work.”

Y17¹⁸⁷:

“Interviewer: Do you think the man plays a more important role than the woman does in the household?”

Ms. Wu Q: Definitely. The man is more important than the woman in a family. A woman doesn’t have enough strength to do hard work. A woman can do hard work for only a few hours. And then woman feels too tired to do the work. A man performs much better.”

¹⁸³ Bierema, Laura, "The role of gender consciousness in challenging patriarchy," *International Journal of Lifelong Education* 22.1 (2003): 3-12, 5

¹⁸⁴ Ibid

¹⁸⁵ Patricia Gurin,J., “Women’s gender consciousness,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 49, (1985): 143-163, 145

¹⁸⁶ See the appendix, p. 30

¹⁸⁷ See the appendix, p. 92

Y9¹⁸⁸:

“Interviewer: Do you think men’s family status is higher than women’s in a household?”

Ms. Li I: Of course, men’s family status is higher than women’s.

Interviewer: Why?

Ms. Li I: The man is the breadwinner in a family and men have the ability to manage external affairs. A man can be a good head of a family. So man’s family status is higher.”

Y10¹⁸⁹:

“Interviewer: Do you think men’s family status is higher than women’s in a household?”

Do you think the man is superior to the woman?”

Ms. Liang G: There’s no doubt that man is superior to woman. He can do things that the woman can’t do, such as hard work. He can leave home to venture out by himself. I don’t have any other skills. Even if I could do heavy work in the city, I would feel anxious remaining him alone at home. Now I am mainly looking after him and keeping him good company. He found a dangerous job where he can earn more money. That’s why he’s hurt. If not for maintaining this family, he wouldn’t be so.”

The traditional ideology of “women are inferior” makes women take on heavy household chores voluntarily. They regard family as the center of life and neglect their self-development. To some extent, it has a negative influence on rural women’s development.

3.7.2 Confidence and participation in public affairs

It can be found from the descriptions of interviewees that the majority of females lack confidence. On one hand, traditional ideology has been handed down from one generation to the next and is deep-seated. Today gender bias is widespread in Y Village. In this investigation, we can see the literacy level of 14 out of 17 interviewees is lower than their husbands. That is one reason that the women induce the sense of inferiority. When a woman is asked, “If you could choose your sex, what would you like to be, a man or a woman?” The interviewee answered:

“I could only choose to be a woman because I am not able to be a man. A man is often under a lot of pressure. I can only do some trivial things, so I can only be a woman. As a man, he has a heavier burden.”¹⁹⁰

When a woman with senior middle school education talked about her pressure in life, she even felt inferior because her education level is lower than her husband’s. She

¹⁸⁸ See the appendix, p. 48

¹⁸⁹ See the appendix, p. 55. Ms. Liang’s husband is disabled. He was hurt in mine when he was working.

¹⁹⁰ See the appendix, p. 74

thought she only had the ability to do the housework at home at present.

“...the man I married is not a common man. He is out of my league. He had a good education while I didn't have the much general education. As a result, I don't see eye to eye with him on many things. But I have to endure it. Nothing can be done about it, and it is a fact of life, and I must face it. So, now the only task for me is looking after the children. What else can I do at such an old age? ...”¹⁹¹

Rural women always insist that they are vulnerable, and they cannot play important roles in life as they are poorly educated. Therefore, they would rather remain with a subordinate status in the family. When they face difficulties and challenges, they give up before making any effort and miss opportunities to express themselves. Rural women do not actively participate in public affairs, so they lose the right or power to influence actions or decisions in this arena. When the women were asked about their participation in village affairs, they shook their heads and said they would not attend unless they had enough time. They took part in meetings held by the village committee occasionally. In their view, their role in village affairs is to serve as audience members at meetings.

Y10¹⁹²:

“Ms. Liang G: ...Sometimes they call for me to attend the meetings, but I always feel depressed because of trivial things in the family. I never attend their meetings...”

Y12¹⁹³:

“Interviewer: Do you often attend to village affairs?”

Ms. Cao L: Yes, I often attend.

Interviewer: What kind of village affairs?”

Ms. Cao L: When they have asked me to attend meetings, I have.”

In conclusion, rural women don't feel invested village affairs. When there are some affairs of the village that need to be dealt with, most women shrink back instead of taking the initiative. That makes them lose their public self-consciousness.

¹⁹¹ See the appendix, p. 33

¹⁹² See the appendix, p. 56

¹⁹³ See the appendix, p. 66

Chapter 4 Working and living conditions of rural women in one plain area in Shandong Province of China

The three villages selected in this investigation are named X village, Z village and B village. There are over a thousand residents in X Village, and the villagers make a living mainly by doing part-time jobs outside of the village and planting wheat and corn. As there is relatively little arable land in the village, each villager can only get 1 mu (0.07 ha) of land, and most of the females who are living here are married. Every villager owns a farmyard of about 200 square meters, with a row of brick-concrete houses on one side for living. Usually, there is a well in front of the house and villagers use a water pump to draw water into tanks. But because water pipes have not yet been installed in the village, people here still drink well water. The other sides of the yard house sheep, cattle, and chickens as well as toilets. Apart from that, many electro-tricycles, vans, and even cars can be seen parked in the yards. The residents of this village live relatively close together, so the yards are basically right next to each other. Beside the village there is a field of wheat that stretches as far as the eyes can see, with a few harvesters working like they never get tired. X Village located is only 40 minutes' drive from the biggest town. Z village is a very small village located in the southern part of X Village and there are only about 500 people living here. Besides the broad highway to Linyi County there is a narrow path perpendicular to the highway. Extensive cropland is situated on one side of the path, and farm houses are lined up on the other side, vertically and deeply. This is Z village. Villagers here make a living mainly by planting crops, selling livestock, or working at township enterprises. There are several professional cooperatives for beef cattle and mutton sheep, and milk factories, along with gas plants and refineries nearby, providing more job opportunities and ways to make money for the villagers. As a result, the villagers here are relatively well-off. Presently, it has become a pilot village for rural urbanization in Shandong Province and is under construction. The government is dedicating to changing the peasants' lifestyle and transforming their way of living, in order to promote urbanization. The government has put up buildings on the highways to the county and is trying to forge a new rural community. By 2015, all villagers will move into buildings

and the farmyards they are living in now will be torn down to be turned into arable lands that can be connected to the current land, for which the government will implement scaled operation. All arable lands will be recalled with compensation by the government, which will then contract large lands to individuals specialized in agricultural production, for the sake of large-scale planting and operation and realizing the industrialization of agricultural production. Compared with the former two villages, B Village is larger. There are over 3000 people living in this village. It is far away from the county, and there are no township enterprises nearby. Residents make a living by growing crops, doing odd jobs outside the village, doing business, or selling their flocks and herds. The majority of houses looked shabby. Villagers had even fewer household appliances than residents in previous villages. Conservatism is deep-seated, running through the village and gender discrimination and inequality is especially common here.

Most females who are ordinarily resident in villages are married, with ages ranging from 20 to 70. Most single women are working away from home. Young married women work part-time jobs near the village or do business with their husbands in the village or in the town. Young females usually do less field work than middle-aged females. The middle-aged women, having to look after their grandchildren, always stay in the village. Their daily tasks include a little farm work or housework, feeding livestock, and looking after their grandchildren. As this county features plain, residents in these three villages are doing farm work with agricultural machines, such as wheat seeders, reaping machines, etc. In other words, the farm work in this region has been mechanized. As a result, farming women often have more time to do other things. Doing farm work is no longer the main daily task for women and agricultural earnings are not the major source of income any more. Some females find jobs in the town or in the nearest city when there is little farm work to be done. Due to the fact that the work sites are near the village, women can go home after work. Most middle-aged women look strong and healthy. It is chiefly because they don't need to do heavy work on the farm nowadays. Women's husbands often do odd jobs or do business in cities. In addition, males can choose work sites freely, they can work anywhere they want no matter how far away from home. There are some males feeding and selling livestock in the villages as well. To sum up, women living in these three villages are no longer chained to farm

work. Their material living conditions are better than before. However, some difficulties still exist in their lives.

4.1 General information of interviewees

In the investigation of Linyi County, 30 interviews were conducted: nine interviews in X Village, 11 interviews in B Village, and 10 interviews in Z Village.

4.1.1 Age

From the view of age distribution, most participants are between 20 and 60 years old, which can be classified into four stages, such as, 6 people are 20 to 29, 3 people are 30-39, 6 people are 40-49, and 15 people are 50-60 years old, accounting for 50% of the total participants (see Table 4.1). These results indicate that women staying in the rural plain area full-time are mostly older. Women between 50 and 60 years old have to take care of their grandchildren because their children are often too busy in work or business in the downtown or near the village.

Table 4. 1 Age of Interviewees in the plain area

Age	Frequency	Percent
20-29	6	20.0
30-39	3	10.0
40-49	6	20.0
50-60	15	50.0
Total	30	100.0

Among those six participants who are mainly 40 to 49 years old, four participants are doing business in the village, such as, operating a garage or selling cattle and sheep, while the other two participants are only doing farm work and taking care of grandchildren at home, sometimes they will go to urban areas for work. 20 to 39-year-old women rarely stay in rural areas and seldom do farm work even though they live in the village. Actually, some of them always conduct some small business with their husbands in the village or town, e.g. keeping a shop.

Overall, the rate of rural women younger than 39 years old living in the rural area is small, and most of them will leave the area and work with their husbands after the marriage except those who do business in the village. They have a light burden in the

family as their parents and parents-in-law are not very old. Therefore, their children can be taken care of by the older generation while they are working away from home.

4.1.2 Marriageable age and marriage reality

According to Article 6 in the “Marriage Law” of the People’s Republic of China, a man can’t get married before he is 22 years old and a woman can’t be married before she is 20 years old, and late marriage and late childbirth shall be encouraged. But in rural areas, people are heavily influenced by feudal thought, especially by the concept - “to enjoy a happy life and carry on the family line by early marriage and early childbirth”. Therefore, rural women often get married at 20 to 23 years of age. Some of them even get married before they reach the legal age. In the investigation in the plain area, 24 women were married when they were 20 to 23 years old. The lowest age of marriage among them is 17, and the highest is 26.

4.1.3 Education level

As shown in this investigation, 19 of the rural women have only a primary school education. They are mainly 40 to 46 years old and account for a big proportion. Eight women have junior school education. They are mainly 20 to 39 years old. Moreover, two women have high school education, and only one has the college degree (see Table 4.2).

Table 4. 2 Education level of interviewees in the plain area

	Education level				Total
	Primary school	Junior school	High school	College	
Age					
20-29	-	4	1	1	6
30-39	1	2	-	-	3
40-49	4	1	1	0	6
Over 50	14	1	0	0	15
Total	19	8	2	1	30

From this result, we can find an inverse relationship between age and education: the older they are, the less education they have received and the younger they are, the more education they have received. This phenomenon also reflects that women’s education is

improving gradually with the development of society.

4.1.4 Fertility situation

Generally speaking, rural women who have three children account for the highest proportion (43.3%) in Shandong, and 30% of women have two children (see Table 4.3). The rate of rural women under the age of 30 only having one child is the biggest. In this investigation, there are six women under the age of 30, but five women only have one child. However, this rate may decrease with the growing age of rural women. Affected by traditional culture in China, they may have a second or even a third child in the future.¹⁹⁴ Most women in their 40s have three children. As shown in this investigation, there are twenty-one women over 40 years old and fifteen of them have both sons and daughters, which fully reflects Chinese traditional culture as well. In traditional culture, having both sons and daughters are regarded as symbols of a happy life.

Table 4. 3 Number of children

	Number of children				Total
	1	2	3	5	
Interviewees' age					
20-29	5	1	-	-	6
30-39	1	2	-	-	3
40-49	-	3	3	-	6
Over 50	1	3	10	1	15
Total	7	9	13	1	30
% within age	23.3%	30%	43.3%	3.3%	100%

4.2 The Working conditions of rural women in one plain area

4.2.1 Superior geographical environment

Agriculture is the preferred sector in Shandong province, which occupies an important position in China. According to statistics, the farmland and water resources in Shandong account for 6% and 1 % of the whole country's respectively, but its grain and vegetable production account for 8% and 13 % of the whole nation separately.¹⁹⁵ Moreover, meat, egg, and milk output is also 10% of the whole country's overall

¹⁹⁴ Ye Jingzhong & Wu Huifang, *Dancing Solo: Women Left Behind in Rural China* (Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2008, 69 (in Chinese)

¹⁹⁵ "Many Index of Agriculture in Shandong Province Rank first in China". <http://www.agri.gov.cn/> 2014-09-01

production.¹⁹⁶ Over the years, several kinds of agricultural sector indicators in Shandong have ranked first in China. Why is agriculture a preferred industry in Shandong province? There are two demonstrable reasons. First, it has a superior geographical environment, which provides good natural conditions for agricultural production. Second, it has convenient traffic conditions. The wheat growing areas in China can be divided into ten parts, such as, northeast spring wheat, northern spring wheat, northwest spring wheat, Xinjiang winter wheat, Qingzang spring and winter wheat, northern winter wheat, Huanghuai winter wheat, Middle and lower Yangtze River winter wheat, southwest winter wheat and south China winter wheat.¹⁹⁷ Actually, Shandong province is located in the Huanghuai winter wheat area, which is also the main production area in China. The whole terrain in the Huanghuai winter wheat area is low and flat, and the main soil type is calcareous alluvial soil, some parts of the soil are yellow and brown soil, which is of good quality and high productivity. The weather in this district is warm with suitable rainfall, which is good for wheat to passing through the winter. Shandong province has convenient irrigation conditions as it is located in the middle and lower stream of the Yellow River and has several rivers flowing through it. In this case, agriculture in Shandong province is developing rapidly. Mechanization has basically been achieved for grain and other crop production. As agricultural mechanization is an important basis for modern agricultural development. Large scale mechanized operation can not only promote the development of grain production in Shandong but also enables the improvement of labor productivity. In addition, the province possesses good transportation via its waterways, roads, railways and aviation, which can improve the efficiency of agricultural transactions. This is another major cause of the high level of agricultural development in the area.

4.2.2 Agricultural activities

Rural females in Shandong participate in agricultural activities in this superior geographical environment. In the scope of this investigation, wheat and corn are the main grain crops, and the cropping system is a winter wheat-summer corn rotation

¹⁹⁶ “Many Index of Agriculture in Shandong Province Rank first in China”. <http://www.agri.gov.cn/> 2014-09-01

¹⁹⁷ Jin Shanbao, *Wheat Improvement and Pedigree Analysis* (Beijing: China Agriculture Press, 2003), 194 (in Chinese)

system. The area of farmland per capita in Shandong is only one mu due to high population density and land fragmentation. According to the results of statistics, the average farmland for each family in the survey area is 3.7 mu (0.26 ha) (Table 4.4), and the annual wheat output is at least 600kg per mu.

Table 4. 4 Farmland area in the plain area

	1 mu	2mu	3mu	4mu	5mu	6mu	7 mu	10 mu
Frequency	2	5	4	9	5	1	1	3

Most middle-aged and older women living in the countryside for a long time do farm work. With the extensive popularization of agricultural machines, ploughing, seeding, reaping and other processes can be done by machines. All peasants have to do is carry the reaped wheat home, dry it in the yard or on neighboring roads, and then sell it. In fact, wheat drying is the only activity which consumes more energy comparatively. However, most rural women don't feel tired and believe that both their working time and labor strength had been reduced since agricultural production was mechanized. 18 interviewees indicated that their daily working time is less than four hours and seven interviewees expressed that they don't work at all. Thus, it can be seen that agricultural activities are no longer a heavy burden for small-scale peasants living in the plain area in the context of agricultural mechanization.

X19¹⁹⁸: Ms. Liu T, 53 years old.

“Interviewer: Do you always feel tired when you do farm work? Do you think it is harmful to your health to do farm work for a long time?”

Ms. Liu T: In recent years, we don't feel tired because we do all the farm work by agricultural machine. Now it is different from in the past. In the past we did lots of manual labor in the course of farming. You know, now we harvest the wheat by machine. When the wheat is dried, we sell it to some companies. Those companies will come and carry the wheat away.”

B30¹⁹⁹: Ms. Zhang T, 44 years old.

“Interviewer: Do you feel tired when you are drying the wheat?”

Ms. Zhang T: When it is the busy season, I do more farm work. When I finish harvesting, I don't have farm work to do. I don't feel tired. After all, we use agricultural machines most of the time. We harvest wheat with the reaping machine. Afterwards, we carry the wheat by car, spread wheat on the road, and dry it in the sunshine. After the

¹⁹⁸ See the appendix, p.102.

¹⁹⁹ See the appendix, p.154.

wheat is dried, we sell it. You see, we can finish all the work easily.”

Although agricultural mechanization has been popularized in the investigated area, the ownership rate of large agricultural machines is not high. This means that only a few farmers have big agricultural machines like seeders, harvesters, etc. Furthermore, few rural women know how to operate those machines. The main reason is that the majority of farmers in Linyi County only own a small plot of land, so they deem it unnecessary to invest too much money in agricultural production. When machines are required, they often employ people owning agricultural machines to do the farm work. In general, only a few farmers tend to buy large machines in each village; instead the majority rent machines from other farmers or are employed by others after finishing their own farm work. In this case, farmers who own machines can make a small profit by providing machines to others. As a result, nearly all the farmers have the basic skills required to use the machine, but not many people acquire proficiency.

Z38²⁰⁰: Ms. Liu L, 53 years old.

“Interviewer: Do you often use agricultural machines?”

Ms. Liu L: Yes, very often. We use agricultural machines to do all kinds of farm work.

Interviewer: Can you operate the machines yourself?

Ms. Liu L: It depends on the kind of machine. I can't operate the large machines, like the combine harvester or the seeder. We don't have these machines ourselves. We employ someone who has those machines when we need to use them. It is convenient. The machines are too large to put them in our yard, and they are very expensive. And, I think it is difficult to operate them. I can't operate them. But I can drive the tractor and electric tricycle (Laugh).

Interviewer: Is it expensive to employ people to do farm work for you with machines?

Ms. Liu L: No. We pay 70 Yuan (10 Euro) per mu of land to have the wheat harvested. We have ten mu of land (0.7 ha), and we only need to give him 700 Yuan (100 Euro).”

Farmers in the investigated area don't plant vegetables. It is understood that vegetable planting requires a lot of time and energy and can't bring respectable profits for them, so nearly all farmers gave up vegetable planting several years ago. The vegetables they often eat are bought from the market after being planted by neighboring vegetable professional cooperatives or farmers who specialize in large scale vegetable planting.

X21²⁰¹: Ms. Wang F, 46 years old.

“Interviewer: Do you often buy vegetables from the market?”

Ms. Wang. F: Yes. Now we don't grow vegetables, so we buy them from the market

²⁰⁰ See the appendix, p. 187

²⁰¹ See the appendix, p. 113.

every day. It is so tiresome to grow vegetables. It is more convenient to buy them from the market.”

Most farmers mainly raise sheep and cattle. Among all the interviewees, there are six households earning a living by raising and selling sheep. Gendered division of labor can't be found in the raising process. In other words, raising livestock is a common task of both men and women. As Ms. Qi E²⁰²said, the person who has time feeds the livestock.

From a gender perspective, the subjects of agriculture activities in this area are primarily middle-aged female farmers. According to statistics, there are only seven women who never do farm work among the interviewees, and four of them are under 30 years old. Regarding the careers of the interviewees' husbands, only eight women's husbands are staying in the village and doing farm work, all of them older than 50. 12 interviewees' husbands are working in the city while eight women's husbands are doing small business in the village, such as selling flocks and herds or vegetables, keeping a shop or garage and so on (Table 4.5).

Table 4. 5 Husbands' ages and careers in the plain area

	Doing farm work	Working in the city	Doing business	Doing nothing	Total
Age					
20-29	2	2	1	1	6
30-39	-	2	-	1	3
40-49	-	2	4	-	6
Over 50	6	6	3	-	15
Total	8	12	8	2	30

It is worth mentioning that convenient transportation in the plain area offers migrant workers more opportunities to come back to the village. Women's husbands who are working away from home or doing business downtown can often go home and help their wives to do some farm work in the busy season, although they occupy the role of assistants during agricultural production. Most importantly, frequent contact with each other is helpful to improve the relationship between husbands and wives. Hence, I deem good transportation to be a significant factor favoring family harmony.

Regarding age, the women who are farming are generally between 40 and 60 years

²⁰² See the appendix, p. 145

old. Among 30 interviewees, there are only six women under 30 years old staying in the village. For this group, their parents-in-law are relatively young so they can assist in farming, or the farm work is completely undertaken by the parents-in-law. Because of the transformation of China's economy and the development of plain areas East China, new non-agricultural work opportunities are created in rural China. Under this background, the division of labor among women has been changed. The young are willing to do off-farm work while the older women do much more farm work.²⁰³ Among those six interviewees under the age of 30, two women operate stores in the village or town, two women work in the factory near the village, and the other two take care of children at home temporarily and may leave home for work in the future.

This investigation involves three villages, and most of the young people in them leave home for work due to three reasons. First, agricultural mechanization leads to an increase of surplus labor in the countryside. According to research, the effect of agricultural machines on labor is very obvious when they are widely used in farm work as they can greatly improve production efficiency.²⁰⁴ As a result, a large number of surplus labors are generated in rural areas. Second, rural residents want to earn more income to improve their living conditions. Since the area of farmland is limited for each household, rural people cannot earn enough money to maintain their lives only by farming. Thus, working in the city becomes one way to increase family income. Thirdly, many young people long for city life and they look forward to opportunities to change their status.

4.2.3 Part-time jobs

Agricultural mechanization can not only reduce the labor burden for local farmers but also can save a plenty of time as mentioned above. As they have much time in the off season and transportation is convenient, the majority of rural women usually find jobs in township enterprises. They can work in the daytime and go back to the village at night. Moreover, agricultural production is no longer a primary economic activity for

²⁰³ Mu, Ren, and Dominique van de Walle, "Left behind to farm? Women's labor re-allocation in rural China," *Labour Economics* 18 (2011): S83-S97, S95

²⁰⁴ Zhang Dongping, Shi Guodong, "Influence of agriculture mechanization on surplus labor force," *Transactions of the Chinese Society for Agricultural Machinery* 27, (1996): 1-6, 4 (in Chinese)

them. Importantly, many interviewees expressed that it is too difficult to improve their living standards solely by farming and that income by selling grain can hardly maintain their normal family life. Planting is not the main source of family income but an important means of old-age security. When peasants get old, and they are no longer able to engage in heavy manual work or earn any non-farm income, and the land becomes their basic livelihood.

X26²⁰⁵: Ms. Wu N, 50 years old.

“Interviewer: Do you always feel tired when you do farm work?”

Ms. Wu N: I do little farm work. I often go to the city to find a job. At the beginning of this month, I came back to harvest the wheat. When I finish that, I will continue to work in the city.

Interviewer: Do you often use agricultural machines?”

Ms. Wu N: Yes, it is very tiring to do the farm work without agricultural machines. Nowadays, all of us use agricultural machines when we are doing farm work. However, if we don't find a job outside the village, we can't live a better life. The cost of living is very high, so we can't make enough money only by doing farm work. All of us have only a little farmland. As a result, it is necessary to find a job.”

Taken together, female farmers living in the plain area are still major contributors to agriculture. Additionally, the amount of labor time is relatively smaller and shorter due to the small area of farmland they have. While they maintain high agricultural production efficiency, as a result, their workload in agricultural production is lighter.

4.3 Living conditions of rural women

Most rural women in the plain area have good material living conditions. With various ways of increasing their income, rural residents can earn. From the perspective of housing conditions, home appliances, and traffic conditions, it can be seen that the material living standard in the investigated area is much better than those of women in the mountainous area.

4.3.1 Annual household income and sources of income

This survey shows that the 15 families' annual household incomes range from 20,000 (2857 Euro) to 29,999 Yuan (4285 Euro), accounting for the greater proportion. Followed by 10 families with annual income between 10,000 (1428 Euro) and 19,999 Yuan (2857 Euro). Further, it can be seen that the husband's career has a great influence

²⁰⁵ See the appendix, p. 135.

on household annual income. Specifically, 20 of the interviewees' husbands are working in cities, among their families, nine have an annual income over 20,000 while eight of the women's husbands are doing business and seven of them earn more than 20,000 Yuan yearly. Meanwhile, eight of the female farmers' husbands are doing farm work in the village, five of whom earn less than 20,000 Yuan each year (Table 4.6). Noteworthy is the fact that husbands' careers have a direct effect on household income.

Table 4. 6 Husbands' Careers and household annual income

Husband's Careers	Household Annual Income (Yuan)				Total
	Less than 10,000	10,000-19,999	20,000-29,999	Over 30,000	
Doing farm work	1	4	1	2	8
Doing jobs in cities	-	3	8	1	12
Doing business	-	1	6	1	8
Doing nothing	-	2	-	-	2
Total	1	10	15	4	30

The contribution of most of rural women's individual income to the family income is relatively small. It can be seen from the investigation that rural women's daily tasks are very tedious. They not only need to do house work, take care of children, and raise cattle and sheep, they also need to do farm work during busy periods. They may find part-time jobs in township enterprises if they are free. Although farm work doesn't take up too much time, no process can be neglected in order to ensure the quality and output of crops. At this time, they have to make choices. Who shall stay in the village to finish those chores? In reality, women undertake farm work in most families, while men continue to work away from home, though they may come back to help if there is too much farm work or if the women have to take care of babies or the elderly. From the perspective of gender, choices like these sacrifice the female's benefit in order to meet the needs of the whole family as much as possible.²⁰⁶ Therefore, women fewer opportunities than their husbands to hold full-time jobs and they can only do some part-time jobs during their spare time. In this case, their income is not higher than their husbands'.

Most of the rural women's family income comes from working outside the village,

²⁰⁶ Duan Tali, "The choice of women left behind from a gender perspective," *The Journal of Humanities* 04, (2010): 170-176, 171 (in Chinese)

planting, and raising livestock, while some women's household income comes from business, such as operating a store or supermarket or selling vegetables. Based on this investigation we find that wheat and corn planting is not the main source of rural women's income. Interviewees indicated that they can't get much income from planting because of the limited area and output of farmland. The annual output of wheat in this region is about 600kg per mu. As shown in A Survey of the Agriculture Department of Shandong province, on average farmers can earn 349 Yuan (50 Euro) per mu of land by growing wheat and corn. Adding on the grain subsidy (125 Yuan (18 Euro)), they can get 470Yuan (67 Euro).²⁰⁷ In this case, a common family who owns 4 mu farmland can earn about 2000 Yuan (285 Euro) from crops per year.

X21²⁰⁸: Ms. Wang F, 46 years old, owning three mu of land.

“Interviewer: How much can you earn by selling your crop?”

Ms. Wang F: The wheat is 2 Yuan per kilo. We can earn at most 3000 Yuan (428 Euro) a year. In other villages, farmers who have more than 10 of mu of land can make a lot of money. In our village, every household has a little land, so we can't make much money just by growing crops. We have to find a job in the city. If you tried to make a living from the land, you would live a poor life. In this village, many people have left home and gone outside the village in search of jobs while the others who can't find work in cities stay home and do farm work. All in all, you cannot only depend on farming. If there is only one family member making money in the city, the whole family will not live a better life.”

According to most interviewees, their household income comes mainly from non-farm work and small business.

B32²⁰⁹: Ms. Yang F, 60 years old, owning five mu of land.

“Interviewer: How much is your family's total annual income?”

Ms. Yang F: Over 20,000 Yuan. We have only a little land, and we can't earn much money by selling crops. Most of our earning comes from doing odd jobs or doing business in the city.”

The development of sheep farming is very prominent in that area. Most rural women breed sheep, and six of the families have more than 30 sheep. Compared with farming, raising sheep can bring much more money to villagers, especially those who operate on a large scale.

Z47²¹⁰: Ms. Li C, 48 years old. Her husband is raising 31 sheep. Her family's total

²⁰⁷ http://ncdz.dzwww.com/news/yaowen/201412/t20141205_11501454.html (Accessed in 12.05.2015)

²⁰⁸ See the appendix, p.114.

²⁰⁹ See the appendix, p.162.

annual income is 25,000Yuan (3571 Euro).

“Interviewer: How much can you earn by raising sheep?”

Ms. Li C: About 25,000 Yuan. Sometimes we can earn 30,000 Yuan (4285 Euro). It depends on the quality of our sheep. If they seldom get sick, we can earn more. On average, we can earn 1000 Yuan (142 Euro) by selling one sheep.”

The investigation indicates that farm households are beginning to diversify their income sources, and non-farming income accounts for a large proportion of total income. Finding a job, doing business and animal breeding in the city have become primary ways for farmers to make money. For example, in Ms. Sun E²¹¹'s family, the household income consists of her husband's non-farming work in the city, her son's business, and the shop in the village kept by Ms. Sun E.

B34: Ms. Sun. E, 53 years old.

“Interviewer: What are the sources of income in your family?”

Ms. Sun E: We can earn only a little money by selling agriculture products. The main sources of income are working in the city or doing business. My husband is doing odd jobs in the city. My son is doing business. I am keeping a shop in the village. Now the young people don't do farm work. They are working in the city. The elderly staying in the village do some farm work.”

4.3.2 Household expenditure

Household expenditure is also another important index to reflect the standard of living. The interviewees indicated that, household expenditure is mainly used for necessities, food, maintaining relationships, and children's tuition. Firstly, necessities such as water, electricity, gas, health products and commodities, are unavoidable in daily life. They are necessary costs for each family. According to my investigation, the cost of necessities is the main part of the household expenditure. This answer was mentioned 29 times in total by all the interviewees. Secondly, food and cost of social contact are also important parts of household expenditure. Food such as oil, rice, noodles, vegetables and fruits, must be bought from the market. The majority of rural women indicated that these costs also accounts for a big proportion of the total expenditure. According to Engel's law, the less the family income is, the bigger proportion of the total family income (or total expenditure) food will take up. Although the living standard of rural women in the plain area is higher than that of women living

²¹⁰ See the appendix, p.223.

²¹¹ See the appendix, p.171.

in the mountain area, which does not mean that the quality of life of rural women in the plain area is as good as the average in China including urban areas.

The cost of maintaining interpersonal relationships (mainly kinship) is remarkable for villagers. In rural China, kinship is regarded as the most important relationship, which exists in marriage and reproduction.²¹² Especially in rural communities, the kinship networks of rural residents are vast. It is very common that most of residents living in a same village are relatives.²¹³ It is based on consanguinity and people have to maintain it by frequent interaction. There are primary ways for rural people to maintain interpersonal relationships – social engagement and exchanging gifts. The exchange of gifts plays an important role in social life in China, especially in terms of maintaining and improving social relationships. The wedding is one of the main occasions where people exchange gifts.²¹⁴ For example, people are often invited to attend a relative's wedding. The person who is invited is expected to give a gift. Nowadays, the form of gifts in such an occasion is generally cash. According to the amount of money the person gives, the receiver has to give the same or more amount of money on a similar ceremony or parties held by this person some days or even some years later, such as a wedding, a full-moon-birth dinner party, funeral or something like that. The nature of this kind of interaction equals exchange of gifts. In this way, interpersonal relationships can be strengthened. The amount of money generally depends on the level of intimacy between people.²¹⁵ However, nowadays there is a serious problem that the money people have to give is much higher than before, to the extent that it becomes a burden for rural people. In rural areas, the phenomenon of comparing is widespread. Gift exchanging becomes a way to show off wealth. A person who gives less money as a gift will be laughed at. A study showed that each rural household needs to spend at least 3000 Yuan (428 Euro) each year to maintain relationships in this way.²¹⁶

X26²¹⁷: Ms. Wu N, 50 years old.

“Interviewer: How much do you spend every month?”

Ms. Wu N: We spend about 2000 Yuan a month. We spend at least 20,000 Yuan a year. We pay the electricity, gas bills, clothes and gift giving.....

²¹² Fei, Xiaotong, Gary G. Hamilton, and Zheng Wang, *From the soil, the foundations of Chinese society: a translation of Fei Xiaotong's Xiangtu Zhongguo, with an introduction and epilogue* (University of California Press, 1992), 63

²¹³ *Ibid.*

²¹⁴ Yan Yunxiang, *Exchange of Gifts* (Shanghai People's Publishing House, 1999), 14

²¹⁵ *Ibid.* p.53

²¹⁶ Yang Hua, “The nature of social relationship,” *Journal of the Postgraduate of Zhongnan University of Economics and Law* 01, (2008): 30-34, 32 (in Chinese)

²¹⁷ See the appendix, p. 135

Interviewer: When and whom do you give gift to?

Ms. Wu N: When the villagers or relatives get married or when they have a baby, I must give at least 100 Yuan. If the villager is also my friend, I give him or her 200 Yuan. And I give my relatives more. For example, when my nephew or niece gets married, I give them more than 300 Yuan. I spend much money on this.”

Half of interviewees deemed their children’s educational expenses also to be a heavy burden for them. Mrs. Lin in Z village (interview 44) has two children-- a son and daughter. Her son is 14 years old and studies in junior school, while her daughter is 10 years old and now attends primary school. She said that her children’s educational expense presents a heavy burden. The educational expense for two children is about 3000 to 4000 Yuan per year. Actually, Mrs. Lin seldom buys clothes for herself, and the family has to live a frugal life in order to save money for her son. As shown in an investigation, students in high school or technical secondary school in Shandong province pay 8,000-100,000 Yuan per year, while students who study in university pay at least 13,000 Yuan. Moreover, the investigation indicates that a child will cost 5-10 years of family income from the stage of high school to university.²¹⁸ Expensive tuition fees not only seriously weaken farmers’ consuming ability, but also directly influence rural women’s living quality because they cannot spend money for themselves, as they must save more money for their children’s education.

B30²¹⁹: Ms. Zhang T, 44 years old.

“Ms. Zhang T: I have 3 children, a son and two daughters. They are students. My elder daughter is studying in Jinan (a city), my younger daughter is going to senior school and my son is going to junior school.

Interviewer: How much do you spend for yourself every month?

Ms. Zhang T: I spend about 1000 Yuan for myself a year. I only buy some clothes and shoes for myself. My children are young, I have to raise children and pay their schooling fees. So I must try to save money”.

These two cases above reflect the strong family responsibility of rural women. They pay more attention to the benefit of family, not just the individual benefit of a certain member. Additionally, to save money and try best to accumulate wealth for the family is a very common thing in most Chinese families.²²⁰

²¹⁸ Dong Zhenguo & Wang Chunyu, “Consumption in Countryside: Too Much Housing and Education Expenditure,” *Economic Information Daily*. August 9, 2007 (in Chinese)

²¹⁹ See the appendix, p. 154.

²²⁰ Li Qiang, “Research on remittance from migrant workers,” *Sociology Research* 02, (2001): 64-76, 65 (in Chinese)

4.3.3 Housing conditions and ownership rate of household appliances

The difference of housing conditions between the three villages in the study is huge. Houses in X village and Z village are relatively new while the buildings in B village look so dirty and old that they may have been built 20 years ago. The difference is mainly caused by different living environments. In fact, the annual income of farmers in B village is the same as that of people in the other two villages, but their housing conditions are different. In terms of the area and structure of the house, houses in both villages have similar characteristics. Houses in these villages are big and mainly made of brick, wood, and reinforced concrete.

Every farmer has a yard of at least 200 square meters. A house on one side of the yard is for living, there are six or seven rooms in total, while on the other side of the yard is a barn for domestic animals and the toilet. Besides the deep well in the yard that they drink water from using a pump, it is estimated that they will be able to use running water after several years because water pipes are being laid now. Many houses in X village and Z village have been done up with simple decoration, and the furniture looks very new. Their bright and spacious rooms are laid with floor tiles. However, the toilets there are small and simple, and are generally set in a small corner of the yard, adjacent to the barn for domestic animals. Like in most countryside places in China, they still use pit toilets, i.e. without a flush device, sewer, or equipment for decomposition of manure. There is only one cesspool underground and the hygienic condition is very poor. Most families don't have bathrooms. Villagers have to go to the public bathroom for showers. With respect to cooking, rural women in the plain area use gas ovens nowadays instead of earth stoves. Use of gas ovens not only saves a lot of time, but also enables them to reduce their burden of housework.

X26²²¹: Ms. Wu N, 50 years old.

“Interviewer: What kind of stove do you use when you are cooking?”

Ms. Wu N: I often use a gas stove or induction cooker, although it costs more than an earth stove. They are economical in terms of time. Now I can find a job in the city and I can earn more money, so I spend more. When I am too old to find a job in the city, I will stay at home and be unable to earn money any more. Then, I may choose the earth stove for cooking, because I must save money when I am old.”

The traffic around these three villages is very convenient, due to the smooth topography. Roads linking villages to towns are wide as well as flat. The majority of

²²¹ See the appendix, p.136.

farmers have a car or a motorbike, and also there are through buses from villages to towns and cities.

Regarding the ownership rate of household appliances, villagers in X Village and Z village have more household appliances. Almost all the families have a TV, washing machine, fridge, air conditioner, rice cooker, induction cooker, electric pan, and so on. In contrast, farmers in B village have few appliances. Most of them only have a TV, washing machine, fridge, and rice cooker.

4.4 Family life of rural women in plain area

The family life of rural women in different regions is very diverse, which is caused by a diversity of cultural factors and territory. They have an influence on family values and lifestyles. Combining with the value-attitude-behavior model, scholars believe that cultural values, which establish the norms and standards, shape people's beliefs and attitudes. And the attitudes guide people's behaviors.²²² China is a country with vast territory and numerous nationalities. Different cultures are developed in different territory. Indeed, the development status of one region and the people's living conditions are not completely decided by its environmental conditions and resource endowment, so it is necessary to further refer to larger cultural factors to explain people's mindset, lifestyle, and mental status. This paper describes rural women's family life in Shandong province from the aspect of their kinship, marital status, concept of child-bearing and family status in combination with regional culture.

4.4.1 Confucianism and Confucian gender ideology

Different kinds of material and spiritual civilization are formed because different material bases are supplied by natural physio-geographical environments. China's traditional cultural area can be divided into three parts: the eastern agricultural culture area, southwestern ethnic agricultural culture area, and the western nomadic culture area. Each kind of culture area has several cultural districts. For instance, the eastern agricultural culture area includes twelve cultural districts, such as, northeast Chinese culture, Yanzhao culture, loess plateau culture, central plain culture, and so on. With

²²² Fan, Ying, "A classification of Chinese culture," *Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal* 7.2 (2000): 3-10, 4

Shandong province as its core, Qilu deputy culture is one of the eastern agricultural cultural areas located along the lower Yellow river with its deep and fertile soil. The traditional economic type is agriculture and fishery in coastal areas. Confucian culture was also generated from this place and spread to the whole nation over two thousand years of history.

Confucianism is not only “the core of the cultural framework”²²³ but also a complex system of behavioral or “moral teachings.” in ancient China ²²⁴ This system is based on ethical standards with family, paternal line, and peasant economy as the mode, axis, and development bases respectively. It occupies the leading position in the entire traditional cultural system and has had a profound impact on the Chinese nation from the view of historical evolution, and it penetrates each region and ethnic group continuously with national power. People inevitably end up living in the network weaved by Confucian culture. Confucian gender culture also deeply affected and created traditional gender culture in China. Although there are many excellent spiritual treasures contained in Confucian culture - the spirit of “self-discipline and social commitment”²²⁵ and “Self-improvement”, social responsibility along the lines of “show concern first and enjoy oneself last,” among others –its core gender concept of male superiority is far behind the times and has greatly constrained the development and progress of females.

Generally, the Confucian concept of gender is mainly reflected in relational ethics, which are constructed around patrilineal descent,²²⁶ patrilocality, and patriarchy, and involves some aspects, such as, the family line always passing to a male heir, relative inheritance rights, and maintenance of obligations also being transmitted between male family members. Male elders hold the power in the family and women are expected to live with their husbands’ families after marriage. This being the case, the status of men is systematically higher than women. Additionally, the concept of “Take care of husband and children” and “Three Rules of Obedience” can also directly embody the core concept of “male superiority”. In Confucian culture, the concept of “Taking care of husband and children” is important to specifying women’s social value. One of the

²²³ Kim, Kyung Hee. "Cultural influence on creativity: The relationship between creativity and Confucianism." *Roeper Review* 27.3 (2005): 186.

²²⁴ Tsai, Chiung - Tzu Lucetta, "The influence of Confucianism on women’s leisure in Taiwan," *Leisure Studies* 25.4 (2006): 469-476, 469

²²⁵ Shan Z, “Interpretation of self-discipline and social commitment - reflections of Chinese nation's spirits,” *Studies on Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping Theories* 08, 13(2008): 58-60, 59(in Chinese)

²²⁶ Li Xia. “Women’s living space and backstage power in a North China village,” (Beijing: Social Science Academic Press, 2010), 72 (in Chinese)

principles of Confucius - "men are primarily outside the home, and women are primarily inside the home" also supports the traditional gendered division of labor which is based on the patriarchal structure.²²⁷ It advocates the measurement of women's (wife and mother) function and impact through men's (husband and son) social status and value and thus constrains women in the small space from the behavioral paradigm, so that they have to pursue limited emotional satisfaction and realization of poor life value. This is the barrier to women's freedom and liberation. Three Rules of Obedience, which governed women's behaviors,²²⁸ included the "obedience to father as a daughter, obedience to the husband as a wife and obedience to the son as an old widow."²²⁹ With the development of society, traditional and conservative thoughts still influence people in differing degrees in the backward countryside although such feudal ethical codes should not exist under the open era and gender equality system.

4.4.2 Traditional ways of finding spouses and the breakdown of marriage

Generally speaking, the age of marriage of women in the countryside is lower than women in urban areas. The results of this survey show that the age of marriage of most of women is between 20 and 23 in the investigated villages. These days, many girls in rural areas leave home to find a job after they graduate from junior middle school (around 15 years old). Their parents begin to find them suitors when they are 18 years old. Under the *Marriage Law of the People's Republic of China*, woman cannot be married before 20 years old. It's widely assumed that, however, the engagement should be made in advance.

4.4.2.1 from Arranged Marriage to Blind Date

Traditional Confucian thinking requires that people of the opposite sex who are not blood relatives not have contact, talk, or give or receive things directly, and they must maintain a certain distance, which greatly limited free courtship for men and women. Under the effect of such feudal ethics, traditional marriage is to be decided by parents and the parties introduced by a matchmaker. This is called an arranged marriage. As

²²⁷ Choi, Jaepil, and Chao C. Chen, "Gender differences in perceived work demands, family demands, and life stress among married Chinese employees," *Management and Organization Review* 2.2 (2006): 209-229, 211

²²⁸ Leung, Alicia SM. "Feminism in transition: Chinese culture, ideology and the development of the women's movement in China." *Asia Pacific journal of management* 20.3 (2003): 359-374, 361

²²⁹ Soh, Chunghee Sarah. "From imperial gifts to sex slaves: theorizing symbolic representations of the comfort women." *Social Science Japan Journal* 3.1 (2000): 59-76, 67

long as the matchmaker tells the situation to both parents, the marriage can then be decided upon by the parents' agreement.²³⁰ Before marriage, the man and woman cannot meet each other; if a girl wants to meet her future husband, she will be regarded as "indecent". Importantly, Confucian culture emphasized filial duty and thought that children who obeyed their parents' the arrangement were expressing filial respect. Therefore, in the feudal society, all marriages were decided by parents, and children had to obey. In the 1960s and 1970s, arranged marriage was reduced gradually and thoroughly disappeared when the *Marriage Law* came out in 1980, which specified that, arranged or chattel marriage and any other acts of interference in the freedom of marriage shall be prohibited.²³¹ With social development and cultural evolution, the role of matchmaker is still maintained. Although the marriage is not arranged by parents any more, in the countryside most people still get married soon after their introduction by a matchmaker.

Generally speaking, matchmakers are mostly eloquent older women who know many people and possess a lot of information about those in their community eligible for marriage because they are always entrusted by neighbors or relatives to find marriage partners for their children.²³² They play the role of middlemen," from the process of proposing marriage and engagement until the wedding. They take charge of contact, coordination, and mediation between the two sides until the completion of the wedding, and finally they charge some money. As matchmakers, they should not only be familiar with the basic situation of the two families in order to propose a perfect marriage match, but also be able to correctly describe the situation to each side and ensure they each get a good understanding of the other's advantages so that both sides will be glad to consent to the marriage agreement.

In recent decades, blind dating instead of arranged marriage has become common for young people in the village. The procedure of dating is as follows. The matchmaker proposes the marriage first and introduces the basic situation of both families. Then if

²³⁰ He Junzhao, "The analysis of the backward arranged marriage in rural areas," *Society* 04, (1985): 60-61, 60 (in Chinese)

²³¹ Ma Hui. "The research on Chinese Marriage Law and marital family," Shandong University, 2013, 36 (Doctoral dissertation, in Chinese)

²³² Li Xia. "Women's living space and backstage power in a North China village," (Beijing: Social Science Academic Press, 2010), 72 (in Chinese)

both of the two sides think the basic situation is good, she arranges for the man and woman to meet each other accompanied by relatives. If it is possible to develop continuously after they meet once or twice, the two families will check the detailed information of other side and make the engagement if there is no problem. If everything goes smoothly, the marriage can be decided within two weeks.²³³ We call this means of finding a marriage partner a blind date. In the whole process of dating, parents' opinions are still very important. After all, people around 18 years old don't have much social experience and they tend to respect and pay attention to their parent's advice. Moreover, the money for various gifts must be paid by the parents as young people don't have an economic foundation. Therefore, parents' support is a significant factor of successful marriage. In such an arrangement, parental support and young people's individual choice coexist in the whole process of dating and marriage.

In the present investigation, there are 23 interviewees who met their husbands on blind dates. Only four women's marriages were arranged by their parents, and all of them are over 40 years old. In addition, three females under the age of 30 were allowed to choose their spouses freely without any interference by parents or relatives. The statistical results indicate that free marriage is becoming more and more widespread in rural China, although some young people are still influenced by their parents' opinions in the process of finding marriage partners (Table 4.7).

Table 4.7 Ways of meeting a husband in the plain area

	Meeting on their own	Blind date	Arranged by parents	Total
Age				
20-29	3	3	-	6
30-29	-	3	-	3
40-49	-	4	2	6
Over 50	-	13	2	15
Total	3	23	4	30

Ms. Xu H is 52 years old. She got married in 1983 when the forms of marriage arrangements in rural China were changing from arranged marriages to blind dates. Ms. Xu H has described her experience on a blind date.

²³³ Li Xia. "Women's living space and backstage power in a North China village," (Beijing: Social Science Academic Press, 2010), 72 (in Chinese)

Case 1 (Z46)²³⁴:

“Interviewer: How did you get to know your husband?”

Ms. Xu H: I got to know him on a blind date.

Interviewer: Who introduced your husband to you?

Ms. Xu H: One of my relatives.

Interviewer: Could you tell me more details about your blind date?

Ms. Xu H: (Laugh) It happened about 30 years ago. Let me see.....I came here in 1983 when I was 21 years old. I come from a small village in a mountain area in Shaanxi Province. My family was very poor at that time, because I have so many brothers. And we had only a small plot of land. We didn't have enough food. My parents heard that peasants in Shandong Province had more food. They decided to send me there. One of our relatives knew a family living in Shandong Province. This is my husband's family. The relative told my husband to come to our village. He came and met my parents and me. Shortly afterwards, he decided to marry me and my parents agreed. They asked me whether I was willing to marry him. I didn't know how to make a decision. I agreed because my parents agreed. Two days later, my husband gave my parents 400 Yuan (57 Euro) as a betrothal gift. My parents let me go with him. So I came here and got married. It's just like I was sold by my parents. But they hoped for me to have enough food to eat at that time.”

In recent years, some young people in rural areas are free to choose their spouses, while others still hunt for marriage partners on blind dates. Take Ms. Han (Z37)²³⁵ as an example.

“I met him (Ms. Han's husband) on a blind date. After I graduated from junior middle school, I went to work in a city. I worked for two years, my parents asked me to come back afterwards. They thought that it was time for me to get married and wanted to find me a suitor. Then a matchmaker came to my home and introduced him to me. The matchmaker told my parents about the situation of his family, my father was very content with that and agreed to let the matchmaker make an appointment for us. A few days later, we first met on a road near our village. My mother and aunty came together with me. They asked me how I felt about him, I said: 'Not bad.' The matchmaker took me to his family after two days. It was the second time we met. His father telephoned my father afterwards and talked about our engagement. After we made the engagement, I left the village to work while he was working in another place. We seldom met until Spring Festival. After two years, we got married, I gave up my job in the city and began to live in his home and we soon had the baby. ”

These two cases reveal that parents have interfered too much in the traditional blind date. Young girls on their own, have no chance to look for a future marriage partner. At the beginning of the 1980s, arranged marriages disappeared. Although young people could meet their future partner before the wedding, they were not

²³⁴ See the appendix, p. 219.

²³⁵ See the appendix, p.184. She is 24 years old and has been married for 4 years.

expected to have a differing opinion when their parents had already chosen a marriage partner for them. According to Ms. Xu H's statement in case 1, she decided to marry the man only because her parents had agreed. This verified the traditional family ethic in rural areas – the younger generation has to obey to the older generation. In recent years, influenced by modern culture, young people have more freedom in many aspects. Regarding decision-making in marriage, however, younger individuals are often in a passive state. From case 2 we can see that rural families are still immersed in patriarchy-centered ideology. The father has the final say about a child's marriage. Young people have few opportunities to communicate with each other. Thus, they cannot understand each other thoroughly, which may present more problems for their married life in the future.

4.4.2.2 The collision between traditional culture and modern culture — young people's divorce

The number of rural young people's divorce cases has been increasing in recent years, and has become a noticeable problem. The present investigation found two cases of divorce among rural young people. I would contend that it is caused in large part by the collision between traditional culture and modern culture.

In feudal society, females don't have the right to initiate divorce, as they must obey the ideals of so-called "chastity and fidelity" put forward by Confucian culture. A divorced woman will be laughed at by others and have difficulty remarrying. In ancient times, Confucianism in each dynasty advocated the concepts of "chastity and fidelity" and took them as basic guidelines for women's behavior. Females were expected to keep absolute loyalty and chastity for their husbands. The basic requirement of chastity and fidelity is to keep sex "pure" and monogamous. This included premarital chastity, married chastity, and moral integrity as a widow. Premarital chastity means that women should not have sex with any other men before marriage. Married chastity indicates that the husband is her only sex partner after getting married. Banzhao, female historian in the Eastern Han Dynasty (45-117), wrote in "Lessons for women" that, a woman should be faithful to her husband unto death, that is to say, a man can remarry if he loses his

wife, but a woman cannot remarry after divorce or after her husband passes away.²³⁶ In the Song Dynasty (960-1279), neo-Confucianism (one kind of Confucian genre) arose, trying to indoctrinate the people more thoroughly with the Confucian ethical code and advocating widowhood by moral public opinion. Widow remarriage became shameful from that time. In Confucian culture, women are not only the tool to carry on the family line, but also the carrier of sex: they don't have personality and are just regarded as men's accessories.²³⁷ In fact, men pay more attention to the chastity and fidelity of women in feudal society, and consequently the virgin complex was generated from that time. In the 1970s or 1980s, with such conservative sexual concepts women chose to endure the pains and tried to maintain their marriages even if they encountered domestic violence. As such, divorce was not common in this period.

During the investigation in B village, I heard a story about the suicide of a woman, who could not stand domestic violence: In the 1980s, Ms. Zhao L (interviewee 36)'s sister married in this village. Her husband had a terrible temper and was a hard drinker. He always beat and abused Ms. Zhao's sister after drinking, she was totally helpless. After three years, she could not abide her husband anymore and finally committed suicide by drinking poison. From this we can see that women in the 1980s might have been affected deeply by feudal ideology. When a woman is suffering from domestic violence, she would rather end her life than file a suit for divorce.

With political, economic, and cultural changes and development following reform and opening up, all aspects of Chinese society are changing. People have started to pursue the enjoyment of a diverse mental life with the growth of the economy and improvement of material living standards, and different kinds of new information and new values (including sexual liberalization) are integrated into people's lives. The biggest change appears in the realm of sex, which can be seen from people's tolerance and open attitude towards premarital cohabitation. Sexual liberalization was transmitted to China and penetrates individual's lives through some films and literary works, which altered people's traditional ideology. Their attitudes to premarital cohabitation have

²³⁶ Jin Wen, "Reevaluation of traditional ethics on women in Lessons for women written by Banzhao," Academic Forum of Nandu 11, 03 (2007): 1-5, 2 (in Chinese)

²³⁷ Zhou Guanghong. (1997). "Confucianism culture, women and ethics," Journal of Shandong Women's University 05, (1997): 161-164, 162 (in Chinese)

changed. They have begun to acquiesce in or accept it instead of absolutely opposing it. Moreover, men's virgin complex is gradually disappearing nowadays.

However, in the countryside where the economy and culture is comparatively underdeveloped, older people still have some old-fashioned values and concepts of marriage. They deem that marriage should not be broken up once it begins. Hence, the divorce rate is very low among villagers over 40 years old, even in recent years. Nevertheless, there are more and more divorced young people in rural areas.

Case 1²³⁸: Ms. Xv (X18) is 51 years old, and has two daughters and a 27-year-old son. Her son divorced two years ago. He met his ex-wife through a matchmaker. They got married soon after they first met. They went to Xi'an to do small business afterwards. According to Ms. Xv' son, they found that they could not get along well with each other. They quarreled frequently and his ex-wife spent money freely. What's more important, he found she was barren. Because of this, Ms. Xv is no fan of the girl. Her son's marriage ended after 3 years. Half a year later, his ex-wife met a middle-aged man with one child living nearby. She married the man soon after.

Case 2: Ms. Liu L (Z38), 53 years old. She has three daughters, the youngest daughter is 23 years old and she has been married three times.

The youngest daughter Yan, with a nice figure and cheerful habit of mind, is the prettiest in Ms. Liu's family. She is working in a supermarket as a cashier in Dezhou city. She lives in the dormitory on weekdays and comes back home each weekend. In Ms. Liu's words, she is the most unfortunate one among her daughters. Recently, she got divorced. To my astonishment, she had been married three times. Her first husband lives in the next village, a relative introduced them. Ms. Liu and Mr. Zhang were satisfied with the man. They let Yan marry him. However, this marriage only lasted for a few days before they divorced. Ms. Liu said she did not know the specific cause. She thought the major cause of failure might be that they did not consult Yan before they arranged this marriage. Some months later, another relative of Ms. Liu introduced a man to Yan, who came from a poor family in Ms. Liu's home town. The man wanted to marry Yan and live with her family as a son-in-law, an uxorilocal marriage. They got married after they got to know each other. Unluckily, Yan found he was sterile one year later. Ms. Liu said angrily: "He is a crook! He knew he was sterile

²³⁸ See the appendix. p.98

before the marriage, but he never told us.”²³⁹ Yan divorced again. Three months later, she met a man living in a village in another county. She married him some days later. This marriage is going to break up as well and the reason is unclear.

Many studies show that, the number of cases of divorce among young people in rural areas is growing gradually. According to the People’s Court of Ningming County in Guangxi province, the number and rate of divorce for people under the age of 30 in the countryside is increasing, accounting for 50.6% of the total cases of the court in 2012, and reaching 68.5% and 76% in 2013 and 2014 respectively.²⁴⁰ In addition, the divorce happening in rural areas is characterized by younger ages, short marriages, and conflict. It can be seen from the two cases above that, young people in countryside often get married and divorce hastily.

From the perspective of culture, there are two reasons for divorce among rural young people. First, they get married too early, influenced by traditional marriage concepts, the aims of which are to carry on the family line and advocate “early marriage and childbirth”. Affected by traditional culture, rural young people married at early ages and their emotional foundation is too weak as they don’t know each other very well before marriage. They often get married, encouraged by their families, at what is considered the appropriate age. Most of them find partners via traditional dating, i.e. they are introduced by a matchmaker and get engaged after meeting each other a few times. Then they go out and find work separately, stay in touch by phone, and finally get married after a short time. In this case, they don’t have much time to get to know each other so they don’t understand each other very well. Therefore, the disadvantages of both sides have to be gradually revealed after marriage. If they cannot tolerate each other, the contradictions will worsen and they have to choose divorce in the end. Second, people’s attitude to divorce is more tolerant under the influence of modern culture. Rural young people always work in the city, they have many opportunities to be exposed modern culture and their receptivity to divorce is much higher after introduction to open and free modern culture. Therefore, they get divorced easily once

²³⁹ See the appendix, p.190.

²⁴⁰ Wang Hui & Ouyang Jing, “The phenomenon of quick marriage and quick divorce in rural area,” *China Rural Survey* 03, (2012): 87 – 88, 87 (in Chinese)

the irreconcilable conflict happens after marriage.²⁴¹

4.4.3 Forms of marriage and factors influencing women's family status

To some extent, forms of marriage play a decisive role in women's family status. Women have different family status with different form of marriage. The forms of marriages are generally classified into two categories: virilocal marriage and unxorilocal marriage. In a virilocal marriage, "the wife has to leave her natal family and move in with her husband's family." In contrast, in an unxorilocal marriage "the husband leaves his natal family and moves in with his wife's."²⁴² Up to now virilocal marriage is still the most common marriage form in China, which can be accepted by most of people, especially in rural areas.

4.4.3.1 Virilocal Marriage

Patrilocal residence is not only a key element influencing rural society and its power relationships. It also establishes the weak position of women in the family after marriage. On one hand, it forms an overlap of patrilineal descent and residential area, i.e. clansmen, which created affinity within clan relationships. On the other hand, it structured men and women's different position in the relationship, and put women's position under men's. The patrilineal descent system has two parts: "insider" and "outsider". Male members are "insiders" within the family, while daughters are members of another family after marriage. While the patrilocal residence system has "native people" and "outsiders", men are native people, while the daughters who get married with men are outsiders.²⁴³ Consequently, women are marginalized women are always regarded as "temporary members of their natal families" and they have limited access to family resources.²⁴⁴

In rural areas, the majority of marriages are normally patrilocality. Villagers' ideology in X village and Z village is relatively more open. Women's family status is

²⁴¹ Wang Hui & Ouyang Jing, "The phenomenon of quick marriage and quick divorce in rural area," *China Rural Survey* 03, (2012): 87 – 88, 87 (in Chinese)

²⁴² Li, Shuzhuo, Marcus W. Feldman, and Nan Li. "Acceptance of two types of uxorilocal marriage in contemporary rural China: The case of Lueyang." *Journal of Family History* 28.2 (2003): 314-333, 314

²⁴³ Li Xia. "Women's living space and backstage power in a North China village," (Beijing: Social Science Academic Press, 2010), 167 (in Chinese)

²⁴⁴ Leung, Alicia SM. "Feminism in transition: Chinese culture, ideology and the development of the women's movement in China." *Asia Pacific journal of management* 20.3 (2003): 359-374, 360

not very inferior. At least they are seemingly treated equally in the family. In stark contrast, villagers in B village are more conservative. The concept of “male superiority” emerged in all aspects of their life. For instance, women cannot have dinner together with men on formal occasions, and they cannot eat first. I had a special experience in B village as follows:

I went to B village with a friend. His aunty, Ms. Zhao L (interviewee 36) married there. It is a typical virilocal marriage. Ms. Zhao comes from another village in Linyi County. All of her husband’s family members are living in B village. She has two daughters and a son. The son is her third child. All of her children are married.

On that day, my friend, his brother and I went to his relative’s house. When we got to their home, Ms. Zhao started to prepare dinner. An eight-immortal table is opposite the door of living room. When people enter the living room, it can be seen at first glance. Mr. Bai (Ms. Zhao’s husband) was sitting beside the table and talking with my friend and his brother. But he never talked to me. He even didn’t greet me when we met for the first time. There were four men (my friend, his brother, Mr. Bai and his son.) and three women (Ms. Zhao, her daughter-in-law and me.) in the house. After a while, Ms. Zhao finished preparing the dinner and put some dishes on the square table. However, there were only four seats around the table which made me feel strange. There were seven persons in total in the house. Then she asked all the men to have dinner. I was surprised that she did not invite me, although I was also a guest. At that time, I just sat in a corner of the living room. I was very hungry but I had nothing to eat. I watched the men eating. They had four dishes-- chicken, beef, and two other vegetable dishes. Also, they had beer to drink. Not until half an hour later did the women start to eat. We sat around a very small tea table beside the square table. But we only had two vegetable dishes. After a while, all the men finished their dinner. The chicken and beef were not eaten up. Ms. Zhao brought the meat to our table. The second day, I went out and talked with the other women about this phenomenon. They told me it is a tradition in the village. Women are not allowed to have dinner together with men in formal circumstances.

Actually, this is a feudal custom which existed in ancient China. To, my surprise, it still exists in this village nowadays. In addition, I stayed in Mr. Bai’s home for several days. I found that Mr. Bai never did housework. He is the head of the family. Other family members have to obey him completely.

4.4.3.2 Uxorilocal Marriage

In an uxorilocal marriage, the man is always discriminated against by other people when the woman's family status is higher comparatively. In many people's eyes, a man living with his wife's family and his parents will be looked down upon. Uxorilocal marriage indicates the man has no ability to make money, and his parents cannot afford to give a betrothal gift or offer a house for the new couple. The man living with his wife's family after getting married is often regarded as a dawdler because an uxorilocal marriage doesn't cost the man any money.

According to Chinese traditional norms in rural areas, for a virilocal marriage, when a man and a woman plan to get engaged, the man should give a betrothal gift to the woman and her parents to thank them for their upbringing of their daughter. There are normally two forms of betrothal gift: material goods and money. The variety of material goods and the amount of money differ from area to area in China. Generally speaking, things are apt to be gold jewelry, usually worth no less than 10,000 Yuan (1428 Euro) in total. Gold jewelry is bought for the bride. The other kind of betrothal gift is money, which will be sent to the bride's parents. The amount of money ranges from 20,000 Yuan (2857 Euro) to 100,000 Yuan (14285 Euro) or even more depending on the man's or his family's financial situation. Moreover, the man's family should build a new house for the new couple. The groom's parents tend to build a new house adjacent to their own house in order to make it easy for the young couple look after them in the future. Typically, it costs at least 100,000 Yuan to build a house in rural areas. Young men in rural areas, for obvious reasons, don't have enough money for a patrilocal marriage. Whether he can take a wife to live with his natal family depends on his family's wealth and his parents' support.

Generally, an uxorilocal marriage will happen under the following circumstances: Firstly, it occurs in families without sons. In Chinese traditional culture, only sons could carry on the family line and take responsibility for old age support.²⁴⁵ Parents without sons tend to call in a son-in-law for one of their daughters. The son-in-law carries on the family line of his wife's family by taking his new family's surname as an adopted son or

²⁴⁵ Leung, Alicia SM, "Feminism in transition: Chinese culture, ideology and the development of the women's movement in China," *Asia Pacific journal of management* 20.3 (2003): 359-374, 360

giving one of his sons the surname of his wife's family.²⁴⁶ To some extent, the man in an uxori-local marriage plays the same role as the daughter-in-law in a viri-local marriage. Secondly, a man without enough money or parents' financial support will accept an uxori-local marriage. It is hard for a young rural male coming from poor family to take a wife to live with his natal family except by borrowing money. In an uxori-local marriage the wife's family often spends a lot of money on the engagement or wedding ceremony and the husband spends nothing. Sometimes his parents can even get an amount of money from the wife's family as a betrothal gift. As a result, the uxori-local marriage generally relates to poor families with sons and wealthy families without sons.

During the investigation, two families with uxori-local marriages were found. Ms. Wang F (Interviewee 21) living in X Village only has two daughters. She took in a son-in-law. "My son-in-law comes from a mountain village in Hubei Province. He began living with us after he got married to my daughter. In the day he and my daughter work in the city near here, then they come back after work. During the busy season, my son-in-law stays home and helps me harvest wheat."²⁴⁷

Ms. Liu L (Interviewee 38) and Mr. Zhang (Liu's husband) in Z village have 3 daughters, they don't have a son. They are Muslims. Their oldest daughter Wen is 28 years old. She graduated from college in Henan Province. She got married in 2013. Her marriage is different from most of girls' in the village. First, she and her husband is a love match. They met without being introduced by a matchmaker in the village. Second, she was pregnant before getting married, which differs very much from traditional marriages. Finally, her husband is living with her family. The form of her marriage is uxori-local.

Wen graduated from college in Henan Province. She got married in 2013 and has a six-month-old son. She is not so confident as her mother. She is shy of strangers and quiet in public. Her marriage faces a great deal of criticism in the village. She got to know her husband Gang when she was in college. They were at a party when they first met. Gang is not tall but he's good looking. They fell in love with each other after a

²⁴⁶ Leung, Alicia SM, "Feminism in transition: Chinese culture, ideology and the development of the women's movement in China," *Asia Pacific journal of management* 20.3 (2003): 359-374, 360

²⁴⁷ See the appendix, p.113.

period of contact. Gang was working as a laborer on a building site while Wen was studying. After Wen graduated, she found a job in Henan Province, where Gang was working.

Wen came back home until last year. She told her parents that she wanted to marry Gang, yet, Ms. Liu and Mr. Zhang disapproved of her marriage, since Gang is not a Muslim. In fact, Wen wanted to get married because she was three months pregnant. She did not dare to tell this news to her parents. Two days later, Wen told her outgoing breezy eloquent sister Ying the truth. Wen hoped Ying could persuade her parents so they would accept what happened. Not surprisingly, Ms. Liu and Ms. Zhang became furious as soon as they found out. Ms. Liu recalled: “I was trembling with anger, when I found out she was pregnant. It is disgraceful to get pregnant before marriage. Anger had taken away my appetite. I stayed in bed for three days without having any food. I had never thought such a thing could happen to my family. Then I attempted to persuade her to have an abortion. I told Wen I would take her to Xi’an²⁴⁸ and abort the baby there. We could keep it a secret. No one here would know about it. In addition, I promised that after the abortion I could find her a better date who would at least be a Muslim.” Wen refused and cried not only because she wanted the baby, but because she did not want to break up with Gang. The deadlock continued for a few days until Ms. Liu gave up, “I thought she would be starting to show some days later, then everyone would know she was pregnant. That would be so degrading. Since she insisted on having this baby and we could do nothing to prevent it, my husband and I had to approve of their marriage. And the wedding ceremony had to be held as soon as possible.” Ms. Liu said.

But another problem followed. Gang’s parents opposed their marriage as well, because they did not like Wen. Gang quarreled with his parents about the marriage. He left home in anger. Yet, Gang, himself, could not support a family with his low salary. He could not even afford to rent a room and they would have nowhere to live after the marriage. Finally, Ms. Liu consulted with her husband and intended to let Gang live in their house, just as a son-in-law living with his wife’s family in the context of an uxori-local marriage

²⁴⁸ Xi’an is the capital city of Shaanxi Province, where some of Ms. Liu’s relatives are living.

Gang had no choice at that time without any money or his parents' support. He complied with Wen's parents' request. He married Wen and lived with Wen's family. When his parents found out, they were shocked and their anger was beyond measure. Ms. Liu decorated a room in their house for the new couple and organized a wedding. Ms. Liu said, "I ordered only ten tables in a restaurant for the wedding feast. Gang's parents and his relatives did not come. We invited most of the villagers, our relatives and friends. When the wedding ceremony was held, Wen's belly was larger. I knew everyone noticed that. Maybe all of them realized Wen was pregnant. But now I pay no attention to their gossip. What really irritates me is that when my daughter gave birth, Gang's parents came but they just glanced at the baby boy, and left afterwards. They did not even kiss the baby once. And they have never come to see the baby again after that day." As a normal uxorilocal marriage, the son of Gang and Wen carries the surname of Wen's family, i.e. its surname is Zhang. Ms. Liu was very happy that she has a beautiful grandson. Recently, Wen and Gang are staying at home and taking care of their baby. They sometimes help Ms. Liu to dry the wheat. Until now, Gang hasn't left the village to find a job, which also annoys Ms. Liu and Mr. Zhang.

Ms. Liu's second daughter Ying has been married as well. She worked in an urban area after she graduated from junior middle school. Over the last two years, a friend found her a suitor in the next village and she got married. She moved in with her husband's family. Soon afterwards, she had a baby boy. Ying is looking after the baby at home and her husband is working near the village. Ying's son is two months younger than Wen's. She sometimes takes the baby to her natal family, and communicates with Wen about child rearing. However, Ms. Liu prefers Wen's son, she often says: "our baby (Wen's son) is more beautiful than theirs (Ying's son)." In her opinion, Wen's son is a member of her family, while Ying's is not as Ying's son carries the surname of her husband's family and Ying is no longer a member of her family with a patrilocal marriage.

4.4.3.3 Factors influencing the family status of women

Women's family status can be objectively reflected in aspects of decision-making in marriage, reproduction and other family affairs, housework distribution and

arrangement of leisure time, which can also show women's satisfaction in marriage. In X village, B village and Z village, only a small number of women have the rights to make decisions about both important family affairs and trivial affairs. A small number of women make decisions on important family affairs by consulting with their husbands, but in the majority of families, only the husband has the right to make such decisions. Generally speaking, women have a large degree of rights to make decisions on trivial affairs. Some women said they handle things independently when their husbands are not at home. Regarding housework, 16 interviewees do housework by themselves, while eleven interviewees said they do housework together with their husbands. According to statistics, there is no observable relationship between whether or not a husband and wife share the housework and their current jobs. Some of the women undertake all the housework even though their husbands are at home farming all the time. Even women's right to make decisions regarding marriage and reproduction is weak. As mentioned in the section above, their marriages are always interfered with by parents, and they have to give birth to a boy under the pressure of "patriarchal" expectations. This will be clarified in the following sections. As a whole, a woman's position in the family has improved but still does not completely embody gender equality.

I believe that there are two key factors affecting women's status in the family: women's economic contribution to the family and the influence of traditional culture. An individual's power is consistent with the resources that he or she brings to the marriage and supplies to the partner, and the rights come from the comparison of resources possessed by the two sides. Second, economic conditions form an important resource, and play a significant role in affecting women's status in the family. As many rural families adopt the labor division mode of "men outside the home and women inside", men typically work outside to support the family and women are responsible for housework, taking care of the old and children and other internal trivial matters. Although women's work has become more productive with the development of society, their economic resources have not increased; that is, women's economic contribution to the family is less than men's. As a result, most rural women are still economically dependent on men. There is an extreme case in Z village, Ms. Liu, who has been mentioned above, takes charge of making money to support the family as her husband is

disabled, and her husband just does some housework and farm. It's worth mentioning that Ms. Liu created considerable income with her own capabilities, and the family's wealth is not less than other villagers. We can say that, Ms. Liu is the main contributor of family income. In this case, Mrs. Liu not only has high status in the family, but also earned respect from other villagers.

Ms. Liu is 53 years old. Her husband, Mr. Zhang, is disabled. Ms. Liu looks strong and a bit fat. She wears her hair short, is of medium height, with a dark complexion. She looks young in a stylish flowered dress. She is very confident when she is talking, looking like a leader in her family. Ms. Liu was born in a remote village in a mountainous area. Mr. Zhang comes from the Northeastern part of China. Several years ago, Mr. Zhang came to Shandong Province with his family to do business and settled in Z village. Shortly afterwards, Ms. Liu came and married him. They have three daughters. Mr. Zhang made money by selling leather. Ms. Liu was doing farm work and looking after the children at home. They lived a good life. However, an unexpected conflict spoiled their peaceful lives. Ten years ago, Mr. Zhang got into an argument during business dealing. He couldn't move any more. He had to stop doing business and spend two years bedridden with this injury. Ms. Liu started to take care of the whole family. They spent almost all their money on his illness. Two years later, his leg became better. Nevertheless, he couldn't do the hard work. He had to stay at home and do some housework and a little farm work. Ms. Liu goes outside and finds jobs. During the busy season, she comes back and harvests crops with her husband and children.

Ms. Liu is a smart woman, as her neighbors have said. She earns money in various ways. She is growing wheat and corn. Selling agricultural products brings in approximately 3000 Yuan (428 Euro) a year. She is raising sheep and geese. When she is not at home, her husband helps her to feed them. They can earn 5,000 Yuan (714 Euro) a year by selling sheep and goose eggs. During the slack season, Ms. Liu does odd jobs in urban areas. I asked her what kind of work she usually does, she answered: "I do whatever I can, as long as it can bring in much money. I always choose highly-paid jobs, no matter how hard they are." She can earn at least 20,000 Yuan (2857 Euro) a year by doing odd jobs. In the past, she even went to steal oil from the oil field near the village. She said: "at that time, most of villagers 'carried' oil, because they could earn lots of

money selling oil. We went to the oil field at mid-night. We were seldom noticed by the oil company.” She took the oil back, extracted it herself, and sold it afterwards. She made fast money from the oil. In 2000, the oil company found out about this problem and began to supervise the oil field carefully. Ms. Liu and the other villagers stopped stealing oil.

Ms. Liu and her family are living in a new house built in 2009. Five years ago, Ms. Liu decided to build a new house. The house they lived in before was too small as well as old. Sheep and geese often made the yard dirty. She felt uncomfortable living in an old house. This prompted her to build a new one. Then she made another yard next to the old one where they lived before. The new yard is about 230 square meters. A row of brick-concrete bungalows have been constructed on one side for living. Sheep and geese still stay in the old yard. There are seven rooms including four bedrooms, a living room, a kitchen and a bathroom. It is the only house with a bathroom in Z Village. The house is simply decorated with a tile floor in each room that looks pretty clean. In the living room, there is a 42-inch LCD TV. There is a large leather sofa in the front of the TV. Every bedroom is equipped with an air conditioner. They have many household appliances, such as a rice cooker, induction cooker, electric water heater, fridge, water dispenser and so on. In one of her daughters’ bedrooms, there is a computer. The new house is modern, clean, and light, and it’s the largest one in the village. Constructing the new yard and house has cost Ms. Liu 120,000 Yuan (17,142 Euro). Three vehicles are parked in the yard beside the entrance gate: an electric tricycle, minibus, and a car. In June, when crops are harvested, the ground in the yard and the roof of the house are covered with wheat just like a golden carpet. There is a line in the front of house with baby clothes hanging from it dripping drops upon the ground.

Since suffering his leg injury, Mr. Zhang does housework, such as cooking, washing clothes, and cleaning rooms. He said: “My injury doesn’t allow me to make money now. I have become a burden to her. I appreciate that she doesn’t leave this family. She accompanied me through the bad times. Now she has to go outside to earn money for us. She is very tired because I can’t help her so much. What I can do for her is doing the housework. When she comes back, the rooms are cleaned already and she can have a meal as soon as possible.

From the story above, we can see that women's larger economic contribution to the family can affect their family status positively and bring women more confidence.

Traditional Chinese culture brings some negative impact on women's family status. By traditional Chinese culture I refer to feudal ideas, such as the concept of "male superiority", and patrilocal marriage. B Village is the most conservative and the most affected by feudal ideas among the villages in the present study. Women are inferior in the family under the influence of traditional culture. Moreover, the marriage customs in this village make women fall into a passive position. Specifically, when a woman gets married, her parents cannot benefit financially, on the contrary, they have to give her a large amount of money as a dowry. Therefore, daughters' marriages are often regarded as a great loss to their parents in this village.

B35²⁴⁹: Ms. Zhao W, 50 years old, has two daughters and a son.

"Interviewer: How much did you spend on your son's marriage?"

Ms. Zhao W: In this area, people spend at least 80,000 Yuan for a son's marriage. We spent 80,000 Yuan (11428 Euro). However, when a daughter gets married, you have to buy the household appliances for the new couple. The most important thing is that we don't ask for betrothal gifts from the groom. And we have to give the daughter at least 30,000 Yuan (4285 Euro) as a dowry. Some rich families give the daughter 50,000 Yuan or 60,000 Yuan. The daughter will leave home and live with her husband's family when she gets married. The groom's parents not only have a new family member but also get the household appliances. However, the bride's parents can get nothing and even lose a family member and a lot of money. So having a son is better. Raising a daughter means you will lose money in the future. The daughter will leave you in the end. In addition, you must give her much money when she is leaving you. The family which has two or three daughters will feel stressed."

4.4.4 Concept of child-bearing

Traditional marriage advocates early marriage and early childbirth, and fertility is an important purpose of marriage. Generally speaking, most of women will give birth to the first child in the first year of marriage. When I ask them for the date of marriage, most of them will calculate by adding one year to the age of their first child. With the growth of age, they will have a second or third child. Traditional concepts of child-bearing are characterized by "more children" and "preferably a boy". Firstly, "more children" aims to increase the labor force in the family. China was a feudal society for a long time. Small-scale peasant economy occupied a dominant position and, the labor force, especially male labor, played an important role in production under the

²⁴⁹ See the appendix, p.178.

preferred production mode and lower productivity.²⁵⁰ Moreover, people's living conditions suffered greatly. Both the birth rate and death rate were high. In this environment, people strove to have more boys in order to ensure the enough labor force in the family. Second, from the perspective of traditional culture, Mencius believe "There are three forms of unfilial conduct and the worst is to have no descendants", i.e. one is impious to ancestors if he doesn't have descendants. Life is limited, but it can be eternal through the unlimited continuity of a clan, this is the religion of Chinese farmers.²⁵¹ Indeed, the traditional concept of child-bearing has deeply affected social development, but the concept of "Rear sons for help in old age" and "Carry on the family line" still exists and continues in the countryside even though the agricultural production mode has changed in modern society.

As might be gathered, family planning policy in rural areas is different from that of urban districts. Family planning policy in rural areas specifies a family who only has one daughter is legally allowed to give birth to a second child. However, under the effect of the concept of "More children", local rural families are often willing to have a second baby, or even would like to pay some penalties to give birth to the third baby no matter whether the first child is boy or girl. However, with the increasing cost of raising a child in recent years, some young people in the countryside prefer to have fewer children.

B30²⁵²: Ms. Zhang T, 44 years old, has two daughters and a son.

"Interviewer: How is the equality between men and women in this village?"

Ms. Zhang T: In some families, they still view sons as better than daughters. But the rule is strict now. Each couple can have two children at most. If they already have two daughters, they can't have a third one according to the One Child Policy. But they still want a boy. Nowadays raising a child costs lots of money. The schooling fees are also expensive. Parents are under heavy pressure. As a result, the couple who have only a son will not want to have another one."

During the investigation, it is found that preference for a son is widespread among women in the countryside. Influenced by feudal ideas, older women think that sons can carry on their family bloodline, and ensure their security in their old age. Meanwhile, young women under pressure from their parents-in-law are expected to have a son. If

²⁵⁰ Li Yu, "Research on Traditional Childbearing Cultures in China," *Dong Yue Tribune* 02, (2002):116 (in Chinese)

²⁵¹ Chen Feng, "Intergenerational relations in rural family," *Journal of South China Agricultural University*, 02, (2014): 49-54, 50 (in Chinese)

²⁵² See the appendix, p.155

the first child is not a boy, they will have another one. Moreover, before they give birth to a son, some of them may suffer unjust treatment in their husbands' families. Consequently, women without sons often have more anxiety in all aspects of life.

B31²⁵³: Ms. Han M, 59 years old, has four daughters and a son.

“Interviewer: Why did you want to have so many children?”

Ms. Han M: The first four children are all daughters. At that time we wanted a son. So we had the fifth child. Each couple needs a son. When we are old, our son can look after us. After the daughters get married, they have to look after their parents-in-law. They have no time or energy to take care of us. So a son is important for a family.”

X25²⁵⁴: Ms. He Z, 26 years old, has a daughter.

“Interviewer: How do you feel about equality between men and women?”

Ms. He Z: Men and women should be equal. But in the village, people often think men are superior. They view sons as better than daughters. My husband was hoping for a son when I was pregnant. He asked me to bring forth a boy, so did my parents-in-law. So I had to give birth to a boy. Their views are outworn. They especially wanted a boy.”

Ms. Wu N is 50 years old. She doesn't have a son, just two daughters. She is the only participant who has bought commercial medical insurance (it is different from the new cooperative medical care system in rural areas). As she has no son, she always feels helpless and insecure about her future. The following indicates the reason why she bought it.

Interviewer²⁵⁵: Do you have medical insurance?

Ms. Wu N: Yes, all the villagers have been covered by new rural cooperative medical system. Moreover, my husband and I have bought commercial health insurance. We don't have a son, so we have to consider it more. When we are old, maybe no one will care for us. My elder daughter told me that she would look after us, but she is married and has to take care of her parents-in-law. If we had a son, our daughter-in-law would have the obligation to look after us.

There is a big difference between the pension system in Chinese rural areas and urban districts. The pension for rural people is relatively lower, which cannot guarantee old people's lives fundamentally, so family security is the main method for rural endowment insurance system. Based on the traditional concept of “Rear sons for help in old age”, most people in the countryside take their son as their own old-age security, while people who don't have sons are lacking in safety awareness on the aging problem.

²⁵³ See the appendix, p.160.

²⁵⁴ See the appendix, p.131.

²⁵⁵ See the appendix, p.137.

4.5 Leisure and health issues

With the rapid development of mechanization, rural women in the plain area don't need to spend too much time working the land and they have more leisure time than before. In fact, their leisure entertainment is very simple, such as, watching TV and chatting. People who like to play cards, read books, read newspapers, and go shopping only account for a small proportion. Actually, only one interviewee said she reads newspapers in her free time. This phenomenon is closely related to the lower cultural standard of local women. However, rural women don't have very high expectations or requirements for their own leisure. According to statistics, most women are satisfied with their leisure time and only five interviewees are not satisfied. On one hand, it reflects rural women's "family-centered" life, and their pursuit for individual life is much lower than family life. On the other hand, it can embody their lower degree of integration into modern society. Leisure activities are still traditional. Nobody travels, exercises, surfs the internet, or does other new recreational activities due to various limitations.

In terms of social contact, the network of rural women is limited in the village. People who communicate with them frequently are their relatives or neighbors, and they can ask for help from them in case of any difficulty in life. Thus, the social capital capacity of rural women is very small and homogeneity of social networks is strong.

Agricultural mechanization can greatly reduce the burden of farmers, which can be visibly seen from their physical condition. In the three villages, the majority of women are in good physical condition. Of the 15 interviewees over the age of 50, eleven females are very healthy and only four women said they got ill sometimes. This is closely related to the decreased labor quantity. Since agricultural mechanization has been implemented in this area, the time women spend doing farm work is greatly reduced. Most of them believe that farm work is no longer a burden, and they can finish work easily as their physical condition is not influenced negatively by the assistance of agricultural machines. In this case, some women in their 50s can still go out to find work to increase family income in the slack season.

Regarding attitudes toward disease, they are not willing to see a doctor based on the principle of saving money. Some popular sayings go like this, "Future generations

will be poor if one gets ill” or “One person seeing a doctor will impoverish the whole family”. Since rural women always focus on the family, they do not want to become a burden themselves. This makes them are afraid of seeing a doctor when they are ill, so they just bear it or buy some medicine from village clinics. Few people go to see a doctor except when they suffer serious diseases. Although most rural females are in good physical condition, they still worry that they may not be able to pay for medical care if they suffer from serious illness someday. For these women, medical costs for serious illness easily become an invisible pressure.

“X26²⁵⁶: Ms. Wu N, 50 years old.

Interviewer: What is the main problem in your daily life?

Ms. Wu N: Now we don't have big problems. For rural families, medical bills would be the biggest problem. If a family member suffered serious disease, the whole family would become poor. Although we all have the rural medical insurance, we still need to pay a lot for the medical bills. After all, the rural medical insurance only covers half of the expenses. The money we have saved would be only a drop in the bucket.”

²⁵⁶ See the appendix, p.137.

Chapter 5 A comparison of Chinese rural women's lives in the mountainous area and the plain area

Through the description of Chinese rural females' living and working conditions in one mountainous area and one plain area, it can be found that there are lots of staggering dissimilarities as well as some similarities in rural women's situations in different terrains. In this chapter, I will compare the situations of rural females in the mountain area and the plain area, summarize the differences and similarities, analyze the reasons for them, and probe into the gap in women's living conditions and rural development between different areas.

5.1 Dissimilarities in rural women's lives in the mountain area and the plain area

The biggest difference between the mountainous rural area and the plain rural area is in the terrain features. This difference in physical terrain also greatly influences the difference between the living conditions of mountainous rural women and plain rural women. In other words, there's a direct connection between the living conditions of the rural women and the terrain features. The mountainous countryside is mostly located in regions with many mountains, which, generally speaking, are more remote, closed off and have lower levels of modernization. However, the countryside in plain regions has natural geographic advantages. Convenient traffic allows the rural residents in plain regions to have more chances to get in contact with modern civilization. Overall, the difference in working and living situations between mountainous rural and plain rural women falls into the following three aspects: working conditions, living environment, and nutrition and health. In addition, from the point of policy implications, the government is currently promoting local urbanization policy across the countryside, which generates influences on the lives and development of mountainous and plain rural women. However, there's a big difference among the influences.

5.1.1 Working conditions and income

Through comparison of the working conditions of rural women in two different regions, a significant difference between the labor situations of the rural women in the

two places is evident. In particular, this kind of difference is mainly found in labor tools, labor time, labor tasks, and crop yield. Ultimately, different terrain features and regional economic development levels are the main reasons for the differences.

Table 5. 1 Comparison of farmers' working conditions

Terrain features	Labor tools	Labor time (in the peak season)	Means of transportation	Wheat annual yield	Women's labor tasks
Mountain	Hoe, sickle, harrow, hayfork, threshing machine, small digging machine, shredder, etc.	The whole day	Basket and tractor	300 kilo per mu	Mainly doing farm work
Plain	Seeding machine, spray irrigation machines, rotary cultivator, combine harvester, shredder, etc.	Less than 4 hours	Light truck	At least 600 kilo per mu	Doing part-time jobs or small business, doing farm work

Y Village is an administrative village under the management of Zhenan County, Shangluo City, Shaanxi Province. Zhenan County has a total area of 3480 square kilometers. It currently has a preservation of 490,000 mu (32666 ha) of arable land, the reserved resources of which are severely inadequate and the soil texture of which is sticky and heavy, with bad tith. Y Village, located in the deep mountains, is a traditional and isolated small village. Given that access is very inconvenient, there are no enterprises or factories in Y Village, except for a brick factory nearby. Therefore, the young adult labor force of the village works or does business in the city all year round, and the phenomenon of agricultural feminization is widespread. The mountainous arable lands are basically fragmented, comprised mostly of sloping fields. It's very hard for large agricultural machinery to work. The villagers can farm only according to tradition ways and techniques. The farming tools are rudimentary. For example, farmers use hoes to loosen the dirt and cut the grass, sickles to reap wheat or corn, and wooden hayforks to carry the wheat straw. From ploughing to harvest, during the whole process,

they barely use modernized agricultural mechanics. Except for the small digging machines used by most farmers when ploughing and the threshing machines occasionally used to reap the corn or wheat, all the other labor is done using traditional agricultural tools. It is conceivable that not only is mountainous agricultural production time and energy consuming; its productive efficiency is also very low. Especially during the harvest season, the disadvantages of the traditional production methods are manifested in the extreme, and the labor burden of farmers are very heavy. At the same time, as the male labor force of this village continues to get transferred to the outside, the proportion of women doing agricultural labor keeps increasing, and in turn highlights the problem of agricultural feminization. For women, using traditional agricultural tools to finish most of the agricultural labor using physical strength is a very big challenge.

In Y Village, most villagers grow wheat, soybeans, potatoes, corn, and other such crops. Crops are grown according to a three-year rotation. This is a traditional method: crop rotation, to keep the soil fertile and prevent soil erosion. The usual growing order is as follows: in the autumn (October) of the first year, farmers start to grow wheat; around May of the second year, they reap, plough, and grow soybeans; in October of the second year, they reap the soybeans, plough, and spare the land; till the spring of the third year, farmers start to grow potatoes, one month after which, they grow corn in between the potato seeds; in the summer (around June), they reap the potatoes; in Autumn (around October), they reap the corn; when the corn reaping is finished, continuing to grow wheat. By then, one cycle is over. According to what the women of Y Village said, the same crop can't be grown on the same piece of land continuously. For example, in the first year, wheat got planted; in the second year, the wheat was planted again; in the autumn of the third year, however, the wheat can no longer be planted any more. Otherwise, the soil fertility will be affected, which in return will cause a reduction of the harvest. So, if wheat is planted in the autumn of the first year, , in the winter of the second year, the land will be spared till the next spring, by which time potatoes or corn will be planted again. This kind of basic planting knowledge is normally accumulated through family experience and gets passed on from generation to generation. Even today, almost all the rural left-behind women understand these rules, though they don't completely understand the truth behind these rules. This kind of family heritage is a kind of conservative way to teach agricultural knowledge. The phenomenon of "bearing each family's skills and always following the old" is the manifestation of the lag in agricultural technology education, and it has limited the

communication and development of agricultural techniques.²⁵⁷

As many male laborers have left the village to work, the left-behind women of Y Village need to finish every link of the crop farming alone, such as ploughing, fertilizing, weeding, reaping, moving, threshing, etc. Before planting each crop, the small digging machines need to be used for ploughing. However, not every family can own a small digging machine. When they need to plough women without digging machines usually hire a villager with a digging machine. It costs 80 Yuan to plough 1 mu (0.07 ha) of land. Fertilizing can be divided into two phases. The first phase is to use organic fertilizer, such as animal feces, and at the same time do the ploughing. Women use carts to transport feces and spread them on the ground, and then dig the ground with a digging machine. The second phase is to fertilize. Women must go to the town to buy fertilizer, and transport the fertilizer to the village by themselves, and then spread fertilizer without using any machines. Because the southern mountainous area of Shaanxi province is humid, and it rains frequently all year around, the crops don't need special irrigation. The following steps are harvesting and transporting, which are the most exhausting in the entire process of planting. Farmers use sickles to cut wheat. Generally cutting a mu of wheat takes two days from morning till night, and from this a maximum of 300 kg wheat can be harvested. Harvested wheat must then be back home with bamboo baskets every day, a journey that requires several trips back and forth each day. It is the same or may take even longer when harvesting corn. Finally, farmers use electric wheat scourers to thresh. Since not every family has wheat scourers women must sometimes borrow from someone else, and exchange labor when needed. After threshing is completed, workers sort out the wheat-straw from the kernels with wooden forks and store it to feed cattle and sheep or burn it.

Farming and cooking are the main daily tasks of women in Y Village, and they spend a lot of time and energy on these two activities, especially during the busy farming seasons. Even if they are not left-behind women accompanied by their husbands, they often seem to be busier than their husbands and are under the double burden of agricultural labor and housework. To demonstrate this point, I present the labor record of women's work for a day in Y Village. It was in September 2013 when I was doing research in Y Village, and it was just the corn harvesting season, which is a busy period and it was the busiest time for women in Y Village. During my research I lived in Ms. L's house and recorded all Ms. L's activities for one day. This is just a

²⁵⁷ Agriculture education <http://www.xzbu.com/2/view-617153.htm> (Accessed in 05.09.2015)

description of some of her labor, but through the records we can know many of the busy activities of most women in Y Village.

Ms. L is a farmer. She is 50 years old. Her husband was working outside the village a few years ago. As he aged, he couldn't bear the heavy physical work any more and returned home to do farm work with Ms. L. They have a son and a daughter. The son, now 30 years old with a bachelor's degree, works in a company in Xi'an. The daughter went to work in a restaurant in Xi'an after dropping out of high school, got married last year, and now runs a small restaurant with her husband in Xi'an. Ms. L is short, about 155 centimeters and she is small and thin with a bit of a humpback, dark short hair without luster, and some straw debris scattered in it. Ms. L is simply dressed and wears slightly oversized black trousers, with some mud on them. She also wears a green woolen cloth jacket with long sleeves, a pair of cloth shoes she sewed herself, and her right leg looks a little swollen, making her start to falter. Villagers in Y Village mostly look tanned, and Ms. L is no exception. At the same time, her face is covered with wrinkles, left as traces of time.

At 6 o'clock in the morning, I noticed that Ms. L and her husband got up when I got up. Her husband took a teakettle, filled it with water, picked up some dry branches, made a fire and boiled more water in the kitchen. Ms. L went to the cabin next to the kitchen and took some hay to feed the cattle. At 6:35, Ms. L and her husband sat in the kitchen, drinking and chatting with each other. At 7 o'clock, she carried a bamboo basket and went out with her husband, crossing the paths in the village. At 7:20, they started to break off the corn in their field. At 9:30, they put the corn that had been broken off into each of their own bamboo basket, and then they went back home. I asked her the weight of a bamboo basket full of corn, and she answered "About 70 or 80 Jin (35 or 40 kilograms)". At 10 o'clock, Ms. L put down the bamboo basket and went to the vegetable plot at the door of their home to pick up three green peppers, and then went to the room (storage) next to the kitchen to pick out five potatoes, and was ready to cook. Her husband poured the corn out of the bamboo basket, and put it neatly in the yard in the sun. Ms. L put the vegetables in the plastic basket and went outside to wash them under the pipe, then went into the kitchen, cut the potatoes and green peppers, saved the potato peels and green pepper stems in a red keg to feed the cattle and sheep, and then took out a piece of bean curd and cut it. At 10:15, she began to make a fire, using some good dry branches that had been chopped as firewood. At 10:25, Ms. L

cooked three dishes, a plate of potatoes, a dish of green peppers, and a plate of bean curd. Her husband sat beside the table and smoked a cigarette with a cup of tea in front of him. Ms. L put three dishes on the table, and her husband began to eat the food. Ms. L went back to the kitchen and took some rice in a large bowl and washed it, after washing it again, she poured the washing water into a little red bucket. She cut some pieces of potato into the pot, put the washed rice on the potatoes, and poured in two bowls of clean water. Then Ms. L added wood while sitting in front of the stove, fanning the flames to make a fire. At 10:45, the rice was completely steamed, and Ms. L took the rice out of pot, and then poured some water into the pan, saving it for washing the dishes. Then she put the rice in the living room and went to the kitchen to put out the fire in the stove. At 10:55, she began to have dinner with her husband. At 11:20, after they had their meal, Ms. L collected all the dishes and started to scrub pots and washed dishes in the kitchen. Her husband sat on the sofa and lit a cigarette. At 11:40, Ms. L and her husband put the bamboo baskets on their backs and walked back to the fields. At 12 o'clock, they began to break off the corn. At 14:20, they took the bamboo baskets filled with corn and went back home, and there were also some corn that was broken off but couldn't fit into the basket, so it was temporarily left in the field. At 14:45, Ms. L began to pick and chop vegetables, and light the fire. Her husband was laying the corn to dry in the yard. At 15:20, Ms. L cooked green pepper and bean curd, and the potatoes that hadn't been finished in a pot in the morning, and then took them to the table. Her husband sat beside the kitchen table and drank tea. At 15:35, Ms. L steamed rice and had dinner with her husband. At 15:55, Ms. L began to wash the dishes. Her husband rode a motorbike to the hillside and cut grass for the sheep. At 16:10, Ms. L drank a bottle of water, carrying a bamboo basket to the ground. At 16:30, she began to break off the corn in the field alone. At 18:05, her husband returned to the field and worked with her. At 20:25, it gradually got dark, and they put some corn that had been broken off into the bamboo basket, and left the rest of the corn in the field. At 20:55 when they came home, Ms. L began to cook, and her husband was to boil water to drink. It was very dark outside, and there was no light in the village. Ms. L picked two green peppers with a flashlight in their vegetable field. At 21:30, Ms. L cooked the potatoes and green peppers, and her husband sat on the sofa while watching TV. At 22 o'clock, Ms. L had

dinner with her husband. At 22:50, after they had their meal, Ms. L washed the dishes in the kitchen, and her husband boiled water. At 23 o'clock, her husband poured hot water into the little bucket filled with the washing water from the rice, potato skins and leaves, and carried a small barrel to the sheepfold. At 23:20, Ms. L and her husband sat in the sitting room filled with corn and started threshing the dried corn with their hands.

As described, these field notes make an explicit statement about time allocation of women for agricultural operations and house work, and sexual division of labor in Y Village. According to the record, Ms. L has to finish a series of activities in one day, such as picking vegetables, washing dishes, doing the cooking, feeding cows and sheep, harvesting corn and so on. Among these activities, most of the time is occupied by harvest corn and doing the cooking, with respectively 8 hours and 25 minutes and 3 hours and 10 minutes, 55 minutes to wash dishes, 1 hour and 35 minutes to eat, 2 hours to walk from home to their farmland in a day. What calls for special attention is that Ms. L walks from the farmland to home with about 35 kilograms of corn on her back. She doesn't rest when she gets home but goes straight to pick vegetables and do the cooking. In contrast, Ms. L's husband gets more time to rest. While Ms. L is doing the cooking, there are about 40 minutes for her husband to rest in the living room. However, as for agricultural operations, what Ms. L does is almost the same as what her husband does. This fully embodies the heavy burden of women in agricultural work and the unequal sexual division of labor in Y Village. In the revolution that changed China's political organization, women were engaged in agricultural production. In that revolution, it was vigorously promoted that work brought emancipation and equality to women.²⁵⁸ However, no greater improvement in agricultural technology has been achieved in Y Village, which puts women under the added pressure of work. Because of the low income of agricultural production, male laborers working away from home are not willing to quit their jobs and go home to help their wives harvest in the busy farming season. As a result, the "left-behind" women during the busy season have to bear much more hard work than Ms. L.

Women in the mountainous area participate in a large number of high-cost but

²⁵⁸ Laurel Bossen, *Chinese Women and Rural Development—Sixty Years of Change in Lu Village of Yunnan* (Jiangsu Peoples Publishing, LTD, 2005), 125 (translated by Hu Yukun , in Chinese)

low-efficiency agricultural operations. Having spent a lot of time and energy, they don't get high income.

According to what I surveyed in Y Village, no matter which kind of crop is grown, villagers of Y Village did not gain high profits proportionate with their efforts in agricultural production. Table 5.2 shows the villagers' cost and income per mu of wheat, corn, potatoes and soybeans in Y Village.

Table 5. 2 Cost and income of growing crops in Y village

Crop		Wheat	Corn	Soybean	Potato
Cost (Yuan)	Seed	120	60	90	300
	Plough	80	80	80	80
	Carbamide	-	100	10	-
	Diammonium phosphate	72	36	-	36
	Insecticide	-	-	-	5
	Herbicide	3	-	-	-
	Other	-	-	3	-
	Total cost	275	276	183	421
Income (Yuan)	Yield (Kilo)	300	200	90	800
	Market price (Yuan / kilo)	2	2	4	1
	Total income	600	400	360	800

As stated below, villagers in Y Village grow wheat, soybean, potato and corn, on three year rotations. The total income within three years is 2160 Yuan and the total cost is 1155 Yuan. The pure profit per mu within three years is 905 Yuan and the average profit per mu in one year is about 300 Yuan. In Y Village, on average, every villager has one mu of farmland, so every family owns three or four mu. Therefore, statistically every family can at most gain an income of 900 Yuan to 1200 Yuan from agricultural production every year. While in the plain area, a family with four acres of farmland can earn almost 2000 Yuan.

In fact, villagers in Y Village don't sell off all their agricultural produce. For example, kernels will be kept in storage after threshing, some of which are used as a feed for livestock. Others are exchanged for flour and the rest will be sold if someone comes to buy them. Most of the soybeans will not be sold but will be exchanged for tofu or processed into tofu; some will be processed into soybean flour that is fed to cows and sheep, which helps promote lactation. Potatoes are the main food for villagers in Y Village. As we can see in the working records of Ms. L, there are potatoes in three meals

every day for the family of Ms. L. In Y Village, every family keeps potatoes in storage for the whole year in general and some are kept as seeds for the next cultivation. Families don't grow potatoes to earn money but for themselves. In conclusion, even though women in Y Village spend considerable time and energy, they gain very little income in a self-sufficient production environment. For farmers, farmland is a basic guarantee of life. Whether it's in mountainous the area or in the plain area, small-scale farmers can't meet all their living needs by income from farmland, so they have to rely on non-farm income. However, rural women in the mountainous area spend a significant amount of time on agricultural production and don't have additional energy to earn non-farm income. As such, they are still dependent on the family economically.

The agricultural development level in the mountainous area is still in the traditional agricultural stage. In this stage, farmers are in a passive position. The natural environment and natural resources exert a direct influence on the quality and yield of agricultural products, such as the productivity of the soil, climate, amount of precipitation and seed quality. The productivity of the soil and the seed quality can be improved under some certain conditions, but such things as the climate and amount of precipitation can't be controlled. Especially in the poor mountainous area like Y Village, farmers don't have the ability or condition to improve the quality of the soil. Therefore, the yield of wheat per acre in mountainous the area is only a half of that in the plain area. In addition, in the process of cultivation, farmers use traditional tools and technologies to finish all cultivation steps, such as seed selection, weed control, fertilizer application, and harvest. However, the harvested grain only can be sold near the village. In traditional agricultural operation, farmers lack access to the latest information on agricultural production and management. Even if they get the latest information, they will not use it. They still acquire farming knowledge from experience passed on from generation to generation, so agricultural production technology can't be updated objectively and subjectively, making it difficult for farmers to increase their productivity.

I think that L County is in a transitional stage between agricultural mechanization and modernization, because agricultural mechanization of production processes has been basically achieved in L County at present, but such other characteristics of

agricultural modernization as scientific production technology and intensive growth patterns have yet to be achieved completely, which remains to be further explored and developed. For example, there is a lack of effective management of fertilizers and pesticides. The excessive use of fertilizers and pesticides may cause water pollution and affect food security. Besides, water resources are wasted terribly by broad irrigation. The technique of drip-irrigation has not been popularized in the plain area, which cannot meet the requirements of agricultural modernization. In my opinion, agricultural modernization has to involve environmental concern. Advanced technology has to be popularized during agricultural production to ensure rational use of natural resources. Compared with the mountainous area, agriculture in the plain area is much better developed. For L County in a plain area, I deem its level of agricultural development to be in a transitional stage between agricultural mechanization and agricultural modernization, or at least it has realized agricultural mechanization. The three villages I selected belong to L County of Shandong Province, which is part of the Yellow River Floodplain. The terrain in this area is flat along with many rivers flowing through. In 2012, there were approximately 1,520,000 mu (101333 ha) of land including 780,000 mu (5200 ha) of arable lands in L County. This area enjoys abundant water resources and sunshine, which is beneficial for growing crops. Additionally, huge agricultural machines can work in fields in the plain freely. Hence, L County is an ideal place to develop modern agriculture. Agricultural modernization is characterized by mechanized production processes, scientific production technology, intensive growth patterns, market-oriented cycle of operations, socialized production organization, intelligent workers and so on. Mechanization of production processes is one of the characteristics in agricultural modernization.

To a large extent, a higher level of mechanization has eased the labor burden of farmers in the plain area, resulting in the complete difference in the labor situation of rural women between L County and the mountainous area. In L County, tillage machines, seeding machines, sprinkling machines and combine-harvesters are used by farmers in the process of cultivation. With the machines taking the place of human labor, the efficiency of agricultural production increases greatly. The combine-harvester, for example, combines harvest with threshing in the same machine, and through simple

operations enables farmers to finish harvesting and threshing at the same time. From the perspective of work efficiency, a large grain combine-harvester can harvest 400 to 500 acres of wheat in one day. As long as they can rent a harvester, farmers in L County can finish harvesting within dozens of minutes. In the respect of breeds of crops, only corn and wheat are grown in L County. In the process of growing wheat, the only step which wastes more energy is drying wheat in the sun. Because the harvesters currently used don't have a drying grain function, farmers have to lay the harvested kernels on the ground and dry them in the sun before putting them in storage or selling them. Most villagers lay grains of wheat on the flat and wide roadside near the village. In the morning, they move the wheat to the road in their light trucks and then pour all the wheat on the side of the road. The wheat is pushed with brooms and is spread evenly on the road so as to make the moisture in the wheat evaporate as quickly as possible. By dusk, wheat is swept up with brooms, put into the trucks with shovels and then sent home. The next morning, the procedure is repeated. In June, it is fine and sunny in Shandong with little rain, as a result the wheat dries after about three or four days.

When the wheat is being dried on the road, one family member must stay at the side of the road to watch the wheat, otherwise, it may be stolen or broken by passing cars. Hence, when they are drying wheat, farmers have to sit in the sun and watch the wheat for the whole day. They often spend a lot of time gathering the wheat scattered on the road and shoveling all of it into the car. Many interviewees find this process tiring. Some of them²⁵⁹ even work more than 15 hours on these days. However, when they finish this task, they gain leisure time again.

In contrast to farmers from Y village, farmers in L County sell the whole crop as soon as the wheat is dried; they never store crops for self-consumption. They buy all the food including rice, flour, and vegetables in the market near the village. The market, usually located in a larger town, refers to a place that can meet all the normal trade demands of farm households, one in which farmers can sell agricultural products which they will not use while they can buy things they need.. It is the starting point for agricultural products and traditional handicrafts flowing upward to the whole market

²⁵⁹ See the appendix, p.127

system. Meanwhile, it is also the downward flowing destination of inputs for peasants' consumption.²⁶⁰ In the market of Y Village, there are two forms of trade. One is immediate bartering, for example, exchanging wheat for rice or flour; exchanging soybeans for tofu. The other is bartering with currency as the mediation. However, in the market of L County, immediate bartering has totally disappeared and all bartering is conducted with currency as the mediation. Commodity production in Y Village is relatively backward and backward commodity exchange forms still exist in Y Village. These are related to semi self-sufficient agriculture production environments in the mountainous rural area. The market of L County is more in line with the development of social modernization. The burden of rural women in non-self-sufficient areas has been removed. They do not need to spend much time planting vegetables and processing food, for example making tofu at home. Besides the fact that time is saved, manual labor is saved.

In order to demonstrate the differences with women in the mountainous area, I have recorded a day routine of Ms. Xv (interviewee 18) from L County.

Ms. Xv is 51 years old. She has dark skin and is of medium height. She looks strong and wears a black and thick braid which goes past her waist. She has two daughters and one son already grown up. The land of her family is four mu (0.27 ha). Recently, she has always stayed in the village, done farm work and looked after granddaughters. Her husband works in the city. I went to the home of Ms. Xv in late June when she was not ready for reaping wheat. She had planned to reap wheat in a week. Two days before, her husband had come home from the city to help Ms. Xv with the farm work. Shandong is located in eastern China and morning comes early. At 5 am, the cocks on Ms. Xv's farm started to crow. When I woke up, through the window I saw Ms. Xv and her husband feeding the sheep in the backyard. At 7 am, Ms. Xv started to cook with the gas stove. Therefore, she did not need to chop wood for the fire in advance. It would not take a long time to cook and about forty minutes would be enough for her to get the meal ready. There is a variety of food. She prepared chicken, cabbage, celery and beans and so on. At 8:30, Ms. Xv washed dishes. Her husband led

²⁶⁰ G. William Skinner. (1998). Marketing and social structure in rural China (pp. 6), translated by Shi Jianyun and Xv Xiuli. (in Chinese)

the cattle and sheep out of the yard and broke off some leaves to feed the sheep. At 9, Ms. Xv watched TV in the room. At noon, the daughter of one villager had a wedding in the county and Ms. Xv and her husband were invited. At 10, Ms. Xv and her husband discussed the wedding gift and decided to give 100 Yuan. Then Ms. Xv went to the county on her electric motor car and her husband stayed at home.²⁶¹ At 12, her husband started cooking. It can be seen that he is familiar with the kitchen and has cooked for many years. At 12:30, Ms. Xv came home. After having lunch together, Ms. Xv went to wash dishes. That afternoon, Ms. Xv and her husband stayed at home and watched TV until 5pm when her daughter sent her two granddaughters to her home. At 6pm, Ms. Xv went to the county in her electric motor car to buy vegetables while her husband looked after the granddaughters at home. Half an hour later, Ms. Xv returned and began to cook. She made about five dishes. At 7:30 pm, they had dinner. At 8pm, Ms. Xv began to wash dishes, her husband fed the cattle and sheep and her two granddaughters stayed in the house to do homework. After washing dishes, Ms. Xv cleaned the living room and then accompanied her granddaughters. At 10 pm, Ms. Xv washed her granddaughters' faces and feet. When they fell asleep, she and her husband went to bed.

From the example of Ms. Xv, it can be seen that the quantity of agricultural work and housework of rural women in the plain area is much less than that in the mountainous area and that the gender division of labor in the plain area is less clear than in the mountainous area. In Y Village, men seldom or never stay in the kitchen and it is rare to see men cook. However, it is normal to see men in X Village cook in the kitchen. Under such circumstances, women in the plain area have more spare time., They can spend their free time doing business in the village or working near their home, as a result of which, their income is higher and they have economic independence. This exerts an active influence on the improvement of women's status in the family and their development.

5.1.2 Living circumstances

Apart from the differences caused by terrain and location in living circumstances, housing and traffic conditions are fairly different as well. In the mountainous area, the

²⁶¹ As to my visit, they did not attend the wedding ceremony together.

temperature varies greatly between day and night, both outdoor and indoor environments are quite cold and humid. It is cooler than other areas in summer in China, so villagers don't need an air conditioner. However, it is harmful for residents living in a humid environment for a long time. The plain area in Shandong belongs to the warm temperate monsoon climate. Spring and summer last for a long time and autumn and winter last for a short time. It is hot in summer and the highest temperature of recent summers was 34 degrees Celsius. It is cold and dry in winter. Most precipitation falls in summer, which easily leads to water logging in summer and drought in winter, spring, and late autumn. This has an adverse effect on agricultural production.²⁶² Similar to the situation in the mountainous area, villagers in the plain area warm themselves by keeping a fire in the bed-stove (it is called "kang" in Chinese) while in summer air conditioners become a basic necessity for residents in the plain rural area. Seen from this point of view, the cost of living of villagers in the plain area is higher than those in the mountainous area.

There is a large difference in housing conditions between the mountainous village and the plain villages. Houses in Y Village consist of mostly storm-beaten houses, where the light is dim and there is a lot of dust. Most houses in L County are of concrete structure but those in B Village seem newer as they are bright and spacious inside. The difference has a direct relationship with the income of villages in the two areas. According to residents, it costs 120,000 to 200,000 to build a house of concrete structure in the village. For villagers in X Village (in L County) and B Village (in L County) who have high incomes, they can afford the cost. However, for villagers in Z Village in the plain area, it is still difficult to build a new house. Therefore, although most of the houses of residents of Z Village are of concrete structure, these houses still seem old. Almost all houses in mountainous Y Village are old, most of which were built 70 or 80 or even a hundred years ago. For one thing, the location of Y Village is remote. The villagers who earn money by doing business in the city are unwilling to stay in the mountainous area. Some of them move from the village and settle down in the county and some buy houses in the town.²⁶³ The villagers of this part are young. Therefore,

²⁶² See the official website of Shandong Province

²⁶³ Houses were built in the town for local urbanization. It will be further elaborated below.

although villagers have enough money, they seldom spend money to build a new house in remote Y Village.

Kitchen facilities correlate closely to women's lives. Women in Y village still use stoves and need to chop wood for the fire, which costs time and labor. Stoves also pollute the indoor environment. Rural women spend almost three or four hours in the kitchen every day, which makes them the direct victims of the pollution. Burning solid fuel leads to indoor air pollution, which has serious impact on the respiratory system and the cardiovascular health of rural women. In the plain area, villagers often use gas ovens, which are much more progressive compared to the stoves used in the mountain area and liberate the rural women in the plain area. On the one hand, they don't need to spend much time in the kitchen. On the other hand, even though there are some dangers involved in using gas ovens, they are much better for the indoor environment than wood burning stoves, and to some extent are better for rural women's health. The reasons why the kitchen stoves of the mountain area haven't been improved are numerous. First of all, the unattended women in the mountain area don't earn much income, so they are frugal in their daily lives. They would rather spend time and energy than spend money. They are unwilling to use convenient electromagnetic ovens to cook meals because they think that electromagnetic ovens waste electricity and that using wood stoves doesn't cost a penny. Secondly, the rural areas lack gas resources. If the villagers from Y Village want to use gas, they have to carry it back from county towns. However, the inconvenient transportation causes a higher transportation fee than that of other areas, which increases the cost of gas. Thirdly, the women who have lived in the remote mountain area for a long time have difficulty accepting modern culture and are unwilling to change their current lifestyles. So they are unwilling to use new energy or new types of cooking tools despite the inconvenience of wood stoves. Taken together, stronger infrastructure makes housework easier and decreases hours of housework for females. In this sense, plain women take less time than mountain women to deal with household chores.

Transportation can change people's life to a large extent. In Chinese rural areas, there is a saying that if one wants to become rich, he should first build roads. It means a road in good condition is a prerequisite for getting rich. Flat roads are of great significance for the improvement of farmers' living conditions. Especially for farmers in the poor mountainous area, roads are not only their only means of transportation, but also an important channel to communicate with the outside world. However, this study

found out that the poorer the village is, the worse the road condition will be. Thus the villagers' living conditions cannot be improved without a transportation infrastructure. In the mountain area, the road conditions of villages are universally bad. On the one hand, the rugged terrain presents tremendous difficulties in road construction. On the other hand, the local governments lack sufficient funds to build roads. Inconvenient transportation is the major factor hindering the development of the mountain area and farmers. Based on actual conditions of the villages in the present study, the road conditions in the plain area are much better than those of the mountain area. In Y Village, it is difficult for women to go to the market town. What connects Y Village and the market town is a muddy sky way and there is no public transit from the market town to Y Village. Men often ride motorcycles to the market town. Since few women are able to ride motorcycles, they often walk to the town or take private micro buses with high fares and regular overloading. In comparison, L County in the plain area presents a different scene. With all kinds of roads leading everywhere, the flat roads connect every village. Every day there are many shuttle services between the towns and the county. Because many women in L County can ride electric bicycles, they can freely go back and forth between the county, towns, and villages. They even work in the county during the day and return home at night. Hence, convenient transportation brings more employment opportunities and income to rural women in the plain area.

5.1.3 Nutrition and health status

The differences in the nutrition and health status of rural people in these two areas are equally obvious. Residents in the mountain village eat few kinds of vegetables, fruits, meat and eggs whereas rural families in the plain eat a balanced diet comparatively. As a housewife in rural areas, women produce and provide food for the family. They "play a central role in the nutritional intake of the family."²⁶⁴ Nevertheless, women in the mountains are not able to provide their families with balanced diets. There are three primary reasons for this. First of all, mountain females are growing vegetables themselves, but the kinds of vegetables they can grow are limited. As the foregoing discussion mentioned, the uncertain climate and lower quality of soil in the mountain area make some crops and plants difficult to grow, for instance, tomatoes,

²⁶⁴ Irene Dankelman, Joan Davidson. *Women and Environment in the Third World* (London: Earthscan Publications Ltd., 1991), 13

cucumbers, and many green vegetables. That is to say, scarce natural resources lead to their incomplete nutrition. Residents in the mountain area usually eat six kinds of food in the whole year: food made from flour, rice, potatoes, food made from soya beans, green peppers, and cabbages. Other vegetables can seldom be seen in mountain villages. In winter, when the weather is too cold to grow anything, they barely eat vegetables at all. Secondly, it is difficult for mountain females to go to the market. There is a small market which is five kilometers from Y village. People can buy all kinds of things there, like vegetables, fruits, meat, daily necessities, clothes, shoes, and so on. The prices of goods in this market are usually higher than in a normal market in a city. For example, eggs cost 12 Yuan per kilo in cities while the price of eggs is 14 Yuan per kilo in the rural market. Equally importantly, there is no public transportation between the market and Y village. Women have to walk or take a private car at high cost to get to the market. Because of the inconvenience, most of the mountain females don't go to the market frequently. Their diets thereupon can't be improved. Lastly, rural people in China live fairly frugally. Especially in poor areas, low incomes force them to form frugal consumption habits. Lacking money and basic knowledge of nutrition, they are reluctant to spend money on various foods which can balance their diet. Comparatively, plain females eat almost all kinds of foods. Also noteworthy is the fact that females are more likely to buy vegetables in the market every day, but less likely to grow vegetables themselves. In Shandong Province, some counties including L county mainly produce grain (e.g. wheat and corn), some counties primarily grow vegetables and others grow fruits. In addition to convenient transportation, there is a wide selection of food in local markets, both in cities and countryside. As there are also some coastal areas in Shandong Province, fresh seafood often can be found in markets as well. Rural females there usually buy food in markets every day. However, the majority of rural women indicated that cost of food accounts for a big proportion of the total household expenditure. By way of conclusion, rural females' diets in plain regions are much better than those of women in mountain regions.

With regard to women's health status, plain females are, without a doubt, healthier than mountain females. The statistics of rural female's age and health status in different geographical regions are summarized in the following table (Table 5.3).

Table 5. 3 Health status of interviewees in the mountain area and plain area

Geographical features				Health status			Total
				Good	Not bad	Bad	
Mountain area	Age	30-39	Count	2	1	1	4
			% within age Group	50.0	25.0	25.0	100.0
		40-49	Count	3	1	3	7
			% within age Group	42.9	14.3	42.9	100.0
		Above 50	Count	3	1	1	5
			% within age Group	60.0	20.0	20.0	100.0
		Total	Count	8	3	5	16
		% within age Group	50.0	18.8	31.2	100.0	
Plain area	Age	20-29	Count	4	2	-	6
			% within age Group	66.7	33.3	-	100.0
		30-39	Count	2	1	-	3
			% within age Group	66.7	33.3	-	100.0
		40-49	Count	6	0	-	6
			% within age Group	100.0	0	-	100.0
		Above 50	Count	11	4	-	15
% within age Group			73.3	26.7	-	100.0	
	Total	Count	23	7	-	30	
		% within age Group	76.7	23.3	-	100.0	

According to data I collected, mountain females with good health conditions account for 50% while mountain women in poor health make up 31.2% which is a much higher proportion than among plain women. In the plain area, women in good health account for the highest proportion (76.7%) and no interviewee is in bad physical condition. In terms of age, plain females are healthier than the poorer mountain females in each age group (except women under 30 years old). Geographical factors would appear to have a great influence on women's health.

Women's burden of agricultural work in mountain area is much heavier due to the farming work force not being replaced by agriculture machines. Especially in the peak agricultural seasons, women have to work the whole day and do lots of back-breaking tasks, like frequently carrying heavy baskets bulging with crops, which may have an extremely negative effect on their health. Equally important, most people living in the

mountain area are born in poverty. They have had poor nutrition since they were born. Their health condition gets worse with age. On one hand, they can't withstand hard physical work in cities any more. Consequently, they don't have enough money to feed themselves. The evidence can be found in the investigation that a large proportion of females above 50 years old in the plain area still have enough energy to find part time jobs in cities or near the village while women at the same age in mountain area have already given up hard physical work due to poor health conditions. On the other hand, they are too poor to pay medical bills, so their health care can't be improved. Likewise, the next generation will live the same poor life and be unable to change their destiny. To a certain extent, women are easily caught in a poverty trap which they can hardly escape.

5.1.4 The influences of local urbanization policy on rural women

Urbanization is not the final goal of social development but a way to achieve socialist modernization. Compared to western countries, the enormous size of the rural population in China brings unprecedented difficulties and challenges to the promotion of Chinese urbanization. This means that as China draws on experiences from international urbanization it must also combine national conditions to lead the way with Chinese characteristics and promote new urbanization. Against this background, local urbanization has become a part of people's exploration and an important mode for promoting new urbanization as well as balancing urban and rural development in various parts of China.

Local urbanization refers to when the regional economy and society is developed well enough that the farmers obtain nearby non-agricultural employment and an urbanization mode based on central villages and small towns within their original residences takes shape. It includes an integrative transformation and aggregation of industrial economy, geographical space, and population residence as well as employment. It is not only a direct unification of land and population urbanization, but also a deep process to socially promote the level of public services and residents'

behaviors.²⁶⁵ Local urbanization shows that: first, the extent of aggregation of the population is high; second, industrial methods achieve three industrial linkages and focus on secondary industry and service sector; third, the public services residents enjoy achieve or approach urban levels.²⁶⁶ Simply speaking, the local area possesses three characteristics, industrialization of rural development, modernization of agricultural production and life style, as well as urbanization of social welfare security.

Y Village in the mountain area and Z Village in the plain area covered in this thesis are both in the primary stages of the local urbanization transformation. The promoting effects of local urbanization transformation and their impact on rural women in these two places present a huge difference.

5.1.4.1. Ways of Spreading Local Urbanization

At present, Zhen'an County in Shaanxi province is promoting the local urbanization of Y Village by establishing central market towns. In order to improve villagers' living conditions and transfer villagers living in remote areas to market towns with better living conditions, the government is building houses in towns near Y Village. Villagers can move from villages to market towns and each house costs 250,000 Yuan. The government provides a subsidy of 40,000 Yuan for villagers who move into the central market town. The villagers need to pay the remaining 210,000 Yuan for the house, which is not an affordable price for every villager in the poor mountainous area. Therefore, villagers decide on their own whether to move into the central market town. The present study has found that in Y village only 22 households have already moved into the central market town. The local urbanization of Z Village shows differences from that of Y Village. According to the policy of local urbanization, villagers can move into the buildings beside the road way connecting Z Village and the County by replacing the house sites with commercial residential buildings. The government will evaluate the price according to the area of the residences. Every villager's house can be replaced with one or two flats in the new buildings. The original residences will be torn down,

²⁶⁵ Research Group of Shandong Academy of Social Science, "Research on Practice of Local Urbanization and Its Spreading Path," Jinan: Dongyue Tribune 08, (2014):130-135, 132 (in Chinese)

²⁶⁶ Ma Qingbin, "Local Urbanization is worth popularizing and being studied," Beijing: Macroeconomic Management 11, (2011): 25-26, 25 (in Chinese)

with the remaining land returning to fertile farmland. All parcels of farmland are guided by the government to circulate in an orderly manner, which can in turn the appropriate scale of agricultural operation and promote the development of industrialized agriculture.

5.1.4.2. Local Urbanization and Rural Women's Change of Roles

Fei Xiaotong wrote in *From the Soil*:

“In basic level, the Chinese society is rural. Country people cannot leave the soil because the simplest means of subsistence for people who live in the countryside is to cultivate crops. Only those who make a living from the soil can understand the value of the soil...” (Fei Xiaotong, 2007)²⁶⁷

The countryside and the soil is the last complex farmers can leave. The current promotion of local urbanization includes two categories. One is to take the mode of “leave neither soil nor countryside”, which is to provide employment opportunities in local enterprises while still cultivating crops and satisfying farmers' local complex to the largest extent. Another mode is “to leave the soil but not the countryside”, which thoroughly promotes the vocational non-agricultural transformation of local farmers.

The local urbanization mode of Z Village is that the majority of farmers give up the land while the remaining farmers contract more lands and achieve an appropriate scale of cultivation and operation. No matter what choices women in Z village make, their professional roles will change. If they transfer land to others, they can leave the land and make the transition to a non-agricultural profession. If they contract the land for scale operation, they will become new professional female farmers. However, at present, the problems are: firstly, the local secondary industry and service sector have not been developed, so there are few non-agricultural employment opportunities. Once women leave the land, they can only depend on working for others for income. Secondly, local urbanization is a difficulty for rural women who can neither work for others nor contract land. For women working for others and contracting land, local urbanization can bring more benefits. Because mass production in agriculture is encouraged, a small number of villagers can contract land on a large scale. Meanwhile, most villagers have to leave the land and work outside the village. Local urbanization brings diversity and heterogeneity of career choices to women in Z village, and at the same time, based on the internalized traditional social rule of “men managing external affairs and women internal”, males

²⁶⁷ Fei Xiaotong, *From the Soil* (Nanjing: Jiangsu Artistic Publishing House, 2007), 11 (in Chinese)

have the freedom of going out of the family environment, while females have to be responsible for taking care of the kids. Therefore, whether they can work for others depends on the independence of their kids. For women whose kids are too young or who have no one else to help them look after kids, they can do nothing but stay at home and be responsible for the role of housewife.

“Ms. Chen²⁶⁸: It is unrealistic for me to find part-time jobs. I have two children. The older boy is 14 years old and the younger one is seven years old. The state schools don’t offer accommodation. If I want to work outside, I have to send them to private boarding school, and the tuition fees are too much to afford. I would rather stay at home and look after them by myself, and I can cook for my husband.

Interviewer: How much is the tuition for private boarding school?

Ms. Chen: It’s up to 20,000 Yuan a year for two children. I would never earn so much, even if I worked outside for the whole year. In that case, I can’t cook for my husband.”

The expression above shows females’ responsibility of raising kids and the deep embeddedness of the gender identity structure and the structure of gender differentiation of labor. Ms. Chen has mentioned twice that if she was raising kids at home, she could cook for her husband. It shows that she has internalized household affairs like raising kids and cooking as her own responsibility, and that career choices for females follow the household's utility maximizing principle of taking the interest of the male as the center. Thus, their economic status does not change and they may lose the initiative of local urbanization. Although they are a small group in Z Village, they are the most vulnerable group. Whether they can join in development equally still needs attention from the government and perfection of related policies.

Local urbanization has little effect on the change of career roles of women in Y village. Arable land in Y village has the feature of being severely fragmented, so it is difficult to achieve scale cultivation and land circulation. If women who move into the town center cannot circulate land, they will continue to cultivate farmland. Living in the town enlarges the distance between farmland and home. Therefore, it will bring more difficulty for women doing farming. Transportation is not convenient in Y village. If women live in the town center, cultivation costs and the burden will increase. However, even under these circumstances, women cannot give up the land, because it is their only basis to make a living.

²⁶⁸ See the appendix, p.201

5.1.4.3. Access to Capital and Change of Family Status

Authority and power of marriage is derived from the comparison of resources that the wife and the husband account for. The one who accounts for a larger part of the resources will possess greater power.²⁶⁹ Local urbanization gives women opportunities to gain more capital, including economic capital, social capital, and cultural capital. There is no doubt that local urbanization brings economic capital for women in Z village. Firstly, agricultural industrialization lets new professional female farmers earn more agricultural income, that is, more economic capital. In traditional rural families, the husband usually takes charge of the family. This is because of the economic capital he has. For most families, because the small-scale production and scattered family farming that women mainly engage in cannot bring large income for the family, the main income of a family comes from the non-agricultural production that in which men engage.²⁷⁰

Against the background of local urbanization, the industrial structure changes from small-scale agriculture to large-scale agriculture. The increase of comparative benefits makes the land no longer the last guarantee for villagers' living, but rather a new channel that can improve their living standard. Secondly, local urbanization breaks the pattern of traditional agricultural production by speeding up land circulation, and women who circulate land out will be no longer restricted by land. They get more time to engage in non-agricultural work and opportunities to engage in more stable work without quitting during the busy season. Under these two situations, women's income increases, and their economic status and even family status will increase. In addition, rural women whose careers are successful can obtain more social capital and cultural capital. That is, rural women may be able to break through the barriers of blood relationship and geographical relationship to build occupational relationships and to learn new technology and knowledge at new posts. Indeed, local urbanization not only brings diverse channels for acquiring capital and broader development for women in Z village, but also increases rural women's family status.

Acquisition of capital changes along with the change of occupations. Left-behind women in Y village cannot realize occupational change at the initial stage of local

²⁶⁹ Kamo, Yoshinori, "Determinants of household division of labor resources, power, and ideology," *Journal of family issues* 9.2 (1988): 177-200, 181, 182

²⁷⁰ Li Xia. "Women's living space and backstage power in a North China village," (Beijing: Social Science Academic Press, 2010), 167 (in Chinese)

urbanization, so they cannot get more capital. Left-behind women in Y village are limited to a relatively closed space and engage in scattered low-income cultivation and unpaid house work. The main income of a family is the non-agricultural income which comes from the male's working for others or doing business. There is a significant gap between the income of left-behind women and that of their husbands, which determines their family status, and left-behind women remain dependent on a male.

5.1.4.4. Change of Life Style

Modernization of lifestyle is one of the tasks of people-oriented urbanization, that is, to realize the integration of the lifestyle of farmers and vast rural areas in modern civilization to form modern civilized lifestyle and living ideas. For rural residents, the living environment change from single detached homes to buildings is a great change.

The location of L county Z village offers great advantages. It is near cities like Jinan, Beijing, and Tianjin. Because of the leading role of cities nearby, the level of local economic development is high, and they have a great influence on villagers' lives and rural civilization. In recent years, under the influence of urbanization, the lifestyle of residents in Z village has modernized. For example, almost all villagers have televisions, washers, refrigerators, air-conditioners, electric cookers, water heaters, induction cookers, and so on. From the perspective of social gender roles, domestic appliances like washers, electric cookers, and induction cookers and the use of gas cookers are helpful in reducing the burden of household chores on women in Z village. With the exception of living space, the lifestyle after moving into buildings is little different from that in single detached homes for women in Z village. Therefore, most women are not opposed to moving into buildings, especially young women, because they yearn for city life, and more easily accept modern civilization. However, older women who are used to living in single detached homes think that "the space in buildings is too small and living in them is boring". Moreover, there is no elevator inside buildings in Z Village, so older women are unwilling to live in them. The government has difficulties in the problem of choosing houses for villagers.

"Ms. Lu²⁷¹ (56 years old): A few days ago, I told them: 'You young guys should live on upper floors. Some years later, we old people will be too old to climb stairs, so we

²⁷¹ See the appendix, p.217.

should move into houses on lower floors.’ Then they said: ‘Yes, now we are young, we can live on upper floors. You live on lower floors. But, just tell your son, when we become old we have to change houses with you.’ This problem is really hard to deal with.”

Women in Y village, who are living in the mountain area, live simple lives. At present, only two domestic appliances, televisions and washers, are common. Only a few rural families have refrigerators, electric cookers, and induction cookers. Deep-rooted gender traditions restrict women in Y village to the land and the stove. Cultivating, gathering firewood, chopping firewood, making a fire, cooking, and feeding cows are their daily lives. It needs to be pointed out that the stove brings an invisible and heavy burden for women in Y village. Thus, what local urbanization brings to the lifestyle of women in Y village is that they no longer use the stove. This not only saves time in cooking, but also ensures their health, which improves their living standard to a large extent. However, because they have had little access to modern civilization, most women are reluctant to accept a new lifestyle. They believe that they have got used to the life in villages, and it is uncomfortable to change their living environment. Of course, family poverty is also an important reason why they refuse the removal. This leads to slow local urbanization of Y village.

The promotion of the local urbanization mode has an interactive influence on rural women. The positive influence of local urbanization on rural women will become the driving force behind their actively taking part in the development of urbanization. On the contrary, the negative effects that local urbanization brings to them will become barriers to the development of urbanization. Through comparison and analyses of local urbanization’s effects on rural women in eastern and western areas, it can be seen that villages in eastern developed areas present more suitable conditions and environment for promotion of local urbanization. However, remote western areas, especially mountainous rural areas, should be proactively connected to large and medium-sized cities, urban agglomerations, developmental ecology, tourism, special agriculture with local labor, resources, and market demand to promote local urbanization.²⁷²

5.2 Similarities of rural women’s lives in the mountain area and the plain area

Agriculture feminization is still common in rural China today. In this investigation,

²⁷² Zhou Yongkang, Pan Xiaofu. “Development of local urbanization and urbanization away from home,” Inner Mongolia Dailies, February 26, 2014

most married women in both regions stay in the villages to deal with household chores and farm work.

5.2.1 Feminization of agriculture and gender-based division of labor

Feminization of agriculture is still common in rural China today. In this investigation, it is obvious to see that most married women stay in the villages in both regions to deal with household chores and farm work.

Feminization of agriculture usually occurs with a change in agrarian transition and migratory patterns following gender lines.²⁷³ Rural males flow to cities to seek jobs, while most females are left behind. In China, a possible cause of this problem is the deep-rooted traditional gender ideology and traditional division of labor - the male breadwinner model. Also, males are better educated compared with females in the countryside.²⁷⁴ Women's poor educational background becomes an obstacle for them to find jobs in non-agricultural sectors. Nevertheless, it is a rational family strategy which can maximize the income of the family and avoid risk. Despite the fact that farmers can't make much money by participating in agricultural production, land is their basic safeguard for getting food and maintaining life. Significantly, land can't be abandoned in the light of the Chinese land system. If rural families want to move and live in the city, they have to return the land to the collective. However, it is difficult for a normal rural family to register in a city because of the rigorous household registration system, and peasants in cities cannot enjoy urban social welfare as common citizens. Their health insurance, children's schooling, and so on cannot be guaranteed. Coupled with the high price of housing in urban districts, a large proportion of peasants are not able to move to cities and change their identities from peasants to urban residents. Consequently, no matter how long they can work in cities, they have to come back to their villages and live the rest of their lives doing farm work. To some degree, land is as important as their lives, no peasant can forsake it. With a disordered gender division of labor, women are left behind in the village and take major responsibility for the farm and the care of the family. The gender-differentiation of labor markets is exacerbated with inequity.²⁷⁵

²⁷³ Sampson D, Wills C. *Food Sovereignty: A Critical Dialogue* 2013.

https://www.tni.org/files/download/20_sampsonwills_2013.pdf p.37

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Mu, Ren, and Dominique van de Walle, "Left behind to farm? Women's labor re-allocation in rural China," *Labour Economics* 18 (2011): S83-S97, S84

5.2.2 Family-centered life

Women in rural areas always regard home as the center of their lives. People's daily lives are closely linked with the household. They regard family as the center of their lives, especially women. In rural people's opinion, marriage and procreation are the most significant two tasks of a person's life. Compared with urban areas, people living in the countryside get married at a very early age. They start family life at a younger age and undoubtedly have early procreation. It can be found that the mean of rural females' age of marriage in the mountain area is almost the same as women in the plain area, approximately 22 years. It is the minimum legal age of marriage in China. In particular, women who are older than 22 years old and have not been married will always be pressured to getting married.

When females are pushed into marriage, all of their activities and daily lives are based on the household. Above all, for a newly married couple, their first task to bring forth a boy to carry on the husband's family bloodline; the woman is usually under great pressure from her husband's family before having a boy. Women themselves also view this as their unshakable duty. It forces them to be positive about procreation. If the first child is a girl, they will be urged to have a second one. Generally speaking, only when a woman gives birth to a son does her family status improve. Secondly, women arrange or adjust their productive lives according to family needs. In mountain villages, women stay home mainly for three reasons: to take care of children, look after the elderly and do farm work. As long as families require it, women can give up jobs and come back home at a moment's notice. They put in time and effort to do these activities which always makes women's financial contribution invisible. In the plain area, women often find part-time jobs near the village in order to take care of their families. In this way, they can not only finish family domestic tasks but also increase family income. In a word, women are too often constrained by family commitments and by low expectations. Compared with females, rural males have more flexibility. Thirdly, rural residents earn money for family rather than for themselves. The majority of rural women live a frugal life whether they are poor or wealthy. They are reluctant to buy even one piece of clothing for themselves. In contrast, they are willing to spend almost all of their money their son's marriage. The investigation shows that women in both the plain area and mountain area seldom buy cloth, shoes, or anything else for themselves. Furthermore, they rarely go to see a doctor when they are ill. For rural, it is wasteful to spend on

themselves. Women often pay close attention to the family's demands, ignoring their own needs.

5.2.3 Independent old-age support

In China, the social welfare of rural people is starkly different from city residents, especially the old-age support system. Nowadays nearly half of the population of China is registered in rural areas, with a large number of elderly residents. The government doesn't have enough money to guarantee each senior a comfortable life. The elderly can only get at most 70 Yuan per month as a pension. It is, apparently, hard to survive on so little money in today's society, which means that old people have to depend on themselves or their families. The basic housing allowances in the countryside covers only the destitute elderly, mainly childless widows and widowers who have no family members to whom they can look for assistance.²⁷⁶ In the light of Chinese family ethics, a son has the responsibility of providing his parents with security in their old-age. As to daughters, when they are married, they have to take care of their parents-in-law. Sons therefore are the only source of old-age support among rural residents. That is another reason why rural households stick to the tradition of obvious son preference. During interviews, women without sons often alluded to their feelings of insecurity about old-age support. In the plain area, rural households that are rich and have only daughters easily accept and adopt an uxorilocal marriage – that is, a son-in-law living with them after getting married to their daughter. In an uxorilocal marriage, the son-in-law plays the same role as a daughter-in-law in a patrilocal marriage. He has the responsibility to offer his wife's parents old-age support. This is a typical for parents without a son to ensure security in their old age. Of course, sufficient financial capability is an essential prerequisite for taking in a son-in-law. It is perhaps on this account that uxorilocal marriages are hardly seen in rural families of the remote mountain region. Even more disturbing, however, is the marginalization of the elderly in the countryside in recent years to the extent that many old people, both males and females, are left alone in villages. When the elderly can no longer make contributions to their family and need to be taken care of, they often feel helpless and frustrated. Some rural elderly with serious diseases don't want to burden their children with economic and psychological pressure, so finally they choose suicide. Taken together, old-age support for rural dwellers is a big challenge for rural development.

²⁷⁶ Lin Jiang. (1995). "Changing kinship structure and its Implications for old-age support in urban and rural China," *Population Studies* 49, 1(1995): 127-145, 138 (in Chinese)

5.2.4 Poor education and lack of environmental awareness

In both regions, most rural women are poorly educated and lack the means to keep up with social development. The table below (Table 5.4) shows the education background of interviewees in the mountainous area and the plain area.

Table 5. 4 Education background of interviewees in mountain area and plain area

		Geographical features		Total
		Mountain area	Plain area	
Education background	Illiterate	1	-	1
	Primary school	13	19	32
	Junior middle school	1	8	9
	Senior middle school	2	2	4
	College and above	-	1	1
	Total	17	30	47

There are 13 interviewees in Y village in a mountainous area and 19 interviewees in a plain area all have only a primary school education, making them the majority. Rural females over 40 years old have less education than younger females. It is mainly because of the lower social development level several years ago. Nowadays, women's education in rural areas is gradually improving.

As a result of women's poor education, they also lack environmental awareness. Environmental problems in rural China are increasingly serious. On one hand, rural dwellers' living environment is worse. Women, particularly those living in rural areas, play a major role in managing natural resources—soil, water, forests, and energy. Women performing agricultural tasks become the daily managers of the living environment and natural resource.²⁷⁷ On the other hand, women's lack of environmental consciousness makes them easily prone to environmental problems in agricultural production, such as soil pollution, food security problems, etc. As the most important food producers of the world, rural women are directly dependent on a healthy environment. The interplay between rural women and environment becomes

²⁷⁷ Irene Dankelman, Joan Davidson. *Women and Environment in the Third World* (London: Earthscan Publications Ltd., 1991), 3

increasingly obvious.²⁷⁸ Due to a lack of related environmental knowledge, they damage the environment unconsciously. They may use fertilizers and pesticides excessively, pollute the water, and so on and so forth. In the meantime, they are negatively affected by the poor environmental conditions, for example, when drinking untreated well water, burning firewood and inhaling toxic gases, etc.

Except for in X village, there are no garbage cans in the selected villages. In X village, the living environment of residents' has gradually improved since 2014. Some garbage cans have been put in the village and a sanitation worker hired by the village committee cleans out the rubbish every day. According to the interviewees, it is cleaner than before. However, in the other three villages, the living environment remains appalling. No one is responsible for dealing with waste in these villages. The disposal of rubbish is always a big problem. In Y village in the mountain area, burning is a major way of dealing with the garbage. Biological waste, for instance, potato peelings, leftovers, etc. are fed to livestock. Residents burn other rubbish including paper, cloth, plastic bags, and so on. Almost every household gets rid of rubbish in this way, producing toxic gases and giving rise to air pollution. In the plain area, rural households scatter the rubbish in the villages. Plastic bags can be seen anywhere. In B village in the plain area, there is a small river running through the village. However, it has been completely polluted. It is filled with rubbish and the river water has become dark green and the top seems to have solidified. In terms of drinking water, people in these villages are drinking untreated water from wells, which comes from shallow ground water and is easily polluted by microorganisms, heavy metals, and fluoride. What's worse, no resident in these villages has been aware of this problem. Females in Y village are exposed to an even more terrible living environment. On account of the earthen stoves they use for cooking, they have to burn solid fuels. Earthen stoves are common in the mountainous area, because they consume no electricity and save money. Rural women are willing to use them even though research shows that burning solid fuels can also produce toxic gases. Rural women have saved money with this kind of stove at the cost of their health.

During agricultural production, most of farmers damage the environment without being aware of it. Nowadays a large proportion of rural women are engaging in farming in China. Their activities directly impact environmental health and food security.

²⁷⁸ Irene Dankelman, Joan Davidson. *Women and Environment in the Third World* (London: Earthscan Publications Ltd., 1991), 17

Unfortunately, most of them have little knowledge on the environment due to poor education. While rural women's contribution to agricultural development is significant, their practices often have a negative influence on the environment. The vast majority of women working on farmland have little environmental awareness. They use chemical fertilizer and pesticide when growing crops to produce higher yields. Nevertheless, chemical fertilizer and pesticide may damage the quality of soil and threaten food security, but this is always neglected by the cultivators.

X19²⁷⁹: Ms. Liu T, 53 years old.

“Interviewer: Is the chemical fertilizer harmful to the environment?”

Ms. Liu T: I am not sure... it has no bad effect on environment, I think. Chemical fertilizer is beneficial for increasing grain. I would harvest less grain without chemical fertilizer. It must be used. It is buried when the crops grow up. I think it is not harmful to the environment.

Interviewer: How do you deal with insect pests?

Ms. Liu T: I use pesticide. It has a little bad influence on people's health, but it is not serious.”

X26²⁸⁰: Ms. Wu N, 50 years old.

“Interviewer: Do you think chemical fertilizer is harmful to the environment?”

Ms. Wu N: We must use chemical fertilizer whether it is harmful to the environment or not. I think it has no bad influence on the environment. It will be buried under the soil gradually. We use one bag of chemical fertilizer per mu.

Interviewer: How do you deal with the trash?

Ms. Wu N: There are some the trashcans in the village. In my family, we spread the trash on the land.”

Nowadays, organic farming is expanding in a growing number of countries including China, which can solve some environmental problems and improve food quality efficiently. Nevertheless, smallholders in China for the most part still utilize many chemical fertilizers in the process of growing. The reason is threefold. Firstly, middle-aged rural females account for a large proportion of cultivators in China. They lack environmental literacy and environmental awareness as previously mentioned. Secondly, smallholders can't bear unknown risks so they have no wish for any change in the status quo. In many people's eyes, farmers with small plots are conservative and do not dare to upgrade their skills. In fact, they cannot afford to take risks. For most Chinese smallholders, growing crops without chemical fertilizers and pesticides is not an accepted method, with which they may run the risk of failure. Without chemical fertilizers, crops will grow slowly; without pesticide, pests will be hard to control. In the

²⁷⁹ See the appendix, pp. 105- 106.

²⁸⁰ See the appendix, p.135.

current form of agricultural production, peasants tend to make use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, which will yield a good harvest without the influence of climate. Organic agriculture is very different. Farmers have to learn how to manage the ecological system and control the pests with biotechnology that they have never used before. The risks unsurprisingly increase. As James C. Scott described farmers on small plots in Southeast Asia, “a crop failure may force them to sell some or all their scare land or their plow animals. If the failure is widespread they must sell in a panic at extremely low prices.”²⁸¹ For small-farm households, the failure may threaten their survival. The tolerance for risk among rural households depends on their economic conditions.²⁸² Hence, poor farmers are inclined to follow the safety-first principle and seldom change their cultivation method. Last but not least, the cost of producing organic food is prohibitive for small-scale farmers and the crop yield is much smaller than traditional agriculture. According to a survey, to gain the same grain output, farmers have to use five times more organic fertilizers than chemical fertilizers in traditional agriculture.²⁸³ Peasants have to invest much more without the utilization of chemical fertilizers. For those living in poverty, without external financial support they evidently can't afford such high costs.

Taken together, it is difficult for farmers to change their farming methods consciously. Without financial support from the government and the guidance of policy, environmentally friendly agriculture is difficult to spread among smallholders.

²⁸¹ Scott, James C. *The moral economy of the peasant: Rebellion and subsistence in Southeast Asia*. Yale University Press, 1977, 4

²⁸² *Ibid.* p.14

²⁸³ <http://www.99yoo.com/2014/0715/9439.html> (Accessed in 09.10.2015)

Chapter 6 Rural women's living conditions and agricultural and rural development strategies in EU member states

This chapter begins with general conditions of rural women in Western Europe and Eastern Europe followed by a brief analysis from a gender perspective (6.1). It then presents the main strategies for boosting rural development and promoting environmentally friendly agriculture in the EU (6.2). This section gives a review of significant rural development policies and agri-environmental measures in the Common Agricultural Policy followed by analyzing what can be used for reference to resolve China's environmental problems in agricultural development and at the same time promote rural development in China (6.3).

6.1 General conditions of rural women in Western Europe and Eastern Europe

Rural women are not a homogeneous group²⁸⁴ in European countries. The working and living conditions of rural women in different regions are different. Likewise, Chinese rural females, taken as a whole, are of great heterogeneity, although they are generally homogeneous in the same village. This is one obvious characteristic of rural populations. Lives of rural residents differ from area to area. To some extent, they make a living by farming. Agricultural production is easily influenced by the geographical environment. Farmers possess diverse resources in different regions and the geographical environment can affect their lifestyle as well. Furthermore, each country or region has its own culture and history which may affect local residents' ideology. In addition, people's quality of life is largely determined by local economic development. Thus, it is difficult to generalize rural females' conditions in all EU member states.

Since 2004, the European Union (EU) enlarged with accepting 10 new countries and uniting the Western and the Middle Eastern parts of the continent.²⁸⁵ In general, the development level of both the economy and society of Western Europe is higher than in the New Member States (NMS), which are mostly located in Central and Eastern

²⁸⁴ Carmen Quintanilla Barba, *Rural women in Europe*, 2010, 8

<http://www.assembly.coe.int/CommitteeDocs/2010/aegadoc422010.pdf> (Accessed in 04.10.2015)

²⁸⁵ Buchenrieder, Gertrud, and Judith Möllers, *Structural change in Europe's rural regions: Farm livelihoods between subsistence orientation, modernisation and non-farm diversification*. No. 49. *Studies on the agricultural and food sector in Central and Eastern Europe*, 2009, 3

Europe. Rural females' livelihood in NMS is on a much lower level than those of the EU-15, as confirmed by current research and reports. Hence, in this chapter I divide European rural women into two groups: rural women in Western Europe and rural women in Central and East Europe.

6.1.1 Rural women in Western Europe

As modernization and urbanization have progressed in Western Europe, the boundaries between rural districts and urban districts have begun to blur. These days fewer and fewer researchers pay attention to rural females in contemporary Western Europe. Thus, "there is a lack of gender-focused statistics on rural women in Europe."²⁸⁶ Although some kinds of statistics are collected in rural districts, they are not used to analyze gender issues. There are two primary reasons for this: first of all, many young people in rural areas including young females tend to move to cities to seek a better job or life. In Germany, for instance, fewer young people living in rural areas are studying agricultural science or are interested in farming. Many small farms lack a possible successor and are shut down or transferred. According to an article in the *Berliner Zeitung*, about 10,000 farms close each year. One interviewee said: "Just because my son is a lawyer, I don't want him to take over this farm."²⁸⁷ In 2013, farm managers under 34 years old only represent 7% of all the farm managers in Berlin and Brandenburg.²⁸⁸ Another article titled "Bauer sucht Bauer (farmer looking for farmer)" corroborates this again. Fewer young people are engaging in agricultural production. In 2014 in Germany about two thirds of farm owners were over 45 years old and had no successor. In Berlin and Brandenburg the rate of farm inheritance is 28% while only 17% in Rheinland-Pfalz.²⁸⁹ In particular, the number of young rural females is declining sharply. Fewer and fewer women in Western Europe are willing to stay in the countryside. Therefore, rural women have become a tiny group, and it is difficult for males doing small farming to find a wife. Under this background, a reality television series called "Farmer Wants a Wife" has been produced. It is popular in many European

²⁸⁶ Carmen Quintanilla Barba, *Rural women in Europe*, 2010, 8

<http://www.assembly.coe.int/CommitteeDocs/2010/aegadoc422010.pdf> (Accessed in 04.10.2015)

²⁸⁷ Peter Altmann. *Feld mit Zukunft*, *Berliner Zeitung*, 16./17. February 2013

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁹ Petra Pluwatsch, *Bauer sucht Bauer*, *Frankfurter Rundschau*. January 31, 2014

countries such as UK, Germany, Belgium, France, and so on. This program offers the opportunities for farmers to find a spouse from the city.²⁹⁰ With its high ratings, this show reveals the common phenomenon that the sex ratio in rural communities becomes unbalanced. Secondly, as the majority of rural areas in Western Europe offer easy access to a variety of resources, services, and facilities, the quality of life between rural women and urban women shows little difference. Nevertheless, it doesn't mean that there are no problems in rural females' lives. They may suffer the same difficulties as urban women, such as gender equality issues. In many gender studies, they are frequently taken as a whole. Only a few studies indicate that females living in remote rural areas are still facing some extra difficulties.

Germany as a typical post-industrial country belongs to Western Europe politically. Germany's rural regions account for 59% of the surface area, 27% of the population and 21% of the gross domestic product (GDP). "Germany currently has a population of approximately 82.5 million inhabitants, of which approximately 20.6 million live in rural districts."²⁹¹ Nowadays, Germany has completed the transformation from traditional to modern agriculture. Against this background, rural women's conditions in Germany, to some degree, can reflect women's current livelihood in rural West European countries.

An investigation on rural women in Niedersachsen (Lower Saxony) collected data about rural women' education, labor time, composition of household income, and self-evaluation of social status. According to the survey, 99% of rural women have received vocational education at different levels in 2008.²⁹² Among them, women studying domestic science represent 28%, while women studying agricultural science only make up for 6 % of all rural women.²⁹³ The rest studied other subjects like social science, business science, engineering science, and so on. On one hand, it illustrates that women nowadays in rural Germany get a good education, and almost all of the rural women have received professional training so that they have enough ability to work in non-agricultural sectors. They are not constrained within the agriculture sector any more.

²⁹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Farmer_Wants_a_Wife (Accessed in 17.05.2016)

²⁹¹ OCED, Rural policy review (Germany), 2007, p.30

²⁹² Agrarsoziale Gesellschaft e.V. in Göttingen, Frauen sind ein Gewinn, 2009, 18

²⁹³ Ibid.

On the other hand, fewer and fewer women are willing to engage in agricultural production. It is one of the reasons why young females leave rural areas. In Europe, the out-migration of rural young women is viewed as a primary problem for rural development.²⁹⁴ Furthermore, the investigation indicated that rural women's labor time is gradually decreasing as mechanization advanced in agriculture in Germany. Rural women's workload on farms is evidently reduced. In 2008 professional female farmers' labor time on farm work represented 31% of all their labor time on average, i.e. about 20 hours a week, while they spent approximately 55% of all labor time on household work.²⁹⁵ Nowadays, livestock breeding is regarded as a relatively labor-intensive industry. However, the number of women engaged in this industry is gradually decreasing. For instance, the proportion of rural women in pig breeding had decreased from 28% to 18% between 2000 and 2008 in Niedersachsen.²⁹⁶ With regard to household income, self-employed farms with more than 2 h of land earned 53,860 Euro on average from 2006 to 2007.²⁹⁷ From the perspective of quality of life, sufficient household income can ensure rural women a better material life. Nevertheless, gender stereotypes still exist in developed countries. Along with women's responsibility of reproduction, they have to spend a lot of time on invisible work like doing housework and taking care of children. But it is worth noting that this phenomenon is improving. An increasing number of rural males are willing to share part of the housework. Lastly, the majority of rural women count themselves as unpaid laborers in the family, especially young rural women. Females from 20 to 30 years old seldom work on the farm, because they put in more time and effort looking after children. 69% of them deem themselves homemakers without payment while merely 4% regard themselves as farmers.²⁹⁸ Not surprisingly, rural women have not escaped the traditional gender role completely. It is a common difficulty for most of women to combine work and family life.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rural-area-economics/briefs/pdf/07_en.pdf (Accessed in 10.12.2015)

²⁹⁵ Agrarsoziale Gesellschaft e.V. in Göttingen, *Frauen sind ein Gewinn*, 2009, pp.28, 54

²⁹⁶ Ibid. p.54

²⁹⁷ Ibid. p.11

²⁹⁸ Ibid. p.50

²⁹⁹ Carmen Quintanilla Barba, *Rural women in Europe*, 2010, 1

<http://www.assembly.coe.int/CommitteeDocs/2010/aegadoc422010.pdf> (Accessed in 04.10.2015)

The quality of life of rural women in Germany does not demonstrate any huge differences with urban women, which is similar with rural women in other Western European countries. Their living conditions may be very different due to distinct geographical environment, but, few evident disadvantages can be found with regards to material life in these countries. However, both urban and rural women are confronted with some common problems caused by traditional gender ideology, such as a lower participation rate in the labor market and the gender pay gap. Women still take major responsibilities for running a family. Consequently, they are constrained by those unpaid household activities or even are marginalized in the labor market.³⁰⁰ In some countries like Germany, the Netherlands, Finland, and UK, the gender pay gap is larger although the rate of women's participation is comparatively higher than in other countries. It is possible to deduce that women are inclined to find jobs in low-paying sectors.³⁰¹ A large pay gap easily brings a higher risk of poverty for women.

6.1.2 Rural women in Central and Eastern Europe

With rural development in most of NMS lagging behind EU-15, the working and living conditions of rural women in Central and Eastern Europe are worse than rural women in Western Europe. In NMS10, "the rural economy often cannot sufficiently support rural livelihoods."³⁰² It is found that in Central and Eastern Europe there are many small-scale farmers who are maintaining a vulnerable life, as the farming is characterized by low efficiency and low productivity, especially in five NMS (i.e. Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovenia).³⁰³ With the low level of mechanization, small-scale farmers produce food for self-consumption and only a few extra agricultural products can be sold. Rural residents have to find part-time jobs in the industrial or service sector of the economy to improve their quality of life. The situation of rural people is similar to the lives of small-scale farmers in the mountainous regions in China. The livelihood of farmers (including female farmers) is predictably bad in

³⁰⁰ EU Agricultural Economic Briefs. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rural-area-economics/briefs/pdf/07_en.pdf (Accessed in 15.12.2015)

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Buchenrieder, G., & Möllers, J., Structural change in Europe's rural regions: Farm livelihoods between subsistence orientation, modernisation and non-farm diversification (No. 49). Studies on the agricultural and food sector in Central and Eastern Europe, 2009, 3

³⁰³ Möllers, Judith, Gertrud Buchenrieder, and Csaba Csáki, Structural change in agriculture and rural livelihoods: Policy implications for the New Member States of the European Union. No. 61. Studies on the agricultural and food sector in Central and Eastern Europe, 2011, 38

these areas. Additionally, female residents face more obstacles than males. In Poland, for instance, there is a high incidence of women's unemployment, including both rural women and urban women. First, job opportunities are deficient, particularly for women. It is especially difficult for rural females to get access to the labor market as rural areas mostly offer poor facilities such as poor local transport, poor quality of roads, poor social services, and so on.³⁰⁴ This phenomenon is widespread in the rural areas of Central and Eastern Europe. Lastly, although the EU offers funds for rural development of new member states, rural females often lack the relevant knowledge and fail to take advantage of them. Through learning the situation of rural women in EU countries, it can be found that gender inequality is mainly manifested in three interrelated aspects – ideology, labor division, and distribution of resources.

Traditional gender ideology, from a cultural perspective, is an expectation of roles played by males and females in everyday life and their characteristics in relationships. Men are usually expected to be strong, rational, and independent while women are expected to be compliant, emotional, and dependent. In this way, gender stereotypes have been formed. It is the root of traditional labor division and unequal distribution of resources between males and females, whereas the traditional labor division and unequal resource distribution strengthen traditional gender ideology. Females in daily life play a subordinate role as they attend to the needs of others (especially males) in the context of traditional gender ideology. According to standpoint theory which is one of the feminist theories of Dorothy Smith, “women tend to offer everyday support, at the same time men are inclined to play dominate roles”³⁰⁵ in both public and private spheres. With regard to traditional labor division, the husband often is the breadwinner in the household while the wife mainly focuses on domestic affairs. As a result, women's economic contributions to the family are fewer than men's. Most of their contribution to the family is invisible, whereas men's visible contributions frequently rely on the everyday support provided by women in their micro-level worlds. It is a serious problem that the importance of women's everyday support is often ignored by the society.

In rural communities, resources involve means of production (such as farmland, livestock, machinery, etc.), education, social resources (for instance, social security,

³⁰⁴ Carmen Quintanilla Barba, *Rural women in Europe*, 2010, 11

<http://www.assembly.coe.int/CommitteeDocs/2010/aegadoc422010.pdf> (Accessed in 04.10.2015)

³⁰⁵ Johnson D P. *Contemporary sociological theory: An integrated multi-level approach* (New York: Springer Science & Business Media, 2008), 441

social service, etc.), political participation, and so on. The quality of life depends on the distribution of resources to a large extent. Generally speaking, rural women in Europe have fewer means of production than men. The majority of farmland in EU-27 is registered by male farmers. Female farm holders' farm size is smaller than male farm holders' on average. The number of livestock reared by women is also smaller than that of men. However, in most of EU member states, rural women achieve more education than male rural residents. In remote rural areas, it is difficult for females to get access to social services due to geographical factors. Political participation is not high in contemporary rural Europe, especially in Central and Eastern EU states, but it is improving gradually.

Gender inequality exists in both visible spheres like distribution of resources and invisible spheres like traditional gender ideology. Visible inequality can be improved over a period of time with local economic development and related solutions, since it can be easily observed and attracts public attention. Comparatively, gender inequality problems in invisible spheres tend to be ignored and difficult to resolve so they stay in society for a long time. Therefore, in developed countries although the material life of rural women's has improved greatly, women continue to face other challenges caused by gender stereotypes which have not been eliminated completely. In developing countries, it is urgent to improve rural women's livelihood, and a wide range of gender mainstreaming policies are needed. Additionally, women living in remote rural areas and doing small farming cannot be neglected.

To summarize, gender inequality in rural areas is unlikely to be resolved in the short term. However, it is by no means insurmountable. Changing traditional gender ideology and making policies for agricultural development based on gender mainstreaming would be a good first step to resolve this problem.

6.2 Rural development policies in Europe Union countries

Rural females' livelihood and rural development are closely tied. In particular, the living standards of women's are largely influenced by local development. On this account, it is essential to study policies shaping rural development.

6.2.1 Common Agricultural Policy

Established by the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1962, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) was the first as well as the most important common policy to resolve the problem of food shortages after the war, with the increasing population, and offered a fair living standard for peasants.. Since its introduction, the CAP been adjusted according to the differing situations of the agricultural sector and rural areas in various periods to ensure rural development goes positively.

CAP aimed at increasing the productivity of agriculture, ensuring a fair life quality in rural communities, and stabilizing agricultural markets. In the beginning, the policy greatly boosted rural development with soaring budget costs in the 1970s. However, another problem followed in the next decade: an overabundance of farm commodities. As the CAP motivated farmers, they expanded production blindly, which consequently caused a surfeit of agricultural products and environmental problems in Europe.³⁰⁶ From 1992 on, the EU began to pay more attention to rural environmental issues. Environmentally friendly farming is encouraged by the CAP. Farmers are supported for protecting biological diversity. Compared with other sectors, the climate has a great influence on agriculture directly or indirectly, and peasants' activities are closely related to climate change. With this environmental awareness, a new type of agriculture – multifunctional agriculture has been put forward in the Agenda 2000, which is an important improvement on the Common Agricultural Policy.

One of the purposes of this reform is to form a European pattern of agriculture, establishing an environmentally-friendly farming system and spreading it to the rest of Europe. Under the Agenda 2000 reform, agri-environment payments are offered for encouraging organic agriculture and reasonable utilization of agricultural resources.³⁰⁷ Under this rubric, the focus of the CAP shifted. CAP is divided into two pillars. The first pillar is the direct payments to farmers and the second one is rural development.

³⁰⁶ Alm R, Campbell H., Rethinking agricultural policy regimes: food security, climate change and the future resilience of global agriculture (United Kingdom: Emerald Group Publishing, 2012), 76

³⁰⁷ Pacini, Cesare, et al. "The EU's Agenda 2000 reform and the sustainability of organic farming in Tuscany: ecological-economic modelling at field and farm level." *Agricultural Systems* 80.2 (2004): 171-197, 173

Historically, large amounts of money had been invested in the first pillar.³⁰⁸ The Agenda 2000 puts more emphasis on the second pillar. While funding for market support is reduced, much attention is paid to rural development. Rural development policy are carried out to “promote the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry, reward environmental care and improve rural livelihood, and encourage economic diversification.”³⁰⁹ In practice, this reform brought differing impact to EU member states. These changes contributed to different results among EU member states. For example, the incomes of rural households in Finland, Ireland, Sweden and Austria were increased while the incomes of farmers in Spain and the UK were decreased.³¹⁰ Most importantly, the expenditure of the reform is much higher than before. It is estimated to be an additional 3,203 million Euro.³¹¹

In 2003, several innovative measures were introduced in CAP, such as the decoupled income payments and the introduction of ‘cross-compliance’.³¹² The Single Payment Scheme (SPS) establishes a system of decoupled income payments in this reform.³¹³ The EU claims that with decoupling payment the subsidy that farmers can get is no longer simply dependent on their production. That is to say, the link between subsidy and production is loosened.³¹⁴ Superficially, it is an efficient way to solve the problem that peasants pursue to increase production scale at the expense of destroying natural resources. Farmers have the freedom to produce to market demand.³¹⁵ However, “the Mid-Term Review still allowed a part of the direct aids for the crop and livestock sectors to remain coupled to production.”³¹⁶ Furthermore, since the decoupling payment increase farmers’ incomes and lower their market risks, it still has a trade-distorting and surplus-simulating effect.³¹⁷ Cross-compliance requires farmers to

³⁰⁸ Rudloff, B. The Mid Term Review of the Common Agricultural Policy: The Future of Rural Development. EIPASCOPE 3, (2002): 1-5, 1

³⁰⁹ http://www.mop.gov.si/fileadmin/mop.gov.si/pageuploads/podrocja/velike_zveri/cipriani_rural_development_programmes.pdf (Accessed in 14.12.2015)

³¹⁰ Philippidis, George, and Lionel J. Hubbard, "Agenda 2000 Reform of the CAP and its Impacts on Member Member States: A Note." *Journal of Agricultural Economics* 54.3 (2003): 479-486, 484

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-history/2003-reform/index_en.htm (Accessed in 14.12.2015)

³¹³ Grey, C., *Green Box Mythology: The Decoupling Fraud*, 2006, 42

³¹⁴ Fritz, Thomas, "Globalising Hunger: Food Security and the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)," (2011), 19

³¹⁵ Grey, C., *Green Box Mythology: The Decoupling Fraud*, 2006, 42

³¹⁶ Fritz, T., op. cit., p.19

³¹⁷ Fritz, T., op. cit., p.21

protect the environment and pay attention to food security, animal welfare, and so on.

From 2007, Rural Development Programs (RDPs) began to be implemented. It is being implemented in two planning periods: 2007-2013, 2014-2020. It is used as “a policy tool and funding mechanism for implementing EU rural development policy in a specified territory.”³¹⁸ The financial support comes mostly from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) which was introduced in 2004. A wide variety of different types of rural development projects and actions³¹⁹ are funded by RDP.³²⁰ With this financial instrument, agriculture in the EU is encouraged to develop along competitive and innovative lines on the premise of protecting the environment and ecological system as well as improving rural life. This financial instrument strengthens rural development policy and makes it easier to implement.

Following the 2003 reforms, simplification and “health check” were put forward respectively in 2005 and 2008. Simplification involves technical simplification and policy simplification. The goals of simplification in the CAP are to reduce the regulatory burden and red tape in the agricultural sector and make policies easier to understand. “Health check” was raised in 2008 to help farmers to cope better with market needs and climate change. After 2013, CAP was given some new features. According to the *Overview of CAP Reform 2014 – 2010* of European Commission, the new CAP design is described as being “more efficient, targeted and coherent.”³²¹ It is expected to maintain the existing two pillar structure in a more targeted, integrated, and complementary way.³²²

Through a series of reform since 1992, CAP has improved significantly. However, the drawback of CAP still cannot be neglected. Valentin Zahrnt suggests that CAP “still distorts the economy, harms poor farmers abroad, and hands out income support to already wealthy recipients.”³²³ Furthermore, small farms in EU, as a significant part of the rural economy, are eliminated by CAP as well.³²⁴ Global players like the

³¹⁸ <https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en/general-info/faq#programmes> (Accessed in 05.05.2016)

³¹⁹ “The RDP budget is used to help Member States fund actions associated with the different themes/axes of EU rural development policy, namely: Improving the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry; Improving the rural environment and countryside; Quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy; and ‘LEADER’ rural development methods.” (Retrieved from <https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en/general-info/faq#programmes>, 05.05.2016)

³²⁰ <https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en/general-info/faq#programmes> (Accessed in 05.05.2016)

³²¹ http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/policy-perspectives/policy-briefs/05_en.pdf (Accessed in 14.12.2015)

³²² Ibid.

³²³ Zahrnt, V. (2009). Public money for public goods: winners and losers from CAP reform. ECIPE (European Centre for International Political Economy) Working Paper, 8, 1

³²⁴ Fritz, Thomas, "Globalising Hunger: Food Security and the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)," (2011), 31

agricultural conglomerates Monsanto (U.S.A) and Nestle (Switzerland) which own, and contrive to buy big amounts of cultivated land, lower the consumer prices for food and by that force the rest of small farmers to give up agricultural production because they cannot compete on the consumer markets: These markets function nowadays as capitalist mass markets. Their only counterforce is the still small but growing segment of bio-producing farmers who can sell these high prized products to the well-to-do middle classes and upper classes of the cities.

6.2.2 LEADER Approach

LEADER ("Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale", meaning 'Links between the rural economy and development actions') is a significant part of Rural Development Policy of EU.³²⁵ It was put forward in 1991 by the European Commission. As a tool, the LEADER approach is integrated into rural development policies in the EU. It focuses on relations between rural development programs and development actions. It is an innovative approach in rural development strategy that encourages local people to deal with local problems. Since physical environments of rural areas vary from region to region, the locals are well aware of all local developments. The locals can implement a rural development program more efficiently with the support of government and other external technical support. On this account, the LEADER approach can be seen as a bottom-up method which features flexibility, cooperation, and innovation. From 1991 to 2000, it puts emphasis on development of disadvantaged rural areas. Since 2000, this approach has been widely used in all types of rural areas. It is currently an essential part of the Common Agricultural Policy.

As a locally oriented strategy, the LEADER approach makes rural policies flexible. Common rural development policy is usually initiated to deal with general problems in rural areas. However, each rural area with special conditions has its own problems. Policy cannot be implemented in different regions in the same way. Measures should be adapted according to local conditions. For example, the countryside in the plain area and the mountain area has dissimilar natural conditions and the life quality of residents is also different. They possess different strength and shortcomings. Plain regions are suitable for crop farming while in mountainous regions the development of forestry and

³²⁵ http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/enrd-static/leader/en/leader_en.html (Accessed in 14.12.2015)

animal husbandry is more applicable. On this account, rural development strategy should be made according to their different features. Undeniably, in China it is a general problem that some rural development policies are implemented mechanically so that some policies are ineffective in dealing with local problems. Hence, the LEADER approach will be a good reference for carrying out new sustainable development. With this approach, the EU commission selects several rural areas with a population between 5,000 and 100,000 people as the target areas where the groups are relatively homogenous in nature.³²⁶ Through analyzing the advantages and disadvantages in the target areas, the development potentiality and obstacles in the process of development will be first confirmed. In the light of local competitive advantage, the development strategy will be designed afterwards. The local development strategy is made by Local Action Groups (LAGs), which are the mainstay of implementation of the LEADER approach.³²⁷ The Local Action Groups consist of residents, local government and representatives of local social and economic sectors. They will participate in decision making, selecting and implementing local development programs and managing the financial and social resources. During the process, the cooperation of participants is important. Participants have to reach agreement on local development strategy through dialogue and negotiation. As a whole, the development strategy must involve the interests of all sectors. Innovation is another essential feature of the LEADER approach. As mentioned earlier, it is a bottom-up method, which makes implementation of rural development policy more efficient. The method itself is innovative. It encourages local participation at all levels and establishes a wide network at each target site. To solve local problems, participants should discuss and find solutions together and utilize all kinds of resources effectively. In this process, new ideas may be stimulated. Additionally, it is worth noting that the LEADER program is beneficial for women getting involved in decision-making. LAGs include representatives of women's associations, and women can participate in developing strategic plans and implementing programs. This approach has strengthened women's equal participation and created lots

³²⁶ Barke, Michael, and Michael Newton, "The EU LEADER initiative and endogenous rural development: the application of the programme in two rural areas of Andalusia, southern Spain," *Journal of Rural Studies* 13.3 (1997): 319-341, 322

³²⁷ <https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en/leader/local-action-groups> (Accessed in 12.11.2015)

of work opportunities for females.³²⁸

By way of conclusion, the LEADER program as an instrument indicates that rural development needs a combination of local conditions, external resources, and wide local participation.

6.2.3 Climate change and agri-environmental policy in the EU

The relationship between agriculture and environment is obvious. Agriculture as the primary economic sector depends on natural resources. However, an improper agricultural production mode will destroy the environment and threaten sustainable agricultural development as well as human health. Nowadays, environmental problems including climate change have become the center of global attention. Not surprisingly, the agricultural sector is one of the primary causes of global warming and climate change. Generally speaking, 25% of greenhouse gases are produced during food production. These come mainly from burning biomass and destroying forests. Atmospheric methane comes from ruminant livestock, forest fires, rice planting and its associated waste, and so on. In addition, traditional farming practices and chemical fertilizer account for 70% of sources of nitrogen oxide.³²⁹ Policy as an instrument can impact people's behaviors and a good agri-environmental policy will guide people to protect the environment and develop sustainable agriculture. Therefore, agri-environmental policy plays a significant role in agricultural development and environment protection.

European agri-environmental policy formed against the background of CAP reforms. As previously mentioned, the CAP underwent three important reforms: the 1992 MacSharry Reforms, Agenda 2000, and the 2003 Reforms. In these reforms, environmental issues were considerable. The Common Agricultural Policy was introduced by the EEC in 1962. Environmental issues and rural development issues did not at first receive any consideration. Even in the 1970s, chemical fertilizers and pesticides were used widely while agricultural technology was popularized. As a result, food production was increased. However, pollution caused by intensive agriculture was

³²⁸ Prüggl, Elisabeth. "Feminism and the postmodern state: Gender mainstreaming in European rural development." *Signs* 35.2 (2010): 447-475, 451

³²⁹ <http://www.fao.org/ag/zh/magazine/0103sp2.htm> (Accessed in 12.03.2016)

serious, and had a negative influence on the environment and rural development in Europe. The quality of agricultural products declined and the water supply system was contaminated. On the other hand, it was difficult to solve the problem of food overproduction caused by expansion of agriculture. Some food was exported at lower prices which caused a complete breakdown of the agricultural product markets in some developing countries. Some food was disposed of directly in Europe. On account of this, the financial burden was aggravated and the Common Agricultural Policy was criticized by consumers and taxpayers during this period. In the mid-1980s, both government and society realized the significance of environment protection, and it “became an increasingly important policy concern in some member states.”³³⁰ In agricultural sector, agri-environmental schemes were introduced and gradually implemented in those EU member states. In its early stages, agri-environmental policy focused on “controlling nitrate pollution, pesticides, intensive animal husbandry and silage production, and the application of animal waste to land.”³³¹ With the reform of the CAP, agri-environmental policy was compulsively carried out in all member states. In 1999, the European Commission confirmed the direction towards sustainable agriculture.³³² In the meantime, the concept of multifunctional agriculture was strengthened. It was given three different functions: production of food, environmental function, and rural function.³³³ Undoubtedly, providing agricultural products is the basic function of agriculture which has long been a major concern among these three functions. Environmental function and rural function relate to sustainable development, which were introduced by the EC in Agenda 2000. Multifunctionality as an innovative concept expands the functions of agriculture. Based in environmental consciousness, it indicates the direction of agricultural development in the EU. In Agenda 2000, a series of environmental protection measures were put forward. For example, it stipulates that ecologically sensitive areas should be paid additional subsidies for environmental

³³⁰ Schreurs, Miranda, "Environmental protection in an expanding European Community: lessons from past accessions," *Environmental Politics* 13.1 (2004): 27-51, 34

³³¹ Latacz - Lohmann, Uwe, and Ian Hodge, "European agri - environmental policy for the 21st century," *Australian Journal of Agricultural and Resource Economics* 47.1 (2003): 123-139, 125

³³² Piorr, Hans-Peter, "Environmental policy, agri-environmental indicators and landscape indicators," *Agriculture, Ecosystems & Environment* 98.1 (2003): 17-33, 32.

³³³ Arovuori, Kyösti, and Jukka Kola, "Policies and measures for multifunctional agriculture: experts' insight," *International Food and Agribusiness Management Review* 8.3 (2005): 21-51, 23

services, and “calls for extra efforts made by farmers, such as organic farming, maintenance of semi-natural habitats, traditional orchards or hedgerows, continuation of alpine cattle keeping and so on.”³³⁴ In addition, EU member states were asked to set standards for good agricultural practices. The 2003 reforms brought environmental improvement as well. Cross-compliance is established based on the polluter-pays-principle and the provider-gets-principle. It sets a reference level for agri-environmental measures. All the agricultural activities have to be up to the standard set for cross-compliance. Otherwise, farmers have to pay the costs themselves. Environmentally friendly activities are encouraged and can be granted. In doing this, it is very motivating and leads farmers to participate in good agricultural practices.

Through these reforms, environmental consideration has been integrated into the Common Agricultural Policy and agri-environmental policy has become an essential part of the CAP guiding agricultural development and rural development in EU states. However, in the perspective of ecological globalization, CAP brings an indirectly negative effect on environmental protection in some developing countries. EU has been strongly promoted the global competitiveness by providing cheapest raw materials and feedstuffs to global players.³³⁵ At the same time, large amount of cheap agricultural products from EU floods to other countries. The livelihood of small farmers in the world, especially in some developing countries, might be threatened. To compete with the cheap products of EU, small farmers have to enhance the output by using chemical fertilizers and pesticides.³³⁶ As a result, the local environment and food security cannot be protected.

6.2.4 Policy for promoting sustainable development in the mountain area

Almost half of the continent of Europe is made up of mountain areas and one fifth of the population lives in mountain areas in Europe. Generally speaking, mountain areas are remote and marginal. The climatic conditions of mountain areas are complex and the quality of land is poor. People depending on farming in mountain areas usually live a

³³⁴ Williams, Ingrid H. "Insect pollination and crop production: a European perspective." *Pollinating Bees-The Conservation Link Between Agriculture and Nature*. Ministry of Environment, Brasilia (2002): 59-65, 64

³³⁵ Fritz, Thomas, "Globalising Hunger: Food Security and the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)," (2011), 94

³³⁶ Ibid.

tough life. For example, with natural handicaps small farm households in the mountains of Southern Europe are constrained by the low productivity, and they have limited opportunities for mechanization and intensification.³³⁷ The situation is the same as that in China's mountain regions. Agriculture abandonment and depopulation easily occur in mountain areas in Europe. However, mountain regions of Europe have a high proportion of natural or seminatural areas, in which extensive agricultural landscapes are significant.³³⁸ Agricultural land abandonment may threaten the ecosystem in mountain areas and lead to the loss of highly valuable rural landscape.³³⁹ To mitigate these risks, the Less Favored Areas (LFA) payment scheme was introduced in the Common Agricultural Policy. Mountain areas are included in less-favored areas. Since 1975, LFA have become a long standing measure of the Common Agricultural Policy.³⁴⁰ LFA payment scheme makes significant contributions to both development of local rural communities and environmental protection in less-favored areas. Farmers can receive the direct payments by continuing agricultural activities, and this is also helpful for maintaining cultivated land and nature conservation.³⁴¹ With requirements for environmental protection, it also encourages livestock farms to solve the problem of continued grazing on farms.³⁴² In addition, new income and employment opportunities can be created with increasing economic activities and developing recreation and tourism dependent on open landscapes.³⁴³ By encouraging farmers in less-favored areas to continue agricultural activities and reducing the risk of agriculture abandonment, the LFA payment scheme plays a significant role in poverty alleviation and sustainable natural resource management in those areas.³⁴⁴

³³⁷ MacDonald, Donna, et al. "Agricultural abandonment in mountain areas of Europe: environmental consequences and policy response." *Journal of environmental management* 59.1 (2000): 47-69, 47, 48

³³⁸ Bezák, Peter, and Lúboš Halada, "Sustainable management recommendations to reduce the loss of agricultural biodiversity in the mountain regions of NE Slovakia," *Mountain Research and Development* 30.3 (2010): 192-204, 192

³³⁹ http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/lfa/index_en.htm (Accessed in 10.11.2015)

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁴¹ Institute for European Environmental Policy for DG Agriculture, *An evaluation of the less favoured area measure in the 25 member states of the European Union*, 2006, p.12

³⁴² *Ibid.* p.11

³⁴³ *Ibid.* p.12

³⁴⁴ Ruben, Ruerd, and John Pender, "Rural diversity and heterogeneity in less-favoured areas: the quest for policy targeting," *Food policy* 29.4 (2004): 303-320, 313

6.3 Environmental problems in China's rural areas and lessons from agricultural policy of the EU

To make the agricultural sector in EU member states more competitive and sustainable, CAP experienced several reforms. At the same time, it witnessed the process of agricultural development in Europe. Nowadays, rural areas in China are suffering some of the same problems that appeared in the process of European agricultural development as well as some of the difficulties that EU member states are facing now, for instance, ecological issues and the development of remote rural areas. As such, CAP offers a reference for improving Chinese agricultural policies.

These days, climate change and its negative impact are issues of global common concern. In China, the air pollution becomes increasingly serious with the country's rapid economic growth. Indeed, economic development in China has often been achieved at the cost of the environment. Coupled with its large population, currently China's emissions of carbon dioxide are the highest in the world.³⁴⁵ When more energy is consumed, the concentration of greenhouse gas increasing. Agriculture is one major pollutant source. As mentioned, many agricultural activities may lead to global warming. In China, biomass burning and excessive use of fertilizers and pesticides are two main concerns with respect to endangering the environment.

The purpose of biomass burning in China can be generally classified into three kinds: domestic cooking and heating, making plant ash to fertilize the soil and clearing to prepare the fields for the next crop. In remote rural areas, especially in mountain areas, energy from crop waste is still an important part of the rural energy for cooking or heating.³⁴⁶ It is regarded as the cheapest fuel. In many rural areas, the majority of farmers think burning crop straw will give rise to plant ash which benefits the soil as a kind of fertilizer. In addition, for farmers burning is the easiest and the most economical way to deal with the crop straw. However, biomass burning on a wide scale generates large amounts of atmospheric particles, which causes a serious regional pollution and has deleterious effects on the health of local residents.^{347 348} Consequently, China's

³⁴⁵ Atemlos durch die Stadt, Die Zeit, December 4,2014

³⁴⁶ Guoliang, C. A. O., et al, "Investigation on emission factors of particulate matter and gaseous pollutants from crop residue burning," *Journal of Environmental Sciences* 20.1 (2008): 50-55, 50

³⁴⁷ Li, LingJun, et al. "Wheat straw burning and its associated impacts on Beijing air quality." *Science in China Series D: Earth Sciences* 51.3 (2008): 403-414, 404

³⁴⁸ Galanter, Meredith, et al., "Impacts of biomass burning on tropospheric CO, NO x, and O3," *Journal of Geophysical Research: Atmospheres* 105.D5 (2000): 6633-6653, 6633

government has taken some measures to resolve this matter. According to the environmental law, crop straw burning is forbidden. People burn crop straw will be fined at least 200 Yuan. Nevertheless, this phenomenon still happens frequently in many provinces. For example, in Henan Province³⁴⁹ about 25% of the straw material is burned to prepare the fields for the next crop.³⁵⁰ This problem is also more and more serious in Jiangsu Province where straw burning has increased from 21% to 48% between the mid-1990s and the mid-2000s.³⁵¹ On the 20th of October, 2013, Heilongjiang Province located in northeast of China experienced the most serious hazy weather in its history, caused mainly by burning coal and crop straw. On the 1st of October, 2015, the local government of Taikang County belonging to Zhoukou city in Henan Province, one of the poorest counties in China, was criticized and fined 20 million Yuan (about 2.74 million Euro) by the Zhoukou municipal government³⁵² because many villagers were burning crop straw in this county.³⁵³ Why is it difficult to prevent crop straw burning in China? The principal reasons are as follows. Firstly, for small-scale farmers the cost of dealing with crop straw properly is high. Crop straw can be shredded as fertilizer or animal fodder. Shredding crop straws will cost 50 to 100 Yuan per mu. And farmers can get 10 to 20 Yuan from government as a subsidy. As a result, farmers will spend 40 to 80 Yuan on shredding crop straws, which is expensive compared with utilizing chemical fertilizer directly. Furthermore, crop straw can be sold to straw processing plants at the price of 300 Yuan per ton. One mu of land produces half a ton of crop straw. However, farmers have to pay the freight, which is about 100 Yuan per 100 km.³⁵⁴ In China, each household in rural areas owns on average 3 or 4 mu (0.2 or 0.27 ha) of land. Therefore, they cannot earn much money by selling crop straw while spending time collecting and carrying the straw. If the straw processing plant is far away from the village, the transport cost will be higher and farmers will end up losing money. And nowadays there are a lot of left-behind women participating in agricultural production. It is difficult for them to carry the crop straw by themselves. Sometimes they would rather burn them directly on the land than spend much time and energy dealing with crop straw. Thirdly

³⁴⁹ Henan province is located in the central plain of north China.

³⁵⁰ Ma, J., "Cause of straw burning in field by China's farmers: an analysis of cost-benefit and policy barriers," *Journal of Agri-technical Economics* 02, 77 (2009): 82-86, 84 (in Chinese)

³⁵¹ Liu, L. H., "Greenhouse gases emissions from agricultural residues burning- a case study of Jiangsu province of China," Graduate School, Nanjing Agricultural University, 2011, 43 (in Chinese)

³⁵² In Henan Province, Taikang County belongs to Zhoukou City. The government of Taikang County is under the jurisdiction of Zhoukou municipal government.

³⁵³ http://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_1381264 (accessed in 12.11. 2015)

³⁵⁴ http://3g.163.com/ntes/special/0034073A/wechat_article.html?docid=B6CMA49P00963VRO&f=wx&from=timeli ne&isappinstalled=0&s=newsapp&w=3 (Accessed in 12.11.2015)

and most importantly, the policy has not taken account of farmers' interest. Although the policy integrates both the polluter-pays-principle and the provider-gets-principle, the subsidy for dealing with straw is not enough to motivate farmers. It cannot move farmers to dispose of straw properly. To sum up, with current policy the cost of protecting the environment is mostly paid by farmers.

According to EU policy, at least 30% of EAFRD (European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development) have to "be allocated to investment in the environment and climate, the development of woodland and improving the viability of forests, 'agri-environment-climate' measures, and organic farming."³⁵⁵ EU expenditure on agri-environment measures amounted to nearly 20 billion EUR for 2007-2013.³⁵⁶ In China, the proportion of agricultural funds for protecting the environment should be increased. Besides, innovation is important to rural development. Measures should be taken to encourage innovation regarding efficient use of biomass. Lastly, burning crop waste for domestic cooking and heating cannot be ignored. In most remote rural areas, earthen stoves are still widely used, requiring a large amount of solid fuels including biomass. It is a major source of both indoor air pollution and outdoor air pollution. Thus, the utilization of earthen stoves in remote rural areas should be given more attention.

Another serious problem in agricultural development in China is the excessive use of fertilizer and pesticides. According to statistics, in half of Chinese regions the average levels of nitrogen fertilizer use are above the internationally accepted limit.³⁵⁷ Except for the emissions of carbon dioxide, the consumption of fertilizers and pesticides in China is also more than other countries in the world. In 2013, China's agriculture consumed 59.119 million tons of fertilizers. Consumption has nearly doubled over the past 22 years.³⁵⁸ However, not all the fertilizer can be absorbed by crops. The agricultural authorities of Henan Province found that every year about one million tons of fertilizer used in agricultural production in Henan province cannot be absorbed and remains in the soil.³⁵⁹ The excess fertilizers can cause environmental pollution such as destroying the soil structure, degrading the land, water pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, and so on. There are four primary reasons for the excessive use of fertilizer

³⁵⁵ http://www.europarl.europa.eu/atyourservice/en/displayFtu.html?ftuId=FTU_5.2.6.html (Accessed in 12.11.2015)

³⁵⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/envir/measures/index_en.htm (Accessed in 12.11.2015)

³⁵⁷ Yang Meng, The damaging truth about Chinese fertilizer and pesticide use, China Dialogue, September, 7, 2012

³⁵⁸ Kan Lili, The problem of rational use of fertilizer remains to be solved (in Chinese), China News Product Network, August 31, 2015

³⁵⁹ Yang Meng, The damaging truth about Chinese fertilizer and pesticide use, China Dialogue, September, 7, 2012

and pesticides. First of all, farmers believe that increasing fertilizer or pesticide use correlates positively with higher yields of crops. Undeniably, fertilizers and pesticides are beneficial for better yield. Since the arable land in China is limited, reasonable application of fertilizers is a way of increasing the output of crops. As mentioned earlier, nevertheless, crops cannot absorb all the fertilizers. A large amount of fertilizers and pesticides are wasted and become a primary source of environmental pollution. A study estimated China's fertilizer requirements in 2009 and suggested that the yields would not be reduced when the chemical fertilizer use is cut by 30% to 50%.³⁶⁰ Second, an increasing number of agricultural workers undertake off-farm work in recent years. Such workers tend to apply fertilizer in a single large quantity rather than a more labor-intensive split application which has better nitrogen use efficiency.³⁶¹ Third, peasants lack related knowledge and skills. They don't know how to use the fertilizers and pesticides reasonably or effectively. Lastly, government offers excessive subsidies on fertilizers and pesticides so that they are very cheap for farmers. For example, all the chemical fertilizer manufacturing companies in China are excused from taxes. The subsidy for the transport costs of fertilizer is excessive. In 2003, this kind of subsidy was up to 5 billion Yuan.³⁶² These days, the chemical fertilizer industry is facing a serious problem— with overcapacity and chemical fertilizers being over supplied. With a doubt, excessive subsidy is the major contributing factor. As a result, the cost of using fertilizers and pesticides is much lower than using organic manure.

With reference to EU agricultural policy, environmental consideration should be integrated into China's agricultural policies. As environmental problems in China are becoming more and more serious, environmentally friendly farming should be taken as a guideline. In light of the experience of the EU, agri-environmental measures can be classified into two categories: enhancing rural residents' environmental awareness, and subsidizing good agricultural practices and environmentally friendly farming. Farmers are the mainstay of agricultural production. Their agricultural activities are closely related to agricultural development as well as the environment. Agricultural and

³⁶⁰ Good, Allen G, and Perrin H. Beatty, "Fertilizing nature: a tragedy of excess in the commons," *PLoS Biol* 9.8 (2011): 1-9, 5.

³⁶¹ OECD Economic Surveys: China 2015, p.119

³⁶² <http://www.chinavalue.net/Finance/Blog/2010-11-14/524881.aspx> (Accessed in 02.11.2015)

environmental education is significant in rural areas. Measures should be taken to teach farmers professional skills and upgrade their knowledge. Government could encourage farmers to employ good agricultural practices to protect or improve the environment with sufficient financial support. Admittedly, such a measure would probably need a large amount of money as the population of rural areas is also large in China. However, the subsidy for chemical fertilizers and pesticides at least could be cut and the proportion of funds on agri-environmental measures could be enlarged. Environment quality is a kind of public good. Government should pay for environmental improvement while farmers who receive the subsidies can benefit from environmentally friendly farming. In addition, rules and regulations controlling fertilizers and pesticides have to be improved while the procedure for carrying out the regulations has to be clarified.

China's terrain features mountains, mountainous areas account for 69.1% of the whole land area. On this account, agricultural sustainable development and rural development in mountain areas is very important. At present environmental pollution in mountain areas is serious as well, and agricultural abandonment is gradually become a trend. Since burning straw in mountain areas is dangerous and may cause forest fires, it is always strictly forbidden and supervised by the government. Nevertheless, solid fuels and rubbish burning is often allowed. Due to the vulnerable and complex physical environment, most rural mountain areas are impoverished and many rural communities are short of living facilities. It is difficult to find trash cans in mountain rural areas and generally there is no waste disposal plant near those villages. Furthermore, villagers are scattered in mountains which increases the difficulty of trash collection. Rural residents, therefore, always burn all of their domestic waste which results in air pollution. With respect to pollution caused by burning solid fuels and excessive use of fertilizers and pesticides, there is no need to repeat.

Agricultural abandonment in mountain areas is becoming a cause of concern in recent years. The increasing number of rural young laborers flowing to non-agricultural sectors, rural residents migrating to cities, soil degradation, and aging of the population are the major causes of agricultural abandonment. In addition, because of the implementation of the Grain for Green Project, mountain areas are seeing increases in

the populations of wild animals, which often destroy crops and sometimes even result in total crop failure. As a result, farmers have to give up the land. In China, there is a large amount of cultivated land in mountain areas. When agricultural abandonment becomes a common phenomenon, output of agricultural products will fall and China will face a serious food crisis. According to EU discussions on agricultural abandonment in mountain areas, abandonment may have a negative impact on the environment.

With a small plot of farmland, farmers in mountain areas cannot earn enough money from farming. In the meantime, the indiscriminate use of fertilizers and pesticides is polluting the soil, water, and air. In these circumstances, either maintaining small farming or agricultural abandonment would negatively affect the environment and rural development. In order to stem environmental pollution and the tide of agricultural abandonment, we must first address its causes. With reference to the EU, perhaps the most of effective method of doing this would be for the government to offer financial incentives to farmers. If government could afford most of the cost of organic farming, it would not be difficult to lead farmers to accept good agricultural practices. Doing organic farming can not only improve the environment but also bring income to farmers and improve the quality of their lives, killing two birds with one stone. At the same time, measures to improve infrastructure in remote rural communities would be necessary. Lastly, the non-governmental organizations (NGO) that dedicate themselves to environmental protection and rural development should be encouraged. They will be very helpful for resolving the weakness of related policies, helping the poor and promoting sustainable development.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

With the rapid economic development and social transformation of China, the surplus labor force in rural areas is increasing. Lots of rural labor force flock to cities and engage in non-agricultural activities. However, people who are not able to work are left in the villages. They are mostly the elderly and the children. The majority of married women also remain at home doing farm work and looking after family members. In the past, the mode of gender labor division in the countryside was the husband doing farm work while the wife did the housework and looked after other family members. This is the traditional gendered division of labor. Since 1955, women have been encouraged to take part in agricultural production. They share farm work with their husbands. The traditional mode of labor division has changed. Compared with the past, females have become financially independent. Nevertheless, the workload of rural women is heavier. When the reform and opening up policy was implemented in 1978, the majority of male laborers flowed to urban areas. Husbands now work in non-farm sectors while wives stay in rural areas and do all of the farm work and housework, forming a new mode of labor division. This new labor division mode constrains rural women, especially married women, to the countryside and their livelihood is even worse than before. Nowadays, farming women have become one of the most vulnerable groups in China. Against this background, I selected farming women as the subjects of this study.

China is a large country with a large land area and approximately 1.37 billion people. The level of economic development varies from region to region. The living standard of people in different areas is different as well, especially between western China and eastern China. Due to geographical and historical factors, there is a wide gap in development between western China and eastern China. Generally, the levels of urbanization, modernization, and industrialization in eastern regions are higher than those in western regions. As a result, rural communities in eastern China develop faster than those in western China. China shows both the features of highly industrialized countries and developing countries. So does the agricultural sector. The disparity of rural development between mountain area and plain area found in this study indicates

the imbalance of modernization in China. From a geographical perspective, mountain ranges and plain are the two major landforms of China. Landforms have a great influence on agricultural production and people's lives. Especially in rural areas, landforms can even shape people's lives. Comparatively, agriculture in the plain area mostly features industrialization and mechanization while agriculture in the mountain area develops slowly. This study aims to show the disparity of farming women's living and working conditions between different areas with different landforms. I selected farming women in villages of a mountain area in western China and a plain area in eastern China to elaborate on how large the gap in farming women's situation is across diverse areas in China. By comparing the situation of rural women in these two regions common difficulties and special difficulties in farming women's lives can be found. According to the results of the comparison, this study summarizes the factors influencing farming women's situation in this chapter, which will contribute to solving the problems of farming women by making effective and targeted policies.

Compared with China, agriculture and rural communities in most countries in the EU develop better with positive policies, and thus offer would be a good reference for the development of agriculture and farming women in China. Since environmental issues are often neglected in agricultural and rural development in China, the present study also focuses on the relationship between farming women, agriculture, and the environment.

7.1 Research question and summary of findings

In the beginning of this study, five research questions were put forward. The results are summarized as follows.

7.1.1 What are the differences of rural women's situation in the mountain area and plain area?

Differences in rural women's situations between the mountain area and the plain area comprise five aspects: working conditions and income, living circumstances, nutrition and health status, and influences of local urbanization policy.

Farming women in the mountain area are general live a tough life. Villages in the mountain area are mostly remote and far away from urban areas. Except for mountain

regions with rich tourism resources, they have only limited access to modern society and culture. The lifestyle of farmers there is very traditional. In China, most farmers living in the mountain area are impoverished. For farming women, both working and living conditions are comparatively worse than those of rural women in the plain area. In the mountain area, arable land is scarce and fragmented as well as being characterized by low quality of soil and the slope of land. Large agricultural machines cannot be used in the mountain area. Therefore, farmers there have to do farm work with traditional tools like the hoe, sickle, harrow, hayfork, etc., ensuring the farm work is of low efficiency. They must spend much of their time farming. With the increasing number of male laborers flowing to urban areas, women have become the main participants in agricultural production. For women, the workload is heavier than before. They must do all kinds of farm work including heavy manual work, which was usually done by men before, like picking corn by hand and carrying it from the field to home in baskets. Moreover, the arable land is scattered around the mountain. It usually can be found that the land is far away from farmers' home. There is no public transport for residents in the village and the majority of women in the mountain village don't have any vehicles. As a result, they can only go to the field on foot. Such a long distance increases the workload of farming women. However, most mountain villages in China feature self-sufficiency. Locally grown agricultural products are the major source of food in each household. Farming women are growing vegetables for their own consumption, which is a non-profit, energy-consuming, and time-consuming activity. Lastly, women in the mountain area cook with earthen stoves. They usually spend at least three hours cooking, in the process burning solid fuels that pollute the outdoor and indoor environment. In turn, this has a negative influence on women's health.

Most farming women in the mountain region live in old houses built of clay and sand, and there is no toilet or heating system indoors. The village is lacking in garbage disposal, and residents have to burn their trash. The climate in the mountain area is cold and humid, and the kinds of vegetables which are suitable for growing in such an area are very limited. Especially in winter, villagers can only eat one to three sorts of vegetables. As access to market is difficult for rural women, they seldom eat fruits and meats. On account of this, rural residents including farming women in the mountain

area might be undernourished. All in all, the situation of farming women in mountain villages is similar to rural women in developing countries. Many of them still live in poverty and are easily neglected by the modern society.

Compared with farming females in the mountain area, the working conditions and material lives of farming women in the plain area are much better. The local economic development level in the plain region is higher than that of the mountain region. As the rural development of the plain area is at the halfway point of modernization, the lifestyle of rural women in the plain area is influenced by both traditional and modern culture. From a cultural sociological perspective, their situation reflects the cultural lag in rural communities. In the plain area, the farmland is flat and agricultural production has been mechanized. Agricultural machines replace human effort to accomplish tasks during farming. Therefore, agricultural work is no longer a heavy burden for farming women living in the plain area. Agricultural mechanization has saved a lot of effort and time for farming women so that most of them can do small business or find part-time jobs around the village. In terms of doing housework, most of women must do all the housework as well. However, gas ovens are widely used in the rural plain area, which reduces the burden of housework for women to some extent. In addition, women don't have to grow vegetables for themselves. Convenient transportation in the plain area provides easy access to markets. Vegetables they often eat are bought from the market. In summary, the working conditions of farming women in the plain area are better and most of them are healthier than women of the same age in the mountain area.

Around villages in the plain area, there are some township enterprises providing job opportunities to rural women. Coupled with good climate and higher crop yields, the household income of rural women in the plain area is higher, which is beneficial to improving their material lives. Accordingly, the living circumstances of rural women in the plain area are better. Housing conditions in the plain area are also good while the ownership rate of household appliances is much higher than that of the mountain village. As to their family lives and values, they are still traditional with the influence of Confucian culture. Confucian culture advocates that the primary task of a married woman should be taking care of her husband, children, and aging parents-in-law. Shandong province is the birthplace of Confucian culture. Rural people in this place are

affected by it greatly. In the plain area, women are still in an inferior position in the family. Preference for sons puts great pressure on women in reproduction. Although their material lives have vastly improved, even today traditional values are hard to change. This phenomenon manifests the cultural lag in rural communities in the process of social change. Ogburn (1957) described cultural lag as follows:

“A cultural lag occurs when one of two parts of culture which are correlated, changes before or in greater degree than the other part does, thereby causing less adjustment between the two parts than existed previously.”³⁶³

It is believed that non-material culture usually lags behind material culture during social change. Thus, it is easy to understand that farming women's lives in the plain area feature both tradition and modernity. The collision between tradition and modernity shows more obviously in young females' marriage. On one hand, influenced by traditional values they obey their parents, get married, and start a family at an early age. On the other hand, influenced by modern culture young females' attitude to divorce is more tolerant. As a result, the rate of divorce among rural young people is increasing. Nevertheless, farming women without sons in the plain area often show insecurity in terms of old-age support. According to traditional culture, sons should take responsibility for looking after elderly parents. Villagers without sons usually call in a son-in-law who has to live together with them after getting married. This form of marriage is called uxorilocal marriage. The son-in-law often plays the same role in his wife's family as a daughter-in-law in a virilocal marriage. Wealthy villagers without sons tend to guarantee their old-age lives in this way.

With respect to influences of the local urbanization policy, the results show that this policy brings more positive effect to rural women in the plain area. It benefits rural women's development and the development of rural communities. However, the village in the mountain area is not suitable for implementation of this policy. The conditions in the mountain area are limited by the low level of economic development. This policy cannot be carried out effectively and it doesn't affect rural women in the mountain area positively. In summary, geographical factors and the level of economic development contribute to the differences in rural women's situations. From those differences, it can

³⁶³ Ogburn, William F. "Cultural lag as theory." *Sociology and Social Research* 41.3 (1957): 167-174, 167

be seen that there is a great disparity of development of rural communities and rural females between the mountain area and the plain area in China. Such a disparity will affect social equity and social stability.

7.1.2 What are the similarities of rural women's conditions?

According to the results of this study, the similarities of women's situation in the mountain area and the plain area include five aspects: gender-based division of labor, family-centered life, independent old-age support, poor education and lack of environmental awareness.

Feminization of agriculture spread in most of rural regions and an increasing number of rural women are constrained by the farm and family. They regard family as the center of their lives. All of their activities and daily lives are based on their households and they pay close attention to the family's demands while ignoring their own needs. Patriarchal culture affects family life of farming women. Compared with the past, women's family status has largely improved. Women can manage family property together with their husbands. Some females have total control the family property. However, they have limited rights of decision-making on family affairs. Women can make decisions about trivial things while important family affairs have to be decided by men. Traditional gender ideology traps farming women in the family and they have little awareness of gender equality. Even when they are treated unfairly, they seldom realize this. Independent old-age support is another similarity among rural women's living conditions. In rural districts, the elderly can get at most 70 Yuan (about 10 Euro) per month as a pension, which is too little to maintain a normal life. As a result, they have to be dependent on their sons when they are too old to earn money. In both regions, rural women are mostly poorly educated and can hardly keep up with social development. Meanwhile, they lack environmental awareness, making them inclined to cause environmental problems in agricultural production. On the other hand, they are exposed to polluted environments and their health is threatened; for instance, they drink well water which is untreated and might be polluted by fertilizers and pesticides.

7.1.3 Which factors affect rural women's working and living conditions?

Actually, there are a variety of factors influencing rural women's lives. According

to my investigation, it can be seen that geographical features, regional economic development, social support, traditional gender ideology, and Chinese farmers' life philosophy are the most obvious factors affecting rural women's lives.

7.1.3.1 Geographical factors

Geographical features not only influence local agriculture, but also shape local residents lives in rural areas.

Agricultural performance to some degree is determined by geographical features. The agricultural system in the mountain area is rain-fed agriculture. This means that the water for agriculture production comes from rainfall, and farmers don't have to irrigate by themselves. It saves time and effort for them. Nevertheless, climate change brings uncertainty of crop yields. Without the utilization of modern technology, farmers in the mountain area are passive. On the contrary, the plain area in China has irrigated farming and fertile soil. The temperature in East China is also proper for growing crops. In the investigation, I find crop yields in the plain area to be double those in the mountain area. It can be surmised that different geographical conditions have a great effect on the results. While geographical features are an objective factor which man can't change, they determine the situation of rural women to some extent. They bring plain rural women easy access to resources and facilities while giving rise to difficulties for residents in rural the mountain area. In China, women left behind are a vulnerable group, whereas left-behind women in mountain villages are the most vulnerable in this group. From the perspective of natural conditions, the plight of rural women living in the mountain area should draw widespread concern.

7.1.3.2 Development level of the regional economy

Owing to opening-up policy, lots of investment tends to flow to East China, which helps keep the economy of eastern areas growing rapidly. In the late 1980s, the economy in East China far outpaced other regions. Many township enterprises were established in eastern areas. The development of non-agricultural sector offered surplus labor force in rural areas, as well as more job opportunities, and other means of production could be utilized to the fullest. To a large extent, it boosted rural economic development. The efficiency of resource allocation in local rural community was

improved and rural households' family income was increased. At the same time, rural communities in western areas lacked financial and technical support to cope with inconvenient transportation. To this day, resources can't be used effectively. As a result, rural development is lagging behind, especially in the mountainous area in West China. From the perspective of regional development, the gap in development between eastern areas and western areas lead to the difference in living standards of rural residents in the different regions.

7.1.3.3 Lack of social support

These days, Chinese rural women have drawn worldwide attention. However, rural women actually lack real social support. I discuss this from two perspectives. In terms of private social contact, rural women seldom communicate with the outside. In both mountainous area and plain area rural females often contact their neighbors and relatives who live near them. Hence, the social networks of rural women are homogeneous. They are characterized by consanguinity and regionalism. As each person in the social network has similar or fewer resources. Rural women get less support from their homogeneous social networks. In terms of public social support, rural women are lacking in welfare and social security. Rural women are living off farming and the majority of them work on the small-scale farmland. As they are working on their own land, they are not protected by labor law and have no welfare either. Besides, the women's federation in the village exists in name only. It cannot give rural women real help. Most importantly, females in rural areas mostly have no awareness of safeguarding their interests and they have no say in public. All in all, both the government and society is short of support for rural women.

7.1.3.4 Traditional gender ideology

Traditional gender ideology is the result of patriarchy. It brings gender inequality in both society and families. Nowadays sexual equality is advocated in China's Constitution and reflected in related laws, such as the Women Rights Guarantee Law. However, traditional values still have a great influence on people who are living in poor areas. In rural China, gender inequality is especially obvious whether in the mountains or on the plain.

Traditional gender ideology is an invisible context leading to discrimination against women. According to the clan system, only sons can carry on the family lineage.³⁶⁴ A daughter is born to be regarded as a member belonging to her future husband's family, while a son is more desirable to the family. The Chinese old age support mode in rural areas is another invisible context aggravating gender inequality. In rural China, sons are better suited for providing old age support against the background of traditional values. They have to provide their parents with security in their old age. As a result, rural people always feel insecure without a son. In this setting, gender discrimination takes place.

Patriarchal relations have shaped gender division of labor which forces women to take primary responsibility for the home and children. It limits women's employment choices. To balance work and family responsibilities, women often short the time and distance traveled to work.³⁶⁵ In this investigation, the rural plain can be a typical example: although public transportation is convenient for rural dwellers in plain area, women still tend to seek jobs near the village while most rural males go to cities without distance limitations. In the mountain area, the access to vehicles also reflects gender inequalities. In general, males can use the family automobile (when there is only one) and females have to choose slower and less flexible public transportation.³⁶⁶

In a patriarchal context, women are not expected to pursue self-development. They are inextricably bound up with family demands. Because of stereotypes, women have limited access to resources and are restricted to the reproductive role.³⁶⁷ Hence, their education and skills training are neglected. Particularly in the 1960s and 1970s, most rural families were faced with financial difficulties. They did not have enough money to support all the children to go to school. In these circumstances, parents tended to send boys to receive education while girls had to stay at home and attend to work at a very

³⁶⁴ Leung, Alicia SM. "Feminism in transition: Chinese culture, ideology and the development of the women's movement in China." *Asia Pacific journal of management* 20.3 (2003): 359-374, 361

³⁶⁵ Wolch, Jennifer, and Michael Dear, eds., *The Power of Geography (RLE Social & Cultural Geography): How Territory Shapes Social Life* (UK: Routledge, 2014), 151

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

³⁶⁷ Prakash, Daman, "Rural women, food security and agricultural cooperatives," *Rural Development and Management Centre, The Saryu, J-102 Kalkaji, New Delhi*, (2003), 1

<http://ieham.org/html/docs/RURAL%20WOMEN.%20FOOD%20SECURITY%20AND%20AGRICULTURAL%20COOPERATIVES.pdf> (Accessed in 10.12. 2015)

early age. This is the reason why the level of female villagers' education is lower than that of men's. Rural women who are poorly educated cannot keep up with the times, as well as their modes of thinking. They are unwilling to seek progress or accept anything new. Their knowledge of agriculture is incomplete and they lack professional skills in agricultural production. They are doing farm work by rule of thumb, which often leads to low efficiency of agricultural production. Furthermore, they lack confidence because of poor education. When they are communicating with their husbands or they are dealing with public affairs, they often feel inferior. At the same time, it is difficult for them to find a job in the city without vocational skills. Except for engaging in agricultural production and other manual jobs in non-agricultural sectors, rural women have no choice. Therefore, they have to stay in the village and do farm work with less social welfare when they are unable to do the manual work outside.

7.1.3.5 Chinese farmer's life philosophy—"Guorizi"

"Guorizi" is a common saying in China, as well as an idiom that Chinese peasants often use. It summarizes rural residents' life philosophy and explain how Chinese farmers guarantee fundamental subsistence. "Guorizi" is the Chinese farmer's life philosophy; in other words, it is a family ethic. Women's family-centered lives are largely influenced by this family ethic. There are two meanings of "guorizi". The literal meaning is passing through each day while the deeper meaning is managing family life. It is nonsensical for the person who is passing through each day without marriage. Family is regarded as a common but most important social union in Chinese society. The individual's life can't be called "Guorizi". Young rural people are usually anxious to get married and establish a family, because most of them think that life is meaningful only with marriage. In light of rural residents' life values, the greatest success is living a stable family life. The word "stable" in rural people's eyes means carrying on the patrilineage and maintaining basic subsistence. Once a new family is established, they have to learn how to manage family life and try to make their family life stable.

Carrying on the patrilineage and earning a good living are two major tasks for rural people in their family lives. Both of these tasks bring pressure to rural females. In traditional culture, only sons can carry on the patrilineage and offer old-age support. A son is seen as the future of the whole family and even the future of the clan. Under this pressure, a woman who doesn't give birth to a boy often feels guilty and has an inferior

family status. According to traditional family ethics in rural areas, a woman must bring forth a boy as soon as she gets married. Then she will be regarded as a successful wife. The second task is earning a good living. People always try their best to make plenty of money for their families. For the majority of rural women, as they cannot earn more money than their husbands with various restrictions, they do everything possible to save money, even at the cost of sacrificing their personal interests. They are reluctant to buy clothes and shoes for themselves and even avoid seeing a doctor when they suffer diseases. A woman who can save as much money as possible for her family will be praised as a good wife who is good at managing family life (i.e. *Guorizi*). Influenced by this ethic, rural married females make every effort to save money for their families. What's more, the purpose of saving money is not only to maintain basic the subsistence of the family, but also to prepare for sons' marriages, which represent the production of a new generation. As mentioned in chapter 4, nowadays in rural China the groom has to pay a large amount of money for betrothal gifts and buy or build a new house for getting married. For most rural families, it is difficult for them to afford such a staggering sum of money. Parents often have to save money for sons for many years. Otherwise, they will be considered losers who are not good at managing family life. Therefore, rural females who often spend money on themselves will be criticized by other villagers. Chinese rural society is an acquaintance society, in which people living together know each other very well. Everyone is supervised by other villagers. They must follow the traditional family ethics no matter what they are doing.

Taken together, geographical features and the development level of the regional economy give rise to differences in rural women's working and living conditions in the mountainous area and the plain area. The lack of social support, traditional gender ideology, and traditional peasants' life philosophy make rural women in different regions stay experience the same plight.

7.1.4 What are the major challenges existing in the lives of rural women in China?

The challenges which rural women face can be found from the results of the comparison. Generally, the poor infrastructure in rural communities (especially in the rural mountain area), weak social security system, environmental protection, and rural

women's self-development are the major difficulties in farming women's lives in China.

First of all, the results of this study manifest that rural regions, especially rural mountain regions, lag behind urban regions in infrastructure development. Infrastructure development is closely linked to the living conditions of rural residents, agricultural productivity and the development of rural community.³⁶⁸ The water system, sanitary latrines, heating applications and refuse disposal systems are scarce in both plain area and mountain area. The lack of these facilities directly affects the quality of women's lives. Roads in the mountain village are very poor, making the mountain village isolated. This makes it difficult for rural females to access to resources and public social services, such as education and health services.

Secondly, the weak social security system in rural communities brings rural women more risks and pressure. Problems mainly exist in two aspects: health care and the pension system. Although the new rural cooperative medical system has covered all rural residents throughout the country, there are some shortcomings in this system. For example, the medical expense reimbursement proportion for serious diseases is up to 70%. Poor rural residents still cannot afford the extra cost. It might widen the gap between the poor and the rich in rural regions. Common rural residents may sink back into poverty due to disease. On account of this, most of rural women don't go to see a doctor even when they are ill. The pension system in rural areas cannot guarantee old people's lives. The supporting resources are mostly provided by the children, or more precisely, sons. As a result, the preference for sons is strengthened by this kind of supporting system, which not only causes discrimination against women, but also increases the pressure on rural women to reproduce.

Environmental problems in rural areas are an essential issue but have not been paid great attention. Due to the lack of environmental knowledge, rural women damage the environment unconsciously when they are farming. Meanwhile, their health is badly influenced by the polluted environment. Environmental problems in agricultural production decrease the crop yields and the quality of food. More disturbingly, they degrade ecosystems and threaten the climate's stability. Therefore, environmental issue in the countryside is a serious problem in women's lives, rural development, and social

³⁶⁸ Shenggen, F. A. N., and Xiaobo Zhang, "Infrastructure and regional economic development in rural China," *China economic review* 15.2 (2004): 203-214, 207

development.

Lastly, the results show that self-development of rural women is also a big problem. Lacking education and influenced by traditional ideology, women generally have low self-esteem. This is the key obstacle to women's self-development. Also, rural women's political participation rates are very low. Few of them take part in rural policy decision making and they have few opportunities to protect their rights or speak up for themselves.

7.1.5 Suggestions for improving rural women's lives and promoting rural development —including environmental improvement?

For mountain villages, the agricultural production model should be improved first. The situation of farming women would be improved either by giving up farming entirely or enlarging their farmland. However, agricultural land abandonment may cause loss of biodiversity and some other environmental problems. On the other hand, it is impossible for women to enlarge their farmland, because cultivated land in the mountain area is limited by the Grain for Green Policy. Additionally, the farmland is scattered in the mountain area, making it difficult to enlarge the land by land circulation. A proper way to improve the situation of farming women would be to keep small farming and return to traditional ways of growing plants. Specifically, policy should be made to encourage rural women to farm without chemical fertilizers and pesticides and promote the development of organic farming. It can be an important step in improving the environment (including improving the quality of drinking water) also for people living in the cities. In addition, it will be beneficial to raising the incomes of farming women. Nowadays, food security is a hot issue in China. An increasing number of people put more emphasis on food security. Organic food is becoming more and more popular, especially in urban areas. That means there is a great demand for organic food. Compared to common food, organic food is more competitive. Coupled with the development of e-business in rural areas being promoted by the government, it would be a reasonable way for farming women in the mountain area to produce organic food and make money by selling it through the Internet with the financial and technical support offered by local government.

In the plain area, the agricultural environment also should be improved. Land

salinization caused by simply irrigating with surface water is becoming serious. Based on the flat terrain and better natural conditions for crop growth, the plain area is suitable for development of mechanization and large-scale agricultural production. However, extensive management can cause environmental problems. Therefore, during the development of mechanization and large-scale agricultural production, the development of environmentally friendly technology has to keep pace, for example, by replacing simple large-scale irrigation with drip irrigation. For farming women, the government should encourage them to reduce their use of pesticides and fertilizers and ensure food security and safety of drinking water.

Second, physical infrastructure in rural communities should be strengthened, especially in the mountain area. Due to environmental and health concerns, earthen stoves should be abandoned in mountain villages and replaced with methane stoves or electromagnetic ovens. Methane ovens are more climate-friendly. The Chinese government is popularizing methane stoves in rural communities these days. Nevertheless, the utilization rate of methane stoves is extremely low in the mountainous area. There are three reasons for this. The costs of building biogas digesters are high in the mountain area. As the mountain villages are generally remote, the transportation costs of construction materials are high. There is a large temperature difference between day and night in winter so that the sunlight-plates are necessary when building biogas digesters in mountain villages. On account of this, the costs are increased. The subsidy provided by the government for building biogas digesters is about 300 Yuan per cubic meter.³⁶⁹ But for mountain villagers, it is not enough. Furthermore, large-scale animal husbandry is decreasing in mountain areas, which can cause a lack of animal dung and reduction of biogas.³⁷⁰ Last but not least, the great majority of young people are leaving the villages and people living in rural areas don't have related knowledge and cannot master the maintenance of biogas digesters. This problem is usually neglected by the government. Actually, there are some rural residents in other mountain villages using methane stoves. But they have to give up the stoves when they break down. Compared

³⁶⁹ Why is it difficult to build bio digesters in mountain villages? China Energy News, December 9, 2013 (in Chinese)

³⁷⁰ Zhaoshu Dong, Shuyin Tian, Le Zhang, etc., The investigation of development of biogas in mountain villages, Agricultural Journal 01, (2012), 25-28, 27 (in Chinese)

with methane stoves, electromagnetic ovens are easier to spread in mountain areas. However, they consume more electricity. To save money, women would rather use earthen stoves. On this basis, the government should increase funding for clean cooking stoves and provide more service for maintaining clean stoves. For some villages whose physical conditions are not suitable for developing biogas, electromagnetic ovens should be encouraged by increasing the subsidy for electricity.

Road networks in the mountain area have to be improved. The provision of rural roads should be bundled properly with support services and capacity-building activities. From a gender perspective, a well-developed road network will contribute to gender equality in rural regions. In fact, the central government has paid attention to road construction in poor rural areas. But project implementation is inefficient.

In addition, drinking water systems, toilets, and refuse disposal system should be improved in rural communities in both plain area and mountain area. They are closely related to rural residents' health and quality of life.

Third, the social security system should be strengthened in rural regions. Nowadays, social security systems in rural areas are based on land and family. Land for rural residents is a guarantee of survival and family is the major security form for elderly. Under the present circumstances, villagers could be at risk. Rural residents, as a huge and vulnerable group, are entitled to enjoy the same rights and interests as urban residents. In rural areas, the first important step should be to expand coverage of social security programs and reduce the potential risks existing in rural people's livelihood. According to regional differences, the level of social security should be different. In poor areas, level of social security should be higher than other areas to ensure social equality. Since the rural population of China is huge, it is still one of biggest problems in establishing a comprehensive social security system.

Fourth, enhancing the literacy level of rural women is an essential way to improve their livelihood. For farming women, education links closely with sustainable agricultural development. In other words, agricultural education is necessary to develop environmentally friendly agriculture and modern agriculture. Farming women's environmental awareness has to be raised in this way. Moreover, gaining basic knowledge and skills can allow rural women to break through physical and social

constraints. Rural women can be no longer confined to the family in rural regions and get more paid non-agricultural job opportunities. Most importantly, with higher levels of literacy rural females will have more consciousness to defend their interests in both the private sphere and public sphere, which can promote gender equality.

Fifth, the social support network of rural women should be expanded. This study finds that the social support of rural women mainly consists of neighbors, relatives, friends, and so on. These are informal supports. Formal support, such as the village committee, women's federation, etc. is absent. Formal support can provide rural women public resources and establish kinds of social connections for them. In addition, formal support can offer rural women more opportunities to take part in public decision making. Therefore, formal support is important for rural women to improve their livelihood.

7.2 Policy implications

By reviewing the agricultural policies of the EU, this thesis provides policy-makers with references for improving women's livelihood and promoting rural development. First, it is essential for policy-makers to understand rural women's situation in different regions. According to differences in rural women's livelihood, policy-makers can make various policies to solve the specific problems in different regions. With similar difficulties affecting farming women's situation, policy-makers can expand the coverage of some policies. Currently, regional differences in the situations of farming women have not been widely studied. Rural women are often regarded as a homogeneous group. As a result, similar problems that rural women are suffering are easily noticeable by policy-makers while specific difficulties of rural women in different areas are neglected. With the neglect, the development gap between rural mountain and rural plain regions may be widened and it will contribute to widening the poverty gap. That the complex physical environment in the mountain area creates obstacles to women's livelihood needs to be considered firstly.

Second, gender inequality caused by traditional ideology is hard to improve. Making policies for women and agricultural development based on gender mainstreaming would be a good first step. Therefore, policy-makers will need to take gender perspectives into account when making policies. Although in China there is no

obvious gender discrimination in current policies, in fact many mainstream policies in China ignore the gender relations causing indirect discrimination.³⁷¹ Policy-makers will need to assess the feasibility of policies from gender perspectives. According to different objective and subjective conditions of males and females, policy-makers should consider the consequence of the intervention on gender relations by the implementation of each policy. Also, gender-based data should be collected before the policies are carried out, which will help the policy-makers to improve the systems in time.

Third, environmental goals should be integrated into the Chinese political strategy of development as well as agricultural policies. Aiming for sustainable agricultural development, the goal of feeding all Chinese citizens by raising the productivity of farming has to be given up. Both the polluter-pays-principle and the provider-gets-principle needs to be integrated into agri-environment policies. Farmers should be encouraged to do environmentally friendly farming with sufficient financial support. That is to say, policy-makers need to consider farmers' interests and the cost of protecting the environment has to be borne by the government rather than farmers. Since the financial resources of government are limited, they have to be allocated optimally. Specifically, the subsidies for chemical fertilizers and pesticides could be cut while government could enlarge the proportion of funding for agri-environmental measures. Besides, the concept of multifunctional agriculture put forward by the EU could be introduced to China's strategy of agricultural development.

Fourth, I find that the performances of some policies in China are often ineffective. In brief, there are three reasons. The supervision mechanism is imperfect, the interests between sectors or stakeholders are imbalanced and policies do not fit the local situation. In the light of this, the LEADER approach of EU would be a good reference for carrying out policies. It is a bottom-up method and features flexibility, cooperation, and innovation. The nature of LEADER is that local problems are resolved by local people with financial support from the government and external technical support. With the LEADER approach, Local Action Groups consisting of local stakeholders from

³⁷¹ Zaisheng Zhang, Xinyuan Qiang, "The research on the plight of public policy in the process of promoting gender mainstreaming," *Journal of Tianjin University (Social Sciences)* 17, No.5. (2015): 425-430, 426 (in Chinese)

different sectors will be formed. They are not only the participants in decision-making but also implementers of projects. LEADER approach will contribute to balancing interests as well as better supervision. Most importantly, it is beneficial to resolving local problems flexibly and creatively.

7.3 Value of the study

This dissertation provides some theoretical and empirical contributions to the research on farming women in China.

Geographical perspective has been introduced in this study, which contributes to developing a new direction of empirical research on rural women. Geographical conditions, to some extent, can influence people's lives. Especially for farmers, their activities are closely related to the physical environment. This study examines the relations between geographical features and farming women's livelihood. Another contribution to the research on rural women is the environmental consideration combined with the study. A large number of farming women take part in the agricultural production and they take responsibility for managing and conserving natural resources. Also, the environment has an effect on rural women's health. However, in the existing research on rural women, environmental and ecological problems combined with small farming have been neglected.

This thesis can be an empirical foundation of further research on rural women and rural development in China. Through comparing rural women's situation between the mountain area and the plain area, it also contributes to analyzing the heterogeneity of rural women in China and the disparity of rural development in different regions. In addition, this study provides detailed information on rural women's conditions in EU member states and agricultural policies of the EU, which contributes to literature on policies of promoting rural women's development and agricultural development in China.

7.4 Open questions and further research

According to findings of this study, there are three directions for further research. The first relates to conducting quantitative research on rural women. As this study is mainly based on a qualitative analysis with few of cases, it lacks data to support some

findings, such as the quality of material life of farming women. Therefore, the first way to further research would be to collect a large number of quantitative data and study rural women's situation with quantitative analysis methods. The second direction relates to extending the scope of investigation. The findings of this study show that geography and regional economic development are two main factors affecting rural women's conditions and that rural women's livelihood vary from region to region. In order to improve the sample representativeness, field investigations need to be conducted in more places with different geographical features. A third way to further research relates to in-depth research on some aspects of rural women's living conditions. It refers to all aspects of their lives. To some extent, this study is of width whereas the depth of the research content needs to be improved. Factors influencing rural women's lives have been found in this study, realizing the empirical perspective of gender analysis, and by that a foundation for further research.

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Abbreviations and Equivalents

Abbreviations

CAAS: Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences

CAP: Common Agricultural Policy

CPC: Communist Party of China

EAFRD: European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

EC: European Commission

EEC: European Economic Community

EU: European Union

FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization

LAGs: Local Action Groups

LEADER: Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale

LFA: Less Favored Areas

NMS: New Member States

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

QQL: Quality of life

RDPs: Rural Development Programs

SPS: Single Payment Scheme

WHO: World Health Organization

Equivalents

1 Yuan = 7.4 Euro

1 mu = 666.67 square meters

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Appendix: Interview Transcripts

Dissertation: A Comparative Study on the Work and Life of Rural Farming Women in a Mountain Area and a Plain Area in China—with Reference to the EU Discussion on Agricultural Development and Climate Change

Lijuan Hai

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Interview Y1

Ms. Zhao A

The basic information

I am 50 years old. I have completed two years of education. I have been married for 28 years. I have three children: two sons, and a daughter. I am not living with elderly parents.

Working Conditions

Q: How much arable land do you have? Do you use it?

A: Before the Grain for Green Program¹ implemented, I had four mu² land. Now it remains less than three mu land after I returned one mu land to forests.

Q: What kind of main food crops or vegetables are you growing? What kind of fowls or livestock are you feeding?

A: I am growing corn, soybean and wheat. All kinds of vegetables have been grown, for example, cabbages, hot pepper. I am feeding a cow and seven or eight chickens.

Q: How long do you work on the land every day? Do you always feel tired after work?

A: I do my work for few hours when the hot weather comes. I can't stand such a hot weather, so I usually stay for two hours on the land. Then I come back. When it cools down a little, I go out and continue to work. I am not tired after work.

Q: How many hours can you sleep every day?

A: I sleep before nine or ten o'clock at night, and I usually get out of bed at six or seven o'clock.

Q: What sort of fertilizer do you use?

A: I bought chemical fertilizer.

Q: Only use chemical fertilizer?

A: Yes.

Q: When it is in the busy season, do you usually ask someone for help?

A: We (she and her husband) do the farm work together. He is in poor health. He is suffering diseases, so I do much more work than he does. Now he is doing odd jobs in the village. I tried to persuade him to undergo the heart surgery, but I failed. He didn't want to.

Q: Why?

A: That will cost a lot.

Q: Do you have medical insurance?

A: Yes. But we still have to pay a lot of money for the surgery. We cannot afford such an enormous expense.

¹ The Grain for Green Program, as a CDM activity of Chinese style, launched on trial in 1999 and implemented in 2002 across the country.

² Mu, a unit of land, 1 mu = 0.07 hectare = 666.67 square meters

Q: How much money do you need for the surgery?

A: It depends. The better one needs 300,000 Yuan or 400,000 Yuan. The cheaper one needs 200,000 Yuan. We have to pay at least 100,000 Yuan when the medical insurance refunds part of the expenses. My elderly son has already had a child. And my second son is old enough to get married. We have to save up money for him.

Q: How much money can be refunded by your insurance if you have spent 10,000 Yuan in a hospital?

A: It depends on your condition. Usually, 60% expenses can be refunded. I bought medical insurance every year. But this year I have not got any reimbursement from the medical insurance because I usually buy the medicine in the drugstore in the village. Although we can get the reimbursement when we buy the medicine in the hospital of the town, the price of the medicine in the drugstore is lower than that in the hospital. As a result, with the reimbursement, I still have to pay more for the medicine when I bought it in the hospital. However, if I do not buy the medical insurance, I cannot afford all the expenses when I have a severe illness. So I have to buy it. When I have a severe illness, I can get some reimbursement from the medical insurance at least. It is expensive to see a doctor in a hospital. You have to spend at least 1000 Yuan, only 400Yuan or 500Yuan can be refunded by the insurance. So you still have to spend a lot.

Q: Do you find some part-time jobs in the slack season?

A: Before last year, I went to the city to find some jobs. These two years, I stay at home. Sometimes he (her husband) finds some odd jobs.

Q: Do you use any farm machinery when you are working?

A: Nothing. I don't have any farm machinery. I often ask someone, who has the machine, to help me. I harvest corn with hand and carry them back with a bamboo basket.

Q: How do you thresh the corn?

A: By hand. I haven't had the corn thresher.

Q: Have you got any benefit from the agricultural policies, for example, the farm subsidy?

A: We are the low-income family. Every year we get 200 Yuan as a basic living allowance from the government. Except this, we get nothing.

Material Quality of Their Lives

Q: What are the sources of income in your family?

A: We don't have any income. The people who are planting the cash crop can earn some money, but we don't. He (her husband) earns a little by doing odd jobs.

Q: How much is the total annual income of your family?

A: 2000 Yuan or 3000 Yuan a year.

Q: What is the main expenditure in your family?

A: We spend a lot. We spend money on food and drink, rape oil, salt, buying gifts, seeing the doctor and buying medicine, etc. We have to spend at least 10,000 Yuan a year.

Q: But your income is less than the cost.

A: Yes, sometimes my sons give us some money.

Q: How much do you spend for yourself per month?

A: I am not sure. I seldom buy clothes. I am staying at home and cannot make money. So I don't have enough money to buy them. When I was working outside, I can dress better. Now I am at home I let myself go, and I don't care to dress. In addition, when I am working on the land, my dress would be hitched by sticks. So I cannot dress well.

Q: How about the housing conditions? Are you living in a new house or an old house?

A: I have been living in this house for 30 years.

Q: Does your house have a bathroom?

A: Both the bathroom and toilet are outside the house, in the yard.

Q: What household appliances do you have?

A: I only have a TV and a washing machine.

Q: Do you have a fridge?

A: No, I don't have it. I have nothing else.

Q: Do you have a telephone, mobile phone or computer?

A: Yes, I have a telephone and mobile phone. I don't have a computer.

Q: How often do you go shopping?

A: Once a month. I go to the shop which is in the village to buy oil, salt, dishing and washing liquid, soap and something like that. I rarely go to the town. It is far from here. It costs a lot of time to walk. If you want to take a bus, you must buy bus ticket which is expensive. I usually buy some oil, salt, and nothing else. For me, it is enough to go to the shop which is in the village.

Q: What kinds of vegetables and meat do you usually eat?

A: I eat what I grow, never buy the vegetables. I eat potatoes, cabbages, green peppers and so on. I rarely eat meat.

Family Life

Q: How did you get to know your husband? Is your marriage a love match, or did your parents bring you and your husband together?

A: I met him on a blind date.

Q: Could you give me some general information about your husband, e.g. his age, education, career?

A: He is 50 years old, he is a farmer. He graduated from junior middle school. A few years ago, he went to Xi'an (a city) to work. Recent years, he is staying at home. Sometimes he finds odd jobs in the village.

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: There is no rule. We put the money in a proper place. Either of us who needs money can take it. We put the money which is earned by selling grain crops or given by my children in the place, and anyone can spend.

Q: How do you distribute the housework? Do you do all of it yourself or is your husband sharing housework? Or does he help? Often or occasionally?

A: He never does housework. I do it myself. He never helps me to do that. In rural areas, the man never does the housework. It is weird when a man is washing clothes.

Q: How long does it take you to do the housework every day?

A: Few hours. Now I have a washing machine. It doesn't take long to wash clothes. In summer, I always wash by hand. The clothes are very thin, so it is easy to wash.

Q: How are you getting on with your husband?

A: We get along all right. When we were young, we often quarreled. But now it is better. Age has chastened my violent temper. He is easily offended because of his illness.

Q: Have you ever been abused by your husband?

A: Never.

Q: Are you satisfied with your marriage life?

A: Yes, I am satisfied with my life. I have enough food, and I eat what I grew. When I want to eat rice, I can buy some or I can barter my corn for it.

Q: Who looks after the children in your family?

A: I looked after my grandson for two months, now my daughter-in-law is looking after him, and she doesn't work. Only my son is working in the city.

Q: How do you think about the education of your grandson?

A: I want him to go to school in the rural area. But it is a little far away from home. The school is in the town. If he goes to that school, we have to rent a room in the town. Now he is going to the kindergarten in the city, where his father is working. I expect he would come back. It is hard to say. I reckon that my son and daughter-in-law do not want him to go to school in the rural area because the infrastructure of rural school is worse than the schools' in the city. It is up to them. If he would go to kindergarten and school in the rural area, the tuition fee will be free of charge. However, if he would go to school in the city, the tuition fee must be paid. I heard that it cost 580 Yuan a month to go to kindergarten in the city. In my opinion, a kindergarten is just a place where can look after the children.

They are same everywhere. We would spend little if the child went to kindergarten in the rural area. But my daughter-in-law does not agree. She said the living conditions are not good here. I don't think so. The environment of rural area is better, and here is not so noisy, and the air is fresh.

Q: How are you getting on with older generation?

A: We are getting on with each other well. We don't have any conflict. We are not living together, but they live only a stone's throw from my house.

Q: What you mainly have to do with the older generation?

A: If they were ill, I go to look after them for few days. Usually, they live by themselves. They are also working on the land, and they cook the meal for themselves. Sometimes I come back from the fields earlier than them. I cook for them. Sometimes they get home sooner, they also cook for me.

Leisure Life and Social Contact

Q: How much leisure time do you have in a week?

A: I have two hours for rest. It depends. When it is in the busy season, I don't have any time. After the meal, I go on to work soon. These days I am not very busy because I have harvested the corn. I have nothing else to do.

Q: How do you usually spend your leisure time?

A: Watching TV or going for a walk.

Q: Who do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life?

A: I communicate with few people, just my neighbor and parents.

Q: When you are communicating with them, which topic do you often talk about?

A: Anything. For example, we care whose crops grow better, who is more hard working, who is in good health, everyone expects to have good health.

Health and Safety Issues

Q: Are you in good health?

A: I am in poor health. I got a pain in my side. I didn't know what caused it. The doctor said the pain was caused by a slipped disc. I felt dizzy. The doctor said it was high blood pressure. We (the interviewee and her husband) are both in poor health. The doctor said 'You have to receive medical care at the hospital.' I think it is enough to take some drugs when I feel terribly ill. I asked him (her husband) to go to the hospital. But he did not. My second son said that he could apply for a loan for his father's medical care. He (her husband) disagreed and asked 'How are you going to repay it? You earn little. It is not even enough for you to get married.' My second son said 'I am in no hurry. The most important thing is curing your disease.' I said 'you are already at a late age for getting

married. How can you say that? It will be too late when you want to marry.' My first son got married when he was 23 years old. The next year he had a baby. His child is four years old now. My second son is already 25 years old. It will be a great relief for me when my second son gets married.

Q: How often do you go for a medical examination?

A: I never go for a medical examination unless I feel ill. Every year the committee of village asks us to go for a medical exam in the clinic in the town. But they did not give us the report of the results of the medical examination. Now nobody wants to go for that medical examination.

Q: Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination?

A: Every year the doctor comes into the village to do the examination for us, many people have gone for it. This year I did not, because I feel well.

Q: What are your main concerns?

A: I am worried about my second son. I hope he will get married soon. And I am still worried about his (her husband) illness.

Self-image

Q: Would you like to learn and work in a different profession?

A: No, I do not have a much general education. I can do nothing except for growing. In addition, I do not like the surroundings of the outside. It is too hot in the city. Staying at home, I can feed cattle and doing farm work. I eat food at no cost at all. And I can barter wheat for something I need, such as oil, salt, and rice. In a word, I spend nothing when I am staying in the village. I have less land. The grain is just enough to feed ourselves. My children are working in the city. Other people who have more land can sell their grain to earn some money, but I cannot. The village leader asked me to grow honeysuckle (a kind of cash crops), I refused. I have such a little land. I will have nothing to eat when I grow the honeysuckle. If I grow it, I have to buy the food.

Q: Do you know about the law on the protection of the rights and interests of women?

A: No, I do not have a much education. I don't know anything about the law.

Q: When you have some trouble, will the women's federation or the government help you?

A: Never. They cannot help us, except for giving us a little money every year. We are the low-income family. They give us 200Yuan each year.

Q: Do you often keep track of current social events?

A: Sometimes I watch the news on TV. When it rains, I can do nothing on the land. I stay at home and watch the news. If you don't watch the news, you will know nothing about the society, and you will not know the price of the grain. But I cannot understand some of the

news, like the politics.

Interview Y2

Ms. Sun B

1. The basic information

I am 48 years old. I have been married for 25 years. I have two children: a son and a daughter. I have completed two years of education. My children are working in the city. Now I am taking care of my grandchild. He is one year old.

Working Conditions

Q: How much arable land do you have? Do you use it?

A: I don't know about that. I don't know how much land we have. Maybe, three or four mu land. We are using it.

Q: What kind of main food crops or vegetables are you growing? What kind of fowl or livestock are you feeding?

A: We are growing wheat and corn. We don't grow vegetables. We often buy the vegetables in the market. We only grow potato and green pepper. We grow few vegetables. We buy something else in the market. We are feeding only a sheep and four chickens.

Q: How long do you work on the land every day? Do you always feel tired after work?

A: Every day I dig up potatoes and harvest corn in the field, and weed. It lasts for several months. Sometimes I am too busy to do it. I ask someone for help.

Q: How long do you work every day?

A: I work from morning to night. After I get up, I go to work in the field. At noon, I come back and have lunch. Then I continue to work in the afternoon.

Q: Do you feel tired?

A: Yes, I feel a little tired.

Q: Do you finish all the work yourself, or does your family work together with you?

A: He (her husband) works together with me. My children are not at home. Only he and I do that.

Q: When it is in the busy season, do you usually ask someone for help?

A: Sometimes I ask relatives for help.

Q: Do you pay them money?

A: No. When they need help, I also give them a hand. I have a little land. Generally, I can do it without help. This year my daughter came back and helped me to harvest wheat. Now she is in Xi'an.

Q: How many hours can you sleep every day?

A: I usually get up at 6 or 7 o'clock. I go to sleep at 8 or 9 o'clock in the night.

Q: What sort of fertilizer do you use?

A: I use both chemical fertilizer and farmyard manure. I often use chemical fertilizer, like carbamide and diammonium phosphate(DAP). We often buy a lot of chemical fertilizers. It is not enough when you buy only two or three sacks of them.

Q: Are the chemical fertilizers expensive?

A: Yes. They are expensive. A sack of DAP is about 180Yuan. I don't know how much the carbamide is. He bought that, so I don't know the price. It is usually 150 Yuan per sack.

Q: Do you use any farm machinery when you are working?

A: We don't have farm machinery. Sometimes we ask the person who has farm machine for help. We pay one hundred Yuan per mu. When the person doesn't have time to help us, we do the work ourselves by simple tools.

Q: Have you got any benefit from the agricultural policies, like the subsidy from the government?

A: I got a little subsidy. I got the seed subsidy and the subsidy for only one mu land. There was no subsidy for the rest of my land. To be honest, last year someone who may work in the government of county gave me a call. He asked me some questions just like the questions that you ask me today, for example, he asked me: "How old are you? How much money do you earn this year..." I told him that I didn't know, and I couldn't understand his questions. This year I answered two phone calls like this. He (her husband) told me not to speak nonsense and not always to tell others you haven't got all of the subsidies. But it was the fact. I can't understand that why I cannot tell others. Like the subsidy of growing honeysuckle, I haven't got even a penny. We grow the honeysuckle. Four people and I invested together in honeysuckle. We grow it on 5 mu land. It is said each of us can get the subsidy. But I got nothing. Maybe the money has been taken by others. In addition, I did not get the subsistence allowance either. When I met the person who is working in the government of the town, I asked him why I did not get the subsistence allowance. My mother is 84 years old. She got the subsistence allowance. But I don't have.

Q: Do the elderly people have a pension?

A: Yes, they can get 70 or 80 Yuan per month.

Quality of Material Life

Q: What are the sources of income in your family?

A: Leaving the village to work. He (her husband) has a job in the mine. My children are working in Xi'an. I stay at home alone and grow crops. I don't make money.

Q: How much is the total annual income of your family?

A: We don't have income. My children work outside the village, and they spend all the money in the city. The money I saved before has dwindled away. He earns thousands of

Yuan per year.

Q: Do the children give you money?

A: No. They must pay the money we have owed.

Q: What is the main expenditure in your family?

A: He (her husband) is working outside. When he comes back, he brings something we need.

Q: What things does he bring to you?

A: Living goods.

Q: How much do you spend for yourself per month?

A: I don't know. I cost 4000 or 5000 Yuan since I came back from Xi'an. Now I have to take care of my grandchild. I cannot make money. If I did not look after the child, I could earn some money.

Q: What things did you buy since you came back?

A: Living goods.

Q: How much do you spend on your clothing?

A: I buy a few sets of clothes. Sometimes my children buy some clothes for me. I don't know how much I spend exactly.

Q: Are you living in a new house or an old house?

A: I am living in an old house. I have been living in it for more than 20 years.

Q: What household appliances do you have?

A: I have TV and washing machine.

Q: Anything else?

A: Wheat scourer.

Q: Do you have a telephone, mobile phone or computer?

A: I have a mobile phone and a telephone.

Q: How often do you go shopping?

A: I often go shopping.

Q: what things do you often buy?

A: I buy some food, salt, oil and so on. I also buy the milk for my grandchild in the town.

Q: Are you satisfied with the traffic communication of the village?

A: Not bad. I go to town by mini bus.³ A round-trip ticket is 5Yuan.

Family Life

Q: How did you get to know your husband? Is your marriage a love match, or did your parents bring you and your husband together?

³ It is, actually, a 7 seats mini bus and it is non-registered. The driver is also the owner of the mini bus. The mini bus is often overloaded. The driver usually makes more than 10 people in the bus.

A: At that time, marriages were often arranged by parents. Our parents bring us together.

Q: Could you give me some general information about your husband, e.g. his age, education, career?

A: He is 51 years old. He often works outside. Unlike me, he graduated from junior middle school. I am illiterate. I know next to nothing.

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: Nothing can be managed. He earns some money and brings it back or buys some living goods for me. We don't have much property.

Q: How do you distribute the housework?

A: I do the housework myself. He and my children are not at home usually. I must do all of the housework.

Q: How long does it take you to do the housework every day?

A: I don't have much time to do that when it is in a busy season. I do farm work the whole day in the field. I only cook meals. Sometimes I wash the clothes. Now I am taking care of my grandchild. I have a little time to do housework every day.

Q: How are you getting on with your husband?

A: We are getting along well. We never quarrel. He is usually not at home and works outside.

Q: Have you ever been abused by your husband?

A: Never.

Q: How do you think about the equality between men and women?

A: I don't know. Someone said men's family status is certainly higher than women's. In my opinion, men and women are equal.

Q: Who makes a decision when there is something important?

A: He makes a decision. Everything hinges on his decision. I am not involved in decision-making. Actually, there is nothing important in my family.

Q: What's your attitude towards the idea of 'men manage external affairs while women deal with internal one'?

A: I take it for granted.

Q: Are you satisfied with your marriage life?

A: Yes, I am satisfied with my life.

Q: When did you begin to look after your grandchild?

A: The first seven months I took care of my grandchild with my daughter-in-law in the city. When the weather became hot, I brought my grandchild home.

Q: How do you think about the education of your grandchild?

A: I don't know. It is up to his parents. I just hope he can go to school in the rural area. His parents don't have a steady job in the city. It is too expensive to go to school in the city.

Q: How are you getting on with older generation?

A: We are getting along well with each other.

Q: What you mainly have to do with the older generation?

A: Now they can still do the farm work. When they are ill, I go to look after them. Sometimes I cook meals for them.

Leisure Life and Social Contact

Q: How much leisure time do you have in a week?

A: Now I don't have much leisure time. Now I am taking care of my grandchild from morning to night. At the same time, I have to do the farm work. I am very busy.

Q: Who do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life, neighbor, friends, brother, and sisters, parents or someone else?

A: My neighbor and parents.

Q: When you are communicating with them, which topic do you often talk about?

A: A lot of things, for example, we talk about how to take care of the baby or how to grow crops.

Q: When you need some help, whom will you contact with first?

A: I contact with my neighbor first. We live near from each other after all.

Health and Safety Issues

Q: Are you in good health?

A: Yes, I am in good health.

Q: How often do you go for a medical examination?

A: I seldom go for a medical examination. When I feel not good, I buy some medicine in the drug store.

Q: Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination?

A: Never.

Q: Do you have any medical insurance?

A: Yes, I have medical insurance. I pay 60Yuan a year for it.

Q: How many expenses can be refunded by your insurance?

A: I don't know. Maybe 50% expenses can be refunded. I rarely use my insurance.

Q: Do you feel stress/ pressure in your life?

A: I don't feel stress.

Q: If you had got trouble, whom would you like to pour out?

A: I don't have troubles.

Q: Have you ever been sexually harassed when your husband was not at home?

A: No, the public order of the village is good.

Self-image

Q: Do you think the subsistence of you and everything you have done is significant to your family and society?

A: I don't know. This is my life. Everything I have done is to earn a living. As to significance, I don't know. I never think about it.

Q: Would you like to learn and work in a different profession? Which one?

A: Now I have to stay at home because I must take care of my grandchild.

Q: Do you know about the law on the protection of the rights and interests of women?

A: I don't know about that. I am illiterate.

Interview Y3

Ms. Wang C

The basic information

I am 53 years old. I have completed three years of education. I have been married for 30 years. I have three children: two daughters and a son. My daughters got married. Now I am looking after one of my grandchildren.

Working Conditions

Q: How much arable land do you have? Do you use it?

A: I returned one Mu land to forests. Now it remains three mu. I am using it.

Q: What kind of main food crops or vegetables are you growing? What kind of fowl or livestock are you feeding?

A: I am growing corn, wheat, cabbages, radishes. I am feeding four sheep, five cows, and ten chickens.

Q: How long do you work on the land every day? Do you always feel tired after work?

A: I work from morning to night. I don't feel tired. I've got used to this kind of life.

Q: How many hours can you sleep every day?

A: I get up at 6'clock. I go to bed at ten o'clock in the night. Sometimes I go to bed at 11.

Q: When it is in the busy season, do you usually ask someone for help, or do you finish all the work yourself, or does your family work together with you?

A: My husband works together with me. We often do the same work.

Q: Do you use any farm machinery when you are working?

A: Yes, I use the wheat scourer and corn sheller machine.

Q: Do you find some part-time jobs in the slack season?

A: No. But my son is working outside the village.

Q: What sort of fertilizer do you use?

A: I use both chemical fertilizer and farmyard manure.

Q: Have you got any benefit from the agricultural policies, like farm subsidy?

A: No, I have not got any subsidy.

Quality of Material Life

Q: What are the sources of income in your family?

A: My son is working in the city. He can earn at least six thousand Yuan a year. We eat what we grew. When the corn is not run out, we sell it and then we can buy the chemical fertilizer.

Q: How much is the total annual income of your family?

A: Our income is about six thousand Yuan. Sometimes we can get ten thousand Yuan. It

depends on the kind of work that my son is doing.

Q: What is the main expenditure in your family?

A: We spend money mainly on chemical fertilizer, bills for electricity. Anyway, daily use often meant a big chunk of our income.

Q: How much do you spend for yourself per month?

A: I have never calculated them. I spend a little for myself.

Q: Are you living in a new house or an old house?

A: I am living in an old house. I have been living in it for more than 30 years.

Q: What household appliances do you have?

A: I have TV, fridge, rice cooker, electric pan.

Q: Do you have a telephone, mobile phone or computer?

A: I have a mobile phone.

Q: What kinds of vegetables and meat do you usually eat?

A: I eat what I grew, like cabbages, hot pepper, beans and so on. I buy vegetables in the winter. Because the weather it is too cold to grow vegetables.

Q: How often do you go shopping?

A: I often go shopping. It is about once a week.

Q: Are you satisfied with the traffic communication of the village?

A: Yes, it is convenient. I go to the town by minibus.

Family Life

Q: How did you get to know your husband?

A: I met him on a blind date.

Q: Could you give me some general information about your husband, e.g. his age, education, career?

A: He is 56 years old. He is illiterate. Now he is working on the land. Sometimes he finds odd jobs in the village.

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: I manage the property, and I keep the money.

Q: Who decides an important matter in your family?

A: We decide it together. When there is an important thing, we often consult together.

Q: How long does it take you to do the housework every day?

A: I do the housework the whole day. I have to cook, feed livestock, cut grass, look after my grandchild, and so on. My son and daughter-in-law are working in the city. I must look after my grandchild. He (husband) never cooks. Sometimes he helps me to cut grass and feed sheep or cattle.

Q: How are you getting on with your husband?

A: We are getting along well. We never quarrel.

Q: Do you think men's family status is higher than women's in a household? Do you think the man is superior to the woman?

A: No, I think we are equal in our family. He is illiterate and introverted. He does not like to communicate with others. He works all the day. However, the man still plays an important role in a family.

Q: Are you satisfied with your marriage life?

A: Yes, I am satisfied with my current life.

Q: How do you think about the education of children?

A: I hope my grandchild can receive as much education as possible. Then he can find a good job in future.

Q: How are you getting on with older generation?

A: We are getting along well. Now they can do farm job and cook for themselves. When they are ill, I go to look after them.

Q: In your opinion, what is an ideal family life?

A: We have enough money to buy food and drink. My children are filial. That's enough.

Leisure Life and Social Contact

Q: How much leisure time do you have in a week?

A: I don't have leisure time. I do the work in the whole day. When I am not very busy, I watch TV for a while.

Q: Are you satisfied with that, I mean the life without leisure time?

A: Yes, I am satisfied. As a farmer, life is like that.

Q: Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life?

A: I seldom communicate with others.

Q: When you need some help, whom will you contact with first?

A: I often contact with my relatives.

Q: Do you think you are good at social contact?

A: I don't know. All right, maybe.

Health and Safety Issues

Q: How about your health?

A: I am in good health.

Q: How often do you go for a medical examination?

A: I have never gone for a medical examination. Few months ago, the committee of the village asked us to go for a medical exam in the clinic in the town. I didn't do it.

Q: Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination?

A: No, I haven't gone for it, either.

Q: Would you go for a medical check as soon as you felt under the weather?

A: Yes, when I feel not good, I go to the clinic to see a doctor in the town.

Q: Is it convenient to go to the hospital?

A: Yes, it is convenient to go to the clinic in the town.

Q: Do you have any medical insurance?

A: Yes, I have the medical insurance.

Q: How many expenses can be refunded by your insurance?

A: I don't know that exactly. Maybe, 30% of expenses can be refunded. I pay for it every year. But I haven't used it. So I am not sure.

Q: Do you feel stress/ pressure in your life?

A: No, I don't feel stress.

Q: If you had got trouble, whom would you like to pour out?

A: I don't have troubles.

Q: Have you ever been sexually harassed when your husband was not at home?

A: Never.

Self-image

Q: Do you think the subsistence of you and everything you have done is significant to your family and society?

A: Yes, everyone is important for his or her family. I don't know much about society.

Q: Would you like to learn and work in a different profession? Which one?

A: I am too old to learn a new skill. It is customary for me to do the farm work.

Q: Do you often keep track of current social events?

A: Sometimes I watch news programs on TV.

Interview Y4

Ms. Zhang D

The basic information

I am 36 years old. I have been married for 18 years. I have completed two years of education. I have a daughter. My parents passed away.

Working Conditions

Q: How much arable land do you have? Do you use it?

A: I have two mu land. I am using it now.

Q: What kind of main food crops or vegetables are you growing? What kind of fowl or livestock are you feeding?

A: I am growing wheat, corn and kinds of vegetables, like cabbage, green pepper, bean, potato etc. I have two cows and six chickens.

Q: How long do you work on the land every day? Do you always feel tired after work?

A: I do a little farm work, so I don't feel tired.

Q: How many hours can you sleep every day?

A: I get up at seven or eight o'clock. And I go to bed at nine or ten o'clock.

Q: When it is in the busy season, do you usually ask someone for help, or do you finish all the work yourself, or does your family work together with you?

A: My husband works together with me when it is in the busy season.

Q: Do you find some part-time jobs in the slack season?

A: No, we keep a shop in the village. So I often stay in our shop. I don't go out to find a job.

Q: What sort of fertilizer do you use?

A: I use both chemical fertilizer and farmyard manure.

Q: Do you use any farm machinery when you are working?

A: No. We don't have any farm machinery. And we have a little land. It is not necessary to use the farm machinery.

Q: Have you got any benefit from the agricultural policies, like the subsidy from the government?

A: I just got a little subsidy for returning the land to forest.

Quality of Material Life

Q: What are the sources of income in your family?

A: We keep the shop, but we cannot earn a lot of money. Moreover, we have a minibus. We can earn money by carrying people from the village to town.

Q: How much is the total annual income of your family?

A: We can at most earn 20,000Yuan a year. We are living in the do with the older rural area. We cannot earn much money.

Q: What is the main expenditure in your family?

A: We spend a lot, for instance, buying clothes, food, living goods and seeing a doctor.

Q: How much do you spend for yourself per month?

A: I spend about 1000Yuan a year for myself. Averagely, I spend less than 100Yuan a month.

Q: Are you living in a new house or an old house?

A: Now, we are living in an old house. But we just bought a new house in the town.

Q: What household appliances do you have?

A: I have fridge, washing machine, TV, rice cooker and induction cooker

Q: Do you have a telephone, mobile phone or computer?

A: I have a telephone and mobile phone.

Q: How often do you go shopping?

A: Not very often. When I want to buy clothes or the things that our shop doesn't have, I go to the town. It is convenient for me to go to the town.

Q: Are the vegetables that you eat grown by yourself or do you buy them in the market?

A: In winter, I buy the vegetables in the market. In the other seasons, I often eat the vegetables grown by myself.

Q: Are you satisfied with the traffic communication of the village?

A: The roads in our village are not very good. Some of them are damaged by the heavy truck.

Family Life

Q: How did you get to know your husband? Is your marriage a love match, or did your parents bring you and your husband together?

A: I met him on a blind date. At that time, most women met their husband on a blind date.

Q: Could you give me some general information about your husband, e.g. his age, education, career?

A: He is 41 years old. He graduated from junior middle school. Now he is driving the minibus to carry villagers from home to town.

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: No one is managing the property. Someone who wants to needs money can take it.

Q: Who decides on important matters in your family?

A: He makes the decisions. I don't care.

Q: How do you distribute the housework?

A: I do all the housework. In the village, men never do housework. They don't even wash clothes.

Q: How long does it take you to do the housework every day?

A: Not very long. Just about one or two hours. When I get up, I sweep and mop the floor.

Q: How are you getting on with your husband?

A: We are getting along well.

Q: Do you quarrel with each other?

A: No.

Q: Do you think men's family status is higher than women's in a household? Do you think the man is superior to the woman? What does your husband think?

A: The family status of men and women is equal in a household. But the men are more important for a family. A woman is not as important as a man in a family even she is clever enough. A man means much to a rural family.

Q: How many children would be ideal for your life?

A: I think one is enough.

Q: Who looks after the child when she was young in your family?

A: I looked after her.

Q: Who does your daughter like to communicate with in your family?

A: She likes to communicate with me.

Q: How do you think about the education of children?

A: In my opinion, the more education she received, the better job she can find. But she does not like to study. When she graduated from junior middle school, she did not continue to study. Now she is working in the city. As it stands, I just hope she can marry a good man in future. But now she is too young.

Leisure Life and Social Contact

Q: How much leisure time do you have in a week?

A: I have much leisure time. Properly speaking, I am free in half the time every day.

Q: How do you usually spend your leisure time?

A: I like to play mahjong, embroider, chat with my neighbors.

Q: Are you satisfied with your leisure life?

A: Yes, I am satisfied with my leisure life.

Q: Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life?

A: Because of our shop, I communicate with a lot of people. Most frequently...my neighbors.

Q: When you are communicating with them, which topic do you often talk about?

A: We often talk about household affairs.

Q: When you need some help, whom will you contact with first?

A: I will first contact with my neighbors.

Q: Do you think you are good at social contact?

A: Alright. Sometimes I quarrel with others about trifles. But it rarely happens.

Health and Safety Issues

Q: Are you in good health?

A: My health condition is not good. I suffered from a mild stomach disorder when I was 20 years old.

Q: How often do you go for a medical examination?

A: I went for a medical examination three years ago.

Q: Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination?

A: I went for a gynecological examination last year.

Q: Would you go for a medical check as soon as you felt under the weather?

A: Yes, if I catch a cold, I will go to the clinic to see a doctor in the town.

Q: Do you have any medical insurance?

A: Yes. I buy the medical insurance every year.

Q: How much cost should you afford with this kind of medical insurance for the treatment?

A: 50% to 70% of expenses can be refunded by insurance.

Q: Do you feel stress/ pressure in your life?

A: No, because I just have one child.

Q: If you had got trouble, whom would you like to pour out?

A: My daughter or my neighbors.

Q: What are your main concerns?

A: The big concern of mine is my daughter's job and her marriage in future.

Self-image

Q: Would you like to learn and work in a different profession? Which one?

A: I don't have the chance now. He is driving the minibus. I have to do the housework and keep the shop. So I must stay in the village.

Q: When you have some trouble, will the women's federation or the government help you?

A: When I have some trouble, I will ask him (her husband) for help. If it still cannot be solved, I will ask the committee of the village for help.

Q: Do you often keep track of current social events?

A: Yes, sometimes I watch the news program.

Interview Y5

Ms. Li E

The basic information

I am 36 years old. I had completed only two years of education, because my family was poor when I was young. I have been married for 14 years. I have one child, a daughter.

Working Conditions

Q: How much arable land do you have? Do you use it?

A: I have four mu land. I am using it.

Q: What kind of main food crops or vegetables are you growing? What kind of fowl or livestock are you feeding?

A: I am growing corn, wheat. I can harvest about 500kg corns and 400kg wheat a year. I am feeding four cows and three sheep.

Q: When it is in the busy season, do you usually ask someone for help, or do you finish all the work yourself, or does your family work together with you?

A: I do the farm work myself.

Q: How long do you work on the land every day? Do you always feel tired after work?

A: I work seven or eight hours a day, I don't feel tired.

Q: Do you find some part-time jobs in the slack season?

A: Yes, when it is in slack season, I go to Xi'an to find a job.

Q: How many hours can you sleep every day?

A: I get up at six o'clock, and I go to bed at ten o'clock.

Q: Do you use any farm machinery when you are working?

A: Yes, I use kinds of farm machinery, for instance, wheat scourer, threshing machine. Anyway, I use the farm machines.

Q: Have you got any benefit from the agricultural policies, like farm subsidy?

A: No, I didn't get the subsidy.

Quality of Material Life

Q: What are the sources of income in your family?

A: Working in the city.

Q: How much is the total annual income of your family?

A: We can earn 10,000Yuan a year.

Q: What is the main expenditure in your family?

A: Nothing except school fees of my daughter.

Q: How much do you spend for yourself per month?

A: I don't know how much exactly. I just buy soap, skin cream, shampoo and something

like that. I don't spend a lot of money.

Q: How much do you spend on your clothing?

A: I buy one or two sets of clothes a year.

Q: Are you living in a new house or an old house?

A: It is not very old. We built it eight years ago.

Q: What household appliances do you have?

A: I have a rice cooker, washing machine, TV and electricity pan.

Q: Do you have fridge?

A: No.

Q: Do you have a telephone, mobile phone or computer?

A: I have telephone and mobile phone.

Q: How often do you go shopping?

A: I don't have time to go shopping.

Q: What kinds of vegetables and meat do you usually eat?

A: I eat what I grew. I am growing cabbages, potatoes, green peppers, beans. When it is in winter, I buy the vegetables. I seldom eat meat. It is a little expensive.

Q: Are you satisfied with the traffic communication of the village?

A: Generally speaking, it is good. But some of the roads are damaged.

Family Life

Q: How did you get to know your husband?

A: Our marriage is a pure love match. We were living near each other.

Q: Could you give me some general information about your husband, e.g. his age, education, career?

A: He is 36 years old. He has completed six years of education.

Q: Who decides an important matter in your family?

A: He decides it.

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: No one manages it. We keep money together.

Q: How do you distribute the housework? Do you do all of it yourself?

A: Yes, I do all the housework and farm work. He often works in the city. I stay at home, so I do lots of the housework and farm work.

Q: How long does it take you to do the housework every day?

A: Normally, I spend 5 or 6 hours to do the housework.

Q: How are you getting on with your husband?

A: We are getting along well.

Q: Do you quarrel with each other?

A: Sometimes we quarrel with each other.

Q: What was usually your quarrel about?

A: I don't remember it. We seldom quarrel.

Q: Have you ever been abused by your husband?

A: Sometimes he shouted at me. I just kept silent.

Q: Do you think men's family status is higher than women's in a household? Do you think the man is superior to the woman?

A: Definitely, men's family status is higher than women's.

Q: So your husband's family status is higher than yours?

A: Yes, he is a man after all. We, women, are...

Q: How do you think about the equality between men and women?

A: Men are more important than the women.

Q: What's your attitude towards the idea of "men manage external affairs while women deal with internal one"?

A: I agree. My family is like this: he is the breadwinner, and he works outside. I do all the housework and look after the child. My family is very traditional.

Q: Are you satisfied with your marriage life?

A: Yes, I am satisfied with that.

Q: How old are your daughter?

A: She is four years old.

Q: How many children would be ideal for your life?

A: One is enough.

Q: Who looks after her in your family?

A: I look after her.

Q: Whom, the child likes to communicate with in your family?

A: Her father.

Q: Why?

A: I don't know. Maybe, I am too strict with her.

Q: How do you think about the education of children?

A: Now she is in kindergarten in the village. When we have more money, we will let her go to a better school in the city. Contrarily, if we have a little money, she will still go to school in the rural area.

Q: How are you getting on with older generation?

A: We are getting along well. He and I look after them together. I cook meals for them. He

has several sisters and brother. But no one else wants to look after old parents. He works outside village, earns money and pays our debts. I, myself, look after them. Also, I have to do farm work. None of his sisters and brothers wants to take care of them.

Q: In your opinion, what is an ideal family life?

A: We could have enough money, my daughter studies well and all of us are healthy.

Leisure Life and Social Contact

Q: How much leisure time do you have in a week?

A: I have one or two hours to have a rest at noon.

Q: How do you usually spend your leisure time?

A: I often mow grass and feed sheep and cows in my leisure time.

Q: Are you satisfied with your leisure life?

A: Yes, I am satisfied with that, because this is the rural life.

Q: Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life?

A: The people I mainly communicate with are neighbors and relatives.

Q: When you are communicating with them, which topic do you often talk about?

A: I seldom chat with them. Anyway, the topics are often about house hold affairs.

Q: When you need some help, whom will you contact with first?

A: It depends. When I need help to do farm work, I will hire someone. As to other things, I usually contact with my neighbors.

Health and Safety Issues

Q: Are you in good health?

A: No, I am not in good health.

Q: How often do you go for a medical examination? When did you last go for the medical examination?

A: I do that when the committee of the village organizes us to go for a medical examination. The last time I did that was two years ago.

Q: Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination?

A: Yes, I did. It was organized by the committee of village.

Q: Would you go for a medical check as soon as you felt under the weather?

A: Yes, I often go to see a doctor in the town.

Q: Do you have any medical insurance? How many expenses can be refunded by your insurance?

A: Yes, I have the medical insurance. If I spend ten Yuan in the hospital, two Yuan will be refunded by the insurance. Anyway, normally 20% of expenses can be refunded.

Q: Do you feel stress or pressure in your life?

A: No, I don't feel stress. We are living well.

Q: If you had got trouble, whom would you like to pour out?

A: I like to talk with him.

Q: What are your main concerns?

A: Of course my daughter is my main concern. But now I don't worry about her. She is too young.

Q: Have you ever been sexually harassed when your husband was not at home?

A: No.

Self-image

Q: Do you often take part in village affairs?

A: No.

Q: Would you like to learn and work in a different profession? Which one?

A: Yes, I would like to as long as the wage is higher. I am not sure which one. I don't know much about other professions.

Q: Do you know about the law on the protection of the rights and interests of women?

A: I don't know about that.

Q: Do you often keep track of current social events?

A: I often watch the news program.

Interview Y6

Ms. Liu F

The basic information

I was born in 1975. I am 38 years old. I have a senior high school education. I have been married for 15 years. I have two children. They are girls. Our parents passed away.

Working Conditions

Q: How much arable land do you have? Do you use it?

A: I have four mu land. I still use it.

Q: What kind of main food crops or vegetables are you growing? What kind of fowl or livestock are you feeding?

A: I am growing corn and wheat. Vegetables..... I am growing cabbages and radishes. I am feeding eight chickens.

Q: How long do you work on the land every day? Do you always feel tired after work?

A: Two or three hours. I work in the morning and afternoon. I stay at home at noon. I have such a little land. I don't have to work for a long time on the land.

Q: When it is in the busy season, do you usually ask someone for help, or do you finish all the work yourself, or does your family work together with you?

A: I do most of the work. He (interviewee's husband) is a civil servant in the town. He seldom does farm work.

Q: Do you find some part-time jobs in the slack season?

A: A few years ago, I found some jobs in the city. Recent years, I stay at home and don't find a job.

Q: What sort of fertilizer do you use?

A: I bought chemical fertilizer. Sometimes I use farmyard manure.

Q: How many hours can you sleep every day?

A: I sleep before 10 o'clock at night and I get up at 6 or 7 o'clock.

Q: Do you use any farm machinery when you are working?

A: I use the wheat scourer and the electric fan.

Q: Electric fan? What is it used for?

A: It is used for threshing the wheat.

Q: Have you got any benefit from the agricultural policies, for example, the farm subsidy?

A: Not yet.

Material Quality of Their Lives

Q: What are the sources of income in your family?

A: The sources of income in my family is his (interviewee's husband) salary.

Q: How much is the total annual income of your family?

A: We can earn two or three thousand Yuan a year by selling the grain. His salary is 2000Yuan a month. So the total income is about 25,000 Yuan.

Q: What is the main expenditure in your family?

A: Most of the expenditure is my children's tuition, buying oil and rice.

Q: How much do you spend for yourself per month?

A: Every month I spend 200 or 300 Yuan, I spend a little money. He usually buys the living goods which we need. I never buy these things. I buy some clothes every year. They cost me hundreds Yuan.

Q: How about the housing conditions? Are you living in a new house or an old house?

A: Now I am living in an old house. I have been living in it for 20 years. But we have a new house in the town.

Q: What household appliances do you have?

A: I have TV, washing machine and fridge.

Q: Do you have a telephone, mobile phone or computer?

A: I only have a mobile phone.

Q: How often do you go shopping?

A: Sometimes, not very often. I only buy some soap and washing-powder when I go shopping.

Q: What kinds of vegetables and meat do you usually eat?

A: I eat potatoes, tomatoes, cabbages, soybeans, green peppers. I seldom eat meat.

Q: Are the vegetables that you eat grown by yourself or do you buy them in the market?

A: Generally speaking, I eat what I grew. But in winter, I often buy the vegetables.

Q: Are you satisfied with the traffic communication of the village?

A: So far, the traffic here is undeveloped. It is not convenient to go to the town.

Family Life

Q: How did you get to know your husband? Is your marriage a love match, or did your parents bring you and your husband together?

A: I met him on a blind date.

Q: Could you give me some general information about your husband, e.g. his age, education, career?

A: He was born in 1970, he is 43 years old. He graduated from college. Now he is a civil servant in the town.

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: He (Ms. Liu F's husband) is managing. I cannot manage it. Take the money for example. He often stays in the town because of his work. I often stay at home in the village. It is convenient to buy living goods in the town. You know, there are few kinds of things in the shop in this village. He often buys things in the town. So I never keep the money. I use what he buys. When I visit relatives, he gives me some money (to buy gifts) sometimes. I am not making money, so I never keep the money. He buys what I need. That is enough for me.

Q: How do you distribute the housework? Do you do all of it yourself or is your husband sharing housework? Or does he help? Often or occasionally?

A: I do lots of housework. When he is at home, he helps me occasionally, like sweeping the floor.

Q: Do your children help with housework? What housework do they usually do?

A: Yes, my first daughter helps me a lot. Cooking meals, sweeping the floor, washing clothes, and so on. She is 16 years old. She can do a lot.

Q: How long does it take you to do the housework every day?

A: It costs me not so much time, two or three hours I think. Just cooking, washing, or something like that.

Q: How are you getting on with your husband?

A: We are getting along well. We never quarrel with each other. He comes back and stays at home for only one or two days of a week. We have nothing to quarrel. He is often outside home. Sometimes he comes back only once a week. Sometimes he doesn't come back for weeks. There is nothing to quarrel.

Q: Have you ever been abused by your husband?

A: No, never.

Q: Do you think men's family status is higher than women's in a household? Do you think the man is superior to the woman? What does your husband think?

A: Maybe we are equal in the family. He thinks so, I guess.

Q: What's your attitude towards the idea of "men manage external affairs while women deal with internal one"?

A: In some families, the woman manages external affairs. For my family, he is more educated than me after all. It is my destiny only to deal with internal things. After all, we were married and formed a family. Also, I am less educated. I can only be a housewife. He manages all the external affairs. If I disputed that with him, other people might laugh at me. My tasks are washing, cooking, and looking after the children and the parents. His mother (her husband's mother) had heart disease and stayed here for ten years. I always looked after her. Now that she has passed away, I do nothing at home, except farm work.

Q: Are you satisfied with your marriage life?

A: It is okay.

Q: Your first child is 16 years old and your second child is?

A: My second daughter is seven years old.

Q: (I saw that there was a baby on her arm) This baby is?

A: It is not mine. I help someone to look after it.

Q: Why the person doesn't look after it himself or herself?

A: (After a few minutes silence) I dare not say. You might know the fact. I cannot admit it. When I say this, you might get the fact. I just came back to the village one month ago. I was staying in the city before (to escape from being fined by the department of population and family planning).

Q: Is it still strict in birth control in rural areas?

A: The key thing, though, he (her husband) is the civil servant. He fears other's gossips. We already have two children. We don't apply for a resident permit for this baby, and it doesn't have an identity card. It has nothing.

Q: Is it a boy or girl?

A: It is a boy. It is only three months old.

Q: Whom, the girls like to communicate with in your family?

A: They like to talk with me. Their father is seldom at home. They have less opportunity to communicate with each other.

Q: What do you think about the education of children?

A: I support them as long as they are willing to study. Now they are going to school in the town. If they can be admitted to a university, I will be very happy. But it depends on their ability. My first girl said that she wants to go to the university in London which is called Har...v...

Interviewer: Harvard University? It is in America.

Q: Harvard? It is in America.

A: Right! Harvard. It is good to have a great dream. So far until now, she is doing well at school. She wins a prize every year because of her high grades. It depends on one's fate... Anyway, I resign myself to my fate. I pass my whole life as a housewife without any career.

Leisure Life and Social Contact

Q: How much leisure time do you have in a week?

A: I am often at leisure except in May and September. I am busy in these two months.

Q: How do you usually spend your leisure time?

A: I like chatting with neighbors and playing the card when I am free.

Q: Are you satisfied with your leisure life?

A: Yes, I am content with my leisure life.

Q: When you are communicating with your neighbors, which topic do you often talk about?

A: Just small talk. We like to get together and twitter about the family stuff.

Q: When you need some help, whom will you contact with first?

A: Relatives. Sometimes when I want to find someone to help me do the farm work, I will contact someone unmarried. But someone like that is difficult to find these past two years. I also contact neighbors. It is said that a close neighbor is better than a brother far off. As neighbors, "you scratch my back, and I'll scratch yours". We help each other.

Q: Why you find someone who is single to help you?

A: The bachelor is willing to do that when you give him a little money. When he gets married, he will go to the city to find a job. He has to earn more money to support his family. He thinks it is not worth to do that for earning such a little money. If he is working in the city, he can earn hundreds Yuan a day. For the bachelor, he only has to provide for himself. In the situation like this, the bachelor is willing to do no matter how much money you give him. The person who gets married won't do that.

Health and Safety Issues

Q: Are you in good health?

A: Yes, I am healthy.

Q: How often do you go for a medical examination? When did you last go for the medical examination?

A: I go for a medical examination when the doctor comes to the village. In fact, I know well about my health without an examination. I can feel it. When I feel under the weather, I will go to see a doctor as soon as possible. I am in good health. I went for the last medical examination in March, six months ago.

Q: Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination?

A: Yes. I went for a gynecological examination in the town. A few months ago, there was inflammation. It's just one of those things for a woman. I went to the country to see a doctor. When I get a cold or something like that, I will go to the clinic in the town. I went to see a doctor in the country only once. We bought the medical insurance, but it is useless for us. All of us are in good health.

Q: How much do you have to pay for the medical insurance?

A: Before last year we paid 50 Yuan per person. Starting last year, we have to pay 60Yuan.

Q: How many expenses should you afford with this medical insurance for the treatment?

A: I am not sure. Because we seldom to go to the hospital. I don't know exactly about it. We are all in good health. A few years ago, his (her husband) mother was ill. He paid the money. But I don't know how much he had paid exactly at last.

Q: Do you feel stress/ pressure in your life?

A: I have not felt stress so far. Because I have a little land, there is not so much work to do. And the expense of my family is very small. About the children, I am not worried about them. So I don't feel the stress.

Q: What are your main concerns?

A: I am never worrying about anything. Even if there is something you want to concern, you are not able to deal with them. Anyway, just let it be. So far, I have no stress. In the past, I was always angry with something that cannot be done well. Now I feel keen that my ability falls short of my wishes. So just let it be. He is the breadwinner in the family. I don't need to worry about anything. The man I married is not a common man. He is Out Of My League. He had a good education while I didn't have much more. As a result, I don't see eye to eye with him in many things. But I have to endure it. Nothing can be done about it. It is a fact of life, and I must face it. So, now the only task for me is looking after the children. What else can I do at such an old age? You see, if I didn't marry him, I would live with another kind of life, maybe a better life. He always tries to control me. He would not let me do the things which I want to do. The only thing he wants me to do is looking after the children and his parents. I was a little too obedient, so I am still living in such a life. I give up, let it be. I am a very simple person, when you decide everything without consulting with me, I will care nothing. You just buy me what I need. When I want something, you buy it for me. That is enough. Then I only mind my own business and do the housework, like cooking, washing and looking after the children.

Q: Does he buy you whatever you want?

A: Yes, he buys what I want. When I visit a friend or relative, he also gives me some money to buy gifts for them. Sometimes we go to the market together. We buy a lot of things. Generally speaking, I don't need to buy something. He buys all the things we need. In the family, everything hinges on his decision. The point is that my opinions are always ignored. If I had right to manage the household, my life would be better. He is different from other people. He is very much an introvert. If he was at home today, he would not agree me to talk a lot with you.

Q: Have you ever been sexually harassed when your husband was not at home?

A: Now the public order is good. And human quality is higher than before.

Self-image

Q: Do you know about the law on the protection of the rights and interests of women?

A: No, I don't know much about that. As a rural housewife, I only care about the housework. Other things...I really don't know.

Q: When you have some trouble, will the women's federation or the government help you?

A: No. It is useless to ask them for help. In addition, I don't have trouble.

Q: Do you often keep track of current social events?

A: Sometimes. Sometimes I have a glance at CCTV news. I don't pay close attention to that.

Interview Y7

Ms. Xie G

The basic information

I am 43 years old. I have been married for 21 years. I have completed four years of education. I have two children: a daughter and a son. They are working in Xi'an.

Working Conditions

Q: How much arable land do you have? Do you use it?

A: We have four mu land. They are not abandoned. I grow wheat and corn on it.

Q: What kind of fowl or livestock are you feeding?

A: I am feeding two cows.

Q: Only two cows?

A: Yes. We have only two cows.

Q: How long do you work on the land every day?

A: I do farm work at least eight hours when it is in the busy season.

Q: Do you always feel tired after work?

A: Yes, I feel very tired.

Q: How many hours can you sleep every day?

A: I don't know... I get up at six or seven o'clock in the morning and go to bed at midnight.

Q: When it is in the busy season, do you usually ask someone for help, or do you finish all the work yourself, or does your family work together with you?

A: I finish all the work myself. No one helps me. So I feel very tired, especially in the busy season.

Q: Do you use any farm machinery when you are working?

A: I don't have any farm machinery. I borrow it from others when I need it.

Q: Do you find some part-time jobs in the slack season?

A: No. Now I am just staying in village. I can't find part-time jobs here. My son will get married soon. I have to stay here to look after grandchild.

Q: What sort of fertilizer do you use?

A: Chemical fertilizer.

Q: Have you got any benefit from the agricultural policies, like farm subsidy?

A: I don't know.....I am not sure.

Quality of Their Material Life

Q: What are the sources of income in your family?

A: His (her husband's) income. I can't earn money by doing farming. We have only a little land.

Q: How much is the total annual income of your family?

A: I am not sure. Anyway, our annual income is not enough for us to live a good life. My son is about to get married. Betrothal gifts will cost us a lot of money. We don't have enough money. Maybe we have to borrow some.

Q: What is the main expenditure in your family?

A: We spend money mainly on food and maintaining relationships.

Q: How much do you spend for yourself per month?

A: I spend a little for myself. I seldom buy clothes, shoes or something else for myself.

Q: Are you living in a new house or an old house?

A: We are living in an old house. We got married about twenty years ago and have lived here ever since.

Q: What household appliances do you have?

A: We have TV, fridge and washing machine.

Q: Do you have a telephone, mobile phone or computer?

A: I have a mobile phone.

Q: What kinds of vegetables and meat do you usually eat?

A: Cabbages, onions, hot pepper, beans and so on.

Q: How often do you go shopping?

A: When I need something, I go to the market in the town. I seldom go shopping. It is not convenient to go to the town.

Q: Are you satisfied with the traffic communication of the village?

A: No. The price of the bus ticket is very high.

Family Life

Q: How did you get to know your husband?

A: We knew each other when we were young.

Q: You got to know him on a blind date?

A: No. We met on we own.

Q: Could you give me some general information about your husband, e.g. his age, education, career?

A: He is 46 years old. He graduated from a junior middle school. Now he is working in Xi'an.

Q: How do you distribute the housework? Do you do all of it yourself?

A: Yes, I do housework myself.

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: We don't have much money. No one is managing it.

Q: Who decides an important matter in your family?

A: He (her husband) decides all the important matter. I am less educated. I follow his decision.

Q: How long does it take you to do the housework every day?

A: I am not sure.

Q: What kind of housework do you do every day?

A: Feeding cows, cooking, cleaning and sometimes washing clothes.

Q: How are you getting on with your husband?

A: We are getting along well.

Q: Do you think men's family status is higher than women's in a household? Do you think the man is superior to the woman?

A: No, man and woman are equal in a family. But man is more important for a family. Man can earn more money than the woman.

Q: Are you satisfied with your marriage life?

A: Yes, it's okay.

Q: How do you think about the education of children?

A: I have no idea. Maybe, the more knowledge they have, the better job they can find.

Q: How are you getting on with older generation?

A: It's okay. We are not living together.

Q: In your opinion, what is an ideal family life?

A: Having enough money to live.

Leisure Life and Social Contact

Q: How much leisure time do you have in a week?

A: I don't have much leisure time. You see, I have to do farm work the whole day.

Q: Are you satisfied with that?

A: I hope I can have more time to have a rest. I am too tired.

Q: Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life?

A: My neighbors.

Q: When you need some help, whom will you contact with first?

A: I often contact with my neighbors.

Q: Do you think you are good at social contact?

A: I don't know how to say. It's okay.

Health and Safety Issues

Q: How about your health?

A: Not good. I have back pain.

Q: How often do you go for a medical examination?

A: I seldom go for medical examination. It will cost much money.

Q: Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination?

A: I did that once.

Q: Would you go for a medical check as soon as you felt under the weather?

A: I buy some medicines in the drug store in the village.

Q: Is it convenient to go to the hospital?

A: Hospital in the county is far away from here. There is a clinic in the town.

Q: Do you have any medical insurance?

A: Yes, I have the medical insurance.

Q: How many expenses can be refunded by your insurance?

A: 30% of expenses can be refunded.

Q: Do you feel stress/ pressure in your life?

A: Yes. I hope that we can earn more money.

Q: If you had got trouble, whom would you like to pour out?

A: Relatives

Q: Have you ever been sexually harassed when your husband was not at home?

A: Never.

Self-image

Q: Do you think you and everything you have done is significant to your family and society?

A: I don't know. I have done nothing for the society.

Q: Would you like to learn and work in a different profession? Which one?

A: I can't learn other things. I am less education.

Q: Do you often keep track of current social events?

A: Sometimes. I don't understand most of them, and I have no time to watch the news.

Interview Y8

Ms. Li H

The basic information

I am 46 years old. I have completed two years of education.

Q: Why did you only complete two years of education?

A: Because my family is poor at that time. I could not continue to study. I have two brothers and two sisters. My parents could not afford our school fees. The school fee was 2 or 3 Yuan per person, but even so my parents could not afford to send us to school. When we wanted to quit school, our parents agreed. And then we all worked on the farm land and earned money by manual labor. That's the life in those days.

I have been married for 25 years. I have two children: a daughter and a son. My daughter has already been married.

Q: Do you prefer your son or your daughter?

A: I like both.

Working Conditions

Q: How much arable land do you have? Do you use it?

A: I have...three...or four...mu...I have four mu land. I am using it.

Q: What kind of main food crops or vegetables are you growing? What kind of fowl or livestock are you feeding?

A: I don't grow many food crops. Last year, I harvested about 500kg wheat and 1000kg corns. I am growing a few potatoes, only a few.

Q: How about vegetables?

A: Each family only grow a few vegetables, barely enough to eat. Then we don't need to buy vegetables. We grow only a few. As to livestock, I am feeding two cows.

Q: Will sell them when they grow up?

A: No, I am raising them for home consumption.

Q: How long do you work on the land every day? Do you always feel tired after work?

A: I don't have a fixed schedule. Sometimes I can have a rest for two or three days. Sometimes I am busy doing the farm work for several days...for five or six days. These

days I am busy harvesting corns and shelling ears of corns. I will be free again when I finish.

Q: When it is in the busy season, do you usually ask someone for help, or do you finish all the work yourself, or does your family work together with you?

A: I do the work myself. He (her husband) is working outside. And I grow a few crops. It is not necessary to ask someone for help.

Q: How many hours can you sleep every day?

A: I often get up at six o'clock. When I shell ears of corns, I go to bed late, at 10 o'clock.

Q: Do you shell ears of corns by hand or by machine?

A: I shell it by hand. I don't have the machine.

Q: Do you find some part-time jobs in the slack season?

A: No, I always stay at home because I have to look after old parents.

Q: What sort of fertilizer do you use?

A: Yes, I must use the chemical fertilizer. Otherwise, the crops will not grow well. But I grow vegetables without chemical fertilizer. They are grown for home consumption. I only use the farmyard manure for vegetables. When I grow corns, I use chemical fertilizer.

Q: Have you got any benefit from the agricultural policies, like the subsidy from the government?

A: Not yet.

Quality of material life

Q: What are the sources of income in your family?

A: When he is working outside, we can have some income. Otherwise, we get nothing.

Q: How much is the total annual income of your family?

A: I sell 500kg corns, two cows, two chickens...I can at most sell 3000kg agricultural products a year. So the total annual income is about 15,000 Yuan, including his wage.

Q: What is the main expenditure in your family?

A: Buying gifts...when other villagers go through some particular things (such as weddings, death, moving to a new house.), I buy gifts for them or give them some money as a gift. Moreover, buying rice, oil, or something like that.

Q: How much do you spend for yourself per month?

A: About one hundred Yuan a month. When our financial condition at home is bad, I don't buy even a set of clothes. He and my children are doing hard work outside...

Q: How many clothes do you buy a year?

A: It depends. When I have money, I buy one or two sets of clothes. When I don't have much money, I don't buy clothes. Sometimes, my children buy a few clothes for me. Actually, I can wear two suits for three years.

Q: Are you living in a new house or an old house?

A: The house we are living in is very old. I don't know when it was built. It had been built before I got married. I don't when it was built exactly.

Q: Do you have a new house or will you have a new one?

A: No.

Q: What household appliances do you have?

A: I have fridge, TV, washing machine.

Q: Do you have a telephone, mobile phone or computer?

A: I have a mobile phone.

Q: How often do you go shopping?

A: Not very often. I go shopping when the rice, oil...are eaten up.

Q: Are you satisfied with the traffic communication of the village?

A: I don't know. I don't often go outside.

Family Life

Q: How did you get to know your husband?

A: Our marriage is a love match. Because we were living near from each other at that time. We almost could see each other every day.

Q: Could you give me some general information about your husband, e.g. his age, education, career?

A: He is 46 years old. He graduated from junior middle school. Now he is working outside. He went out to work not long ago.

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: No one manages the property. When he gets his wage, he brings it back to use. Whoever wants to use can use the money.

Q: Who decides an important matter in your family?

A: He decides when he is at home. When he is not at home, I decide it.

Q: How do you distribute the housework?

A: I do all the housework.

Q: How long does it take you to do the housework every day?

A: Sometimes I do the housework all the morning. When I have cows to feed, I must mow grass and feed them. It costs me a little time. These are all I have to do. Now it is different from the past. In the past, the land did not belong to farmers. We had to go to work on the land as soon as we got up at 5 or 6 o'clock every morning. Until 9 o'clock we could go back to have breakfast. After breakfast, we continued to work until 3 o'clock in the afternoon. Then we came back to have lunch...Now the land belongs to ourselves. We can arrange the time freely. So the life is better now. When I want to work, I can do some work. When I don't want to, I do nothing. These days I am harvesting corns. I grow a few corns. So I can finish it in three days. When I finish harvesting corns, I will have much time to have a rest.

Q: How often do you contact your husband, when he is working outside?

A: I contact him with a mobile phone. He calls me almost every day. Sometime we send the short message.

Q: Do you quarrel with each other?

A: Never.

Q: Do you think man plays a more important role than a woman does in the household?

A: Definitely. The man is more important than the woman in family. A woman has not enough strength to do hard work. A woman can do hard work for only a few hours. And then woman feels too tired to do the work. A man performs much better.

Q: Are you satisfied with your marriage life?

A: Yes, I am satisfied with that. Now I eat what I grew. I eat more rice and noodles. I seldom eat corns. I feel it is good.

Q: How old are your children

A: The elderly one is 25 years old. The other one is 24 years old. My daughter got married. She married to a person who is from Hu Bei province.

Q: Is there far from here?

A: No, it is near from here.

Q: Does she often come back?

A: Yes, she comes back frequently with her kid. She stays here for about one or two months when she comes back.

A: My son went for a soldier. My son and daughter both graduated from junior middle school. My daughter didn't want to continue to study when she graduated from junior middle school. Her teacher came home to persuade her to study, but she wouldn't listen. My son could not go to high school because his grade was not good. At that time, he was too young to find a job. So we sent him to the army. Now he is in Shan dong province. Yesterday he gave me a call.

Q: How are you getting on with older generation?

A: We are getting along well.

Q: What you mainly have to do with the older generation?

A: I look after her almost all day long. The stroke left her paralyzed on one side of her body. It condemned her to a wheelchair. His brother's wife and I look after her together. We leave her outside in the morning in the evening we take her back home. We tie a rope to the wheelchair. She can snatch at the rope and do some exercise. It is good for her. So these two years, I cannot leave home. I must stay at home to look after her.

Leisure Life and Social Contact

Q: How do you usually spend your leisure time?

A: When I have leisure time, I often mow grass and feed cows.

Q: Do you play card or have a chat with neighbors?

A: I don't like to play card. Sometimes I have a chat with them.

Q: When you are communicating with them, which topic do you often talk about?

A: We don't have some fixed topic, it is just a chitchat such gossip or something else.

Q: Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life?

A: My neighbors.

Q: When you need some help, whom will you contact with first?

A: Unless there is a serious matter, I don't need other's help.

Health and Safety Issues

Q: Are you in good health?

A: No, I got a pain in my back. I went to see a doctor, but they did not know what was causing the pain. I went to the hospital in town and even went to Xi'an to see a doctor. But none of them knew the cause of it. Also, my leg is also sore.

Q: How often do you go for a medical examination?

A: When I feel really bad, I go for a medical examination.

Q: Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination?

A: Yes, I have done that. And I have undergone three surgeries, including the contraceptive operation. But my abdomen still aches.

Q: Do you have any medical insurance?

A: Yes. I have.

Q: How much money should you afford with the medical insurance for the treatment?

A: I don't know. Anyway, I pay for the medical insurance every year. When we go to the hospital, he (her husband) shows them the insurance. Then the hospital calculates how much we should pay. I don't know it exactly.

Q: Do you pay a lot of money when you have surgery or have an examination?

A: It depends. If I go to the hospital in Xi'an (a city), I have to afford most of the expense. Sometimes I even must afford all the expense. If I am hospitalized, some of the expense can be refunded by the insurance. If I just do an examination, I must afford all the expense. If I go to see a doctor in the town, half of the expense can be refunded no matter what I have done (to be hospitalized or have an examination).

Q: Do you feel stress/ pressure in your life?

A: Pressure? Yes, my mother-in-law's illness is the only one point that worries me. She cannot look after herself, and I dare not leave her. It often darkens my mood.

Self -Image

Q: Would you like to learn and work in a different profession? Which one?

A: No, I think I can only do farm work.

Q: When you have some trouble, will the women's federation or the government help you?

A: No, they cannot help me a lot.

Q: Do you often keep track of current social events?

A: I watch the news program, but I cannot understand most of them. I just watch.

Interview Y9

Ms. Li I

1. The basic information

I am 52 years old. I have completed two years of education. I have been married for 32 years. I have two children: a son and a daughter. I am living with elderly parents together.

Q: Why you had only two years of schooling?

A: I was born into a poor family. And I have five sisters and three brothers. Our parents cannot afford to send us to school.

Q: How about your brothers? How many years have they been in school?

A: They also had two or three years of schooling.

Working Conditions

Q: How much arable land do you have? Do you use it?

A: I have a little land, less than 2 Mu. I have not grown crops before this year. Now I begin to use it. I am going to grow wheat.

Q: Are you growing vegetables? What kind of fowl or livestock are you feeding?

A: No, I am not growing vegetables. This year I grow nothing. I don't have chickens. About livestock, I just bought a calf a few days ago.

Q: How long do you work on the land every day?

A: Now I don't do the farm work. I begin to do it from next month. I will grow wheat. Now there is nothing grown in the land.

Q: What do you do every day?

A: I am looking after my grandchild.

Q: Do you find some part-time jobs?

A: No. Last year I looked after my grandchild in the city, I was living with my son. And I cooked for them. I just come back for several months.

Material Quality of Their Lives

Q: What are the sources of income in your family?

A: He is working in the city. He can earn 2000 or 3000 Yuan a month.

Q: Your husband?

A: Yes.

Q: How much is the total annual income of your family?

A: I am not sure. Anyway, it is more than 20,000 Yuan a year.

Q: What is the main expenditure in your family?

A: I am not sure. Probably, the main expenditure is my grandchild's tuition and buying food. This year we don't grow crops, we have to buy the food and vegetables.

Q: How much do you spend for yourself per month?

A: It is hard to say. I mainly spend money on seeing a doctor. Speaking of clothes, I buy a few clothes for the whole year. The main expenditure is my medical fee. It is very high. I can't be sure how much is it per month. This month it might cost more, next month less.

Q: How about the housing conditions? Are you living in a new house or an old house?

A: It is an old house. I forget how many years I have been living in it. About 20 years, I think.

Q: Do you have a new house?

A: No, I don't have.

Q: What household appliances do you have?

A: I only have a rice cooker.

Q: Do you have TV, washing machine or fridge?

A: I have TV and washing machine.

Q: Do you have a telephone, mobile phone or computer?

A: I have a mobile phone.

Q: How often do you go shopping?

A: I seldom go shopping. I sometimes go to the shop in the village and buy some food, like rice, flour, oil, salt and something like that. As to other things, I seldom buy them.

Q: What kinds of vegetables and meat do you usually eat?

A: We eat cabbage, potatoes, green pepper, and tofu. Sometimes we eat chicken.

Q: Are you satisfied with the traffic communication of the village?

A: What is the traffic communication? I can't understand.

Q: Do you think it is convenient to go to the town and the country?

A: Yes. I think it is convenient. I can take a bus.

Family Life

Q: How did you get to know your husband?

A: I met him on a blind date.

Q: Did your parents bring you and your husband together?

A: No, we decided to get married ourselves.

Q: Could you give me some general information about your husband, e.g. his age, education, career?

A: He is 56 years old, he is a farmer. He graduated from junior middle school. He is now working in the Xi'an (a city).

Q: Who decides an important matter in your family?

A: Both of us. We often take counsel together when there is an important matter.

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: We don't have much property. Nothing has to be managed. And he (Ms. Li I's) brings the money back every month to maintain the family. We have a little money.

Q: How do you distribute the housework? Do you do all of it yourself?

A: Now I am staying at home. I do all of the housework. Anyway, I have no income. This is the only thing I can do.

Q: How long does it take you to do the housework every day?

A: It is uncertainty. There is not a fixed schedule to raise the calf. But I am busy from morning to night.

Q: How are you getting on with your husband?

A: We are getting along well. We often quarreled when we were young. Now it is better.

Q: Why do you have a quarrel?

A: I've forgotten.

Q: Have you ever been abused by your husband?

A: Never, we only quarreled.

Q: Do you think men's family status is higher than women's in a household?

A: Of course, men's family status is higher than women's.

Q: Why?

A: The man is the breadwinner in a family and men have the ability to manage external affairs. A man can be a good head of a family. So man's family status is higher.

Q: Are you satisfied with your marriage life?

A: Yes. Life is like that: getting up, eating... I am content.

Q: How old are your children? What are they doing?

A: My son is 32 years old. My daughter is 23 years old. They are working in Xi'an. My daughter got married.

Q: How old is your grandchild? Does he go to school in the town?

A: He is six years old. Yes, he goes to school in the town. The tuition is cheaper here.

Q: How do you think about the education of children?

A: I hope he can study hard. But it depends on himself.

Q: How are you getting on with older generation?

A: We are getting on with each other well.

Q: What you mainly have to do with the older generation?

A: I am cooking for them. When they are ill, I will look after them.

Leisure Life and Social Contact

Q: How much leisure time do you have in a week?

A: It depends on the weather. When it rains, I will be free. Generally speaking, I have much leisure time in winter, because I don't need to work on the land in winter.

Q: How do you usually spend your leisure time?

A: I usually go to chop wood when I am free.

Q: Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life?

A: Nobody, except my neighbor.

Q: When you are communicating with them, which topic do you often talk about?

A: Whatever, just gossip.

Q: When you need some help, whom will you contact with first?

A: My neighbor. We are living quite near after all.

Health and Safety Issues

Q: How about your health?

A: I am in poor health. I got a pain in my side.

Q: How often do you go for a medical examination?

A: Never. I never go for a medical examination.

Q: Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination?

A: Never.

Q: Would you go for a medical check as soon as you felt under the weather?

A: When I felt ill, I went to the drug store in the village. If I felt better after I took the medicine, I would not go for a medical check.

Q: Do you have any medical insurance?

A: Yes, I have the medical insurance. But it is useless.

Q: Why?

A: I bought medicine...showed them my insurance card...I bought two kinds of medicine...then I still had to pay 30 or 40 Yuan (4 Euro or 6 Euro). They told me some of the expenses had been covered by my insurance. But I still spent a lot.

Q: How many expenses can be refunded by your insurance?

A: I don't know. Anyway, when I buy the medicine, I have to spend a lot.

Q: Do you feel stress/ pressure in your life?

A: Yes, I have no income. Every day, I am worried about that I have no more money.

Q: If you had got trouble, whom would you like to pour out?

A: My family members.

Q: Have you ever been sexually harassed when your husband was not at home?

A: Never. The public order in the village is good.

Self- Image

Q: Do you think you and everything you have done is significant to your family and society?

A: I don't know how to answer. This question is difficult. Maybe, the things I have done is helpful to my family. But I don't work and I have no income. To the society? I don't think so. I only do the housework and look after the child. They are not important to society.

Q: When you have some trouble, will the women's federation or the government help you?

A: It is useless to ask them for help.

Q: Do you know what does the women's federation do?

A: In fact, I don't know much about the women's federation. I was not at home these two years. When the committee of the village wants to collect money, the women's federation will inform us. They tell us nothing except for that. Now we even don't know the policy about farmers. When there was a meeting, they informed us at least long ago. But now, only when they collect money, they inform you. And when somewhere is the lack of hands, they inform you to help. About rest of things, they never tell us.

Q: Do you often keep track of current social events?

A: No. Now I am looking after the child. I have no time to attend to that.

Interview Y10

Ms. Liang B

The basic information

I am 45 years old. I have never been to school. I am illiterate. I have been married for 25 years. I have two children: a daughter and a son. My daughter is 24 years old. My son is 23 years old. Now they are working in the city. They left school when they were 12 years old because they had some trouble in school. When they were in the sixth grade, my son fought with other child and hurt the child. At last, we paid many medical bills for that child and my two children got expelled from school. They didn't continue to go to school from then on.

Q: Why didn't you go to school?

A: I have too many brothers and sisters so my parents couldn't afford the tuition fees.

Q: None of the children in your family have been to school?

A: No, we haven't. There were too many children in my family. Some of them have been to school for just two years. Some of them, like me, have never been to school. We started to make money when we were very young. We earn our living by manual labor. Some of them found jobs in the city. Some of them raise sheep in the village.

Working Conditions

Q: How much arable land do you have? Do you use it?

A: I have four mu land. Two of them become the wasteland. Nothing good can grow from them, so I abandoned. Now I use the rest of the land, it is about two mu.

Q: What kind of main food crops or vegetables are you growing? What kind of fowl or livestock are you feeding?

A: Now I am growing corn. I grow wheat in another season. I am growing vegetables for eating. We cannot grow the Greenhouse vegetables here. We can grow only a few vegetables for ourselves. We have such a little land...I am raising two cows.

Q: When it is in the busy season, do you usually ask someone for help, or do you finish all the work yourself, or does your family work together with you?

A: I do it myself. He (her husband) is disabled. His leg was broken. I do all the work, including housework and farm work.

Q: What sort of fertilizer do you use?

A: I bought chemical fertilizer. Sometimes I use farmyard manure. It is good for crops to use chemical fertilizer. They will grow well with chemical fertilizer.

Q: How long do you work on the land every day? Do you always feel tired after work?

A: I am working the whole day. I must do farm work and housework so that I have no time to have a rest. Sometimes I work on the land until 8 o'clock in the evening.

Q: How many hours can you sleep every day?

A: I get up at 6 o'clock, sometimes I get up half an hour later than usual. I must get up at 6:30 at latest. Because I have to feed cows and look after him (her husband). He is unable to leave the bed. I must help him by the hand. When the weather clears, I help him to go outside. When it rains, I let him stay in the house. It has been two years since he broke the leg. For earning a little money, he found a job in the mine. Unfortunately, he fell and broke his leg two years ago... (Cry)

Q: Do you use any farm machinery when you are working?

A: I don't have any farm machine.

Quality of Material Life

Q: What are the sources of income in your family?

A: We don't have income. We raise cows and then sell them to make a little money. Living in a rural area is miserable. We cannot make money any other way. Now we can't do the hard work in the city as young people do. We are dependent on our children. They make money and send some money to us. With their support, we can to keep the wolf from the door.

Q: How much is the total annual income of your family?

A: The total income is my son's wage. My daughter has been married. The annual wage of my son is 20,000 Yuan. He earns the money by doing physical work. He has been not well educated. He can only do physical work. My daughter married someone who is from another province.

Q: What is the main expenditure in your family?

A: He is disabled now. We spend the money mainly on his sickness.

Q: How much do you spend for yourself per month?

A: I am not sure. Each year I buy a few clothes. I buy five suits of clothes in a year at most.
I am not particular about my dress.

Q: How about the housing conditions? Are you living in a new house or an old house?

A: I am living in an old house. I have been living in it for 25 years.

Q: What household appliances do you have?

A: I have only a TV.

Q: Do you have a washing machine?

A: Yes, I have.

Q: a fridge?

A: Yes, my daughter just bought it for us.

Q: Do you have a telephone, mobile phone or computer?

A: I have a mobile phone.

Q: How often do you go shopping?

A: Not very often. Sometimes I don't go shopping even once a month.

Q: What do you buy when you go shopping?

A: I usually buy something like salt, oil, and sauces. Sometimes I buy biscuits and food supplement for him. But he is not willing to eat them recently because he thinks that he can't earn money now, he does not want to spend more. It is enough to have three meals a day. Therefore, I go shopping only when things are consumed.

Q: Are you satisfied with the traffic communication of the village?

A: I seldom go to the town, so it means a little to me.

Family Life

Q: How did you get to know your husband?

A: I met him on a blind date.

Q: Could you give me some general information about your husband, e.g. his age, education, career?

A: He is 47 years old. He graduated from junior middle school.

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: I am managing our property. I dealt with all of his wages when he had a job.

Q: Who decides an important matter in your family?

A: My son is working in the city, he is disabled, I know nothing at all...

Q: How long does it take you to do the housework every day?

A: Sometimes I do the housework the whole morning. Sometimes I go to work on the land in the morning. I do one or two hours housework in the afternoon. Then I continue to do farm work, feed the cows and do something like that.

Q: How are you getting on with your husband?

A: We are getting along well.

Q: Do you think men's family status is higher than women's in a household? Do you think the man is superior to the woman?

A: There's no doubt that man is superior to woman. He can do things that the woman can't do, such as hard work. He can leave home to venture out by himself. I don't have any other skills. Even if I could do heavy work in the city, I would feel anxious remaining him alone at home. Now I am mainly looking after him and keeping him good company. He found a dangerous job where he can earn more money. That's why he's hurt. If not for maintaining this family, he wouldn't be so.

Q: Do you have a grandchild?

A: Yes. I have a grandson.

Q: Who is looking after him?

A: My son and daughter-in-law. When I don't raise cows, I will get him home and look after him. Then his parents can keep their minds on their work.

Q: Are you living with older generation?

A: No, our parents passed away.

Leisure Life and Social Contact

Q: How much leisure time do you have in a week?

A: When it rains, I will be free. I can stay in the house and accompany him for one or two hours. They asked me to go to play or have a chat together. But I am afraid that he may feel lonely. So I stay at home and accompany him. Sometimes I have a rest at home. Sometimes I happen to do some housework.

Q: Are you satisfied with your leisure life?

A: It is hard to say. I don't know. I have no other choice.

Q: Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life?

A: My neighbor.

Q: When you need some help, whom will you contact with first?

A: I ask the neighbors for help firstly. For example, when he is not feeling well, I ask my neighbor to look after him, and then I can go to see a doctor. My children are not at home. We can only ask our neighbors to help us.

Health and Safety Issues

Q: How about your health?

A: I have been falling in health for the last two years, because of taking care of him. My legs are painful and have a pain in the back. And I also have a poor memory recently.

Q: How often do you go for a medical examination?

A: Never. If I feel ill, I will go to the drugstore to buy some medicine. Doing the medical examination will cost much money, so I never go for a medical examination.

Q: Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination?

A: When the doctor comes to the village, I go to have a check.

Q: Do you have any medical insurance?

A: Yes, I have.

Q: How many expenses can be refunded by your insurance?

A: When I buy medicine for him, some money can be refunded. I mean when I spend 100Yuan on medicine, 60 Yuan or 70Yuan can be refunded at last. For example, last month I bought some medicine for him, it cost 100Yuan. Being refunded by the insurance, I spent only 36Yuan. Also, he often has to be operated on. There is a special pipe needs to be used during the operation. We must buy the medicine which is used with the pipe. We need a lot of that. I buy the medicine in the drug store. A small bottle of it is 3Yuan. There are thirty bottles to a box. Every time I buy a box of the medicine and some expense can be refunded by the insurance.

Q: How about the public order in your village?

A: I think it is good.

Q: Do you know what does the women's federation do?

A: No. Sometimes they called for me to attend the meeting, but I always feel depressed because of trivial things. I never attend their meeting. So I don't know exactly what it does.

Interview Y11

Ms. Li K

The basic information

I am 42 years old. I completed only three years of education.

Q: Why didn't you continue to study?

A: My family was poor. There are so many children in my family. I have two brothers and two sisters.

Q: Did they also study for only three years?

A: Yes. My elderly sister has never been to school.

I have been married for 16 years. I have two children, a son and a daughter. My son is 16 years old. My daughter is nine years old. My daughter is going to school in the town. My son didn't want to continue to study when he graduated from junior middle school. His aunt has a small business in the city. My son is helping her to do that. I asked him to go to school, but he refused to. He said that he does not have the desire to learn. Moreover, we have no much money to pay the school fee.

Working Conditions

Q: How much arable land do you have? Do you use it?

A: I have four mu land. I am using it.

Q: What kind of main food crops or vegetables are you growing? What kind of fowl or livestock are you feeding?

A: The food crops I am growing are corns and potatoes. The vegetables I am growing are some green vegetables. I am growing a few vegetables. When winter comes, the vegetables will be damaged by frost. I am feeding several sheep...four sheep and five chickens.

Q: When it is in the busy season, do you usually ask someone for help, or do you finish all the work yourself, or does your family work together with you?

A: He (her husband), his father and I work together. Sometimes his father does not do the farm work. Only he and I do that. When it is in the busy season, his father helps us to do the work for a while. In the rest of time, only he and I do the farm work.

Q: How do you distribute farm work?

A: We do the same farm work, but sometimes I do all the housework. He does most of the farm work.

Q: Doesn't your husband work outside?

A: These days he stays at home.

Q: Do you find some part-time jobs in the slack season?

A: No.

Q: What sort of fertilizer do you use?

A: I use both chemical fertilizer and farmyard manure.

Q: How long do you work on the land every day? Do you always feel tired after work?

A: I work all day long. Rural life is like this: doing the farm work from morning to night. Anyway, I do much work every day. I have to do that. It is my life. When I get up, I cook the breakfast. Then I must go to mow the grass for sheep. After I finish feeding sheep, I have to wash clothes. Then I cook lunch. After lunch, I feed the sheep again. I must feed sheep twice a day. After that, I go to the field to do farm work. When I finish the farm work, I come back and cook the supper...I feel very tired.

Q: How many hours can you sleep every day?

A: When it rains, I get up late...at about 7 o'clock. I usually get up at 6 o'clock. In the evening, when I finish all the work I cook the super. I cannot have a rest until finishing the supper. So I often go to bed at about 10 o'clock. This is the rural life. There are so many trivial things to do.

Q: Do you use any farm machinery when you are working?

A: No, I don't have any machine. I only have a TV set.

Q: Have you got any benefit from the agricultural policies, like a subsidy from the government?

A: Not yet.

Material Quality of Their Life

Q: What are the sources of income in your family?

A: When the food crops are harvested, he goes to find a job in the city and earns some money.

Q: How much is the total annual income of your family?

A: As a farmer, I don't have much income. I grow only a few corns and potatoes. And I must spend some money on chemical fertilizer...we are poor. The government gives us living subsidy, but it is very little, we can buy some food with the subsidy. All in all, the money we earn is just enough for us to live on.

Q: What is the main expenditure in your family?

A: Buying the living goods, buying cooking oil and salt, and paying my child's school fee.

Q: How much do you spend for yourself per month?

A: I spend a little for myself. I seldom buy clothes. Sometimes my son buys one or two sets of clothes for me. My relatives give me some clothes. We have a little money. The money is only enough for paying my child's school fees and buying living goods. So I don't have money to buy clothes.

Q: Are you living in a new house or an old house?

A: I am living in a very old house. The old generation built this house a long time ago. We just repaired it.

Q: What household appliances do you have?

A: I only have a TV set.

Q: Do you have a washing machine or a fridge?

A: Yes, I have a wash machine, but I don't have a fridge.

Q: Do you have a telephone, mobile phone or computer?

A: I have a cell phone.

Q: How often do you go shopping?

A: Not very often. I don't have enough money to go shopping. I just buy the cooking oil and some food when I go shopping.

Q: Are you satisfied with the traffic communication of the village?

A: Yes, I am satisfied with that.

Family Life

Q: How did you get to know your husband?

A: I met him on a blind date.

Q: Could you give me some general information about your husband, e.g. his age, education, career?

A: He is 44 years old. He graduated from junior middle school. Now he is doing farm work at home. Sometimes he goes to the city to find a job.

Q: Who decides an important matter in your family?

A: He decides all the matters.

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: No one is managing the property. Sometimes he earns one or two thousand Yuan, and brings it back. We manage it together. It is such little money that we have hardly any money left after paying school fees and buying living goods.

Q: Does your husband do any housework?

A: No, I do all the housework. He often goes outside to find a job. I do all the work at home. He is the bread winner. He must earn money to pay my child's education fee. I grow food crops to sustain ourselves. I have no food to sell.

Q: How are you getting on with your husband?

A: We are getting along well.

Q: Do you quarrel with each other?

A: Sometimes we quarrel.

Q: What was usually your quarrel about?

A: Nothing important. Being tired often makes me short-tempered.

Q: Do you think men's family status is higher than women's in a household?

A: I think we are equal in the family.

Q: Are you satisfied with your marriage life?

A: Yes, basically, I am satisfied with my life. The only thing I am not satisfied is a lack of money.

Q: Whom your daughter and son like to communicate with in your family?

A: Me. After all, I spent more time in looking after them.

Q: How are you getting on with older generation?

A: We are getting along well.

Q: What you mainly have to do with the older generation?

A: I cook the meal and wash clothes for them.

Q: If you had a chance to decide your gender, which you would choose, man or woman? Why?

A: I could only choose to be a woman, because I am not able to be a man. The man is often under a lot of pressure. As a woman I can only do some trivial things. However, as a man, he has to worry a lot.

Leisure Life and Social Contact

Q: How much leisure time do you have in a week?

A: I have little time to have a rest. I am busy doing farm work. Once I have time, I go to mow grass or pick vegetables in the field. When I am at home, I often wash clothes for them.

Q: Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life?

A: My neighbors

Q: When you are communicating with them, which topic do you often talk about?

A: We just have a chat. We don't have a fixed topic. Just about the household.

Q: When you need some help, whom will you contact with first?

A: My relatives.

Health and Safety Issues

Q: Are you in good health?

A: No, my health is not good.

Q: How often do you go for a medical examination?

A: Several months ago, I went for a medical examination. My back always hurts. After the examination, I took some antibiotics. Then I had to continue to do the farm work. I can't stop working. Even in my spare time, I must feed the sheep. The doctor in the town cannot find out what causes my illness. Last year, I went to the county to see a doctor, but the cause of my illness was not found out there either.

Q: Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination?

A: I went for a gynecological examination last year.

Q: Do you have any medical insurance?

A: Yes, I buy it every year.

Q: How much should you afford with this kind of medical insurance for the treatment?

A: I pay all the expenses. Medical insurance is useless. It doesn't refund me more money when I see a doctor. I spend 50 or 60 Yuan a year on insurance. When I go to see a doctor

or buy some medicine, only 50 or 60 Yuan can be refunded by insurance in a year in total. I must pay the rest of the total expense. Actually, I get no benefit from medical insurance.

Q: Do you feel stress/ pressure in your life?

A: Yes, I don't have enough money.

Q: What are your main concerns?

A: My little child. I hope she can study well.

Self-image

Q: Would you like to learn and work in a different profession? Which one?

A: No, I am not able to learn and work in a different profession.

Q: When you have some trouble, will the women's federation or the government help you?

A: No, they cannot help me. You know, they even do not have enough money to look after the five guarantees family. Anyway, we are at least living better than the five guarantees family.

Interview Y12

Ms. Cao L

The basic information

I am 40 years old. I have completed two years of education. I have been married for more than ten years. My elderly son is 15 years old. I have two children in total. My elderly child now is going to senior middle school. My second son is in junior middle school.

Working Conditions

Q: How much arable land do you have? Do you use it?

A: I have four mu land. I am using it now.

Q: What kind of main food crops or vegetables are you growing? What kind of fowl or livestock are you feeding?

A: I am growing wheat, corns, and potatoes. I am raising five sheep.

Q: How long do you work on the land every day? Do you always feel tired after work?

A: Now I can work freely. The land is mine. When I want to do the farm work, I do it for a while. I don't feel tired.

Q: When it is in the busy season, do you usually ask someone for help, or do you finish all the work yourself, or does your family work together with you?

A: I do all the farm work. He (her husband) is working outside. He is in Xi'an.

Q: How many hours can you sleep every day?

A: I get up at 6 o'clock. It is usually 10 o'clock at the night when I go to bed.

Q: Do you find some part-time jobs in the slack season?

A: No, I always stay at home.

Q: Do you use any farm machinery when you are working?

A: No. We only have TV, washing machine, fridge, motor bike.

Q: Have you got any benefit from the agricultural policies, like farm subsidy?

A: No, I have not got any subsidy.

Quality of Material Life

Q: What are the sources of income in your family?

A: Food crops and sheep. I make a little money by selling sheep.

Q: How much is the total annual income of your family?

A: I don't know. If I grow more corns, I can make more money. The total income is just enough for me to buy the food oil, salt, and some living goods.

Q: What is the main expenditure in your family?

A: The main expenditure is the schooling fee of my children.

Q: How much do you spend for yourself per month?

A: I spend a little money for myself.

Q: Are you living in a new house or an old house?

A: This is an old house. I am living in it for seven or eight years. We still have a new house. It was built five or six years ago.

Q: Do you have a telephone, mobile phone or computer?

A: I have a telephone and mobile phone.

Q: How often do you go shopping?

A: Yes, I often go shopping.

Q: What do you often buy when you go shopping?

A: Oil, salt, and rice. Sometimes I buy clothes and shoes for my children.

Q: Do you often buy shoes and clothes for yourself?

A: No. When I want to buy them, I buy one or two articles of the coat. I often only buy them for my children.

Q: Are you satisfied with the traffic communication of the village?

A: Yes, it is all right. We have a motor bike. When he is at home, he gives me a ride to the town. When he is not at home, I go to the town by taking a minibus.

Family Life

Q: How did you get to know your husband?

A: I met him on a blind date.

Q: Could you give me some general information about your husband, e.g. his age, education, career?

A: He is 50 years old. He completed primary school.

Q: Who decides an important matter in your family?

A: He decides the important matter. He doesn't care about trivial things.

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: He makes money outside and brings it to me. I keep the money.

Q: How long does it take you to do the housework every day?

A: I am not sure. Three or four hours, maybe.

Q: How are you getting on with your husband?

A: We are getting along well. We never quarrel.

Q: Do you think men's family status is higher than women's in a household?

A: We are equal in our family.

Q: Are you satisfied with your marriage life?

A: Yes, I am satisfied with my life.

Q: How do you think about the education of children?

A: I hope my children can have a higher degree. But it depends on them. If they don't want to continue to study, I can help it.

Q: How are you getting on with older generation?

A: They passed away.

Leisure Life and Social Contact

Q: How much leisure time do you have in a week?

A: I have one or two hours every day.

Q: How do you usually spend your leisure time?

A: Getting together with friends

Q: Are you satisfied with your leisure life?

A: Yes.

Q: Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life?

A: My neighbors.

Q: When you need some help, whom will you contact with first?

A: My neighbors.

Health and Safety Issues

Q: How about your health?

A: I am in good health.

Q: How often do you go for a medical examination?

A: I go for a medical examination every year.

Q: Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination?

A: Yes, I have. I went for it in the town.

Q: Would you go for a medical check as soon as you felt under the weather?

A: Of course.

Q: Do you have any medical insurance?

A: Yes, I have the medical insurance.

Q: How many expenses can be refunded by your insurance?

A: 10% of the expenses.

Q: Only 10%?

A: Yes. For example, if the total expenses are 100 Yuan, 70 Yuan can be refunded by the insurance. If the total expenses are 10,000 Yuan, 7000 Yuan can be refunded.

Q: Do you feel stress/ pressure in your life?

A: No, I don't feel stress.

Q: What are your main concerns?

A: My children. Now they are young. When they are old enough to get married, I want to repair and decorate our house.

Self-image

Q: Do you often attend the village affairs?

A: Yes, I often attend.

Q: What kind of village affairs?

A: When they have asked me to attend meetings, I have.

Q: Would you like to learn and work in a different profession? Which one?

A: No, I don't want to.

Q: Do you often keep track of current social events?

A: Sometimes. I watch the TV news program.

Interview Y13

Ms. Wu M

I am 47 years old. I have been married for more than 20 years. I have three children: two sons and a daughter. I have completed two years of education. My first son has been married and already has a child. My daughter is operating a restaurant in Xi'an. She only finished the primary school.

Q: Why?

A: She did not want to study. I tried to persuade her to go to school but failed. Having a higher degree of education would be good for finding a job. But she did not want to go to school. I let it go. But I think it is enough for her to have six years of education. Now she leads a good life operating the restaurant.

Working Conditions

Q: How much arable land do you have? Do you use it?

A: I have five or six mu land. I am using it.

Q: What kind of main food crops or vegetables are you growing? What kind of fowl or livestock are you feeding?

A: I am growing corns, wheat, and potatoes. I grow the vegetables which I like to eat. I am raising four cows and three sheep.

Q: When it is in the busy season, do you usually ask someone for help?

A: He (her husband) and I can do all the work. I don't ask someone for help.

Q: Do you find some part-time jobs in the slack season?

A: No. I don't go outside to find a job. My children are working in the city. I stay at home.

Q: What sort of fertilizer do you use?

A: I use both chemical fertilizer and farmyard manure.

Q: How long do you work on the land every day? Do you always feel tired after work?

A: I don't have a fixed schedule. I work for several hours, and then I come back to make a meal. After the meal, I continue to work until nightfall. I get used to that.

Q: How many hours can you sleep every day?

A: It depends on my work. If it is not in the busy season, I often sleep at nine or ten o'clock. When it is in the busy season, I sleep at 11 o'clock. Like these days, I harvest

corns, carry them back and shell ears of corns. It is usually 11 o'clock in the night when I finish the work.

Q: Have you carried all the corns back?

A: Yes.

Q: What will you do next?

A: I will plow out the weeds, fertilize it with farmyard manure and buy some chemical fertilizer. Chemical fertilizer is necessary. Then I will grow some other things.

Q: Do you use any farm machinery when you are working?

A: I have the wheat scourer. I often use it. When I need other machines, I will borrow from other people.

Q: Whom you will borrow from?

A: My neighbors.

Q: Do you have to pay money for using the machine?

A: No. It is for free.

Q: Have you got any benefit from the agricultural policies, like farm subsidy?

A: No, I have not got any subsidy.

Quality of Material Life

Q: What are the sources of income in your family?

A: Food crops. When we harvest the food crops, we bring them to the market and change for food oil and salt.

Q: How much is the total annual income of your family?

A: Every year we grow corns...wheat...corns...this year...we can harvest 1000kg corns. Even in this case, we cannot earn much money. This year the corns grow well, we can harvest about 1000kg. Yesterday, I had a chat with him (her husband). I said:" this year we can harvest so many corns, but I reckon they are less than 1000kg." He disagreed and said they must be more than 1000kg. I said:" It is a pity that some of the corns didn't grow well. Otherwise, we could have more." Generally speaking, the corns grow really well this year.

Q: What is the main expenditure in your family?

A: I spend mainly on farm work, like buying chemical fertilizer.

Q: How much do you spend for yourself per month?

A: I buy food oil, salt...

Q: Don't you buy clothes for yourself?

A: Sometimes...sometimes I buy clothes for myself. I spend about one or two hundred Yuan per month.

Q: How many suits of clothes have bought this year?

A: I have not bought clothes this year, my children bought me some. When my daughter came back, she brought me some clothes.

Q: Are you living in a new house or an old house?

A: I am living in an old house. We are living in it for about 20 years.

Q: What household appliances do you have?

A: I have TV and wash machine.

Q: Do you have a telephone, mobile phone or computer?

A: I have telephone and mobile phone.

Q: Are you satisfied with the traffic communication of the village?

A: It is convenient.

Family Life

Q: How did you get to know your husband?

A: I met him on a blind date.

Q: Could you give me some general information about your husband, e.g. his age, education, career?

A: He is 56 years old. He finished junior middle school. He is a group leader in our village.

Q: Who decides an important matter in your family?

A: He decides all the matter.

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: We don't have much property. The children earn the money outside village. The money they have earned is not enough for themselves. That's just the life. Nothing must be managed.

Q: How long does it take you to do the housework every day?

A: I don't know exactly. I am busy doing those trivial things from day to day.

Q: How are you getting on with your husband?

A: We are getting along well.

Q: Do you think men's family status is higher than women's in a household? Do you think the man is superior to the woman?

A: We are equal in the family. But as a woman, I simply mind the trivial things in the household. As a man, he has to do with the important matter.

Q: Are you satisfied with your marriage life?

A: Yes, I am satisfied with my current life.

Q: How are you getting on with older generation?

A: They passed away.

Leisure Life and Social Contact

Q: How much leisure time do you have in a week?

A: I don't have much leisure time unless it rains. As a farmer, although I can arrange my time freely, I cannot bear the weeds growing wild in my field... Nowadays, the life is different from that in the past. In the past, farmers had to do lots of work.

Q: Now it is in the busy season, right?

A: Yes. When winter comes, I have much leisure time. In winter, I only need to raise the livestock. Sometimes I like playing the card with others.

Q: Do you buy vegetables in winter?

A: No. In winter, I eat the vegetables which are stored. Now I start to store the vegetables. I will eat them in winter. We have land. It is convenient to grow vegetables.

Q: How do you spend your leisure time in winter?

A: Having a chat with others.

Q: Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life?

A: My neighbors.

Q: When you are communicating with them, which topic do you often talk about?

A: Most of the time, we talk about household affairs.

Q: When you need some help, whom will you contact with first?

A: I often contact with my relatives.

Health and Safety Issues

Q: Are you in good health?

A: Not bad.

Q: How often do you go for a medical examination?

A: I went for a medical examination last year in Xi'an (a city). I felt not good, so I did that.
When I feel not good, I go for a medical examination.

Q: When you feel good, will you go for an examination?

A: No, it is not necessary to do that when I feel well.

Q: Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination?

A: Yes, when the committee of village organized to do the gynecological examination last time, I went for. I felt not good at that time, so I did.

Q: Do you have any medical insurance?

A: Yes, I have.

Q: How much should you afford with this kind of medical insurance for the treatment?

A: It depends on the total expense... I don't know much about that. I haven't used my insurance.

Q: How about the expense of the medical examination?

A: I afford all the expense of that.

Q: Do you feel stress/ pressure in your life?

A: No.

Q: What are your main concerns?

A: My second son. He is not married. I hope he can get married soon.

Self-image

Q: Do you often attend village affairs?

A: Sometimes they ask me to attend the meeting.

Q: Would you like to learn and work in a different profession? Which one?

A: No. I am too old to learn a new skill or find another work.

Q: Do you often keep track of current social events?

A: Sometimes. I don't care much about that.

Interview Y14

Ms. Ge N

The basic information

I am 56 years old. I have completed two years of education. I have been married for more than 30 years..... about 35 years. I have two sons.

Working Conditions

Q: How much arable land do you have? Do you use it?

A: I have four mu land. I am using it.

Q: What kind of main food crops or vegetables are you growing? What kind of fowl or livestock are you feeding?

A: I am growing corn and wheat. I am raising two sheep and two cows.

Q: How long do you work on the land every day?

A: Ten hours in the busy season.

Q: Do you always feel tired after work?

A: I feel not very tired. I am used to this. This is the life in the countryside.

Q: What sort of fertilizer do you use?

A: I use chemical fertilizer.

Q: Do you use any farm machinery when you are working?

A: Never use.

Q: How many hours can you sleep every day?

A: Usually, I get up at 6'clock and go to bed at eleven o'clock at night.

Q: Do you find some part-time jobs in the slack season?

A: No. I am too old to do those jobs.

Q: When it is in the busy season, do you usually ask someone for help, or do you finish all the work yourself, or does your family work together with you?

A: He (her husband) works with me. He is also staying at home.

Q: Is your husband staying at home?

A: Yes. These five years, he is always staying at home.

Q: Have you got any benefit from the agricultural policies, like farm subsidy?

A: No, I have not got any subsidy.

Quality of Material Life

Q: What are the sources of income in your family?

A: Selling agricultural products and my children's wages.

Q: How much is the total annual income of your family?

A: We can't earn a lot. It is no more than 10,000 Yuan.

Q: What is the main expenditure in your family?

A: We spend money mainly on medicine, clothes, and daily items.

Q: How much do you spend for yourself per month?

A: I just buy two or three pieces of clothing each year.

Q: Are you living in a new house or an old house?

A: I am living in an old house. I have lived in this house for about 30 years.

Q: What household appliances do you have?

A: TV, washing machine, electric pan and rice cooker.

Q: Do you have a telephone, mobile phone or computer?

A: I have a mobile phone.

Q: What kinds of vegetables and meat do you usually eat?

A: Cabbages, tomatoes, peppers.....I buy chicken in the market some times.

Q: How often do you go shopping?

A: two or three times a month.

Q: Are you satisfied with the traffic communication of the village?

A: Not too bad.

Family Life

Q: How did you get to know your husband?

A: Our marriage was arranged by parents.

Q: Could you give me some more information about your husband, like his age, education?

A: He is 60 years old. He has completed four years of education.

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: No one manages it. After all, we have only a little money. It is not necessary to manage it.

Q: Who decides an important matter in your family?

A: I often make decisions. We don't have many important matters.

Q: How long does it take you to do the housework every day?

A: I do farm work and housework the whole day. Doing farming, cooking, cleaning..... they cost me a lot of time.

Q: How are you getting on with your husband?

A: We are getting along well.

Q: If you could choose your sex, what would you like to be, a man or a woman?

A: I could only choose to be a woman because I am not able to be a man. A man is often under a lot of pressure. I can only do some trivial things, so I can only be a woman. As a man, he has a heavier burden.

Q: Are you satisfied with your marriage life?

A: Yes, I am very content with my life.

Q: How do you think about the education of children?

A: I have no idea.

Q: Are you living together with older generation?

A: They passed away.

Leisure Life and Social Contact

Q: How much leisure time do you have in a week?

A: Every day I have one or two hours to take a rest.

Q: Are you satisfied with that?

A: All right.

Q: Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life?

A: My neighbors.

Q: When you need some help, whom will you contact with first?

A: Neighbors.

Q: Do you think you are good at social contact?

A: Not bad.

Health and Safety Issues

Q: How about your health?

A: Not bad. I get sick sometimes. But it is not serious.

Q: How often do you go for a medical examination and gynecological examination?

A: I have never gone for those examinations.

Q: Would you go for a medical check as soon as you felt under the weather?

A: If it is not serious, I often buy some medicines in the village drug store.

Q: Is it convenient to go to the hospital?

A: If you want to go to the hospital in the county, you have to take a bus for four hours at least. It's far. It is more convenient for us to go to a clinic in the town.

Q: Do you have any medical insurance?

A: Yes, I have the medical insurance.

Q: How many expenses can be refunded by your insurance?

A: I don't know. I have never used it.

Q: Do you feel stress/ pressure in your life?

A: No, I don't feel stress.

Q: If you had got trouble, whom would you like to pour out?

A: relatives.

Q: Have you ever been sexually harassed when your husband was not at home?

A: Never.

Self-image

Q: Would you like to learn and work in a different profession? Which one?

A: I am not able to learn new things. It must be difficult for me.

Q: Do you often keep track of current social events?

A: Never.

Q: Do you often attend to village affairs?

A: No, I never attend to.

Interview Y15

Ms. Zhao O⁴

The basic information

I am 40 years old. I have a senior high school education. I got married. I have two children, two sons. The elderly son is 18 years old. He is now working in the city. The other one is nine years old. He goes to school in the town.

Working Conditions

Q: How much arable land do you have? Do you use it?

A: We have four mu land. We use it now.

Q: What kind of main food crops or vegetables are you growing? What kind of fowl or livestock are you feeding?

A: We are growing wheat and corn. As to vegetables, we are growing hot pepper, cabbages, and tomatoes. In addition, we are planting cash crop, i.e. honey suckle. We plant honeysuckle in two mu land. At the same time, we are raising sheep and chicken. The chicken we are feeding is a new breed, i.e. black-bone silky fowl. The price of black-bone silky fowl is much higher than common chicken, so do its eggs. The eggs of common chicken are sold by weight while the eggs of black-bone silky fowl are sold individually. Each one is 1.5 Yuan. This is the highest price among eggs. In this village, only we raise the black-bone silky fowl. We had a black-bone silky fowl farm several years ago, but it was not well operated because there were so many shareholders. As a result, the farm was closed. The black-bone silky fowls were distributed. This year, we have only eighty black-bone silky fowls, much fewer than before. Last year, we had four hundred.

Q: When it is in the busy season, do you usually ask someone for help, or do you finish all the work yourself, or does your family work together with you?

A: We grow small-scale of crops, we usually do it ourselves. My husband and I do farm work together. Sometimes he does more farm work than I do. He often does heavy work.

Q: Do you find some part-time jobs in the slack season?

A: I don't find par-time jobs in the slack season, I always stay at home.

Q: What sort of fertilizer do you use?

⁴ She is the wife of village leader and she is also the leader of the women's federation in the village.

A: I use the chemical fertilizer and farmyard manure.

Q: How long do you work on the land every day?

A: I do a lot of farm work in the busy season. It usually costs me 7 or 8 hours. When it is in the slack season, I do a little work. I feel not bad. Only in the busy season, I feel tired.

Q: How many hours can you sleep every day?

A: I get up at 7 or 8 o'clock, I sleep at 11 o'clock in the night.

Q: Do you use any farm machinery when you are working?

A: Now I use a cultivated land machine. I used an ox to plow the fields several years ago.

Q: Have you got any benefit from the agricultural policies?

A: Yes, every family can get the farm subsidy, such as the seed subsidy. For the purpose of encouraging farmers to grow with good crop seeds, the government gives us the subsidy of seeds. We can get ten Yuan per Mu. In addition, 70% cost of wheat seeds can be refunded by government.

Quality of Material Life

Q: What are the sources of income in your family?

A: We earn money by selling crops, livestock, black-bone silky fowls and his salary. But his salary is only a little. It is about 800 Yuan per month.

Q: How much is the total annual income of your family?

A: About 20,000 Yuan a year. Sometimes I can also earn a lot. If there is an opportunity, I find a part-time job. I can earn 6000 Yuan or 7000 Yuan a year.

Q: What is the main expenditure in your family?

A: Money spent mainly on education and gifts.

Q: How much do you spend for yourself per month?

A: I spend a little for myself per month. I buy nothing else except several sets of clothes or some cosmetics in a year.

Q: How about the housing conditions? Are you living in a new house or an old house?

A: Now we are living in a new house. It was built two years ago. It has two floors with three bedrooms and a living room. It is about 200 square meters.

Q: What household appliances do you have?

A: I have a TV, a washing machine, a fridge, a rice cooker and so on.

Q: Do you have a telephone, mobile phone or computer?

A: I have a mobile phone. The telephone is broken. We often use a mobile phone.

Q: How often do you go shopping?

A: I often go shopping. I often go to market in the town. The shop in our village sells only a narrow range of goods. I don't like to buy things in that shop.

Q: Are you satisfied with the traffic communication of the village?

A: No. You see, the road here is not... Although we have lots of narrow roads, most of the road has been not surfaced. They are still natural soil roads. The road which is surfaced is broken now. Anyways, it is said that the road will be repaired and surfaced in these two years.

Q: Are the vegetables that you eat grown by yourself or do you buy them in the market?

A: I grow vegetables from March to October, during these months I eat what I grew. In winter, I usually buy vegetables in the market. We don't have a green house, so we can't grow vegetables in winter.

Family Life

Q: How did you get to know your husband?

A: I struck up an acquaintance with him. Our marriage is a love match. In those days, there was really a few love matches. Most of the young people met their husband or wife on a blind date.

Q: Could you give me some general information about your husband, e.g. his age, education, career?

A: He is 43 years old. Now he is the leader of the village. He graduated from junior college.

Q: Who decides an important matter in your family?

A: Both of us. We take counsel together.

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: We don't have much property. Nobody holds the pure strings. We put the money in a place. Someone who wants to use it can take it directly. When he gets paid, he gives the money to me. I also put it in a place. He can take it when he wants to use and so do I.

Q: How do you distribute the housework? Do you do all of it yourself?

A: We work on the land together. When he has no time to do the farm work, I seldom work on the land. As to the housework, I do it myself, such as looking after children, washing clothes.

Q: How are you getting on with your husband?

A: We are getting along well. We are seldom apart since we got married. The longest time we went without seeing each other was half a month because he came to another place on business. Therefore, we are getting along so well. We seldom have a quarrel. Occasionally, we have a cold war only for a few days. Then we are reconciled soon without reason or cause. However, we are firm where our principles are concerned. For example, when the other really does something wrong, then the one must apologize. In fact, we rarely quarrel with each other. As to temper, he has a good temper. On the contrary, I have a violent temper.

Q: Have you ever been abused by your husband?

A: No. When there is a conflict, we quarrel for a while. Then the cold war begins. But it won't last long. It lasts for a week at the most.

Q: How do you think about the equality between men and women?

A: Nowadays, all of us are on equal terms. Especially in the family, man and woman are equals. In our village, women's family status is even higher than men's. When a man deals with something important, he often needs his wife's advice.

Q: What is your attitude towards the idea of "men manage external affairs while women deal with internal one"?

A: It is reasonable. In recent years, more and more men are working in the city while women are left at home. They do some housework and look after the children... From this perspective, this idea is reasonable.

Q: Are you satisfied with your marriage life?

A: Yes, I am satisfied with my marriage life.

Q: Who looks after the children in your family?

A: I take care of the child. My child is going to school in the town. It is called Central Primary School. To deepen education reform, the schools in remote villages were being consolidated into a Central Primary School. As to this reform, I am not very satisfied. The

Central Primary School is far away from our village. It is dozens of li⁵ from here. Children in our village must travel long distances to school. They have to live in school since they were in first grade. They are only six or seven years old. Some children even can't dress themselves because they are too young, so does my child. I usually send him to school on Sunday afternoon. In the beginning, the moment we arrived at school, he started crying. He once went back home alone from school. That year is... I mentioned this problem at a meeting of women's federation in the town. The reply is that so far they have not found a good way to solve this problem under the education reform. But recent years, we have a kindergarten in the village. It seems a new policy. Each village can have a kindergarten.

Q: Who do the children like to communicate with in your family?

A: They like to talk with me because I spent a lot of time with them.

Q: How do you think about the education of children?

A: As I said before, each village should have a primary school. It is better for children to go to school in the village. In some families, the men are working outside the home. Women, children, and elderly parents are left. The children are too young. They don't want to live in the school. And the health of elderly parents is not good. The woman must take care of elderly parents when she is looking after the child. As a result, woman has to rent a room in the town when the child goes to school. She takes both child and elderly parents to the town on weekdays. Then in the weekend, she takes them back home. They really had a hard life. I felt sad when I saw that.

Q: How are you getting on with older generation?

A: We are getting along well.

Q: What you mainly have to do with the older generation?

A: We are living within shouting distance of each other. I can give them a hand at any time when they need help.

Q: Do you think it is wife's responsibility to do housework and look after children and elderly generation while the husband has to be a breadwinner?

A: No, I don't agree. We both have the responsibility to look after them. We are both a part of our family. We share the responsibility. You are the son, and I am the daughter-in-law. You are the father, and I am the mother. Both of us have the responsibility.

⁵ 1 li = 500 meters.

Q: In your opinion, what is an ideal family life?

A: Now I feel very happy. I don't have many troubles and have enough money. That's what I want.

Leisure Life and Social Contact

Q: How much leisure time do you have in a week?

A: I have leisure time every day.

Q: How do you usually spend your leisure time?

A: I often play cards, watch TV, take a walk and play basketball or table tennis.

Q: Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life, neighbor, friends, brothers and sisters, parents or someone else?

A: My brother and sisters are working outside, I always stay at home. So I communicate with neighbors and parents most frequently.

Q: When you are communicating with them, which topic do you often talk about?

A: We have a lot of topics, but all of them are about trifles. For example, we talk about the nice style of dress, or we talk about our children...

Q: When you need some help, whom will you contact with first?

A: My neighbors.

Q: Do you think you are good at social contact?

A: Yes. I get along with others very well. I never quarreled with them. I am broad-minded, so I never argue with my friends over trivial things.

Health and Safety Issues

Q: Are you in good health?

A: Yes, I am in good health. I am thin, but I am healthy. Someone wondered if I have any sickness. You see, I have a good appetite, and I am strong enough to do farm work. I never feel bad. I don't think there is anything serious.

Q: Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination?

A: Generally, I go for a gynecological examination several times a year. We are organized by relevant department to do that examination two or three times a year. There is a rule that someone who has undergone the birth control surgery can ignore the examination. I haven't been operated on, so I must have a check at least three times a year. It is stated by family planning law. The government puts great emphasis on it.

Q: Is the hospital far away from home? Is it convenient to go to the hospital?

A: It is not far. It is about seven kilometers away. When we suffer a serious illness, we often see a doctor in the county. But the hospital in the county is very far away from here. A few months ago, I felt painful in my abdomen. I went to the clinic in the town. The doctor asked me to have a check in the hospital of the county. In the town, the equipment of hospital is poor, and doctor's skill is not great.

Q: Do you have any medical insurance?

A: Yes, I buy medical insurance every year. Half of the expenses can be refunded by the insurance at least. It concretely depends on the disease. Last year, the price of medical insurance was 60 Yuan a year. If you see a doctor in a clinic, 60 Yuan can be reimbursed at most. However, when you are hospitalized, it will reimburse you for the costs by proportion depends on the disease. Last year, he (her husband) fell off a motorbike and hurt his leg. The total expenses were 3000 Yuan and 1500 Yuan were refunded by medical insurance. Also, we not only bought the medical insurance but also bought a kind of accident insurance. It costs 20 Yuan a year. Therefore, hundreds Yuan were refunded by accident insurance at the same time. Finally, we only spent a little money.

Q: Does every villager buy this kind of accident insurance?

A: Yes, but it is up to them. The person who bought this insurance can get benefits from it.

Q: How about medical insurance? Does everyone buy it?

A: Yes. The medical insurance we buy belongs to the new cooperative medical system. It operated four or five years ago. In the first two years, few people want to buy that. We did a lot of work to persuade them and told them all the benefits of this insurance. At last, everyone bought it. You see, every year we only spend 60 Yuan for it. It is inevitable for us to suffer minor illness. When you buy some medicine, the costs can be refunded. It is equivalent to you paying nothing. For example, you must pay ten Yuan to buy a kind of medicine without medical insurance. Now it just costs you five Yuan. It helps you to save a lot of money.

Q: Do you feel stress or pressure in your life?

A: I am now worried about the education and employment of my children. These days, jobs are hard to come. There is no future even if the young people are admitted to a college. My elderly child only got though the eleventh grade. Then he found a job in the city. In his

opinion, it is difficult to find a job after graduation. So, he didn't want waste time on study. He said it can also ease our burden when he goes to work at a young age. Now he can earn 2000 to 3000 Yuan a month. Six months ago, he was employed in furnishing a house. He earned 3000 Yuan a month. He received wages plus room and board. He earns more than those university graduates earn. However, I still hope he can learn some new skill or join the army. It is good for him to build up his character in the troop.

Q: How about the public order in your village?

A: The public order is good these years.

Self-image

Q: Do you usually participate in the village affairs as the leader of women's federation of the village?

A: Generally speaking, I rarely participate in the village affairs. Villagers pay less attention to the women's federation. We want to hold some activities, such as playing drums. But few people like to attend. Lots of people are working outside. And villagers are living far away from each other. It is hard to organize.

Q: Would you like to learn and work in a different profession? Which one? If there is a chance for vocational training and knowledge enhancement, are you willing to do that? Why?

A: I am willing to learn something fitting into rural development. Whenever there is a training course in the village, I attend it without hesitation. The training course, like grafting, embroidery is very useful.

Q: When the women have some trouble, will the women's federation or the government help them?

A: When they have troubles, they can ask committee of the village for help at once. If it still can't be deal with, they can further ask the women's federation of the town for help.

Q: Do you often keep track of current social events?

A: I often watch the news on television.

Q: Do you have any expectation for your future?

A: I want to do something useful if I have an opportunity. I want to master a professional skill, such as cultural techniques. For the moment, the market outlook of cash crop is

optimistic. I want to grow schizandra berry. I want to learn how to grow it. I think it is popular in the market. So I plan to grow it in the future.

Interview Y16

Ms. Wang P

Basic information

I am 52 years old. I have completed three years of education. I have been married for 33 years. I have two children: a son and a daughter.

Working Conditions

Q: How much arable land do you have? Do you use it?

A: We have five mu land. I am using it.

Q: Are you growing vegetables? What kind of fowl or livestock are you feeding?

A: Yes, I am growing beans, cabbages, and peppers. I have two cows and four chickens.

Q: How long do you work on the land every day?

A: I work on the land about four hours every day. I don't stay for a long time on the land. Otherwise, I would feel very tired. I come back as soon as I feel tired.

Q: When it is in the busy season, do you usually ask someone for help, or do you finish all the work yourself, or does your family work together with you?

A: I do all farm work by myself. He (her husband) and my children are working in Xi'an. No one helps me.

Q: What kind of work do you do every day?

A: These days, I am harvesting corns. In the morning, I go to farm land and harvest corns. I work until noon. Then I come back make lunch. In the afternoon, I go to the field to carry the corn home.

Q: Do you use any farm machinery when you are working?

A: No, I don't have farm machinery. When the corns become dry, I will find someone who has a corn sheller machine to help me thresh them.

Q: What sort of fertilizer do you use?

A: I use chemical fertilizer.

Q: Do you find some part-time jobs?

A: No. I just stay in the village and do farm work.

Quality of Material Life

Q: What are the sources of income in your family?

A: He and my son are working in Xi'an. Their wages are the sources of our income.

Q: Your husband and children's wage?

A: Yes.

Q: How much is the total annual income of your family?

A: Less than 20,000 Yuan.

Q: What is the main expenditure in your family?

A: Food, daily items, and clothes.

Q: How much do you spend for yourself per month?

A: I just buy some clothes before Spring Festival. I buy nothing except some clothes for myself. I spend two or three hundreds on clothes each year.

Q: How about your house? Are you living in a new house or an old house?

A: I am living in an old house. I have been lived for more than 30 years.

Q: What household appliances do you have?

A: I have TV, washing machine, electric pan and rice cooker.

Q: Do you have a fridge?

A: No, we don't have a fridge.

Q: Do you have a telephone, mobile phone or computer?

A: I have a mobile phone.

Q: How often do you go shopping?

A: Two or three times per month. When I need something, I go to the market in the town. I don't go to the town unless I have to buy something.

Q: Are you satisfied with the traffic communication of the village?

A: Not bad.

Q: Do you think it is convenient to go to the town and the country?

A: Yes. I think it is convenient. There is a mini bus. I can take it to the town.

Family Life

Q: How did you get to know your husband?

A: Our parents brought us together. Our marriage was arranged by parents. At that time, young people's marriages were mostly arranged by parents.

Q: Are you satisfied with your marriage life?

A: Yes. I am content with it.

Q: Could you give me some general information about your husband, e.g. his age, education?

A: He is 54 years old. He graduated from primary school. He is now working in the Xi'an.

Q: Who decides an important matter in your family?

A: He makes the decision.

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: He keeps the money. When I need money, he gives me some.

Q: How do you distribute the housework? Do you do all of it yourself?

A: Yes, I do all the housework and farm work. He often works in the city. I stay at home, so I do lots of the housework and farm work.

Q: How long does it take you to do the housework every day?

A: When I have to wash clothes or clean the room, it often costs me a lot of time. I don't know how long it is exactly.

Q: How are you getting on with your husband?

A: We are getting along well.

Q: Have you ever been abused by your husband?

A: Never.

Q: Do you think men's family status is higher than women's in a household?

A: Yes, men's family status is higher than women's.

Q: Why?

A: Man is the breadwinner in a family. Man can earn more money. As a woman, I can just do farm work and housework.

Q: How old are your children?

A: My son is 25 years old. My daughter is 30 years old. My daughter married to a person who is from Hubei Province.

Q: Do you have a grandchild?

A: Yes, my son's child is four years old.

Q: Are you looking after him?

A: No, he is staying together with my son and daughter-in-law in Xi'an.

Q: How do you think about the education of children?

A: I have no idea about it.

Q: How are you getting on with older generation?

A: We are getting on with each other well.

Q: What you mainly have to do with the older generation?

A: They can look after themselves. When they are ill, I look after them.

Leisure Life and Social Contact

Q: How much leisure time do you have in a week?

A: I have three or four hours every day when it is not in the busy season. These days, I am busy harvesting corns so that I don't have much time to have a rest.

Q: How do you usually spend your leisure time?

A: Watching TV.

Q: Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life?

A: My neighbors.

Q: When you are communicating with them, which topic do you often talk about?

A: Just gossip.

Q: When you need some help, whom will you contact with first?

A: My neighbor.

Health and Safety Issues

Q: How about your health?

A: Not bad.

Q: How often do you go for a medical examination?

A: When I suffer serious illness, I will go for a medical examination.

Q: Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination?

A: Never.

Q: Would you go for a medical check as soon as you felt under the weather?

A: When I felt ill, I went to the drug store in the village.

Q: Do you have any medical insurance?

A: Yes, I have the medical insurance.

Q: How many expenses can be refunded by your insurance?

A: I don't know. I have never used it.

Q: Do you feel stress/ pressure in your life?

A: Sometimes. But life is always filled with troubles.

Q: If you had got trouble, whom would you like to pour out?

A: Relatives.

Q: Have you ever been sexually harassed when your husband was not at home?

A: It is safe in the village.

Self-image

Q: Do you think you and everything you have done is significant to your family and society?

A: (Laugh) I don't know.

Q: When you have some trouble, will the women's federation or the government help you?

A: No. They cannot solve our problems.

Q: Do you often keep track of current social events?

A: No.

Q: Do you often attend the village affairs?

A: No, I never attend.

Interview Y17

Ms. Wu Q

Basic information

I am 39 years old. I have been married for 21 years. I graduated from junior middle school.

I have two daughters.

Working Conditions

Q: How much arable land do you have? Do you use it?

A: I have four mu land. I am growing wheat and corn on the land.

Q: Are you growing vegetables? What kind of fowl or livestock are you feeding?

A: Yes, I am growing cabbages and peppers. I have two cows and three chickens.

Q: How long do you work on the land every day?

A: I don't know. Maybe, four or five hours.

Q: When it is in the busy season, do you usually ask someone for help?

A: I do farm work by myself.

Q: What kind of work do you do every day?

A: I do nothing except doing farm work. This is the life in the rural area.

Q: What kind of farm work?

A: Harvesting corns, carrying them home, drying and threshing them.

Q: Do you use any farm machinery when you are working?

A: No, I don't have farm machinery.

Q: What sort of fertilizer do you use?

A: All of us use chemical fertilizer.

Q: Do you find some part-time jobs?

A: No.

Quality of Material Life

Q: What are the sources of income in your family?

A: Selling agricultural products and his (her husband's) wage. He is working in Xi'an.

Q: How much is the total annual income of your family?

A: 10,000 or 20,000 Yuan.

Q: What is the main expenditure in your family?

A: Food, daily items, seeing doctor, gifts and clothes.

Q: How much do you spend for yourself per month?

A: I buy some clothes for myself. I buy three or four pieces of clothing for myself each year.

Q: How about your house? Are you living in a new house or an old house?

A: I am living in an old house. I have been lived for more than 20 years. I moved in this house when I got married.

Q: What household appliances do you have?

A: I have TV, washing machine, electric pan and rice cooker.

Q: Do you have a telephone, mobile phone or computer?

A: I have a mobile phone.

Q: How often do you go shopping?

A: One or two times per month.

Q: Are you satisfied with the traffic communication of the village?

A: No, the bus ticket is too expensive. If you don't want to take the bus, you have to walk to the town.

Family Life

Q: How did you get to know your husband?

A: Our parents brought us together. Our marriage was arranged by parents.

Q: Are you satisfied with your marriage life?

A: Not bad.

Q: Could you give me some general information about your husband, e.g. his age, education?

A: He is 41 years old. He has completed five years of education.

Q: Who decides an important matter in your family?

A: He makes the decision. I can't deal with important matters.

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: I keep the money. He brings his wage back sometimes.

Q: How do you distribute the housework? Do you do all of it yourself?

A: Yes, I do the housework and farm work. I do all the work.

Q: How long does it take you to do the housework every day?

A: It takes me lots of time. I have to feed the cows three times a day. It costs me a lot of time. And I have to do other work.

Q: How are you getting on with your husband?

A: Not very good. We often quarrel.

Q: Why?

A: I don't know, just for some trivial things. When he is staying at home, we often quarrel. But it is not a big deal.

Q: Have you ever been abused by your husband?

A: Never. We just quarrel.

Q: Do you think men's family status is higher than women's in a household?

A: Yes, men's family status is higher than women's.

Q: Do you think the man plays a more important role than the woman does in the household?

A: Definitely. The man is more important than the woman in a family. A woman doesn't have enough strength to do hard work. A woman can do hard work for only a few hours. And then woman feels too tired to do the work. A man performs much better.

Q: How do you think about the education of children?

A: I have no idea about it. My daughters already have graduated from school. They are working now. I have no idea about the education.

Q: How are you getting on with older generation?

A: We all get along fine.

Q: What you mainly have to do with the older generation?

A: Sometimes I cook for them. When they need help, I go to help them. When they are ill, I look after them.

Leisure Life and Social Contact

Q: How much leisure time do you have in a week?

A: I have three or four hours every day.

Q: How do you usually spend your leisure time?

A: I like watching TV, chatting with neighbors and playing cards.

Q: Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life?

A: Relatives and neighbors.

Q: When you are communicating with them, which topic do you often talk about?

A: Nothing important. It is just about trivial things in the family.

Q: When you need some help, whom will you contact with first?

A: Relatives.

Health and Safety Issues

Q: How about your health?

A: I am in good health.

Q: How often do you go for a medical examination?

A: I don't know what it is. I have never done that.

Q: Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination?

A: I did once in the village when a doctor came here. Most of the women did that, so I did.

Q: Would you go for a medical check as soon as you felt under the weather?

A: I will go to the doctor in the town.

Q: Do you have any medical insurance?

A: Yes, I have.

Q: How many expenses can be refunded by your insurance?

A: It is said 60% or 70% of the expense can be refunded. I am not sure. I haven't used it.

Q: Do you feel stress/ pressure in your life?

A: Yes, I often feel the pressure.

Q: Why?

A: We don't have a son. When my daughters get married, they will leave me. When we (she and her husband) get older, no one will look after us. Life would be better if I had a son. Now we have to earn more money.

Q: If you had got trouble, whom would you like to pour out?

A: Relatives.

Q: Have you ever been sexually harassed when your husband was not at home?

A: No, here is safe.

Self-image

Q: Do you think you and everything you have done is significant to your family and society?

A: I am just a farmer, I am not important for the society. All I have done is only for my family.

Q: When you have some trouble, will the women's federation or the government help you?

A: No. There is no women's federation in the village. If you have some troubles, you have to solve them by yourself. No one can help you.

Q: Do you often keep track of current social events?

A: No.

Q: Do you often attend the village affairs?

A: No, I never attend.

Interview X18

Ms. Xv

Part one: Basic Information

1. Age: (51)
2. Marital Status: (Married)
3. How many years have you been married? (30)
4. Education Background: (Primary school)

Part Two: Working Conditions

5. How much arable land do you have? (Four mu)
6. Utilization of Land: (I am using it)
7. Do you work on the land yourself? (Yes, I work on the land myself)
8. What sort of fertilizer do you use? (Both chemical fertilizer and farmyard manure)
9. How long do you work on the land every day? (Four to six hours)

How often do you use farm machinery when you are working? (I often use it.)

Do you find part-time jobs in the slack season? (No)

12. Who distributes tasks in your family? (I distribute tasks)

Part Three: Quality of Material Life

13. How much is the total annual income of your family? (10,000 to 20,000 Yuan)
14. What are the sources of income in your family? (Selling the agriculture products, the wage of my husband doing odd jobs in the city and the wage of other family members)
15. What is the main expenditure in your family? (Living goods, seeing a doctor, buying gifts and clothes)
16. How much do you spend every month? (1000 to 1499 Yuan)
17. Are you living in an old house or new house? (An old house. I have been living in it for eight years.)
18. What household appliances do you have? (TV, washing machine, fridge, electric pan, rice cooker and induction cooker)
19. You have a (mobile phone).
20. How often do you go shopping? (I go shopping when I need something to buy.)
21. What kind of things do you often buy? (Food, living goods, clothes or shoes)

Part Four: Family Life

How many children do you have? (Three)

How did you get to know your husband? (I got to know him on a blind date.)

Your husband's age (62)

The Education background of your husband: (Illiterate)

26. Your husband's career: (He is working in the city)

27. How do you distribute the housework? (I do it myself.)

28. Are you satisfied with your marriage life? (Basically satisfied)

29. Whom do the children like to communicate with in your family? (Me)

30. Are you living with the parents in law? (The elderly passed away.).

Part Five: Leisure Life

What kind of things do you often do in your spare time? (Watching TV, having a chit chat with others, playing cards or mahjong)

Are you satisfied with your leisure life? (Quite satisfied)

36. Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life? (Relatives, friends, neighbors)

37. When you are communicating with them, which topic do you often talk about? (Trivial things in household, something about work, difficulties I meet with recently)

38. Are you satisfied with your social contact? (Quite satisfied)

39. When you need some help, whom will you contact with first? (Relatives)

Part Six: Health and Safety Issues

Are you in good health? (Not very well. I get ill sometimes.)

How often do you go for a medical examination? (When I feel not good, I go for an examination.)

Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination? (Yes)

What will do you do when you feel under the weather? (I always take a "wait and see" attitude and avoid seeing the doctor as much as I could.)

Do you have medical insurance? (Yes, I have)

How much should you afford with this kind of medical insurance for the treatment? (50%)

Do you feel stress or pressure in your life? (I often feel stress or pressure)

If you had got trouble, whom would you like to pour out? (My husband and children)

48. How about the public order in your village? (Not bad.)

Q: Could you tell me some information about your children, e.g. age, education background, marital status and career?

A: I have three children: two daughters and a son. The elderly daughter is 31 years old. The other daughter is 29 years old. My son is 27 years old.⁶ They have received three years education. Now they are doing business in the town. The elderly daughter and the son are operating a small self-service grocery. Another one has a restaurant.

Q: What kind of main food crops or vegetables are you growing?

A: We are growing corn, wheat.

Q: Are you growing vegetables?

A: No, I am not growing vegetables. We buy them in the market.

Q: What kind of fowl or livestock are you feeding?

A: We are feeding chickens, sheep, and cow.

Q: Do you think you have got benefit from some agricultural policies?

A: No, we don't get any agricultural subsidy from the government.

Q: But the government has implemented the agricultural subsidiary policies.

A: Exactly. But we have not got it and only in this village farmers cannot get it. In other villages, most of them have the wheat subsidy.

Q: Do you always feel tired when you do the farm work? Do you think it is harmful to your health to do the farm work for a long time?

A: Yes, I always feel tired these days. In the past, we did farm work without the agricultural machine. It had a very bad influence on my health. It was too tired when I was doing farm work. Now I am in a weakened condition. I feel tired even though I don't do lots of farm work at present.

Q: When did you start to use the farm machine?

A: Seven or eight years ago, or ten years ago. I am not sure. In 2004 the farm machine had already been used.

Q: How much do you spend for yourself every month?

A: It depends. Sometimes I spend nothing. Sometimes I spend 70 or 80 Yuan a month. I buy one or two pieces of clothing a year. Anyway, it is enough for me.

⁶ Her son divorced two years ago. His ex-wife is barren.

Q: Are you satisfied with the traffic communication of the village?

A: Yes. I am satisfied with it. Here feature mostly plains. It is convenient for us to go anywhere.

Q: How long does it take you to do the housework every day?

A: Four or five hours a day.

Q: In your opinion, what is housework?

A: Cooking, washing clothes and feeding livestock. I do the housework with my husband.

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: I manage the property.

Q: Who makes a decision, when there is something important?

A: I make the decision.

Q: Do you often quarrel with your husband?

A: We often squabble over trifles. When he doesn't help me to do the housework, I will be angry (Laugh).

Q: Do you think men's family status is higher than women's in a household? Do you think the man is superior to the woman?

A: This topic is complicated. It is difficult to say. In this village...women do lots of work...we do more work than men do. We do lots of trivial work. We must not only do the farm work but also do the housework. Men only care about his career.

Q: Do you believe males and females are equal in the family?

A: No.

Q: In your opinion, what is an ideal family life?

A: I feel sad when I talk about this. My life is terrible... (Cry) I was living badly. My son has not been married. These two girls (children of her daughter) are not ours. Even I am looking after them now. After all, they belong to their father's family. I feel not happy.

Q: How much leisure time do you have in a week?

A: 3 or 4 hours a day.

Q: What is the source of your pressure, or what worries you most?

A: My son. I hope he can get married as soon as possible.

Q: Do you think you and everything you have done is significant to your family and society?

A: Important. I don't know how to say. But I feel I am important to my family.

Q: Would you like to learn and work in a different profession? Which one? If there is a chance for vocational training and knowledge enhancement, are you willing to do that? Why?

A: Yes, I am willing to. As long as more money can be made, I am willing to do everything. All I have done is in the interest of the family.

Q: Do you want to live in the city? Why?

A: I don't want to live in the city. It is much more convenient when I am living in rural areas. I get used to living in rural areas.

Q: When you have some trouble, will the women's federation or the government help you?

A: No one asks the women's federation for help.

Q: Do you often keep track of current social events?

A: I am illiterate. It is difficult for me to keep track of social events.

Q: What is the main problem in your daily life?

A: I am not satisfied with my life. I feel not happy since I married him. It is difficult to say. Now I only hope my children can live a happy life.

Interview X19

Ms. Liu T

Part one: Basic Information

1. Age: (53)
2. Marital Status: (Married)
3. How many years have you been married? (30)
4. Education Background: (Primary school)

Part Two: Working Conditions

5. How much arable land do you have? (10 mu)
6. Utilization of Land: (I am using it.)
7. Do you work on the land yourself? (My family work together with me.)
8. What sort of fertilizer do you use? (Both chemical fertilizer and farmyard manure)
9. How long do you work on the land every day? (4 to 6 hours)
10. How often do you use farm machinery when you are working? (I often use it)
11. Do you find part-time jobs in the slack season? (Yes.)

Who distributes tasks in your family? (My husband)

Part Three: Material Quality of Life

13. How much is the total annual income of your family? (Above 20,000 Yuan)
14. What are the sources of income in your family? (Selling the agriculture products)
15. What is the main expenditure in your family? (Children's schooling, living goods, food, seeing a doctor, buying gifts and clothes)
16. How much do you spend every month? (Above 2000 Yuan)
17. Are you living in an old house or new house? (A new house)
18. What household appliances do you have? (TV, washing machine, fridge, electric pan, rice cooker, induction cooker and air conditioner)
19. You have a (telephone and cell phone).
20. How often do you go shopping? (Every day)
21. What kind of things do you often buy? (vegetables and snack food)

Part Four: Family Life

How many children do you have? (Three)

How did you get to know your husband? (I got to know him on a blind date.)

Your husband's age (52)

The education background of your husband: (Junior school)

26. Your husband's career: (He is doing farm work.)

27. How do you distribute the housework? (My husband is sharing it with me.)

28. Are you satisfied with your marriage life? (Basically satisfied)

29. Whom do the children like to communicate with in your family? (I am not sure.)

30. Are you living with the parents in law? (No, they are living in their house.)

31. Who are looking after the parents in law? (They don't need to be taken care of at present.)

32. What do you mainly have to do for your parents-in-law? (Visiting them sometimes)

33. How are you getting on with your parents-in-law? (Quite well)

Part Five: Leisure Life

What kind of things do you often do in your spare time? (Watching TV and going shopping)

Are you satisfied with your leisure life? (Quite satisfied)

36. Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life? (Neighbors)

37. When you are communicating with them, which topic do you often talk about? (Trivial things in household)

38. Are you satisfied with your social contact? (Quite satisfied)

39. When you need some help, whom will you contact with first?(Relatives and friends)

Part Six: Health and Safety Issues

40. Are you in good health? (Not very well. I get ill sometimes.)

41. How often do you go for a medical examination? (When I feel not good, I go for an examination.)

Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination? (Yes)

What will do you do when you feel under the weather? (I always take a "wait and see" attitude and avoid seeing the doctor as much as I could.)

Do you have medical insurance? (Yes, I have.)

How much should you afford with this kind of medical insurance for the treatment? (60%-70%)

Do you feel stress or pressure in your life? (No, I never feel stress or pressure.)

If you had got trouble, whom would you like to pour out? (My husband and children)

49. How about the public order in your village? (Very good)

Q: Could you tell me some information about your children, e.g. age, education background, marital status and career?

A: I have three children: two sons and a daughter. Their education level is junior middle school. My daughter has been married. My sons are doing small business in Beijing.

Q: What kind of main food crops or vegetables are you growing? What kind of fowl or livestock are you feeding?

A: I only grow wheat and corn. I don't grow vegetables. It is too tired. I must stay in the land the whole day if I grow vegetables. I am feeding two cows, ten sheep, and some chicken.

Q: Do you often buy the vegetables in the market?

A: I buy the vegetables every day.

Q: Do you think you have got benefit from some agricultural policies?

A: No. we don't.

Q: Do you always feel tired when you do the farm work? Do you think it is harmful to your health to do the farm work for a long time?

A: In recent years, we don't feel tired because we do all the farm work by agricultural machine. Now it is different from in the past. In the past, we did lots of manual labor in the course of farming. You know, now we harvest the wheat by machine. When the wheat is dried, we sell it to some companies. Those companies will come and carry the wheat away.

Q: Do the young people do farm work in this village?

A: No. most of young people are working in the city. They don't like to do farm work although the agricultural machines are used widely. Now people who are working in the land are middle-aged or elderly. I will feel bored if I don't do farming. Now I am doing farm work and looking after my grandsons. I feel content

Q: Why your grandsons are not staying with their parents?

A: They cannot go to the junior middle school and senior middle school in Beijing because they don't have Beijing resident permits. It is very expensive to register a Beijing resident permit for them. Doing so is not worthwhile. Shandong is good, too. There are also some

better schools near our home. We can send them to go to these schools. Now they go to school by taking a school bus. It is very convenient.

Q: How about the tuition?

A: It is 200 a month. We can afford it.

Q: How much do you spend for yourself every month?

A: I spend nothing for myself.

Q: Do you buy clothes for yourself?

A: No. Sometimes my daughter or daughter-in-law buy me the clothes. I never buy clothes. I want to save money.

Q: What do you often buy?

A: I often buy tea and vegetables.

Q: Who makes a decision, when there is something important?

A: My husband. He is the decision-maker in our family. I only look after the children and cook for them.

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: My husband. I'm busy doing other things.

Q: In your opinion, what is housework?

A: Cooking, washing clothes, feeding livestock and so on. When my husband is at home, he feeds the livestock. Now he is doing business outside. I do all the housework. When he is not at home, I have to deal with all the things.

Q: Is your husband always away from home?

A: Yes. Only in the busy season, he comes back to help me to harvest the wheat. He spends lots of time outside. I stay at home to look after the grandchildren.

Q: How long does it take you to do the housework every day?

A: I am not sure. Just cooking. But I still spend several hours on cooking.

Q: Do you use the gas stove or earthen stove for cooking?

A: I use the gas range or induction cooker. Now there are not so many people stay at home. Earthen stove is no longer needed. No one cooks the meal by the earthen stove. It is dirty. In the past, all the family members were staying at home. We must use a very big pot to cook. In recent years, my husband and my children are always outside, a small pot and a small stove are enough for us.

Q: When did you start to cook with gas?

A: Several years ago. Ten years ago, I think. Gas range and induction cooker are convenient and more easily for cooking.

Q: Do you often quarrel with your husband?

A: (Laugh). About farm work. When he is at home, he does less farm work than I do. I will feel angry. We seldom quarrel with each other. He is always outside.

Q: Do you think men's family status is higher than women's in a household? Do you think the man is superior to the woman?

A: Men and women are equal. They cannot be away from each other. Nowadays, woman's family status is even higher than man's, especially in the young family. Anyway, my son and my daughter-in-law are equal in the family. (Laugh)

Q: How about the domestic violence in this village?

A: There are only a few families in which the domestic violence has happened.

Q: The husband beats his wife?

A: Yes.

Q: How did the wife deal with domestic violence?

A: Some women confided in the Women's Federation or village committee, then someone mediated between the husband and wife. Some women escaped or went her parents' house. Anyway, no one deals with domestic violence at law. Some men often beat wives.

Q: They have such a foul temper?

A: Nowadays, women also have a bad temper, they always make trouble. We can't only blame men. Young wives have a terrible temper as well. Parents-in-law dare not criticize them when they do something wrong.

Q: How do you think about the education of children?

A: Nowadays, our living conditions have improved. We can earn more money, so we surely support the children to receive more education.

Q: What is the source of your pressure, or what worries you most?

A: I am not under pressure. My children are all married, and their business is going well. When all my money has been spent, they give me more money soon. In my family I hold the purse strings, even my children give me all the money they have earned. Now I am staying at home, doing farm work and cooking for my grandchildren. I am very contented.

Q: Do they give you all the money after they are married?

A: Yes. My sons and daughters-in-law are doing business. They give me all the money. I bought a car for them, but they are often not at home. The car has been standing idle for a long time. They have bought flats in the city. They are living in the city and seldom come back.

Q: Are most of the young people willing to living in the city?

A: Yes. When they have enough money, they tend to buy flats in the city and live in the city.

Q: Do you want to live in the city? Why?

A: I don't want to live in the city. I would feel uneasy, like a fish out of the water. I am used to living in the countryside. I can feed livestock here. My sons want me to live with them in the city, but I am not willing to.

Q: Do you feel cold in winter here?

A: No, we have an air conditioner and radiator. I feel good to live in rural area. Now we do everything conveniently. Life is much better than before. In the past, we had to cut firewood and burn the firewood for heating.

Q: How do you deal with the trash?

A: This year, we have the garbage can in the village.

Q: Don't you have the garbage can before this year?

A: No, before this year we threw away trash freely. Now there is a dustman who cleans out rubbish every day. Now the village is cleaner than before, the plastic bags and other rubbish are no longer scattered everywhere. To be honest, rural area cannot be cleaner than urban areas.

Q: Do you use a lot of chemical fertilizer?

A: It depends on how much land you have. I have ten mu land, and I use 50 kilos chemical fertilizer in each mu land.

Q: Is the chemical fertilizer harmful to the environment?

A: I am not sure... it has no bad effect on the environment, I think. Chemical fertilizer is beneficial for increasing grain. I would harvest less grain without chemical fertilizer. It must be used. It is buried when the crops grow up. I think it is not harmful to the environment.

Q: How do you deal with the insect pests?

A: I use the pesticide. It has a little bad influence on people's health, but it is not serious.

Interview X20

Ms. Sun X

Part one: Basic Information

1. Age: (50)
2. Marital Status: (Married)
3. How many years have you been married? (27)
4. Education Background: (Primary school)

Part Two: Working Conditions

5. How much arable land do you have? (Six Mu)
 6. Utilization of Land: (I am using it)
 7. Do you work on the land yourself? (My family works together with me)
 8. What sort of fertilizer do you use? (Farmyard manure)
 9. How long do you work on the land every day? (Less than 4 hours)
- How often do you use farm machinery when you are working? (I often use it.)
- Do you find part-time jobs in the slack season? (No)
- Who distributes tasks in your family? (I distribute tasks.)

Part Three: Material Quality of Life

13. How much is the total annual income of your family? (40,000 to 50,000)
14. What are the sources of income in your family? (Selling the agriculture products, the wage of other family members)
15. What is the main expenditure in your family? (Children's schooling; living goods; food; seeing a doctor; buying gifts; buying clothes)
16. How much do you spend every month? (Above 2000 Yuan)
17. Are you living in an old house or new house? (A new house)
18. What household appliances do you have? (TV ; washing machine; fridge; electric pan; rice cooker; induction cooker; air conditioner)
19. You have a (telephone; mobile phone).
20. How often do you go shopping? (I go shopping when I need something)
21. What kind of things do you often buy? (Clothes or shoes)

Part Four: Family Life

How many children do you have? (Three)

How did you get to know your husband? (I got to know him on a blind date.)

Your husband's age (58)

The Education background of your husband: (Primary school)

26. Your husband's career: (He is doing farm work.)

27. How do you distribute the housework? (My husband is sharing it with me.)

28. Are you satisfied with your marriage life? (Totally satisfied)

29. Whom do the children like to communicate with in your family? (My husband)

30. Are you living with the parents in law? (The elderly passed away.)

Part Five: Leisure Life

What kind of things do you often do in your spare time? (Watching TV; Having a chitchat with others)

Are you satisfied with your leisure life? (Quite satisfied)

36. Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life? (Relatives; friends)

37. When you are communicating with them, which topic do you often talk about? (Trivial things)

38. Are you satisfied with your social contact? (Quite satisfied)

39. When you need some help, whom will you contact with first? (Relatives)

Part Six: Health and Safety Issues

Are you in good health? (Yes, I am in good health.)

How often do you go for a medical examination? (At least once a year)

Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination? (Yes)

What will do you do when you feel under the weather? (I go to the drugstore in the village to buy some medicine.)

Do you have medical insurance? (Yes, I have.)

How much should you afford with this kind of medical insurance for the treatment? (I am not sure.)

Do you feel stress or pressure in your life? (No, I never feel stress or pressure.)

If you had got trouble, whom would you like to pour out? (Relatives)

48. How about the public order in your village? (Not bad.)

Q: Could you tell me some information about your children, e.g. age, education background, marital status and career?

A: I have three children: two daughters and a son. My two daughters have high school diploma. My son just passed the college entrance examination. My two daughters are staying in the village and doing farm work. My elder daughter has been married. My second daughter is doing farm work with me.

Q: What kind of main food crops or vegetables are you growing? What kind of fowl or livestock are you feeding?

A: I am growing wheat. I don't feed any livestock and fowl.

Q: Do you often buy the vegetables in the market?

A: I buy the vegetables in the market every day.

Q: Do you always feel tired when you do the farm work? Do you think it is harmful to your health to do the farm work for a long time?

A: No. I don't feel tired. Now we are doing farm work by using an agricultural machine.

Q: How much do you spend for yourself every month?

A: I spend a little for myself. I seldom buy clothes, and I never buy cosmetics...

Q: How much do you spend on clothes?

A: Four or five hundred Yuan.

Q: Are you satisfied with the traffic communication of the village?

A: Yes, the roads here are smooth. They are convenient for us to go everywhere.

Q: How long does it take you to do the housework every day?

A: Three or four hours. I don't have a lot of work to do.

Q: In your opinion, what is housework?

A: Cleaning the room, washing clothes, cooking and so on.

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: My husband.

Q: Who makes a decision, when there is something important?

A: My husband.

Q: Does he ask for the opinion of you?

A: Yes. He often asks for my opinion. But he always gives the final decision.

Q: Do you often quarrel with your husband?

A: Yes, when the children are uncontrollable, we often quarrel.

Q: Do you think men's family status is higher than women's in a household? Do you think the man is superior to the woman? What does your husband think?

A: Men and women are equal in the family. I don't know what he thinks. We never talk about this issue.

Q: How do you think about the education of children?

A: The more knowledge they have, the better they can live.

Q: In your opinion, what is an ideal family life?

A: All my family members are in good health, and we have enough money, all my children are living in a happy life.

Q: How much leisure time do you have in a week?

A: I have lots of leisure time. Five or six hours a day. I don't have a lot of work to do.

Q: What is the source of your pressure, or what worries you most?

A: I don't feel pressure. I don't have trouble.

Q: Do you think you and everything you have done is significant to your family and society?

A: No. the things I have done is not important. I am just a housewife.

Q: Do you want to live in the city? Why?

A: No. I don't want to live in the city. Living in the city is not convenient. We have to live in the apartment in the city. It is not better than our house in rural areas.

Q: When you have some trouble, will the women's federation or the government help you?

A: No one asks them for help. We deal with the difficulties ourselves.

Interview X21

Ms. Wang F

Part one: Basic Information

1. Age: (46)
2. Marital Status: (Married)
3. How many years have you been married? (24)
4. Education Background: (Primary school)

Part Two: Working Conditions

5. How much arable land do you have? (3 mu)
6. Utilization of Land: (I am using it.)
7. Do you work on the land yourself? (Yes, I work on the land myself.)
8. What sort of fertilizer do you use? (Chemical fertilizer)

9. How long do you work on the land every day? (Less than 4 hours)

How often do you use farm machinery when you are working? (I often use it)

Do you find part-time jobs in the slack season? (No)

Who distributes tasks in your family? (I distribute tasks.)

Part Three: Material Quality of Life

13. How much is the total annual income of your family? (Above 20,000 Yuan)

14. What are the sources of income in your family? (Selling the agriculture products; The wage of my husband who is doing odd jobs in the city; The wage of other family members.)

15. What is the main expenditure in your family? (Children's schooling, buying gifts)

16. How much do you spend every month? (Above 2000 Yuan)

17. Are you living in an old house or new house? (A new house)

18. What household appliances do you have? (TV; washing machine; fridge ; electric pan; rice cooker; induction cooker; air conditioner)

19. You have a (mobile phone).

20. How often do you go shopping? (I go shopping when I need something.)

21. What kind of things do you often buy? (Food; clothes or shoes)

Part Four: Family Life

How many children do you have? (3)

How did you get to know your husband? (I got to know him on a blind date)

Your husband's age (48)

The Education background of your husband: (Primary school)

26. Your husband's career: (doing small business)

27. How do you distribute the housework? (I do it myself.)

28. Are you satisfied with your marriage life? (Basically satisfied)

29. Whom do the children like to communicate with in your family? (Me)

30. Are you living with the parents in law? (The elderly passed away.)

Part Five: Leisure Life

What kind of things do you often do in your spare time? (Playing cards or mahjong)

Are you satisfied with your leisure life? (Quite satisfied)

37. When you are communicating with them, which topic do you often talk about? (Trivial things in household)

38. Are you satisfied with your social contact? (Basically satisfied)

39. When you need some help, whom will you contact with first? (Relatives)

Part Six: Health and Safety Issues

Are you in good health? (Yes, I am in good health.)

How often do you go for a medical examination? (When I feel not good, I go for an examination.)

42. Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination? (No)

Q: What will do you do when you feel under the weather?

A: I go to the drugstore in the village to buy some medicine.

Q: If people suffered severe illness, how do they deal with it?

A: They will go to the city to see a doctor. The serious disease cannot be cured in the town.

No one wants to see a doctor unless he or she suffered a severe illness. Moreover, no one wants to go for a medical examination, when he or she feels well.

Do you have medical insurance? (Yes, I have.)

How much should you afford with this kind of medical insurance for the treatment? (At most 50%)

49. How about the public order in your village? (Very good)

Q: Could you tell me some information about your children, e.g. age, education background, marital status and career?

A: I have two daughters. They are married. One daughter and son-in-law are living with me and have a baby girl. Now I am looking after my grandchild.

Q: Do you often buy the vegetables in the market?

A: Yes. Now we don't grow vegetables, so we buy them from the market every day. It is so tiresome to grow vegetables. It is more convenient to buy them from the market.

Q: Do you always feel tired when you do the farm work? Do you think it is harmful to your health to do the farm work for a long time?

A: No. I don't feel tired when I do the farm work. I don't have a lot of farm work to do. In summer we may be a little bit busy. We must harvest wheat in summer. When my son-in-law stays in village, he helps me to harvest wheat. In other season, the only thing needed to be done is irrigation. I often hire someone to irrigate. So it is not tired to do the farm work. These days we are ready to harvest wheat. If the weather is nice, we will finish harvesting in two days.

Q: Do you harvest wheat with the reaping machine?

A: Yes. We rent a reaping machine in this village.

Q: How much is the rent?

A: 70 or 80 Yuan per mu. We don't have much land. We have only three mu. Although for us we can earn a little by growing the crop, I don't want to abandon it. However, irrigation, buying chemical fertilizer and harvesting will cost money. I will have nothing to do if I don't do the farm work. These years, I am staying at home and looking after grandchildren. Doing farm work makes my life substantial.

Q: Why don't you find a job in the city?

A: I must look after my grandchild. Other family members are working outside. No one takes care of the baby.

Q: Where are your daughter and son-in-law living?

A: We are living in a same yard. My son-in-law comes from a mountain village in Hubei Province. He began living with us after he got married to my daughter. In the day he and

my daughter work in the city near here, then they come back after work. During the busy season, my son-in-law stays home and helps me harvest wheat.

Q: What else fertilizer do you use except chemical fertilizer?

A: Now I only use chemical fertilizer, other farmers who are feeding livestock use both chemical fertilizer and farmyard manure.

Q: Why don't you feed livestock?

A: I begin to feed cow and sheep this year, now I am feeding a cow and a sheep.

Q: How long does it take you to do farm work every day?

A: I almost have nothing to do in the farmland. After irrigation and fertilizing, I have no farm work to do until the crop can be harvested. Nowadays, the agricultural mechanization makes us cushier than before.

Q: How do you distribute the housework?

A: Only I, myself, stay at home in the day, so I do all the housework.

Q: How much is the total annual income of your family?

A: We can earn 2000 Yuan a month. It is about 30,000 Yuan a year.

Q: How much can you earn by selling the crop?

A: The wheat is 2 Yuan per kilo. We can earn at most 3000 Yuan (428 Euro) a year. In other villages, farmers who have more than 10 of mu of land can make a lot of money. In our village, every household has a little land, so we can't make much money just by growing crops. We have to find a job in the city. If you tried to make a living from the land, you would live a poor life. In this village, many people have left home and gone outside the village in search of jobs while the others who can't find work in cities stay home and do farm work. All in all, you cannot only depend on farming. If there is only one family member making money in the city, the whole family will not live a better life.

Q: What is the main expenditure in your family?

A: Giving gift money, buying snacks, clothes, books for my grandchild, the snacks cost me more than 10 Yuan a day. And the tuition fee of my grandchild cost me 300 Yuan a month. In winter, we pay the charge for heating.

Q: How old is your grandchild?

A: She is five years old.

Q: How much is your annual living expenses?

A: It's about at least 20,000 Yuan.

Q: How did you get to know your husband?

A: I got to know him on a blind date. In the past, most of the women got to her husband on a blind date. We could not look for the mate freely. Otherwise, we would be laughed at by others.

Q: How about the young people's marriages nowadays?

A: Nowadays, some young people go outside and find a job in the city, they may look for the mate themselves. Most of the young people get to know their mate also through relatives or other villagers.

Q: How much do you spend for yourself every month?

A: I buy clothes for myself. I never buy cosmetics. So I spend not so much. It's about 100 Yuan a month.

Q: Are you satisfied with the traffic communication of the village?

A: Yes. The roads are better than before. It is convenient to go to the county by bus, and it only takes half an hour.

Q: How long does it take you to do the housework every day?

A: I don't have much housework to do. When I finish feeding livestock, I have nothing to do. Then I watch TV or play mahjong with others.

Q: Are you satisfied with your current life?

A: I think I am living a good life. We have enough money to live, and all my family members are in good health. That's enough for me!

Q: Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life?

A: My neighbors. When we are free, we often play mahjong together.

Q: When you are communicating with them, which topic do you often talk about?

A: Nothing important. We have no higher educational level. We only talk about trivial things in the family. We often play together.

Q: If you had got trouble, whom would you like to pour out?

A: I will pour out my worries to relatives. When you meet with difficulties, neighbors cannot help you a lot.

Q: Do you feel stress or pressure in your life?

A: No, I don't feel pressure. Now I only hope to have enough money to buy a flat for my children in the city.

Q: Do you want to live in the city? Why?

A: It is said it's not convenient to live in a flat. Staying in the village is better. In the city, I have to pay for everything, like electricity, water and so on.

Q: Is the water free of charge in this village?

A: Yes. Here we all drink the water from the well. It is free of charge. Tap water will be supplied in future in this village. Some other villages are now drinking the tap water.

Q: Who makes a decision, when there is something important?

A: In my family, we make the decision together.

Q: Do you often quarrel with your husband?

A: When we were young, we often quarreled. Now age has chastened our temper, and we seldom quarrel.

Q: How do you think about the equality between men and women?

A: Men and women are equal. Both man and woman are important for a family. Although man is the bread-winner, the woman is also important. If I don't look after the children and don't do the housework, he cannot buckle down to the job.

Q: How does your husband think?

A: He feels that he is more important for the family because he is the bread-winner. But I feel I am more important. He cannot earn much money and live a good life without me.

Interview X22

Ms. Wu C

Part one: Basic Information

1. Age: (20)
2. Marital Status: (Married)
3. How many years have you been married? (2)
4. Education Background: (junior middle school)

Part Two: Working Conditions

5. How much arable land do you have? (5 mu)
6. Utilization of Land: (My family is using it.)
7. Do you work on the land yourself? (I don't do the farm work.)

Who distributes tasks in your family? (I don't know.)

Part Three: Material Quality of Life

13. How much is the total annual income of your family? (Above 20,000 Yuan)
14. What are the sources of income in your family? (The wage of my husband who is doing odd jobs in the city)
15. What is the main expenditure in your family? (Living goods)
16. How much do you spend every month? (500 to 999 Yuan)
17. Are you living in an old house or new house? (A new house)
18. What household appliances do you have? (TV; washing machine; fridge; electric pan; rice cooker; induction cooker; air conditioner)
19. You have a (telephone; mobile phone).
20. How often do you go shopping? (I go shopping when I am free)
21. What kind of things do you often buy? (Clothes or shoes)

Part Four: Family Life

How many children do you have? (1)

How did you get to know your husband? (Our marriage is a love match.)

Your husband's age (25)

The Education background of your husband: (Junior middle school)

26. Your husband's career: (He is working in the city.)

27. How do you distribute the housework? (My husband helps me to do it sometimes.)
28. Are you satisfied with your marriage life? (Basically satisfied)
29. Whom do the children like to communicate with in your family? (Me)
30. Are you living with the parents in law? (No, they are living in their house.)
31. Who are looking after the parents in law? (They don't need to be taken care of at present.)
32. What do you mainly have to do with your parents in law? (Nothing)
33. How are you getting on with your parents in law? (Sometimes we have the conflict)

Part Five: Leisure Life

- What kind of things do you often do in your spare time? (Having a chat with others)
- Are you satisfied with your leisure life? (Basically satisfied)
36. Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life? (Friends)
37. When you are communicating with them, which topic do you often talk about? (Difficulties you meet with recently)
38. Are you satisfied with your social contact? (Basically satisfied)
39. When you need some help, whom will you contact with first? (Parents)

Part Six: Health and Safety Issues

- Are you in good health? (Yes, I am in good health.)
- How often do you go for a medical examination? (Twice a year)
- Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination? (Yes)
- What will do you do when you feel under the weather? (I go to the town to see a doctor.)
- Do you have medical insurance? (Yes, I have.)
- How much should you afford with this kind of medical insurance for the treatment? (I am not sure.)
- Do you feel stress or pressure in your life? (I often feel stress)
- If you had got trouble, whom would you like to pour out? (Other)
48. How about the public order in your village? Just so so)

Q: Could you tell me some information about your children?

A: I have a child, she is one year old.

Q: How much do you spend for yourself every month?

A: I spend about 200 Yuan for myself.

Q: How long does it take you to do the housework every day?

A: I don't do much housework. If I want to wash clothes, I just need to put them into the washing machine, and it only takes half an hour.

Q: Do you do the farm work?

A: No, I don't do the farm work.

Q: Who does the farm work in your family?

A: My parents and my husband.

Q: Why your husband doesn't go outside to find a job?

A: He will find a job in a city after they harvest the wheat. When it is in the busy season, he comes back and helps my parents to do the farm work.

Q: Do you plan to find a job in the city?

A: Yes, when my child grows up and can go to school, I will go to the nearest city to find a job. Now I am running a shop in the village.

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: My husband and I are managing the property together.

Q: Who makes a decision, when there is something important?

A: We will talk about it and make a decision together.

Q: Do you often quarrel with your husband?

A: We quarrel once in a while.

Q: What is your quarrel about it?

A: About different habits, about the child, about the housework and so on.

Q: Do you think men's family status is higher than women's in a household? Do you think the man is superior to the woman?

A: No, I think we are equal in the family. The woman is not the weaker one. We can make money. We can look after the children. We can do the housework. We do even more than the men do in the family.

Q: How do you think about the education of children?

A: I've never thought about it. My child is too young. If she is willing to receive more education, I will support her. All in all, I will respect her wish.

Q: In your opinion, what is an ideal family life?

A: Having a healthy child, a happy family and getting along well with family members.

Q: How much leisure time do you have in a week?

A: I have a lot of leisure time. I can have a chat or play the card with friends when I am keeping shop. My mother helps me to look after my child, and I don't need to do the farm work, so I am not very busy.

Q: What is the source of your pressure, or what worries you most?

A: Making money. Raising a child costs much money nowadays. For example, it costs at least 1000 Yuan when the child catches a cold or has a fever.

Q: Do you want to live in the city? Why?

A: Yes. Life in the city must be better than it in the country. There are many stores and schools in the city. There are a lot of interesting things in the city. But the price of the flat is too high. I don't know if we can earn enough money to buy a flat in the city.

Q: When you have some trouble, will the women's federation or the government help you?

A: If I have some trouble, So far, I have not met with the big trouble which my family and I cannot solve.

Q: Do you often keep track of current social events?

A: Yes. I often read the social news with mobile phone.

Interview X23

Ms. Lin X

Part one: Basic Information

1. Age: (30)
2. Marital Status: (Married)
3. How many years have you been married? (10)
4. Education Background: (Primary school)

Part Two: Working Conditions

5. How much arable land do you have? (5 mu)
6. Utilization of Land: (I am using it.)
7. Do you work on the land yourself? (My family work together with me.)
8. What sort of fertilizer do you use? (Chemical fertilizer)
9. How long do you work on the land every day? (Less than 4 hours)

How often do you use farm machinery when you are working? (I often use it.)

Do you find part-time jobs in the slack season? (I found part-time job before, now I am staying at home)

Who distributes tasks in your family? (I am not sure)

Part Three: Material Quality of Life

13. How much is the total annual income of your family? (10,000 to 20,000 Yuan)
14. What are the sources of income in your family? (Selling the agriculture products; selling sheep)
15. What is the main expenditure in your family? (Children's schooling; living goods; food; seeing a doctor; buying gifts and clothes)
16. How much do you spend every month? (1000 to 1499 Yuan)
17. Are you living in an old house or new house? (A new house)
18. What household appliances do you have? (TV; washing machine; fridge; electric pan; rice cooker; induction cooker; air conditioner)
19. You have a (Mobile phone).
20. How often do you go shopping? (Two or three times a month)
21. What kind of things do you often buy? (Clothes or shoes)

Part Four: Family Life

How many children do you have? (2)

How did you get to know your husband? (I got to know him on a blind date.)

Your husband's age (34)

The Education background of your husband: (Primary school)

26. Your husband's career: (He is working in the city.)

27. How do you distribute the housework? (My mother-in-law does the housework.)

28. Are you satisfied with your marriage life? (Quite satisfied)

29. Whom do the children like to communicate with in your family? (Me)

30. Are you living with the parents in law? (Yes.)

31. Who are looking after the parents in law? (They don't need to be taken care of at present.)

32. What do you mainly have to do with your parents in law? (Nothing)

33. How are you getting on with your parents in law? (Quite well)

Part Five: Leisure Life

What kind of things do you often do in your spare time? (Having a chitchat with others)

Are you satisfied with your leisure life? (Quite satisfied)

36. Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life? (Friends)

37. When you are communicating with them, which topic do you often talk about? (Trivial things in household; something about work)

38. Are you satisfied with your social contact? (Basically satisfied)

39. When you need some help, whom will you contact with first? (No one)

Part Six: Health and Safety Issues

Are you in good health? (Yes, I am in good health.)

How often do you go for a medical examination? (I never go for it)

Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination? (No)

What will do you do when you feel under the weather? (I always take a "wait and see" attitude and avoid seeing the doctor as much as I could.)

Do you have medical insurance? (Yes, I have.)

How much should you afford with this kind of medical insurance for the treatment? (30%)

Q: Do you feel stress or pressure in your life?

A: I always feel stress or pressure.

Q: Why?

A: There is a little problem about my husband. He committed the crime and is imprisoned.

I must make money and raise children. So I feel the big pressure of daily life.

If you had got trouble, whom would you like to pour out? (No one)

48. How about the public order in your village? (Very good)

Q: Could you tell me some information about your children?

A: I have two daughters. One is seven years old, and the other one is ten years old.

Q: What kind of main food crops or vegetables are you growing? What kind of fowl or livestock are you feeding?

A: I am growing wheat and corn. We have four sheep and two cows. But I am not feeding them. My parents-in-law are feeding them.

Q: Do you often buy the vegetables in the market?

A: Yes, I buy the vegetables in the market every day.

Q: Do you think you have got benefit from some agricultural policies?

A: I don't know much about it. I am not sure.

Q: Do you always feel tired when you do the farm work? Do you think it is harmful to your health to do the farm work for a long time?

A: I don't do much farm work, now we do most of the farm work with a machine, my parents-in-law can also do some farm work. But, keeping shop always makes me tired. I have a shop in the town. I must get up before 5:00 am every day.

Q: How much do you spend for yourself every month?

A: I spend not so much. Sometimes I buy clothes, shoes or cosmetics. I spend about 100 Yuan per month. I spend more money on my children. I buy the food and clothes for them and pay the tuition fee. I spend almost all my money on them.

Q: Are you satisfied with the traffic communication of the village?

A: Yes, the traffic communication is good. The roads are broad and smooth. We have a car, so it is convenient to go anywhere.

Q: How long does it take you to do the housework every day?

A: I don't have much time to do the housework. I spend much time in the shop. My mother-in-law does most of the housework. When I am free, I do some. Usually, I do the housework in the evening after I close the shop.

Q: Do you think men's family status is higher than women's in a household?

A: No. women are also important for the family. Men and women are equal.

Q: How do you think about the education of children?

A: I don't know. I hope they can receive more education. Nowadays, it is hard to find a job with low educational level. So I want to earn enough money to support them to study.

Q: In your opinion, what is an ideal family life?

A: All the family members are in good health and living happily.

Q: How much leisure time do you have in a week?

A: I don't have leisure time. I must stay in the shop the whole day. Sometimes, I even don't have enough time to sleep. In the morning, I cook the breakfast and send my children to school. Afterwards, I open the shop and stay in the shop until night. In the night, I go to bed after I do some housework.

Q: What is the source of your pressure, or what worries you most?

A: My husband. I hope my husband can be out of the prison soon.

Q: Do you think you and everything you have done is significant to your family and society?

A: Yes, the things I have done is important for my family. I make money for my family and look after the children...

Q: Do you want to live in the city? Why?

A: If I have enough money, I will move to the city. It is helpful to children's development. After all, the schools in the city are better than schools in rural areas.

Q: When you have some trouble, will the women's federation or the government help you?

A: No, they cannot help me a lot. We solve the problems ourselves.

Q: Do you often keep track of current social events?

A: I often watch the news in the morning.

Interview X24

Ms. Shi X

Part one: Basic Information

1. Age: (58)
2. Marital Status: (Married)
3. How many years have you been married? (32)
4. Education Background: (junior middle school)

Part Two: Working Conditions

5. How much arable land do you have? (3 mu)
6. Utilization of Land: (I am using it.)
7. Do you work on the land yourself? (Yes, I work on the land myself.)
8. What sort of fertilizer do you use? (Chemical fertilizer)
9. How long do you work on the land every day? (Less than 4 hours)

How often do you use farm machinery when you are working? (I often use it.)

Do you find part-time jobs in the slack season? (I found jobs in city before, now I am staying at home)

Who distributes tasks in your family? (My husband)

Part Three: Material Quality of Life

13. How much is the total annual income of your family? (10,000 to 20,000 Yuan)
14. What are the sources of income in your family? (Selling the agriculture products; the wage of other family members)
15. What is the main expenditure in your family? (Living goods)
16. How much do you spend every month? (1000 to 1499 Yuan)
17. Are you living in an old house or new house? (A new house)
18. What household appliances do you have? (TV; washing machine; fridge ; electric pan ; rice cooker; induction cooker; air conditioner)
19. You have a (mobile phone).
20. How often do you go shopping? (Two or three times a month)
21. What kind of things do you often buy? (Food; living goods)

Part Four: Family Life

How many children do you have? (3)

How did you get to know your husband? (I got to know him on a blind date.)

Your husband's age (53)

The Education background of your husband: (Senior school)

26. Your husband's career: (Selling vegetables)

27. How do you distribute the housework? (I do it myself.)

28. Are you satisfied with your marriage life? (Quite satisfied)

29. Whom do the children like to communicate with in your family? (I am not sure.)

30. Are you living with the parents in law? (The elderly passed away.)

Part Five: Leisure Life

What kind of things do you often do in your spare time? (Watching TV)

Are you satisfied with your leisure life? (Dissatisfied)

36. Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life? (Relatives)

37. When you are communicating with them, which topic do you often talk about? (Trivial things in household)

38. Are you satisfied with your social contact? (Dissatisfied)

39. When you need some help, whom will you contact with first? (I have no trouble, and I don't need help.)

Part Six: Health and Safety Issues

Are you in good health? (Yes, I am in good health.)

How often do you go for a medical examination? (I never go for it)

Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination? (No)

What will do you do when you feel under the weather? (I go to the drugstore in the village to buy some medicine.)

Do you have medical insurance? (Yes, I have.)

How much should you afford with this kind of medical insurance for the treatment?
(50%-60%)

Do you feel stress or pressure in your life? (No, I never feel stress or pressure.)

48. How about the public order in your village? (Very good)

Q: Could you tell me some information about your children, e.g. age, education background, marital status and career?

A: I have three children: two daughters and a son. My son is married. My daughters are working in the city. My son and daughter-in-law are also working in the city.

Q: What kind of main food crops or vegetables are you growing? What kind of fowl or livestock are you feeding?

A: I am growing wheat and corn. I don't feed livestock. I have to look after my grandchild. I don't have time to feed them.

Q: Do you often buy the vegetables in the market?

A: Yes, in this village no one grows the vegetables. We don't have much land to grow them. Now only the aged are staying at home. Young people are going outside village and finding a job in the city. The aged have no more energy to grow vegetables.

Q: Do you always feel tired when you do the farm work?

A: In the busy season, like this month, I often feel tired. After I harvest wheat, I must spread the wheat on the road and dry the wheat. In this month, I get up at 5:00 am and I do the farm work the whole day, more than 15 hours. After selling the wheat, I have to grow the corn. When it is in the slack season, I take care of my grandchild.

Q: Have you worked in the city?

A: No, I have never found a job in the city. At that time, few people went out to find a job. We only stayed in the village and worked on the land.

Q: How much do you spend for yourself every month?

A: I don't spend money for myself. I don't buy clothes. My daughters often buy clothes and shoes for me. And my daughter-in-law also buys clothes for me sometimes. I only take care of my grandchild at home. I just wear whatever they bought.

Q: Are you satisfied with the traffic communication of the village?

A: Yes, I am satisfied with it. The roads are better. We can go to the county or the city in a short time. My children are working in the city. They can come back every weekend.

Q: How long does it take you to do the housework every day?

A: I don't do much housework. Taking care of my grandchild takes me much time. Doing housework takes me two or three hours a day.

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: My husband manages the property. I don't care about this. I only take care of my grandson.

Q: Who makes a decision, when there is something important?

A: We make the decision together.

Q: Do you often quarrel with your husband?

A: No. We seldom quarrel. We are getting along with each other very well.

Q: How do you think about the equality between men and women?

A: Men and women should be equal. But in this village, some families look down upon women.

Q: Why do they look down upon women?

A: I don't know. The different family has different life style. It is difficult to say.

Q: How about your family?

A: We don't have this problem. I have both son and daughter. I am satisfied with them. Now I have a grandson. I am very happy. My family doesn't have this problem.

Q: In your opinion, what is an ideal family life?

A: My current life is good. We have enough money to live a good life. I am very content.

Q: How much leisure time do you have in a week?

A: I don't have leisure time. I must look after my grandson. I don't have time to chat with neighbors, visit friends.....looking after my grandson taking me much time.

Q: Do you want to live in the city? Why?

A: No. We have a new house in the town. It is good to live in the town. I don't want to move to the city.

Q: Do you often keep track of current social events?

A: No. I have no time to do that. I only care about my family.

Interview X25

Ms. He Z

Part one: Basic Information

1. Age: (26)
2. Marital Status: (Married)
3. How many years have you been married? (4)
4. Education Background: (senior school)

Part Two: Working Conditions

5. How much arable land do you have? (4 mu)
 6. Utilization of Land: (I am using it.)
 7. Do you work on the land yourself? (My family work together with me.)
 8. What sort of fertilizer do you use? (Chemical fertilizer)
 9. How long do you work on the land every day? (Less than 4 hours)
- How often do you use farm machinery when you are working? (I use it every day.)
- Do you find part-time jobs in the slack season? (No)
- Who distributes tasks in your family? (My husband)

Part Three: Material Quality of Life

13. How much is the total annual income of your family? (Above 20,000 Yuan)
14. What are the sources of income in your family? (Our business in the town)
15. What is the main expenditure in your family? (Children's schooling; living goods; food; seeing a doctor; buying gifts)
16. How much do you spend every month? (1500 to 1999 Yuan)
17. Are you living in an old house or new house? (A new house)
18. What household appliances do you have? (TV; washing machine; fridge; electric pan; rice cooker; induction cooker; air conditioner)
19. You have a (Telephone, mobile phone, and computer).
20. How often do you go shopping? (I go shopping when I am free.)
21. What kind of things do you often buy? (Food, living goods, clothes or shoes, cosmetics)

Part Four: Family Life

How many children do you have? (1)

How did you get to know your husband? (Our marriage is a love match.)

Your husband's age (27)

The Education background of your husband: (Senior school)

26. Your husband's career: (selling vegetables in the town)

27. How do you distribute the housework? (My husband is sharing it with me.)

28. Are you satisfied with your marriage life? (Dissatisfied)

29. Whom do the children like to communicate with in your family? (My husband)

30. Are you living with the parents in law? (No, they are living in their house.)

31. Who are looking after the parents in law? (My husband and I)

32. What do you mainly have to do with your parents in law? (Washing clothes; cooking)

33. How are you getting on with your parents in law? (Quite well)

Part Five: Leisure Life

What kind of things do you often do in your spare time? (Watching TV; having a chitchat with others; playing cards or mahjong; surfing the internet)

Are you satisfied with your leisure life? (Basically satisfied)

36. Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life? (Neighbors)

37. When you are communicating with them, which topic do you often talk about? (Difficulties you meet with recently)

38. Are you satisfied with your social contact? (Quite satisfied)

39. When you need some help, whom will you contact with first? (Parents)

Part Six: Health and Safety Issues

Are you in good health? (Not very well. I get ill sometimes.)

How often do you go for a medical examination? (When I feel not good, I go for an examination.)

Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination? (No)

What will do you do when you feel under the weather? (I go to the drugstore in the village to buy some medicine.)

Do you have medical insurance? (Yes, I have.)

How much should you afford with this kind of medical insurance for the treatment? (50%)

Do you feel stress or pressure in your life? (Sometimes I feel them.)

If you had got trouble, whom would you like to pour out? (Friends)

48. How about the public order in your village? (Very good)

Q: Could you tell me some information about your child?

A: I have a son, he is four years old.

Q: What kind of main food crops or vegetables are you growing? What kind of fowl or livestock are you feeding?

A: We grow wheat and corn. We don't feed any livestock and fowl.

Q: Do you always feel tired when you do the farm work?

A: I do only a little farm work. My parents-in-law do most of the farm work.

Q: What kind of farm work do you usually do?

A: Sometimes I help them to spread the wheat on the road to dry it.

Q: How much do you spend for yourself every month?

A: I spend about 300 Yuan for myself every month.

Q: How long does it take you to do the housework every day?

A: I often do housework in the evening, about 2 hours. In the day, I am staying in the shop. Sometimes, my husband helps me to do the housework. So it doesn't cost me a lot of time.

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: We keep money separately. But we pay the debts together.

Q: Who makes a decision, when there is something important?

A: My parents-in-law often makes the decision. Sometimes I make the decision.

Q: Do you often quarrel with your husband?

A: We often quarrel about the business.

Q: How do you think about the equality between men and women?

A: Men and women should be equal. But in the village, people often think men are superior. They view sons as better than daughters. My husband was hoping for a son when I was pregnant. He asked me to bring forth a boy, so did my parents-in-law. So I had to give birth to a boy. Their views are outworn. They especially wanted a boy.

Q: Why do they like a boy much more than a girl?

A: I am not sure. Anyway, I like a girl. Their thoughts are too outworn.

Q: How do you think about the education of child?

A: I will send him to the best school. Now he is too young, he is only four years old. In future, I will try to cultivate his talent. Our parents also put more attention on his education.

Q: What is the source of your pressure, or what worries you most?

A: I always feel the stress. I borrowed a lot of money to open this shop for selling the children's clothing. I borrowed 150,000 Yuan. In addition, it is very difficult to sell children's clothing in the town. I opened the shop when I got married. Until now I have not earned much money. When my son grows up and is old enough to get married, I must buy a flat and a car for him. So I am stressed. If I had given birth to a girl, I wouldn't have much pressure. My husband's hobby also makes me feel much pressure. He likes to collect the old coins. He spent a lot of money on the coins. The old coins are very expensive. Now our child is young, we need enough money to raise the child, but he spent an outrageous amount on those things.

Q: Do you want to live in the city? Why?

A: Yes, I want to live in the city. I always prefer the city to the country. If I had enough money, I would do the business in the city, such as Shijiazhuang, Beijing. I don't like to stay here. In the town, people are too mean to buy clothes for children, especially, the elderly. These days, young people are working in the city. Children in the town or village are looked after by grandparents. They are reluctant to spend money. Just now, you see, an old lady want to choose a coat for her grandchild. But she did not buy it finally because she thought it was expensive. Actually, the coat is only 30 Yuan. It would be easier to sell clothes in the city.

Interview X26

Ms. Wu N

Part one: Basic Information

1. Age: (50)
2. Marital Status: (Married)
3. How many years have you been married? (27)
4. Education Background: (Primary school)

Part Two: Working Conditions

5. How much arable land do you have? (4 mu)
6. Utilization of Land: (I am using it.)
7. Do you work on the land yourself? (I don't do the farm work.)
13. How much is the total annual income of your family? (Above 20,000 Yuan)
14. What are the sources of income in your family? (Selling the agriculture products; the wage of my husband who is doing odd jobs in the city; the wage of other family members)
15. What is the main expenditure in your family? (Living goods; food; buying clothes)
16. How much do you spend every month? (1500 to 1999 Yuan)
17. Are you living in an old house or new house? (An old house)
18. What household appliances do you have? (TV; washing machine; fridge; electric pan; rice cooker; induction cooker; air conditioner)
19. You have a (telephone, mobile phone).
20. How often do you go shopping? (I go shopping when I need something to buy.)
21. What kind of things do you often buy? (Food, living goods)

Part Four: Family Life

22. How many children do you have? (2)
23. How did you get to know your husband? (I got to know him on a blind date.)
24. Your husband's age (50)
25. The Education background of your husband: (Primary school)
26. Your husband's career: (He is working in the city.)
27. How do you distribute the housework? (My husband is sharing it with me.)
28. Are you satisfied with your marriage life? (Basically satisfied)
29. Whom do the children like to communicate with in your family? (Me)
30. Are you living with the parents in law? (The elderly passed away.)

Part Five: Leisure Life

34. What kind of things do you often do in your spare time? (Having a chitchat with others)

35. Are you satisfied with your leisure life? (Basically satisfied)
36. Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life? (Neighbors)
37. When you are communicating with them, which topic do you often talk about? (Trivial things in household)
38. Are you satisfied with your social contact? (Basically satisfied)

Part Six: Health and Safety Issues

40. Are you in good health? (Yes, I am in good health.)
41. How often do you go for a medical examination? (When I feel not good, I go for an examination.)
42. Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination? (No)
43. What will do you do when you feel under the weather? (I always take a “wait and see” attitude and avoid seeing the doctor as much as I could.)
44. Do you have medical insurance? (Yes, I have.)
45. How much should you afford with this kind of medical insurance for the treatment? (50%)
47. If you had got trouble, whom would you like to pour out? (Neighbors)
48. How about the public order in your village? (Not bad.)

Q: Could you tell me some information about your children, e.g. age, education background, marital status and career?

A: I have two daughters. My elder daughter is 27 years old, and she has been married. My younger daughter is working in the city.

Q: Do they help you to do farm work?

A: No, I don't want them to do the farm work. The weather is so hot and doing farm work is a little tired. They come back to visit me during the holidays.

Q: How did you get to know your husband?

A: I got to know him on a blind date. At that time, the women got to know their mates on blind dates. If you had found your mate freely, you would have been laughed at by others. Nowadays, if the young people find mates freely, no one laughs at them.

Q: Does your husband do the farm work?

A: No, he is working in the city, and he is very busy and has no time to do the farm work.

Q: How do you distribute housework?

A: Both my husband and I do the housework. Whoever stays at home does the housework. Sometimes I am busy working while he is staying at home, he does all the housework.

Q: What kind of main food crops or vegetables are you growing? What kind of fowl or livestock are you feeding?

A: I am growing wheat and corn. I don't grow vegetables, and I don't feed livestock and fowl.

Q: Do you always feel tired when you do the farm work?

A: I do little farm work. I often go to the city to find a job. At the beginning of this month, I came back to harvest the wheat. When I finish that, I will continue to work in the city.

Q: Do you think the chemical fertilizer is harmful to the environment?

A: We must use chemical fertilizer whether it is harmful to the environment or not. I think it has no bad influence on the environment. It will be buried under the soil gradually. We use one bag of chemical fertilizer per mu.

Q: How do you deal with the trash?

A: There are some the trashcans in the village. In my family, we spread the trash on the land.

Q: Does someone come to collect the trash?

A: No one collects them.

Q: Are they harmful to the crops?

A: No, we throw the plastic bags and other things made of plastic into the trashcan. The things we spread on the land are good for the crops.

Q: Do you often use the agricultural machine?

A: Yes, it is very tiring to do the farm work without agricultural machines. Nowadays, all of us use agricultural machines when we are doing farm work. However, if we don't find a job outside the village, we can't live a better life. The cost of living is very high, so we can't make enough money only by doing farm work. All of us have only a little farm land. As a result, it is necessary to find a job.

Q: How much do you spend every month?

A: We spend about 2000 Yuan a month. We spend at least 20,000 Yuan a year. We pay the electricity, gas bills, clothes, and chip in.....

Q: When and whom do you chip in for?

A: When the villagers or relatives get married, or when they have a baby, I must chip in with at least 100 Yuan. If the villager is also my friend, I give him or her 200 Yuan. And I give my relatives more. For example, when my nephew or niece gets married, I give them more than 300 Yuan. I spend much money on this.

Q: Do you feel tired when you are drying the wheat?

A: No, we have a car the carry the wheat. I don't feel tired. But the weather is so hot. After I spread the wheat on the road, I have to stay there until nightfall. Then I collect it and carry it to home. On the next day, I spread it on the road again. We must make it dry and

then sell it to others.

Q: Do you sell all the wheat? Do you remain some wheat for your family?

A: I sell all of the wheat as soon as possible. Otherwise, it will be gnawed by the rat. There is no room in my house to put the wheat. We sell all the wheat, and we buy flour in the market.

Q: Are you living in a new house or an old house?

A: The house I am living in was built before ten years.

Q: Do you have a radiator?

A: No. The house is heated by a coal stove in winter. We often go to work in the city and are seldom at home, so we use it once in a while.

Q: What kind of stove do you use when you are cooking?

A: I often use a gas stove or induction cooker, although it costs more than an earth stove. They are economical in terms of time. Now I can find a job in the city, and I can earn more money, so I spend more. When I am too old to find a job in the city, I will stay at home and be unable to earn money any more. Then, I may choose the earth stove for cooking because I must save money when I am old.

Q: How much do you spend for yourself every month?

A: Sometimes I buy clothes for myself, and I never buy cosmetics. I don't spend too much for myself.

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: My husband.

Q: Who makes a decision, when there is something important?

A: Generally, my husband makes a decision. I have no right to make a decision in my family. He never talks with me about the important things.

Q: How do you think about the equality between men and women?

A: Nowadays, men and women are equal. But the elderly still regard men as superior to women. For example, in my family, my mother-in-law didn't help me to look after the children. She didn't like her granddaughters. I looked after the children myself. I was very angry at that time. I think a son may not be better than a daughter. If I had a son, I would have to buy the flat for him. In addition, he may not look after me when I am old.

Q: How much leisure time do you have in a week?

A: I don't have much leisure time. When I am free, I like to chat with neighbors or go shopping.

Q: What is the source of your pressure, or what worries you most?

A: During these two years, I don't have pressure. Two years ago, I had to take care of my

mother-in-law, I felt stressed. I could not work far away from home. I must come back every day. I went to work at 5 o'clock in the morning. I came back at 8:00 am and took care of her. She was paralyzed. I must feed her. I looked after her for several years until she passed away. Now I don't have any pressure, and I can go anywhere without worry.

Q: Who should take care of elderly parents according to the custom?

A: Sons. For example, my mother-in-law has three sons and three daughters. Daughters are all married. They sometimes came back to visit my mother-in-law. They have never looked after her. Generally, sons have the obligation to look after elderly parents. However, my husband's elder brother had passed away and my younger sister-in-law also had passed away. As a result, my husband and I had to look after my mother-in-law. My husband was always busy working. I, myself, took care of my parents-in-law.

Q: Do you plan to find a job after you harvest the wheat?

A: Yes. After I harvest the wheat and grow the corn, I will go outside to work. I don't have sons. I just have two daughters. They may not look after me when I am old. So I must earn enough money to support the rest of my life. In addition, it is boring to stay at home all day long.

Q: Do you have medical insurance?

A: Yes, all the villagers have been covered by the new rural cooperative medical system. Moreover, my husband and I have bought commercial health insurance. We don't have a son, so we have to consider it more. When we are old, maybe no one will care for us. My elder daughter told me that she would look after us, but she is married and has to take care of her parents-in-law. If we had a son, our daughter-in-law would have the obligation to look after us.

Q: Do you want to live in the city? Why?

A: I don't like to live in the city. My elder daughter is living in the city. She wanted me to look after her child, I refused. I feel uneasy in the city. She is living on the sixth floor. I dare not take the elevator, and it is very tired to climb the stairs. Living in rural areas is more convenient. And I cannot use the solar water heater.

Q: Do you use the solar water heater in the village?

A: No, we don't need it. In summer, we have a shower simply with a large pot. We go to the public bathroom in winter. It is a waste of money to buy a shower.

Q: What is the main problem in your daily life?

A: Now we don't have big problems. For rural families, medical bills would be the biggest problem. If a family member suffered serious disease, the whole family would become poor. Although we all have the rural medical insurance, we still need to pay a lot for the

medical bills. After all, the rural medical insurance only covers half of the expenses. The money we have saved would be only a drop in the bucket.

Interview B27

Ms. Zuo B

Part one: Basic Information

1. Age: (44)
2. Marital Status: (Married)
3. How many years have you been married? (27)
4. Education Background: (senior school)

Part Two: Working Conditions

5. How much arable land do you have? (Two mu)
6. Utilization of Land: (I am using it.)
7. Do you work on the land yourself? (My family works together with me)
8. What sort of fertilizer do you use? (Both of them)
9. How long do you work on the land every day? (Less than 4 hours)
10. How often do you use farm machinery when you are working? (I often use it.)
11. Do you find part-time jobs in the slack season? (Yes.)
12. Who distributes tasks in your family? (I distribute tasks)

Part Three: Material Quality of Life

13. How much is the total annual income of your family? (Above 20,000 Yuan)
14. What are the sources of income in your family? (Selling the agriculture products; The wage of my husband who is doing odd jobs in the city; The wage of other family members.)
15. What is the main expenditure in your family? (Living goods)
16. How much do you spend every month? (. Above 2000 Yuan)
17. Are you living in an old house or new house? (An old house. I have been living in it for 20 years.)
18. What household appliances do you have? (TV, washing machine, fridge)
19. You have a (mobile phone).
20. How often do you go shopping? (I go shopping when I am free.)
21. What kind of things do you often buy? (Living goods)

Part Four: Family Life

23. How many children do you have? (3)
24. How did you get to know your husband? (I got to know him on a blind date.)
26. Your husband's age (46)
27. The Education background of your husband: (junior school)
26. Your husband's career: (He is working in the city.)

27. How do you distribute the housework? (My husband helps me to do it sometimes.)
28. Are you satisfied with your marriage life? (Quite satisfied)
29. Whom do the children like to communicate with in your family? (I am not sure.)
30. Are you living with the parents-in-law? (No, they are living in their house.)
31. Who are looking after the parents-in-law? (They don't need to be taken care of at present.)
32. What do you mainly have to do for your parents-in-law? (Nothing)
33. How are you getting on with your parents in law? (Quite well)

Part Five: Leisure Life

35. What kind of things do you often do in your spare time? (Go shopping)
36. Are you satisfied with your leisure life? (Basically satisfied)
36. Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life? (Neighbors; Friends)
37. When you are communicating with them, which topic do you often talk about? (Trivial things in household)
38. Are you satisfied with your social contact? (Basically satisfied)
39. When you need some help, whom will you contact with first? (No one)

Part Six: Health and Safety Issues

41. Are you in good health? (Yes, I am in good health.)
42. How often do you go for a medical examination? (At least once a year)
43. Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination? (No)
44. What will do you do when you feel under the weather? (I go to the drugstore in the village to buy some medicine.)
45. Do you have medical insurance? (Yes, I have.)
46. How much should you afford with this kind of medical insurance for the treatment? (90%)
46. Do you feel stress or pressure in your life? (No, I never feel stress or pressure.)
48. If you had got trouble, whom would you like to pour out? (Relatives)
48. How about the public order in your village? (Not bad.)

Q: Could you tell me some information about your children, e.g. age, education background, marital status and career?

A: I have two daughters and a son. There are all married. My son is working in the city. My daughters are living with their husbands in next village.

Q: What kind of main food crops or vegetables are you growing? What kind of fowl or livestock are you feeding?

A: I am growing wheat and corn. I don't grow vegetables, and I often buy the vegetables in the market. I don't feed livestock. I am feeding some chicken.

Q: Do you always feel tired when you do the farm work? Do you think it is harmful to your health to do the farm work for a long time?

A: I don't feel tired. We are doing farm work with the agricultural machine. It doesn't cost me lots of time.

Q: How much do you spend for yourself every month?

A: I sometimes buy clothes for myself. Sometimes my children buy the things for me. So I spend a little for myself.

Q: Are you satisfied with the traffic communication of the village?

A: Yes, I am satisfied with the traffic communication. I can go anywhere easily.

Q: How long does it take you to do the housework every day?

A: I don't do the housework. My daughter-in-law does most of the housework. I only look after my grandchild. Sometimes I go outside to find a job. Now I am not very old. I can do some work in the city. I go outside to earn money for my family when I can.

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: We manage the property together.

Q: Who makes a decision, when there is something important?

A: My husband makes the decision, sometimes he talks with me about it.

Q: Do you often quarrel with your husband?

A: Yes, we are often fighting over trifling matters, but we make up after a while.

Q: How do you think about the equality between men and women?

A: Men and women are equal nowadays. In my family, all the family members are equal.

Q: How do you think about the education of children?

A: I think receiving more education is better. Receiving more education can find a better job and make more money.

Q: In your opinion, what is an ideal family life?

A: All my family members are healthy. Actually, I am content with my current life.

Q: How much leisure time do you have in a week?

A: I have a lot of leisure time when I am staying at home. When I am working in the city, I have a little leisure time. I don't do lots of farm work, because I don't have much land. As to the housework, my daughter-in-law does more housework. I am free.

Q: What is the source of your pressure, or what worries you most?

A: No, I don't have pressure in my life. I am living a happy life.

Q: Do you think you and everything you have done is significant to your family and society?

A: I am important for my family.

Q: Do you want to live in the city? Why?

A: Of course. The life in the city is better. I think everyone likes to live in the city.

Q: When you have some trouble, will the women's federation or the government help you?

A: I don't have trouble in my life. Even if I had a trouble, I would solve it myself. They cannot offer me much help.

Interview B28

Ms. Qi E

Part one: Basic Information

1. Age: (46)
2. Marital Status: (Married)
3. How many years have you been married? (22)
4. Education Background: (Primary school)

Part Two: Working Conditions

5. How much arable land do you have? (2 mu)
6. Utilization of Land: (I am using it.)

Q: Do you work on the land yourself?

A: My husband does the farm work together with me.

Q: What sort of fertilizer do you use?

A: We use chemical fertilizer more than farmyard manure. We are feeding several sheep and cows. We have lots of farmyard manure. We seldom use the chemical fertilizer.

Q: How long do you work on the land every day?

A: I don't work on the land every day. When it is in the busy season, I do the farm work for 3 or 4 hours. After we harvest the wheat, we don't have much farm work to do.

11. How often do you use farm machinery when you are working? (I often use it.)

Q: Do you find part-time jobs in the slack season?

A: No. I am staying at home to feed livestock. I am feeding 32 sheep and six cows.

13. Who distributes tasks in your family? (I am not sure)

Part Three: Material Quality of Life

13. How much is the total annual income of your family? (50,000 Yuan)

14. What are the sources of income in your family? (Selling livestock)

15. What is the main expenditure in your family? (Children's schooling; Living goods; gifts)

16. How much do you spend every month? (Above 2000 Yuan)

17. Are you living in an old house or new house? (Old house, I have been living in it for 20 years.)

18. What household appliances do you have? (TV; Washing machine; fridge; induction cooker)
19. You have a (telephone; mobile phone).
20. How often do you go shopping? (Two or three times a month)
21. What kind of things do you often buy? (Living goods; clothes or shoes)

Part Four: Family Life

24. How many children do you have? (Three)
25. How did you get to know your husband? (My parents brought us together.)
28. Your husband's age (44)
29. The Education background of your husband: (Junior school)
26. Your husband's career: (Doing business)
27. How do you distribute the housework? (I do it myself.)
28. Are you satisfied with your marriage life? (Quite satisfied)
29. Whom do the children like to communicate with in your family? (My husband)
30. Are you living with the parents in law? (No, they are living in their house.)
31. Who are looking after the parents-in-law? (They don't need to be taken care of at present.)
32. What do you mainly have to do for your parents-in-law? (Nothing)
33. How are you getting on with your parents-in-law? (Just so so)

Part Five: Leisure Life

36. What kind of things do you often do in your spare time? (Watching TV; Having a chitchat with others)

Q: Are you satisfied with your leisure life?

A: I am dissatisfied. I feel very tired. It is very tired to feed livestock.

36. Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life? (Neighbors; friends)
37. When you are communicating with them, which topic do you often talk about? (Trivial things in household)
38. Are you satisfied with your social contact? (Basically satisfied)
39. When you need some help, whom will you contact with first? (Relatives)

Part Six: Health and Safety Issues

42. Are you in good health? (Yes, I am in good health)

43. How often do you go for a medical examination? (I never go for it.)

44. Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination? (No)

45. What will do you do when you feel under the weather? (I go to the drugstore in the village to buy some medicine)

46. Do you have medical insurance? (Yes, I have.)

47. How much should you afford with this kind of medical insurance for the treatment?
(60%)

Q: Do you feel stress or pressure in your life?

A: I always feel stress. We have elderly and children to take care of. The family burden is heavy. We have three sons. We must earn much money for them. They are young and single. Two of them are students.

49. If you had got trouble, whom would you like to pour out? (Relatives)

48. How about the public order in your village? (Not bad.)

Q: How much do you spend for yourself every month?

A: I spend 1000 Yuan at most a year. I only buy clothes for myself.

Q: How long does it take you to do the housework every day?

A: 5 hours.

Q: In your opinion, what is housework?

A: Cooking, washing clothes, cleaning room and feeding livestock.

Q: Are you feeding livestock alone?

A: No. Both my husband and I feed the livestock together. The person who has time feeds the livestock.

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: My husband.

Q: Who makes a decision, when there is something important?

A: My husband makes the decision.

Q: Do you often quarrel with your husband?

A: We seldom quarrel. Quarrel solves no problem.

Q: Do you think the man is superior to the woman? What does your husband think?

A: The man is more important than the woman. The men are the breadwinner while the women spend the money that is earned by men.

Q: Don't you earn money?

A: I earn less than my husband. The amounts spent on family are large. My children and I mainly depend on my husband.

Q: How do you think about the equality between men and women?

A: In our village, men and women are equal.

Q: Do you regard men as superior to women?

A: No. men and women are equal.

Q: How much leisure time do you have in a week?

A: I don't have much leisure time. How much? I don't know exactly.

Q: What is the source of your pressure, or what worries you most?

A: My sons. We must make enough money for them.

Q: Do you think you and everything you have done is significant to your family and society?

A: I don't know. I am not important. I just muddle along from day to day.

Q: Do you want to live in the city? Why?

A: How can I live in the city? I don't have enough money to live there. The environment in the country is better than urban areas.

Q: When you have some trouble, will the women's federation or the government help you?

A: We just solve the problem ourselves. We never ask them for help.

Q: Do you often keep track of current social events?

A: Never.

Q: What is the main problem in your daily life?

A: I don't know. I just muddle along from day to day.

Interview B29

Ms. Mo B

Part one: Basic Information

1. Age: (51)
2. Marital Status: (Married)
3. How many years have you been married? (29)
4. Education Background: (Primary school)

Part Two: Working Conditions

5. How much arable land do you have? (2 Mu)
6. Utilization of Land: (I am using it)

My husband works together with me.

Q: Does he is always staying at home?

A: No. last year, he was selling the cows. At the beginning of this year, he went to Beijing to find a job. Recently, he finished his work in Beijing and came back. We are harvesting wheat together.

8. What sort of fertilizer do you use? (Chemical fertilizer and farmyard manure)

Q: How long do you work on the land every day?

A: It depends. When it is in the busy season, I work for several hours. When it is in the slack season, I am almost free the whole day. Recently, we are harvesting the wheat. I work two or three hours every day. I do nothing when I feel tired. Anyway, I work for myself. I am free.

12. How often do you use farm machinery when you are working? (I often use it.)

Q: Do you find part-time jobs in the slack season?

A: Yes, this year I began to find part-time jobs in the village.

14. Who distributes tasks in your family? (I am not sure)

Part Three: Material Quality of Life

13. How much is the total annual income of your family? (Above 20,000 Yuan)
14. What are the sources of income in your family? (Selling the agriculture products; the wage of my husband who is doing odd jobs in the city)
15. What is the main expenditure in your family? (Living goods; Food; giving gift money)

Q: How much do you spend every month?

A: When I am staying at home alone, I spend about 1000RMB a month.

17. Are you living in an old house or new house? (An old house. I have been living in it for 25years.)

18. What household appliances do you have? (TV; washing machine; induction cooker)

19. You have a (mobile phone).

20. How often do you go shopping? (Once a week)

21. What kind of things do you often buy? (Food; living goods)

Part Four: Family Life

25. How many children do you have? (3)

26. How did you get to know your husband? (My parents brought us together.)

30. Your husband's age (48)

31. The Education background of your husband: (Primary school)

26. Your husband's career: (He is working in the city.)

27. How do you distribute the housework? (My husband is sharing it with me.)

28. Are you satisfied with your marriage life? (Quite satisfied)

29. Whom do the children like to communicate with in your family? (Me)

30. Are you living with the parents-in-law? (No, they are living in their house.)

31. Who are looking after the parents-in-law? (They don't need to be taken care of at present.)

32. What do you mainly have to do for your parents-in-law? (Nothing)

33. How are you getting on with your parents-in-law? (Not bad.)

Q: Do your parents-in-law do the farm work?

A: No. We give them some money every year. My parents-in-law have three sons. Each son gives them some money every year.

Part Five: Leisure Life

37. What kind of things do you often do in your spare time? (Watching TV; having a chitchat with others)

37. Are you satisfied with your leisure life? (Basically satisfied)

36. Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life? (Neighbors)

37. When you are communicating with them, which topic do you often talk about? (Trivial

things in household)

38. Are you satisfied with your social contact? (Basically satisfied)

Q: When you need some help, whom will you contact with first?

A: Until now, I don't come across the problem. I don't need help.

Part Six: Health and Safety Issues

43. Are you in good health? (Not very well. I get ill sometimes.)

44. How often do you go for a medical examination? (I never go for it.)

45. Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination? (No)

46. What will do you do when you feel under the weather? (I go to the drugstore in the village to buy some medicine.)

47. Do you have medical insurance? (Yes, I have.)

48. How much should you afford with this kind of medical insurance for the treatment?
(70%)

Q: Do you feel stress or pressure in your life?

A: Yes, I always feel stress. I have to make enough money to buy a flat in the city for my son. He is already old enough to get married. Now his salary is not high. He cannot afford a flat. My husband and I plan to buy it for him. His salary is at most 3000Yuan a month. The price of flat in that city is 6000-7000 Yuan per square meter.

50. If you had got trouble, whom would you like to pour out? (Neighbors; Friends)

48. How about the public order in your village? (Not bad.)

Q: Could you tell me some information about your children?

A: I have three children: two daughters and a son. My daughters are married. My son just graduated from college.

Q: Does your son work now?

A: Yes, he is working in the city near here.

Q: What kind of main food crops or vegetables are you growing? What kind of fowl or livestock are you feeding?

A: I am growing wheat and corn. I don't feed the livestock. I am feeding several chickens.

Q: Do you often buy the vegetables in the market?

A: Yes. I buy the vegetables in the market every day. No one grows vegetables now in the village.

Q: Do you always feel tired when you do the farm work?

A: I don't have much farm work to do. I don't feel tired.

Q: How much do you spend for yourself every month?

A: I spend a little for myself. My children often buy me the clothes. I buy nothing for myself.

Q: Are you satisfied with the traffic communication of the village?

A: No, the roads in the village are not very good. The roads are narrow and dirty,

Q: How long does it take you to do the housework every day?

A: Two or three hours. There is not much housework. My husband likes to cook, so I don't need to cook. I just wash clothes, clean the room. I mainly look after my grandchildren at home.

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: I don't know. Anyway, I keep the money in my family.

Q: Who makes a decision, when there is something important?

A: We talk about that and then make a decision together.

Q: How do you think about the equality between men and women?

A: Men and women are equal.

Q: Do people regard man as superior to woman in this village?

A: Yes. Most of the people are willing to have a son. Some families who already have two daughters are still planning to have a third child, although it is illegal to have more than two children. A son is necessary for a family.

Q: Do you think the men are more important than the women for family?

A: Yes. The man is more important. For example, although a woman can do the farm work, she cannot drive a car and carry heavy things. Last month my husband told me that he wanted to stay in Beijing and continued to work. I disagreed because I could not finish harvesting wheat without him. I need him to drive the car and carry the wheat. My elder daughter has born four children. All of the first three children are girls. Afterwards, she gave birth to the fourth one. Luckily, it is a boy. I tried to persuade her not to give birth to so many children, but she insisted on having a son. Now I am helping her to look after two girls. It is a heavy burden to raise four children. This is the result of the traditional idea.

Q: How do you think about the education of children?

A: Knowledge is very important for a person, and they can find a good job with a good academic qualification.

Q: Do you want to live in the city? Why?

A: I cannot buy another flat in the city. I have to live with my son together if I want to live in the city. But I guess my son's wife would not be willing to live together with me in future. It is better for me to stay in rural areas. Young people have their own life.

Q: How do you deal with the rubbish?

A: Villagers throw away the rubbish freely. Last two years, the committee in village put some trash cans along the street. But now no one cares about that. They throw around rubbish again. You can see the village is very dirty. Several years ago, the river was very clear. Now it has been polluted. The plastic bags are scattered everywhere.

Interview B30

Ms. Zhang T

Part one: Basic Information

1. Age: (44)
2. Marital Status: (Married)
3. How many years have you been married? (24)
4. Education Background: (junior middle school)

Part Two: Working Conditions

5. How much arable land do you have? (5 mu)
 6. Utilization of Land: (I am using it.)
- Q: Do you work on the land yourself?
- A: No, my husband does the farm work together with me.
8. What sort of fertilizer do you use? (Chemical fertilizer; farmyard manure)
 9. How long do you work on the land every day? (Less than 4 hours)
 13. How often do you use farm machinery when you are working? (I often use it.)
 12. Do you find part-time jobs in the slack season? (No)
 15. Who distributes tasks in your family? (I am not sure)

Part Three: Material Quality of Life

13. How much is the total annual income of your family? (Above 20,000 Yuan)
14. What are the sources of income in your family? (Selling the agriculture products; doing business in village)
15. What is the main expenditure in your family? (Children's schooling; living goods)
16. How much do you spend every month? (Above 2000 Yuan)
17. Are you living in an old house or new house? (An old house. I have been living in it for 17 years)
18. What household appliances do you have? (TV; washing machine; fridge; rice cooker)
19. You have a (telephone and mobile phone).
20. How often do you go shopping? (I go shopping when I need something)
21. What kind of things do you often buy? (Food; clothes or shoes)

Part Four: Family Life

26. How many children do you have? (3)
27. How did you get to know your husband? (I got to know him on a blind date.)
32. Your husband's age (45)
33. The Education background of your husband:(junior school)
26. Your husband's career: (Doing car repair business)
27. How do you distribute the housework? (I do it myself.)
28. Are you satisfied with your marriage life? (Basically satisfied)
29. Who do your children like to communicate with in your family? (Me)

Q: Are you living with the parents-in-law?

A: They are living in their house. They are living near to us.

Q: Who are looking after the parents-in-law?

A: They don't need to be taken care of at present.

Q: Do they do farm work?

A: No. they don't do farm work. I do the farm work for them. They have nothing to do. In some family, the elderly are still doing farm work. But in my family, the elderly do nothing. I do the farm work on their land. When I sell the crops and earn money, I must give them some. When they are ill, I have to take them to see the doctor and pay doctor's bills. So I often feel stress.

Q: Does the son have to look after parents when they are old?

A: In some family, daughters are also taking care of old parents. However, son has to pay the doctor's bills for the elderly and undertake the living costs of the elderly.

33. How are you getting on with your parents-in-law? (Not bad.)

Part Five: Leisure Life

38. What kind of things do you often do in your spare time? (Watching TV; having a chitchat with others)

38. Are you satisfied with your leisure life? (Basically satisfied.)

36. Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life? (Neighbors)

37. When you are communicating with them, which topic do you often talk about? (Trivial things in household)

38. Are you satisfied with your social contact? (Basically satisfied)

39. When you need some help, whom will you contact with first?(Relatives)

Part Six: Health and Safety Issues

44. Are you in good health? (Yes, I am in good health.)
45. How often do you go for a medical examination? (When I feel not good, I go for an examination.)
46. Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination? (No)
47. What will do you do when you feel under the weather? (I go to the drugstore in the village to buy some medicine.)
48. Do you have medical insurance? (Yes, I have.)
49. How much should you afford with this kind of medical insurance for the treatment? (50%)
47. Do you feel stress or pressure in your life? (I often feel stress or pressure.)
51. If you had got trouble, whom would you like to pour out? (Relatives; others)
48. How about the public order in your village? (Not bad.)

Q: Could you tell me some information about your children, e.g. age, education background, marital status and career?

A: I have three children: a son and two daughters. They are students. My elder daughter is studying in Jinan (a city), my younger daughter is going to senior school, and my son is going to junior school.

Q: What kind of main food crops or vegetables are you growing? What kind of fowl or livestock are you feeding?

A: I am growing wheat and corn. I don't feed livestock and fowl. My husband and I do the car repair business in the village. I don't have much time to feed the livestock or fowl.

Q: Do you often buy the vegetables in the market?

A: Yes, I buy the vegetables in the market. There is a market in our village. It is convenient for us to buy the vegetables.

Q: Do you always feel tired when you do the farm work?

A: When it is the busy season, I do more farm work. When I finish harvesting, I don't have farm work to do. I don't feel tired. After all, we use agricultural machines most of the time. We harvest wheat with the reaping machine. Afterwards, we carry the wheat by car, spread wheat on the road, and dry it in the sunshine. After the wheat is dried, we sell it. You see, we can finish all the work easily.

Q: Do you use pesticides and do you think pesticide residues will be harmful for people?

A: Yes, the pesticides are necessary for crop. They won't be harmful to people. Although they are sprayed on crops, they will be washed away by the rain.

What kind of farm work do you usually do?

Q: How much do you spend for yourself every month?

A: I spend about 1000 Yuan for myself a year. I only buy some clothes and shoes for myself. My children are young. I have to raise children and pay their schooling fees. So I must try to save money.

Q: Are you satisfied with the traffic communication of the village?

A: Yes, I am satisfied with it. We can go anywhere easily.

Q: How long does it take you to do the housework every day?

A: I am not sure. One or two hours. There is not so much housework. I only clean the room and cook the meal every day. Sometimes I wash the clothes.

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: We manage the property together.

Q: Who makes a decision, when there is something important?

A: My husband and I first talk about it and then we make a decision.

Q: Do you often quarrel with your husband?

A: We quarrel sometimes. We sometimes quarrel about household affairs.

Q: How about the equality between men and women in this village?

A: In some families, they still view sons as better than daughters. But the rule is strict now. Each couple can have two children at most. If they already have two daughters, they can't have the third one according to the One Child Policy. But they still want a boy. Nowadays raising a child costs lots of money. The schooling fees are also expensive. Parents are under heavy pressure. As a result, the couple who have only a son will not want to have another one.

Q: How do you think about the education of children?

A: Education is important for them. Anyway, I will support them to receive more education.

Q: How much leisure time do you have in a week?

A: Two or three hours a day. When it is in the slack season, I have more leisure time. This

month, I am harvesting the wheat. I can have a rest for two or three hours a day.

Q: When you have some trouble, will the women's federation or the government help you?

A: No. If I have some trouble, I will solve it myself, or I will ask my relatives for help.

Women's Federation can't give me much help.

Interview B31

Ms. Han M

Part one: Basic Information

1. Age: (59)
2. Marital Status: (Married)
3. How many years have you been married? (39)
4. Education Background: (Primary school)

Part Two: Working Conditions

5. How much arable land do you have? (Seven mu)
6. Utilization of Land: (I am using it)
7. Do you work on the land yourself? (My husband works together with me)
8. What sort of fertilizer do you use? (Chemical fertilizers)
9. How long do you work on the land every day? (Less than four hours)
14. How often do you use farm machinery when you are working? (I often use it)
13. Do you find part-time jobs in the slack season? (No)
16. Who distributes tasks in your family? (I am not sure)

Part Three: Material Quality of Life

13. How much is the total annual income of your family? (10,000 to 20,000 Yuan)
14. What are the sources of income in your family? (Selling the agriculture products)
15. What is the main expenditure in your family? (Living goods; giving gift money)
16. How much do you spend every month? (1000 to 1499 Yuan)
17. Are you living in an old house or new house? (An old house. I have been living in it for 20 years.)
18. What household appliances do you have? (TV; washing machine; fridge; electric pan; rice cooker)
19. You have a (mobile phone).
20. How often do you go shopping? (I go shopping when I am free.)
21. What kind of things do you often buy? (Food)

Part Four: Family Life

27. How many children do you have? (5)

- 28. How did you get to know your husband? (I got to know him on a blind date.)
- 34. Your husband's age (50)
- 35. The Education background of your husband: (Primary school)
- 26. Your husband's career: (He is doing farm work.)
- 27. How do you distribute the housework? (I do it myself.)
- 28. Are you satisfied with your marriage life? (Basically satisfied)
- 29. Who do your children like to communicate with in your family? (Me)
- 30. Are you living with the parents in law? (The elderly passed away.)

Part Five: Leisure Life

- 39. What kind of things do you often do in your spare time? (doing housework)
- 39. Are you satisfied with your leisure life? (Dissatisfied.)
- 36. Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life? (Neighbors)
- 37. When you are communicating with them, which topic do you often talk about? (Trivial things in household)
- 38. Are you satisfied with your social contact? (Basically satisfied)
- 39. When you need some help, whom will you contact with first? (Relatives)

Part Six: Health and Safety Issues

- 45. Are you in good health? (Yes, I am in good health.)
- 46. How often do you go for a medical examination? (When I feel not good, I go for an examination.)
- 47. Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination? (No)
- 48. What will do you do when you feel under the weather? (I go to the drugstore in the village to buy some medicine.)
- 49. Do you have medical insurance? (Yes, I have.)
- 50. How much should you afford with this kind of medical insurance for the treatment? (50%)
- 48. Do you feel stress or pressure in your life? (No, I never feel stress or pressure.)
- 52. If you had got trouble, whom would you like to pour out? (Relatives)
- 48. How about the public order in your village? (Not bad.)

Q: Could you tell me some information about your children, e.g. age, education background, marital status and career?

A: I have four daughters and a son. They are all working in the city. They have junior school education. All of them are married.

Q: What kind of main food crops or vegetables are you growing? What kind of fowl or livestock are you feeding?

A: I am growing wheat and corn. I don't feed livestock and fowl. They will make my house dirty, so I don't feed them now. And I am looking after my grandchild. I have no much time to feed them.

Q: Do you often buy the vegetables in the market?

A: Yes. No one grows the vegetable in this village. It is very tired to grow vegetables. I buy the vegetables in the market almost every day.

Q: Do you always feel tired when you do the farm work? Do you think it is harmful to your health to do the farm work for a long time?

A: I don't feel tired. Nowadays, the agricultural machine is widely used. We do the farm work with the agricultural machine. We don't feel tired. In the past, we did farm work slowly and always felt tired, because we didn't have any machine. We often did the farm work the whole day and had no time to have a rest.

Q: How much do you spend for yourself every month?

A: I spend a little for myself. My daughters often buy me the clothes and I don't need the cosmetic or something like that, so I almost spend nothing for myself.

Q: Are you satisfied with the traffic communication of the village?

A: Yes. We go to the town or the county easily. We have a car.

Q: How long does it take you to do the housework every day?

A: I spend at most two hours on housework. There isn't too much housework. I just cook for them and sometimes wash the clothes. For me, the main task is looking after my grandchild.

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: My husband and I.

Q: Who makes a decision, when there is something important?

A: Sometimes we make the decision together. Sometimes he makes the decision. I don't care about that.

Q: Do you often quarrel with your husband?

A: No. When we were young, we often quarreled. At that time we were living a poor life, we often quarreled about the trivial things. Now we are getting old, and our life becomes better. We have nothing to quarrel. In addition, quarrel can solve no problem.

Q: Do you think men's family status is higher than women's in a household? What does your husband think?

A: I don't know. But man is the bread-winner. The man is more important than the woman for a family. He also thinks so. He always feels that he is very important for us.

Q: How do you think about the equality between men and women?

A: Men and women should be equal.

Q: Do you regard sons as better than daughters?

A: I love all of them.

Q: Why did you want to have so many children?

A: The first four children are all daughters. At that time, we wanted a son. So we had the fifth child. Each couple needs a son. When we are old, our son can look after us. After the daughters get married, they have to look after their parents-in-law. They have no time or energy to take care of us. So a son is important for a family.

Q: How do you think about the education of children?

A: I don't know. It is said receiving more education is better. Anyway, my children are all grown up. I don't need to think about this issue.

Q: In your opinion, what is an ideal family life?

A: Everyone is healthy in my family. That is enough.

Q: How much leisure time do you have in a week?

A: I have to look after my grandchild all day long. I have a little leisure time. One or two hours a day, maybe.

Q: What is the source of your pressure, or what worries you most?

A: I don't feel pressure. Now I am living a good life,

Q: Do you think you and everything you have done is significant to your family and society?

A: Yes. What I have done is important for my family. I am not important for society. I have done nothing for the society.

Q: Do you want to live in the city? Why?

A: No, I don't want to live in the city. I get used to the rural life. It is not convenient to live

in the city.

Interview B32

Ms. Yang F

Part one: Basic Information

1. Age: (60)
2. Marital Status: (Married)
3. How many years have you been married? (38)
4. Education Background: (Primary school)

Part Two: Working Conditions

5. How much arable land do you have? (5 mu)
6. Utilization of Land: (I am using it)

7. Do you work on the land yourself?

I don't do farm work now. When it is in the busy season, my children come back to harvest the wheat. After harvesting the wheat and growing the corn, they go to the city to do the business. The city is near here. They do the farm work easily because now all the farm work can be done with the agricultural machine. My husband is also working in the city. I am taking care of my grandchild at home.

8. What sort of fertilizer do you use? (Farmyard manure)
17. Who distributes tasks in your family? (I am not sure)

Part Three: Material Quality of Life

13. How much is the total annual income of your family? (Over 20,000 Yuan)
(We have only a little land, we can't earn much money by selling crops. Most of our earning comes from doing odd jobs or doing business in the city.)
14. What are the sources of income in your family? (Selling the agriculture products; the wage of my husband who is doing odd jobs in the city; the wage of other family members)
15. What is the main expenditure in your family? (Living goods; food; seeing a doctor)
16. How much do you spend every month? (Above 2000 Yuan)
17. Are you living in an old house or new house? (An old house. I have been living in it for 30years.)
18. What household appliances do you have? (TV; washing machine; fridge; rice cooker)
19. You have a (mobile phone and computer).

20. How often do you go shopping? (I go shopping when I need something.)

21. What kind of things do you often buy? (Food; Living goods)

Part Four: Family Life

28. How many children do you have? (3)

29. How did you get to know your husband? (I got to know him on a blind date.)

36. Your husband's age (60)

37. The Education background of your husband :(Primary school)

26. Your husband's career: (He is working in the city.)

27. How do you distribute the housework? (I do it myself.)

28. Are you satisfied with your marriage life? (Quite satisfied)

29. Who do your children like to communicate with in your family? (Me)

30. Are you living with the parents in law? (The elderly passed away.)

31. Who are looking after the parents-in-law? (Myself)

32. What do you mainly have to do for your parents-in-law? (Washing clothes; cooking; when they are ill, I look after them.)

33. How are you getting on with your parents-in-law? (Quite well)

Part Five: Leisure Life

40. What kind of things do you often do in your spare time? (Watching TV, having a chitchat with others)

40. Are you satisfied with your leisure life? (Quite satisfied)

36. Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life? (Neighbors)

37. When you are communicating with them, which topic do you often talk about? (Trivial things in household)

38. Are you satisfied with your social contact? (Basically satisfied)

Part Six: Health and Safety Issues

46. Are you in good health? (Yes, I am in good health.)

47. How often do you go for a medical examination? (I never go for it.)

48. Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination? (No)

49. What will do you do when you feel under the weather? (I always take a "wait and see" attitude and avoid seeing the doctor as much as I could)

50. Do you have medical insurance? (Yes, I have.)

51. How much should you afford with this kind of medical insurance for the treatment?
(60%)

49. Do you feel stress or pressure in your life? (No, I never feel stress or pressure.)

53. If you had got trouble, whom would you like to pour out? (My husband)

48. How about the public order in your village? (Not bad)

Q: Could you tell me some information about your children, e.g. age, education background, marital status and career?

A: I have two daughters and a son. All of them are married. They have junior school education. My son is doing business in the city. My daughters are doing odd jobs in the city.

Q: What kind of fowl or livestock are you feeding?

A: I am feeding some chicken.

Q: Do you often buy the vegetables in the market?

A: Yes, I often buy the vegetables in the market.

Q: How much do you spend for yourself every month?

A: I don't know. I seldom buy something for myself. My daughters often buy me the clothes. I don't know how much I spend for myself a month. It is very little.

Q: Are you satisfied with the traffic communication of the village?

A: Yes. Although some roads in the village are not very well, we can go anywhere by car. I think it is all right.

Q: How long does it take you to do the housework every day?

A: One or two hours. When I feel boring, I would like to do the housework.

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: My husband and I manage it together.

Q: Who makes a decision, when there is something important?

A: There are not some important things in our family after all of the children get married. When he is not at home, I often make a decision. But those things are not very important. If there is something important, I will talk with him.

Q: Do you often quarrel with your husband?

A: We don't have the opportunity to quarrel. He is working in the city and he is very busy. We don't have much time to communicate. In addition, we have nothing to quarrel. It may

be because we are old, the temper becomes better.

Q: Do you think men's family status is higher than women's in a household? What does your husband think?

A: Yes, they can earn more money for the family. They can do many jobs that women can't do. He thinks that he is the head of our family. Now he is working outside to make money. I am looking after the grandchild at home. We cannot live a good life without him.

Q: How do you think about the education of children?

A: I don't know much about that. The more education they received, the better career development they will have in future. I hope my grandchild can receive more education.

Q: In your opinion, what is an ideal family life?

A: We have enough money to live, and all the family members are healthy.

Q: How much leisure time do you have in a week?

A: I have much leisure time every day. I don't need to do much work. I am only taking care of my grandchild.

Q: What is the source of your pressure, or what worries you most?

A: I don't have any pressure. My life is better than before. All my children can make money. We have enough money to live. I am satisfied with my current life.

Q: Do you think you and everything you have done is significant to your family and society?

A: I think I am important for my family. If I don't look after the child at home, my husband cannot go outside to find a job.

Q: Do you want to live in the city? Why?

A: No, I don't want to live there. Living in rural areas is comfortable. I will feel unease in the city. Young people like to live in the city. It is convenient for them to go to work. And there are many schools in the city. They can send their children to go a better school. For the elderly, we don't want to leave home. We get used to the life in rural areas.

Interview B33

Ms. Zhao B

Part one: Basic Information

1. Age: (26)
2. Marital Status: (Married)
3. How many years have you been married? (Four years)
4. Education Background: (junior school)

Part Two: Working Conditions

5. How much arable land do you have? (One mu)
6. Utilization of Land: (I am using it)
7. Do you work on the land yourself? (My family works together with me)
8. What sort of fertilizer do you use? (Farmyard manure)
9. How long do you work on the land every day? (Four to six hours)
15. How often do you use farm machinery when you are working? (I use it sometimes.)
14. Do you find part-time jobs in the slack season? (Yes)
18. Who distributes tasks in your family? (I am not sure)

Part Three: Material Quality of Life

13. How much is the total annual income of your family? (10,000 to 20,000 Yuan)
14. What are the sources of income in your family? (My husband's the wage. He is doing odd jobs in the city.)
15. What is the main expenditure in your family? (Children's schooling; Living goods; Food; Seeing a doctor; Giving gift money; Buying clothes)
16. How much do you spend every month? (Above 2000 Yuan)
17. Are you living in an old house or new house? (A new house. I have been living in it for four years)
18. What household appliances do you have? (TV; washing machine; fridge; electric pan; rice cooker; induction cooker)
19. You have a (telephone; mobile phone).
20. How often do you go shopping? (Two or three times a month)
21. What kind of things do you often buy? (Food; clothes or shoes; cosmetics)

Part Four: Family Life

- 29. How many children do you have? (1 mu)
- 30. How did you get to know your husband? (I got to know him on a blind date.)
- 38. Your husband's age (24)
- 39. The Education background of your husband: (Senior school)
- 26. Your husband's career: (He is doing farm work.)
- 27. How do you distribute the housework? (My husband helps me to do it sometimes)
- 28. Are you satisfied with your marriage life? (Basically satisfied)
- 29. Who do your children like to communicate with in your family? (Me)
- 30. Are you living with the parents in law? (No, they are living in their house.)
- 31. Who are looking after the parents in law? (My husbands' siblings)
- 32. What do you mainly have to do for your parents-in-law? (Washing clothes; cooking; when they are ill, I look after them.)
- 33. How are you getting on with your parents in law? (Sometimes we have the conflict)

Part Five: Leisure Life

- 41. What kind of things do you often do in your spare time? (other)
- 41. Are you satisfied with your leisure life? (Quite satisfied)
- 36. Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life? (Relatives; neighbors; friends; parents)
- 37. When you are communicating with them, which topic do you often talk about? (Trivial things in household; something about work; difficulties you meet with recently)
- 38. Are you satisfied with your social contact? (Dissatisfied)
- 39. When you need some help, whom will you contact with first?(Relatives)

Part Six: Health and Safety Issues

- 47. Are you in good health? (Not very well. I get ill sometimes.)
- 48. How often do you go for a medical examination? (When I feel not good, I go for an examination.)
- 49. Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination? (No)
- 50. What will do you do when you feel under the weather? (I go to the drugstore in the village to buy some medicine.)
- 51. Do you have medical insurance? (Yes, I have.)

52. How much should you afford with this kind of medical insurance for the treatment? (I am not sure.)

50. Do you feel stress or pressure in your life? (I always feel stress or pressure.)

54. If you had got trouble, whom would you like to pour out? (Relatives; Neighbors)

48. How about the public order in your village? (Not bad.)

Q: Could you tell me some information about your children?

A: I have a daughter. She is three years old.

Q: What kind of main food crops or vegetables are you growing? What kind of fowl or livestock are you feeding?

A: We are growing wheat and corn. We are feeding ten sheep and three cows.

Q: Do you often buy the vegetables in the market?

A: Yes, I often buy vegetables in the market, because we don't grow vegetables.

Q: Do you always feel tired when you do the farm work? Do you think it is harmful to your health to do the farm work for a long time?

A: Yes, I often feel tired when I do the farm work. It has a little bad influence on my health.

Q: What kind of farm work do you usually do?

A: I help my parents-in-law to harvest the wheat and dry the wheat. The weather now is very hot. I spread the wheat on the road under the sunshine every day. It is very tired to do that.

Q: How much do you spend for yourself every month?

A: It depends. If I buy the clothes or shoes, I spend more money. But in some month, I buy nothing. I spend more than 2000 for myself a year.

Q: Are you satisfied with the traffic communication of the village?

No. Some roads in the village are not very good. They are muddy and rough.

Q: How long does it take you to do the housework every day?

A: I do housework for four or five hours.

Q: What housework do you do every day?

A: Washing clothes, cleaning rooms, cooking...The housework takes me much time.

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: My husband. He keeps the money. When I need money, I have to ask for money from

him. I often feel degraded.

Q: Who makes a decision, when there is something important?

A: My husband always makes the decision. He never talks with me about those matters. I have no right to make a decision in my family.

Q: Do you often quarrel with your husband?

A: We often quarrel about the child and money. I haven't given birth to a son for him, so he is always not happy. And he keeps all the money. I have to give him the money I have earned, for example, I must give him my wage. When I want to buy something, I must ask for money from him. I want to keep the money myself, but he doesn't agree. So we often quarrel about this.

Q: Do you think men's family status is higher than women's in a household?

A: Men. In my family, my husband's status is higher than mine. He is the head of family. My parents-in-law always hope they can have a grandson. They don't like my daughter. I feel very sad. If I had a son, I would be treated well in the family.

Q: How do you think about the equality between men and women?

A: Men and women should be equal. But in the village, most of the people look down upon women.

Q: How do you think about the education of children?

A: We should support the child to receive more education.

Q: In your opinion, what is an ideal family life?

A: All the family members are healthy.

Q: How much leisure time do you have in a week?

A: I have a little leisure time. I always have a lot of work to do.

Q: What is the source of your pressure, or what worries you most?

A: Child. Raising a child costs a lot of money. The schooling fee is very expensive. And I plan to have another child. My husband wants a son. So I must give birth to another one. Then I need more money to raise two children.

Q: Do you think you and everything you have done is significant to your family and society?

A: No, until now I haven't done something important for my family and society.

Q: Would you like to learn and work in a different profession? Which one? If there is a chance for vocational training and knowledge enhancement, are you willing to do that?

Why?

A: Yes. I want to have a good job and make myself stronger. I want to earn a lot of money and be financially independent.

Q: Do you want to live in the city? Why?

A: No. I will feel more stressful if I live in the city. I cannot get used to the fast pace of urban life.

Q: When you have some trouble, will the women's federation or the government help you?

A: I think I will ask them for help if I can solve the problem myself.

Interview B34

Ms. Sun E

Part one: Basic Information

1. Age: (53)
2. Marital Status: (Married)
3. How many years have you been married? (30)
4. Education Background: (Primary school)

Part Two: Working Conditions

5. How much arable land do you have? (4 mu)
6. Utilization of Land: (We are using it.)
7. Do you work on the land yourself? (I don't do the farm work.)

Q: What do you do?

A: I am doing business. I am keeping a shop in the village.

19. Who distributes tasks in your family? (I am not sure)

Part Three: Material Quality of Life

13. How much is the total annual income of your family? (Above 20,000 Yuan)
14. What are the sources of income in your family? (The wage of my husband. We can earn only a little money by selling agriculture products. The main sources of income are working in the city or doing business. My husband is doing odd jobs in the city. My son is doing business. I am keeping a shop in the village. Now the young people don't do farm work. They are working in the city. The elderly staying in the village do some farm work.)
15. What is the main expenditure in your family? (Children's schooling; Living goods; Food; Giving gift money)
16. How much do you spend every month? (Over 2000 Yuan)
17. Are you living in an old house or new house? (An old house. I have been living in it for ten years.)
18. What household appliances do you have? (TV; washing machine; fridge; rice cooker; Induction cooker)
19. You have a (telephone; mobile phone).
20. How often do you go shopping? (I go shopping when I need something)

21. What kind of things do you often buy? (Food ; Living goods)

Part Four: Family Life

30. How many children do you have? (2)

31. How did you get to know your husband? (I got to know him on a blind date.)

40. Your husband's age (55)

41. The Education background of your husband: (Primary school)

26. Your husband's career: (He is working in the city.)

27. How do you distribute the housework? (I do it myself.)

28. Are you satisfied with your marriage life? (Basically satisfied)

29. Who do your children like to communicate with in your family? (Me)

30. Are you living with the parents-in-law? (No, they are living in their house.)

31. Who are looking after the parents-in-law? (They don't need to be taken care of at present.)

32. What do you mainly have to do for your parents-in-law? (Washing clothes; cooking)

33. How are you getting on with your parents-in-law? (Quite well)

Part Five: Leisure Life

42. What kind of things do you often do in your spare time? (Watching TV; Having a chitchat with others)

42. Are you satisfied with your leisure life? (Basically satisfied.)

36. Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life? (Neighbors; Friends)

37. When you are communicating with them, which topic do you often talk about? (Trivial things in household)

38. Are you satisfied with your social contact? (Basically satisfied)

39. When you need some help, whom will you contact with first? (Relatives)

Part Six: Health and Safety Issues

48. Are you in good health? (Yes, I am in good health.)

49. How often do you go for a medical examination? (I never go for it.)

50. Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination? (No)

51. What will do you do when you feel under the weather? (I go to the drugstore in the village to buy some medicine.)

52. Do you have medical insurance? (Yes, I have.)

53. How much should you afford with this kind of medical insurance for the treatment?
(50%)

51. Do you feel stress or pressure in your life? (Sometimes I feel them.)

55. If you had got trouble, whom would you like to pour out? (No one.)

48. How about the public order in your village? (Not bad.)

Q: Could you tell me some information about your children?

A: I have a daughter and a son. They have been married. My son is doing business in the city which is near here. My daughter-in-law is living with me. I help them to take care of the child and keep the shop in the village.

Q: What kind of main food crops or vegetables are you growing? What kind of fowl or livestock are you feeding?

A: I don't do the farm work. I have no time to do that. My husband's brothers are doing the farm work. He is growing the wheat and corn. We don't feed the livestock.

Q: Do you often buy the vegetables in the market?

A: Yes. We don't grow the vegetable. We have to buy the vegetables in the market.

Q: How much do you spend for yourself every month?

A: I only buy one or two article of clothing for myself a year. I don't spend much for myself.

Q: Are you satisfied with the traffic communication of the village?

A: Yes. I think it is good.

Q: How long does it take you to do the housework every day?

A: It depends. My daughter-in-law shares the housework with me. If I am free, I do some housework. I don't do housework when I am busy.

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: My husband and I.

Q: Who makes a decision, when there is something important?

A: My husband often makes the decision. Sometimes we talk about it together. Then we make the decision.

Q: Do you often quarrel with your husband?

A: No. We are very busy and have no time to quarrel.

Q: Do you think men's family status is higher than women's in a household?

A: Yes. Men's family status is a little higher than women's. But nowadays, in some families, women's family status is higher.

Q: How do you think about the equality between men and women?

A: Men and women are equal.

Q: How about the equality between men and women in this village?

A: Men and women are equal in our village. Daughters are also good for the family.

Q: How do you think about the education of children?

A: I have never thought about this issue. If the children want to receive more education, we should support them. If they are not willing to go to school, I can't help it.

Q: In your opinion, what is an ideal family life?

A: We have enough money to live, and all of us are healthy.

Q: How much leisure time do you have in a week?

A: I don't have much leisure time. I have to stay in the shop every day.

Q: What is the source of your pressure, or what worries you most?

A: We always have to do the business or find odd jobs in the city. Otherwise, we don't have enough money to live. We have only a little land. We can't live only with the land. When we are too old to do the odd jobs or do the business, we will live a poor life. So, now we have to earn much money and save enough money for future.

Q: Do you think you and everything you have done is significant to your family and society?

A: Yes, I am important for my family. I can do a lot of things for my family.

Q: Do you want to live in the city? Why?

A: I don't want to live in the city. I have lived here for decades. I don't want to leave here. I get used to the rural life.

Q: When you have some trouble, will the women's federation or the government help you?

A: Until now, I haven't met with the big trouble which my family and I can't solve. I think they can't help us a lot.

Interview B35

Ms. Zhao W

Part one: Basic Information

1. Age: (50)
2. Marital Status: (Married)
3. How many years have you been married? (25)
4. Education Background: (Primary school)

Part Two: Working Conditions

5. How much arable land do you have? (1 mu)
6. Utilization of Land: (I am using it.)
7. Do you work on the land yourself? (My family work together with me.)
8. What sort of fertilizer do you use? (Chemical fertilizer)
9. How long do you work on the land every day? (Less than 4 hours)
16. How often do you use farm machinery when you are working? (I often use it.)
15. Do you find part-time jobs in the slack season? (No)
20. Who distributes tasks in your family? (I am not sure.)

Part Three: Material Quality of Life

13. How much is the total annual income of your family? (Over 20,000 Yuan)
14. What are the sources of income in your family? (Selling the agriculture products and livestock)
15. What is the main expenditure in your family? (Living goods, food, seeing a doctor and gift money)
16. How much do you spend every month? (Over 2000 Yuan)
17. Are you living in an old house or new house? (An old house. I have been living in it for 30 years.)
18. What household appliances do you have? (TV, washing machine, fridge, rice cooker)
19. You have a (telephone and mobile phone).
20. How often do you go shopping? (I go shopping when I need something to buy.)
21. What kind of things do you often buy? (Food)

Part Four: Family Life

31. How many children do you have ?(3)
32. How did you get to know your husband? (I got to know him on a blind date)
42. Your husband's age (2)
43. The Education background of your husband: (Primary school)
26. Your husband's career: (Doing business)
27. How do you distribute the housework? (I do it myself)
28. Are you satisfied with your marriage life? (Basically satisfied)
29. Who do your children like to communicate with in your family? (I am not sure.)
30. Are you living with the parents-in-law? (No, they are living in their house.)
31. Who are looking after the parents-in-law? (They don't need to be taken care of at present.)
32. What do you mainly have to do for your parents-in-law? (When they are ill, I look after them.)
33. How are you getting on with your parents-in-law? (Not bad)

Part Five: Leisure Life

43. What kind of things do you often do in your spare time? (Watching TV; having a chitchat with others)
43. Are you satisfied with your leisure life? (Basically satisfied.)
36. Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life? (Neighbors)
37. When you are communicating with them, which topic do you often talk about? (Trivial things in household)
38. Are you satisfied with your social contact? (Basically satisfied)
39. When you need some help, whom will you contact with first?(Children)

Part Six: Health and Safety Issues

49. Are you in good health? (Yes, I am in good health.)
50. How often do you go for a medical examination? (I never go for it.)
51. Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination? (No)
52. What will do you do when you feel under the weather? (I always take a "wait and see" attitude and avoid seeing the doctor as much as I could.)
53. Do you have medical insurance? (Yes, I have)

54. How much should you afford with this kind of medical insurance for the treatment?
(50%)

52. Do you feel stress or pressure in your life? (Sometimes I feel stress or pressure.)

56. If you had got trouble, whom would you like to pour out? (My children)

48. How about the public order in your village? (Not bad.)

Q: Could you tell me some information about your children.

A: I have three children: two daughters and a son. They are doing odd jobs in the city.

Q: Are they married?

A: Yes, all of them are married.

Q: Are you taking care of your grandchild?

A: I am taking care of my granddaughter.

Q: What kind of main food crops or vegetables are you growing? What kind of fowl or livestock are you feeding?

A: I am growing wheat and corn. My husband is feeding several sheep. When the sheep become strong, he will sell them.

Q: Do you always feel tired when you do the farm work?

A: No. I only have one mu land. I don't have much farm work to do.

Q: How much do you spend for yourself every month?

A: I buy some food...

Q: Do you buy clothes for yourself?

A: I seldom buy clothes for myself. My daughters sometimes buy me the clothes.

Q: Are you satisfied with the traffic communication of the village?

A: The roads in our village are not good. But it doesn't matter to me. I am often staying at home.

Q: How long does it take you to do the housework every day?

A: My daughter-in-law does the housework. I do the housework when she is not at home. It doesn't take me much time. I only cook for them.

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: My husband. He is doing the business, he makes and keeps the money.

Q: Who makes a decision, when there is something important?

A: My husband.

Q: Do you often quarrel with your husband?

A: We sometimes quarrel about the trivial things. We quarrel not very often. The conflict is unavoidable.

Q: Do you think men's family status is higher than women's in a household? Do you think the man is superior to the woman?

A: Yes, man is the bread-winner. He earns money for us. His family status should be higher than mine. But in some families, woman's family status is even than men's. In my family, I don't make the money. I just stay at home and look after the child.....I don't care about that. It doesn't matter to me.

Q: How do you think about the equality between men and women?

A: Nowadays men and women are equal.

Q: Do the villagers view sons as better than daughters?

A: Yes. Most of the villagers view sons as better than daughters, because it is beneficial for a family to raise a son. When the son gets married, we need to prepare three rooms for him.

Q: Which rooms?

A: A bedroom, a kitchen, and a living room. And then we buy some furniture for them and buy the jewelry for the bride.

Q: How much did you spend on your son's marriage?

A: We spent 80,000 Yuan. In this area, people spend at least 80,000 Yuan for a son's marriage. However, when a daughter gets married, you have to buy the household appliances for the new couple. The most important thing is that we don't ask for betrothal gifts from the groom. And we have to give the daughter at least 30,000 Yuan as a dowry. Some rich families give the daughter 50,000 Yuan or 60,000 Yuan. The daughter will leave home and live with her husband's family when she gets married. The groom's parents not only have a new family member but also get the household appliances. However, the bride's parents can get nothing and even lose a family member and a lot of money. So having a son is better. Raising a daughter means you will lose money in the future. The daughter will leave you in the end. In addition, you must give her much money when she is leaving you. The family which has two or three daughters will feel stressed.

Interview B36

Ms. Zhao L

Part one: Basic Information

1. Age: (54)
2. Marital Status: (Married)
3. How many years have you been married? (30)
4. Education Background: (Primary school)

Part Two: Working Conditions

5. How much arable land do you have? (5 mu)
6. Utilization of Land: (I am using it)
7. Do you work on the land yourself? (Yes, I work on the land with my husband)
8. What sort of fertilizer do you use? (Chemical fertilizer)
9. How long do you work on the land every day? (4 to 6 hours)

How often do you use farm machine when you are working? (I often use it.)

Do you find part-time jobs in the slack season? (Yes, sometimes.)

12. Who distributes tasks in your family? (I am not sure.)

Part Three: Quality of Material Life

13. How much is the total annual income of your family? (10,000 to 20,000 Yuan)
14. What are the sources of income in your family? (Selling the agriculture products and sheep, and my wage when I doing part-time work)
15. What is the main expenditure in your family? (Food, living goods, gift money and tuition fees)
16. How much do you spend every month? (1000 to 1499 Yuan)
17. Are you living in an old house or new house? (An old house. I have been living in it for more than 20 years.)
18. What household appliances do you have? (TV, washing machine, fridge, electric pan, rice cooker and induction cooker)
19. You have a (mobile phone).
20. How often do you go shopping? (Every day)
21. What kind of things do you often buy? (Food, living goods, clothes or shoes)

Part Four: Family Life

How many children do you have? (Three)

How did you get to know your husband? (I got to know him on a blind date.)

Your husband's age (56)

The Education background of your husband: (Primary school.)

26. Your husband's career: (He is staying at home and feeding sheep.)

27. How do you distribute the housework? (I do it myself.)

28. Are you satisfied with your marriage life? (Basically satisfied)

29. Who do your children like to communicate with in your family? (I am not sure.)

30. Are you living with the parents in law? (The elderly passed away.).

Part Five: Leisure Life

What kind of things do you often do in your spare time? (Watching TV, having a chit chat with others)

Are you satisfied with your leisure life? (Not bad.)

36. Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life? (Friends and neighbors)

37. When you are communicating with them, which topic do you often talk about? (Trivial things in household)

38. Are you satisfied with your social contact? (Not bad.)

39. When you need some help, whom will you contact with first? (Friends)

Part Six: Health and Safety Issues

Are you in good health? (Very well)

How often do you go for a medical examination? (When I feel not good, I go for an examination.)

Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination? (Never)

What will do you do when you feel under the weather? (I always take a "wait and see" attitude and avoid seeing the doctor as much as I could.)

Do you have medical insurance? (Yes, I have)

How much should you afford with this kind of medical insurance for the treatment? (60%)

Do you feel stress or pressure in your life? (I feel stress sometimes.)

If you had got trouble, whom would you like to pour out? (My friends.)

48. How about the public order in your village? (Not bad.)

Q: Could you tell me some information about your children, e.g. age, education background, marital status and career?

A: I have three children: two daughters and a son. The elderly daughter is 29 years old. The other daughter is 27 years old. My son is 24 years old. All of them have already got married. My daughters are living in another village. My son is living together with me. We are living in the same yard.

Q: What kind of main food crops or vegetables are you growing?

A: We are growing corn, wheat.

Q: Are you growing vegetables?

A: No, we buy vegetables in the market near this village.

Q: What kind of fowl or livestock are you feeding?

A: We are feeding several chickens and fifteen sheep.

Q: Do you think you have got benefit from some agricultural policies?

A: Yes, but only a few. We can get a few agricultural subsidies from the government.

Q: Do you always feel tired when you do the farm work?

A: No, nowadays farm machines can help us to do a lot of work. I don't feel tired when I do farm work. In the past, we often felt tired, because we didn't have farm machines.

Q: When did you start to use the farm machine?

A: About ten years ago.

Q: How much do you spend for yourself every month?

A: I seldom buy something for myself, except one or two pieces of clothing.

Q: Are you satisfied with the traffic communication of the village?

A: Yes. I am satisfied with it. I have an electric bicycle. It is convenient to go everywhere.

Q: How long does it take you to do the housework every day?

A: Cooking, cleaning, and feeding sheep often cost me four...or five hours.

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: My husband manages the property.

Q: Who makes a decision, when there is something important?

A: My husband makes the decision.

Q: Do you often quarrel with your husband?

A: No, we don't quarrel.

Q: Do you think men's family status is higher than women's in a household? Do you think the man is superior to the woman?

A: Yes, men's family status is higher. The man is the head of a household.

Q: Do you believe males and females are equal in the family?

A: Yes, men and women are equal.

Q: In your opinion, what is an ideal family life?

A: My current life is good. But it would be much better if my son could have a man-child. My daughter-in-law had given two children. Unluckily, both of them are girls. My husband often doesn't feel happy because of this. We only have one son, but he doesn't have a man-child. Recently, the (birth-control) policy is strict. We have not the opportunity to give birth to a third one. The fine is so high that we cannot afford it.

Q: How much leisure time do you have in a week?

A: Three or four hours a day.

Q: Do you think you and everything you have done is significant to your family and society?

A: I am not important. I am just a common farmer.

Q: Would you like to learn and work in a different profession?

A: No, I am too old to learn new things.

Q: Do you want to live in the city? Why?

A: I don't want to live in the city. We don't have much money to buy a flat in the city. In addition, if we move to the city, we have nothing to do. And the flat in the city is too small. I am accustomed to living in rural areas.

Q: When you have some trouble, will the women's federation or the government help you?

A: I don't know where the women's federation is. And I don't have the trouble which needs to be solved by it.

Q: Do you often keep track of current social events?

A: No, I just watch some TV programs.

Q: What is the main problem in your daily life?

A: I have no problem except that my son could have a man-child.

Interview B37

Ms. Han B

Part one: Basic Information

1. Age: (24)
2. Marital Status: (Married)
3. How many years have you been married? (Four years.)
4. Education Background: (Junior middle school)

Part Two: Working Conditions

5. How much arable land do you have? (Five mu)
6. Utilization of Land: (I don't do farm work, my parents-in-law are using it.)

Do you find part-time jobs in the slack season? (No, these four years, I am looking after my children at home.)

Part Three: Quality of Material Life

13. How much is the total annual income of your family? (10,000 to 20,000 Yuan)
14. What are the sources of income in your family? (Selling the agriculture products, the wage of my mother-in-law)
15. What is the main expenditure in your family? (Tuition fee, living goods, seeing a doctor, clothes, and cosmetics)
16. How much do you spend every month? (I am not sure.)
17. Are you living in an old house or new house? (Old house)
18. What household appliances do you have? (TV, washing machine, fridge, electric pan, rice cooker and induction cooker)
19. You have a (mobile phone).
20. How often do you go shopping? (I go shopping sometimes.)
21. What kind of things do you often buy? (Food, clothes, shoes and cosmetics)

Part Four: Family Life

How many children do you have? (Two)

How did you get to know your husband? (I met him on a blind date.)

Q: Do young people nowadays look for the partner in marriage by blind date as well?

A: Yes, most of us look for a mate in this way.

Q: When did you get to know your husband?

A: I was very young at that time, only 18 years old.

Q: Could you tell me your experience of attending blind date?

A: After I graduated from junior middle school, I went to work in a city. I worked for two years, my parents asked me to come back afterwards. They thought that it was time for me to get married and wanted to find me a suitor. Then a matchmaker came to my home and introduced him to me. The matchmaker told my parents about the situation of his family, my father was very content with that and agreed to let the matchmaker make an appointment for us. A few days later, we first met on a road near our village. My mother and aunty came together with me. They asked me how I felt about him, I said: 'Not bad.' The matchmaker took me to his family after two days. It was the second time we met. His father telephoned my father afterwards and talked about our engagement. After we made the engagement, I left the village to work while he was working in another place. We seldom met until Spring Festival. After two years, we got married, I gave up my job in the city and began to live in his home and we soon had the baby.

Your husband's age (24)

The Education background of your husband: (junior middle school)

26. Your husband's career: (He is staying at home now.)

Q: Does he have a job?

A: No, he was working in some factories in Jinan before. But he was not satisfied with those jobs. So he resigned. These days, he is staying at home and plans to do something like small business near the village.

27. How do you distribute the housework? (My mother-in-law shares the housework with me.)

28. Are you satisfied with your marriage life? (Basically satisfied)

29. Who do your children like to communicate with in your family? (Me)

Part Five: Leisure Life

What kind of things do you often do in your spare time? (Watching TV, go shopping)

Are you satisfied with your leisure life? (Basically satisfied)

36. Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life? (Friends)

37. When you are communicating with them, which topic do you often talk about? (Trivial things in household)

38. Are you satisfied with your social contact? (Basically satisfied)

39. When you need some help, whom will you contact with first? (Relatives)

Part Six: Health and Safety Issues

Are you in good health? (Very well)

How often do you go for a medical examination? (When I feel not good, I go for an examination.)

Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination? (Yes)

What will do you do when you feel under the weather? (I go to the town to see a doctor.)

Do you have medical insurance? (Yes, I have)

How much should you afford with this kind of medical insurance for the treatment? (70%)

Do you feel stress or pressure in your life? (I often feel stress or pressure)

If you had got trouble, whom would you like to pour out? (My friends)

48. How about the public order in your village? (Not bad.)

Q: How much do you spend for yourself every month?

A: 300 Yuan averagely. I buy some clothes, cosmetics, shoes and so on.

Q: Are you satisfied with the traffic communication of the village?

A: Yes. I am satisfied with it.

Q: How long does it take you to do the housework every day?

A: One or two hours. My mother-in-law does more housework.

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: I and my husband don't earn money now. We don't have any property.

Q: Who makes a decision, when there is something important?

A: My father-in-law. We all follow his decision.

Q: Do you often quarrel with your husband?

A: Sometimes. But I often avoid quarreling with him. I am living with parents-in-law. It is not good to quarrel with him when they are at home. Otherwise, I will be criticized by them.

Q: Do you think men's family status is higher than women's in a household?

A: Yes. In my family, my father-in-law is the head.

Q: Do you believe males and females are equal in the family?

A: I hope man and woman can be equal in the family. But in this village, man is superior to woman. It is not equal. In my family, my parents-in-law are eager to have a grandson. Unfortunately, I gave birth to two daughters. My father-in-law doesn't like them.

Q: In your opinion, what is an ideal family life?

A: I hope I could have a son. If so, my life must be better.

Q: How much leisure time do you have in a week?

A: I have to look after my daughters, so I don't have much leisure time.

Q: Do you think you and everything you have done is significant to your family and society?

A: I don't know. I have no idea.

Q: Would you like to learn and work in a different profession? Which one? If there is a chance for vocational training and knowledge enhancement, are you willing to do that? Why?

A: Yes, I am willing to. I want to learn anything which is helpful for me to find a good job and earn more money. I want a better life.

Q: Do you want to live in the city? Why?

A: Yes. The environment in the city is better than the rural area. There are also better schools in the city. The leisure life in city is better as well.

Q: When you have some trouble, will the women's federation or the government help you?

A: No. They cannot help us to solve troubles. It's strange to contact women's federation.

Q: Do you often keep track of current social events?

A: Sometimes I read the news.

Interview Z38

Ms. Liu L

Part one: Basic Information

1. Age: (53)
2. Marital Status: (Married)
3. How many years have you been married? (31)
4. Education Background: (Primary school)

Part Two: Working Conditions

5. How much arable land do you have? (Ten mu)
 6. Utilization of Land: (We are using it.)
 7. Do you work on the land yourself? (Yes, I work on the land myself.)
 8. What sort of fertilizer do you use? (Chemical fertilizer and farmyard manure)
- How long do you work on the land every day? (Four to six hours)

Q: Do you often use agricultural machines?

A: Yes, very often. We use agricultural machines to do all kinds of farm work.

Q: Can you operate the machines yourself?

A: It depends on the kind of machine. I can't operate the large machines, like the combine harvester or the seeder. We don't have these machines ourselves. We employ someone who has those machines when we need to use them. It is convenient. The machines are too large to put them in our yard, and they are very expensive. And, I think it is difficult to operate them. I can't operate them. But I can drive the tractor and electric tricycle (Laugh).

Q: Is it expensive to employ people to do farm work for you with machines?

A: No. We pay 70 Yuan per mu of land to have the wheat harvested. We have ten mu of land. We only need to give him 700 Yuan.

16. Do you find part-time jobs in the slack season? (Yes.)

Q: What kind of part-time jobs do you do?

A: For earning more money, I do any job that I can do.

Q: How do you distribute tasks in your family?

A: I do most of the farm work. My husband was injured. He cannot do hard work. When we are drying wheat, I do more work. He helps me to carry wheat with the car.

Part Three: Material Quality of Life

13. How much is the total annual income of your family? (Above 30,000 Yuan)

14. What are the sources of income in your family? (Selling agricultural products. We can earn about 3000 Yuan each year. And we sell sheep and geese eggs. We are raising several sheep and geese in the next yard which also belongs to us. We can earn 5000 Yuan from these. In addition, I do part-time jobs.)

Q: How much can you earn with part-time jobs?

A: About 20,000 Yuan.

15. What is the main expenditure in your family? (Food, living goods, clothes, gift money, medical bills and things for baby)

16. How much do you spend every month? (Over 3000 Yuan)

17. Are you living in an old house or new house? (This is a new house. We built it in 2009.)

Q: How much did you spend on the house?

A: 120,000 Yuan.

18. What household appliances do you have? (TV, washing machine, fridge, rice cooker, induction cooker, air conditioner)

19. You have a (telephone, mobile phone).

20. How often do you go shopping? (Yes, I often go shopping.)

21. What kind of things do you often buy? (food, clothes, living goods)

Part Four: Family Life

32. How many children do you have? (Three)

33. How did you get to know your husband? (I got to know him on a blind date.)

44. Your husband's age (54)

45. The Education background of your husband: (junior middle school)

27. How do you distribute the housework? (My husband does the housework. I have little time to do that. He is staying at home.)

28. Are you satisfied with your marriage life? (Basically satisfied)

29. Who do your children like to communicate with in your family? (Both me and my husband)

31. Who are looking after your mother-in-law? (Both my husband and I are looking after

her.)

32. What do you mainly have to do for her? (Anything, like washing clothes, cooking, etc. She is nearly ninety. We have to do anything for her.)

33. How are you getting on with her? (Quite well)

Part Five: Leisure Life

44. What kind of things do you often do in your spare time? (Go shopping and watching TV)

44. Are you satisfied with your leisure life? (Basically satisfied.)

36. Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life? (My daughters and husbands, friends)

37. When you are communicating with them, which topic do you often talk about? (Trivial things in household)

38. Are you satisfied with your social contact? (Basically satisfied)

39. When you need some help, whom will you contact with first? (Relatives)

Part Six: Health and Safety Issues

50. Are you in good health? (Yes, I am in good health.)

51. How often do you go for a medical examination? (I never go for it.)

52. Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination? (No)

53. What will do you do when you feel under the weather? (I go to the drugstore in the village to buy some medicine.)

54. Do you have medical insurance? (Yes, I have.)

55. How much should you afford with this kind of medical insurance for the treatment? (50%)

53. Do you feel stress or pressure in your life? (Sometimes I feel the stress. It is mainly because of my youngest daughter. I am content with my current life, except for my youngest daughter.)

Q: Why?

A: My youngest daughter is most unfortunate one among my daughters. Recently, she got divorced again. She has been married three times.

Q: Why did she get divorced?

A: I don't know why. I dare not ask her the reason. She looks so frustrated.

Q: How did her last two marriages end?

A: The first marriage... She ... A relative introduced them. The man is living in the next village. We were satisfied with the man. Unexpectedly, they divorced only a few days later. (What's the problem?) I don't know. We should not arrange the marriage without consulting her. Otherwise, she wouldn't divorce. I often regret it. She is the most unfortunate one among my daughters.

Q: How about her second marriage?

A: The man is a crook! He is sterile. He cheated us. The man comes from my home town. His family is poor. After they had got married, the man and my daughter were living in my home. But for a long time, they could not have a baby. He is a crook! He knew he was sterile before the marriage, but he never told us. Because of it, they got divorced.

Q: How did they know each other?

A: One of my relatives introduced the man to Yan.

If you had got trouble, whom would you like to pour out? (My daughters and husband)

48. How about the public order in your village? (Not bad.)

Q: Do you often buy the vegetables in the market?

A: Yes. We buy the vegetables in the market every day. The market is near to this village.

Q: How much do you spend for yourself every month?

A: I don't know the amount exactly. I often buy some clothes for myself.

Q: Are you satisfied with the traffic communication of the village?

A: Yes.

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: My husband and I.

Q: Who makes a decision, when there is something important?

A: We make a decision together.

Q: Do you often quarrel with your husband?

A: No. My husband has a good temper.

Q: Do you think men's family status is higher than women's in a household?

A: No, men and women are equal in the family.

Q: How do you think about the education of children?

A: I hope they can get more education.

Q: In your opinion, what is an ideal family life?

A: I hope my daughters are living a good life. And all of us could be healthy.

Q: How much leisure time do you have in a week?

A: I don't have much leisure time. I am very busy. I have to earn more money for my family.

Q: Do you think you and everything you have done is significant to your family and society?

A: Of course, I am important for my family. I can earn money for them (laugh).

Q: Do you want to live in the city? Why?

A: No. Nowadays, our village is changing. We are about to move into the new building in the village. The flat is far smaller than my yard. However, we have to move into it. We will get two flats. Our house and yard will be removed next year. I don't like the flats so much. They are too small. I am afraid that I am used to living in this house. But flats will be cleaner. This is an advantage.

Q: When you have some trouble, will the women's federation or the government help you?

A: No, they cannot help us. We should solve problems ourselves. We should not depend on others.

Interview Z39

Ms. Zhang B (Ms. Liu L's first daughter)

Part one: Basic Information

1. Age: (28)
2. Marital Status: (Married)
3. How many years have you been married? (Two)
4. Education Background: (College)

Part Two: Working Conditions

5. How much arable land do you have? (Ten mu)
6. Utilization of Land: (My mother is using it)
7. Do you work on the land? (Sometimes. When it is in the busy season, my husband and I often help my parents to do farm work. We help them to carry and dry wheat)
11. Do you find part-time jobs in the slack season? (After I have my son, I am staying at home. I plan to find a job next year or two years later, till my child is older.)

Who distributes tasks in your family? (My mother)

Part Three: Material Quality of Life

13. How much is the total annual income of your family? (My husband and I are staying at home. We don't have jobs. We don't have income.)
15. What is the main expenditure in your family? (Things for my child. Milk powder, clothes, snacks, baby carriage, etc. doctor bills.)
16. How much do you spend every month? (Above 1000 Yuan)
19. You have a (telephone, a mobile phone, and a computer).
20. How often do you go shopping? (Once a week)
21. What kind of things do you often buy? (Things for my child)

Part Four: Family Life

How many children do you have? (One)

How did you get to know your husband? (Our marriage is a love match.)

Your husband's age (26)

The education background of your husband: (junior middle school)

27. How do you distribute the housework? (My husband is sharing it with me.)

28. Are you satisfied with your marriage life? (Basically satisfied)

Part Five: Leisure Life

What kind of things do you often do in your spare time? (Surfing the internet, watching TV, reading)

Are you satisfied with your leisure life? (Quite satisfied)

36. Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life? (My sisters and my husband)

37. When you are communicating with them, which topic do you often talk about? (Trivial things)

38. Are you satisfied with your social contact? (Quite satisfied)

39. When you need some help, whom will you contact with first? (My sisters and parents)

Part Six: Health and Safety Issues

40. Are you in good health? (Yes, I am in good health.)

41. How often do you go for a medical examination? (When I feel not good, I go for an examination.)

Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination? (Yes)

What will do you do when you feel under the weather? (I go to the county or city to see a doctor)

Do you have medical insurance? (Yes, I have.)

How much should you afford with this kind of medical insurance for the treatment? (60%)

Do you feel stress or pressure in your life? (Yes, I feel stress sometimes. My husband and I don't have jobs. We have to depend on my parents. That makes me unhappy sometimes.)

If you had got trouble, whom would you like to pour out? (My sisters)

49. How about the public order in your village? (Very good)

Q: Do you always feel tired when you do the farm work?

A: I don't feel tired. My parents and my husband do more farm work. I often do less farm work.

Q: How much do you spend for yourself every month?

A: I am not sure. Sometimes I buy some clothes for myself.

Q: Who makes a decision, when there is something important?

A: My parents.

Q: How long does it take you to do the housework every day?

A: Two or three hours. We just clean rooms and wash clothes sometimes. My father often does housework.

Q: Do you use the gas stove or earthen stove for cooking?

A: We use a gas stove. It's cleaner than the earthen stove.

Q: Do you often quarrel with your husband?

A: Sometimes.

Q: Do you think men's family status is higher than women's in a household?

Q: How do you think about the education of children?

A: I will try my best to give my child more education. I hope he can be outstanding in future.

Q: Do you want to live in the city? Why?

A: Yes, I want to live in the city. But it is difficult to settle down in cities. We don't have enough money to buy a flat. The flat in the city is so expensive. But we will move into the new building in the village. It is also good.

Interview Z40

Ms. Zhang S

Part one: Basic Information

1. Age: (25)
2. Marital Status: (Married)
3. How many years have you been married? (Two years.)
4. Education Background: (Junior middle school.)

Part Two: Working Conditions

5. How much arable land do you have? (Five mu)
6. Utilization of Land: (My parents-in-law are using it.)

Q: Do you work on the land yourself?

A: My husband and I help my parents-in-law to do some farm work in busy season.

Q: What sort of fertilizer do you use?

A: Farmyard manure and chemical fertilizer.

Q: How long do you do farm work in busy season?

A: Not very long. We only do a little farm work. We help them to dry the wheat.

Q: Do you find part-time jobs in the slack season?

A: When I have my baby, I don't work. I am staying at home and look after my baby.

21. Who distributes tasks in your family? (My parents-in-law.)

Part Three: Material Quality of Life

13. How much is the total annual income of your family? (20,000 Yuan)
14. What are the sources of income in your family? (My husband's salary)
15. What is the main expenditure in your family? (Things for my child, food, snack, clothes, etc.)
16. How much do you spend every month? (Above 1000 Yuan)
17. Are you living in an old house or new house? (A new house. It was built before we got married.)
18. What household appliances do you have? (TV, washing machine, fridge, induction cooker, rice cooker, air conditioner)
19. You have a (telephone, a mobile phone, and a computer).

20. How often do you go shopping? (Once a week)
21. What kind of things do you often buy? (Living goods; clothes, things for my baby)

Part Four: Family Life

33. How many children do you have? (One child)
34. How did you get to know your husband? (I got to know him on a blind date)
46. Your husband's age (26)
47. The Education background of your husband: (Junior middle school)
26. Your husband's career: (He is working near the village)
27. How do you distribute the housework? (My mother-in-law shares the housework with me.)
28. Are you satisfied with your marriage life? (Basically satisfied)
33. How are you getting on with your parents-in-law? (Not bad.)

Part Five: Leisure Life

45. What kind of things do you often do in your spare time? (Watching TV; Having a chitchat with my sister, go shopping)
46. Are you satisfied with your leisure life? (Quite satisfied)
36. Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life? (My sisters and friends)
37. When you are communicating with them, which topic do you often talk about? (Trivial things)
38. Are you satisfied with your social contact? (Quite satisfied)
39. When you need some help, whom will you contact with first? (Relatives)

Part Six: Health and Safety Issues

51. Are you in good health? (Yes, I am in good health)
52. How often do you go for a medical examination? (When I feel not good, I go for an examination.)
53. Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination? (Yes)
54. What will do you do when you feel under the weather? (I go to the county or city to see a doctor)
55. Do you have medical insurance? (Yes, I have.)
56. How much should you afford with this kind of medical insurance for the treatment?

(60%)

57. Do you feel stress or pressure in your life? (No, I never feel stress or pressure.)

58. If you had got trouble, whom would you like to pour out? (Relatives)

48. How about the public order in your village? (Not bad.)

Q: How much do you spend for yourself every month?

A: About 200 or 300 Yuan. Now I have a child. I spend more money on him. Nowadays, it is expensive to raise a child.

Q: How long does it take you to do the housework every day?

A: Two or three hours.

Q: In your opinion, what is housework?

A: Cooking, washing clothes, cleaning room.

Q: Are you satisfied with the traffic communication of the village?

A: Yes, we have a car. It is convenient to go anywhere.

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: Both my husband and I.

Q: Who makes a decision, when there is something important?

A: My parents-in-law.

Q: Do you often quarrel with your husband?

A: We seldom quarrel.

Q: Do you think the man is superior to the woman? What does your husband think?

A: Man and woman are equal in the family.

Q: How much leisure time do you have in a week?

A: Now I have much leisure time. I am just staying at home and looking after my child. I often take my child to my parents' home. I often go shopping in the county on the weekend.

Q: How do you think about the education of children?

A: I have no idea. I just hope he can get more education. But it is too earlier to consider this issue. My child is too young. Now I just hope he can be healthy and happy.

Q: What is the source of your pressure, or what worries you most?

A: I don't have pressure. My current life is good.

Q: Do you think you and everything you have done is significant to your family and society?

A: Of course, I am important for my family. Without me, they cannot have a child.

Q: Do you want to live in the city? Why?

A: Yes. If we were living in the city, life must be more interesting. But living in the village is also good. When we feel boring, we can go to the county to sing karaoke, have a big meal or go shopping.

Q: When you have some trouble, will the women's federation or the government help you?

A: When I have some trouble, I will turn to my parents. They can help me.

Q: Do you often keep track of current social events?

A: Sometimes. I watch the news.

Interview Z41

Ms. Chen

Part one: Basic Information

1. Age: (35)
2. Marital Status: (Married)
3. How many years have you been married? (15)
4. Education Background: (junior middle school)

Part Two: Working Conditions

5. How much arable land do you have? (Four mu)
6. Utilization of Land: (I am using it)
7. Do you work on the land yourself? (Yes, I work on the land myself.)
8. What sort of fertilizer do you use? (Chemical fertilizer and farmyard manure)
9. How long do you work on the land every day? (Four to six hours)
10. How often do you use farm machinery when you are working? (I often use it.)
11. Do you find part-time jobs in the slack season? (No, I am looking after my children at home.)
12. Who distributes tasks in your family? (I am not sure.)

Part Three: Material Quality of Life

13. How much is the total annual income of your family? (Above 20,000Yuan)
14. What are the sources of income in your family? (My husband's wage and selling sheep)
15. What is the main expenditure in your family? (Children's schooling, food, and living goods)
16. How much do you spend every month? (1500 Yuan to 2000 Yuan)
17. Are you living in an old house or new house? (An old house. I have been living in it for ten years.)
18. What household appliances do you have? (TV, fridge, washing machine, rice cooker, induction cooker)
19. You have a (mobile phone and telephone).
20. How often do you go shopping? (Two or three times a month.)
21. What kind of things do you often buy? (Food, living goods, clothes)

Part Four: Family Life

22. How many children do you have? (Two)
23. How did you get to know your husband? (I got to know him on a blind date.)
24. Your husband's age: (35)
25. The Education background of your husband: (junior middle school)
26. Your husband's career: (He is working near the village)
27. How do you distribute the housework? (I do it myself.)
28. Are you satisfied with your marriage life? (Quite satisfied)
29. Who do your children like to communicate with in your family? (Me)
30. Are you living with the parents- in-law? (No, they are living in their house)
33. How are you getting on with your parents in law? (Very well)
34. What kind of things do you often do in your spare time? (Watching TV, feeding sheep)
35. Are you satisfied with your leisure life? (Basically satisfied)
36. Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life? (Neighbors and relatives)
37. When you are communicating with them, which topic do you often talk about? (Trivial things in household)
38. Are you satisfied with your social contact? (Quite satisfied)
39. When you need some help, whom will you contact with first? (Relatives)

Part Six: Health and Safety Issues

40. Are you in good health? (Yes, I am in good health.)
41. How often do you go for a medical examination? (I never go for it.)
42. Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination? (No)
43. What will do you do when you feel under the weather? (I go to the drugstore in the village to buy some medicine.)
44. Do you have medical insurance? (Yes, I have)
45. How much should you afford with this kind of medical insurance for the treatment? (I am not sure)
46. Do you feel stress or pressure in your life? (Yes, sometimes.)

Q: What is the source of your pressure?

A: About moving into the new building. Next year, we will move into the new building.

And I cannot grow crops next year.

Q: Why?

A: The farmland will be rented to persons who will operate a large-scale land. They want to promote industrial agriculture. If you want to continue to grow crops, you have to contract at least 100 mu land. But for my family, we cannot afford the rental.

Q: How much is it for renting 100 mu land?

A: It is 700 Yuan per mu for half a year. You have to pay 1400 Yuan for one mu per year. We don't have so much money.

Q: So you have to pay 140,000 Yuan for renting 100 mu land per year?

A: Yes. Obviously, we cannot afford it. The policy is good. And mechanization is popularized. Machines can do a lot of work, like irrigation, harvesting wheat. It will not cost much physical strength if I could rent so much land.

Q: You can find some part-time jobs if you cannot rent land.

A: That is what I am worried about. It is unrealistic for me to find part-time jobs. I have two children. The older boy is 14 years old, and the younger one is seven years old. The state schools don't offer accommodation. If I want to work outside, I have to send them to private boarding school, and the tuition fees are too much to afford. I would rather stay at home and look after them by myself, and I can cook for my husband.

Q: How much is the tuition for private boarding school?

A: It's up to 20,000 Yuan a year for two children. I would never earn so much even if I worked outside for the whole year. In that case, I can't cook for my husband.

Q: How many flats can you get?

A: Only one flat

Q: How much do you have to pay for this flat?

A: My current house was accessed at 80,000 Yuan. A new flat with 80 square meters is more than 100,000 Yuan. So I have to pay 30,000 or 40,000 Yuan.

Q: Are all flats 80 square meters?

A: Most of them are 80 square meters. Only a few flats are 100 square meters or 120 square meters. If they have more flats with 120 square meters, we would be willing to move into the new building. All of us want a bigger flat. I have such a big house. I am used to living here. I don't like to live in a small flat with only 80 square meters. My brother's

house is as big as 147 square meters. I even feel it is small, let alone live in such a small flat. In addition, the new building doesn't have an elevator. When I am old, I cannot climb more steps. I only want the flat on the lower floor. Most of us don't want flats on upper floors. The government's policy is good, but it is a pity that the implementation is less than satisfactory

Interview Z42

Ms. Tong Y

Part one: Basic Information

1. Age: (49)
2. Marital Status: (Married)
3. How many years have you been married? (27)
4. Education Background: (Primary school)

Part Two: Working Conditions

5. How much arable land do you have? (Four mu)
6. Utilization of Land: (I am using it)
7. Do you work on the land yourself? (Yes, I work on the land myself.)
8. What sort of fertilizer do you use? (Chemical fertilizer and farmyard manure)
9. How long do you work on the land every day? (Three or four hours)
10. How often do you use farm machinery when you are working? (I often use it)
11. Do you find part-time jobs in the slack season? (Yes)
12. Who distributes tasks in your family? (I am not sure.)

Part Three: Material Quality of Life

13. How much is the total annual income of your family? (Above 20,000 Yuan)
14. What are the sources of income in your family? (Selling agricultural products and my husband's salary)
15. What is the main expenditure in your family? (Living goods, food and gift money)
16. How much do you spend every month? (1500 to 1999 Yuan)
17. Are you living in an old house or new house? (A new house)
18. What household appliances do you have? (TV, fridge, washing machine, air conditioner, rice cooker and induction cooker)
19. You have a (telephone and cell phone).
20. How often do you go shopping? (Two or three times a month)
21. What kind of things do you often buy? (Food, living goods)

Part Four: Family Life

22. How many children do you have? (Two)

23. How did you get to know your husband? (My parents brought us together.)
24. Your husband's age (53)
25. The Education background of your husband: (Primary school)
26. Your husband's career: (He is working in the city.)
27. How do you distribute the housework? (I do it myself.)
28. Are you satisfied with your marriage life? (Quite satisfied)
29. Whom do your children like to communicate with? (Me)
30. Are you living with the parents-in-law? (No)
33. How are you getting on with your parents in law? (Quite well)

Part Five: Leisure Life

34. What kind of things do you often do in your spare time? (Watching TV. having a chitchat with others)
35. Are you satisfied with your leisure life? (Quite satisfied)
36. Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life? (Relatives and neighbors)
37. When you are communicating with them, which topic do you often talk about? (Difficulties I meet with recently)
38. Are you satisfied with your social contact? (Quite satisfied)
39. When you need some help, whom will you contact with first? (Relatives)

Part Six: Health and Safety Issues

40. Are you in good health? (Yes, I am in good health.)
41. How often do you go for a medical examination? (I never go for it.)
42. Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination? (No)
43. What will do you do when you feel under the weather? (I always take a "wait and see" attitude and avoid seeing the doctor as much as I could.)
44. Do you have medical insurance? (Yes, I have.)
45. How much should you afford with this kind of medical insurance for the treatment? (I am not sure)
46. Do you feel stress or pressure in your life? (No, I never feel stress or pressure.)
47. If you had got trouble, whom would you like to pour out? (Relatives)
48. How about the public order in your village? (Very good)

Q: Could you tell me some information about your children, e.g. age, education background, marital status and career?

A: I have a son and a daughter. Both of them have been married. My daughter is 26 years old, and my son is 24 years old. My daughter is working near her home. My son is working in Jinan.

Q: What kind of main food crops or vegetables are you growing? What kind of fowl or livestock are you feeding?

A: I am growing wheat and corn. I am feeding several sheep.

Q: How many sheep?

A: Fifteen.

Q: Do you often buy the vegetables in the market?

A: Yes, I buy vegetables in the market.

Q: Do you think you have got benefit from some agricultural policies?

A: A few. We can get seed subsidy. We can get 100 Yuan per mu.

Q: Do you always feel tired when you do the farm work? Do you think it is harmful to your health to do the farm work for a long time?

A: No, I don't feel tired. We can use kinds of machines to do farm work. It costs little physical strength.

Q: How much do you spend for yourself every month?

A: A little. I seldom buy something for myself. I often buy clothes or other things for my grandchild. I buy fewer things for myself except daily necessities.

Q: Are you satisfied with the traffic communication of the village?

A: Yes, it is quite convenient.

Q: How long does it take you to do the housework every day?

A: Three or four hours. Cooking, cleaning and feeding the sheep..... these activities don't cost me much time.

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: My husband is working in the city. I have to deal with many trivial matters which may need some money. He often brings his salary back.

Q: Who makes a decision, when there is something important?

A: Both my husband and I.

Q: Do you often quarrel with your husband?

A: No, we seldom quarrel. We even cannot meet each other. We have no opportunity to quarrel.

Q: Do you think men's family status is higher than women's in a household? Do you think the man is superior to the woman?

A: Man and woman are equal.

Q: Do you think the man is more important than the woman?

A: Yes. Man can earn more money than the woman. And people often want a son. Son has the responsibility to look after elderly parents.

Q: How do you think about the education of children?

A: It is better to make children receive more education.

Q: Do you want to move into the new building?

A: No, I am used to living in my current house. The flats in the new building are too small. But all of us have to into it.

Interview Z43

Ms. Ma H

Part one: Basic Information

1. Age: (52)
2. Marital Status: (Married)
3. How many years have you been married? (31)
4. Education Background: (Primary school)

Part Two: Working Conditions

5. How much arable land do you have? (Four mu)
6. Utilization of Land: (I am using it.)
7. Do you work on the land yourself? (My husband works together with me)
8. What sort of fertilizer do you use? (Chemical fertilizer)
9. How long do you work on the land every day? (Less than four hours)
10. How often do you use farm machinery when you are working? (I often use it.)
11. Do you find part-time jobs in the slack season? (Yes)
12. Who distributes tasks in your family? (My husband)

Part Three: Material Quality of Life

13. How much is the total annual income of your family? (10,000 to 20,000 Yuan)
14. What are the sources of income in your family? (Selling the agricultural products and my wage)
15. What is the main expenditure in your family? (Living goods, child's tuition fees, and gift money)
16. How much do you spend every month? (1000 to 1499 Yuan)
17. Are you living in an old house or new house? (A new house)
18. What household appliances do you have? (TV, washing machine, fridge, air conditioner and rice cooker)
19. You have a (telephone and mobile phone).
20. How often do you go shopping? (I go shopping when I need something)
21. What kind of things do you often buy? (Food and living goods)
22. How many children do you have? (Three)
23. How did you get to know your husband? (My parents brought us together.)
24. Your husband's age (54)

25. The Education background of your husband: (Primary school)
26. Your husband's career: (He is staying at home.)
27. How do you distribute the housework? (I do it myself.)
28. Are you satisfied with your marriage life? (Basically satisfied)
29. Who do your children like to communicate with in your family? (Me)
30. Are you living with the parents-in-law? (Yes)
31. Who are looking after the parents-in-law? (I look after them)
32. What do you mainly have to do for your parents-in-law? (Anything. They are old. They need to be taken care of)
33. How are you getting on with your parents-in-law? (Not bad)

Part Five: Leisure Life

34. What kind of things do you often do in your spare time? (Watching TV, having a chitchat with others)
35. Are you satisfied with your leisure life? (Basically satisfied)
36. Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life? (Relatives and neighbors)
37. When you are communicating with them, which topic do you often talk about? (Nothing important)
38. Are you satisfied with your social contact? (Basically satisfied)
39. When you need some help, whom will you contact with first? (Neighbors and relatives)

Part Six: Health and Safety Issues

40. Are you in good health? (Yes, I am in good health)
41. How often do you go for a medical examination? (I never go for it)
42. Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination? (No)
43. What will do you do when you feel under the weather? (I always take a "wait and see" attitude and avoid seeing the doctor as much as I could)
44. Do you have medical insurance? (Yes, I have)
45. How much should you afford with this kind of medical insurance for the treatment? (60%)
46. Do you feel stress or pressure in your life? (No, I never feel stress or pressure.)
47. If you had got trouble, whom would you like to pour out? (My children)

48. How about the public order in your village? (Not bad)

Q: Could you tell me some information about your children, e.g. age, education background, marital status and career?

A: My son is 24 years old. He is working in Beijing. He has got married. My elderly daughter is 30 years old and my second daughter is 27 years old. They are married as well.

Q: What kind of main food crops or vegetables are you growing? What kind of fowl or livestock are you feeding?

A: We are growing wheat and corn. We are feeding about ten sheep.

Q: Do you often buy the vegetables in the market?

A: Yes, now we don't grow vegetables. We have to buy vegetables in the market in the town.

Q: Do you think you have got benefit from some agricultural policies?

A: I am not sure. Just some subsidies.

Q: Do you always feel tired when you do the farm work?

A: No, I don't feel tired.

Q: How much do you spend for yourself every month?

A: I don't know how much it is. I have never made an exact calculation. I just buy some clothes for myself. But I don't buy clothes for myself every month.

Q: Are you satisfied with the traffic communication of the village?

A: Yes, I am satisfied with it. It is very convenient.

Q: How long does it take you to do the housework every day?

A: Three or four hours.

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: My husband.

Q: Who makes a decision, when there is something important?

A: My husband.

Q: Do you often quarrel with your husband?

A: No, I never quarrel with him.

Q: Do you think men's family status is higher than women's in a household?

A: Yes. The man is the head of the family. The man is important for a family.

Q: In your opinion, what is an ideal family life?

A: I don't know. I hope we can have enough money to live a good life. Everyone wants more money to live.

Q: How much leisure time do you have in a week?

A: I don't have much leisure time. When I don't do farm work, I find jobs near the village. I don't have much time.

Q: What is the source of your pressure?

A: I don't have pressure. The life in rural areas is like this: not good and not bad. Sometimes we may have troubles, but they are not important.

Q: Do you want to move into the new building?

A: No. My house is better than the flats. My house is bigger. We all like the big house. But, the flats in the new building are cleaner.

Interview Z44

Ms. Zhu Z.

Part one: Basic Information

1. Age: (37)
2. Marital Status: (Married)
3. How many years have you been married? (15)
4. Education Background: (junior middle school)

Part Two: Working Conditions

5. How much arable land do you have? (Three mu)
6. Utilization of Land: (I am using it)
7. Do you work on the land yourself? (Yes, I work on the land myself.)
8. What sort of fertilizer do you use? (Chemical fertilizer)
9. How long do you work on the land every day? (Less than 4 hours)
10. How often do you use farm machinery when you are working? (I often use it.)
11. Do you find part-time jobs in the slack season? (Yes)
12. Who distributes tasks in your family? (No one)

Part Three: Material Quality of Life

13. How much is the total annual income of your family? (Above 30,000 Yuan)
14. What are the sources of income in your family? (My husband's wage, my wage and selling agricultural products)
15. What is the main expenditure in your family? (Living goods, food, children's tuition fee, gift money)
16. How much do you spend every month? (1500 to 2000 Yuan)
17. Are you living in an old house or new house? (A new house)
18. What household appliances do you have? (TV, washing machine, fridge, air conditioner, rice cooker and induction cooker)
19. You have a (cell phone).
20. How often do you go shopping? (Two or three times a month)
21. What kind of things do you often buy? (Food and living goods)
22. How many children do you have? (Two)
23. How did you get to know your husband? (I got to know him on a blind date)

- 25. The Education background of your husband: (junior middle school)
- 26. Your husband's career: (He is working in the city.)
- 27. How do you distribute the housework? (I do it myself)
- 28. Are you satisfied with your marriage life? (Basically satisfied)
- 29. Who do your children like to communicate with in your family? (I am not sure)
- 30. Are you living with the parents-in-law? (No, they are living in their house.)
- 31. Who are looking after the parents-in-law? (They don't need to be taken care of. Instead, they help me to look after my children.)
- 33. How are you getting on with your parents-in-law? (Very well)

Part Five: Leisure Life

- 34. What kind of things do you often do in your spare time? (Watching TV, having a chat with others)
- 35. Are you satisfied with your leisure life? (I don't have leisure time. I do farm work in the busy season. I do part-time jobs in slack season. Always busy...)
- 36. Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life? (Relatives)
- 37. When you are communicating with them, which topic do you often talk about? (Trivial things)
- 38. Are you satisfied with your social contact? (Basically satisfied)
- 39. When you need some help, whom will you contact with first? (Relatives)

Part Six: Health and Safety Issues

- 40. Are you in good health? (Not very well. I get ill sometimes.)
- 41. How often do you go for a medical examination? (No)
- 42. Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination? (No)
- 43. What will do you do when you feel under the weather? (I always take a "wait and see" attitude and avoid seeing the doctor as much as I could.)
- 44. Do you have medical insurance? (Yes, I have)
- 45. How much should you afford with this kind of medical insurance for the treatment? (I am not sure)
- 46. Do you feel stress or pressure in your life? (Sometimes)
- 47. If you had got trouble, whom would you like to pour out? (Relatives)_
- 48. How about the public order in your village? (Not bad)

Q: Could you tell me some information about your children, e.g. age, education background, marital status and career?

A: I have a son and a daughter. My son is 14 years old and my daughter is 10 years old.

Q: What kind of main food crops or vegetables are you growing? What kind of fowl or livestock are you feeding?

A: I am growing wheat and corn. I don't feeding any livestock.

Q: Do you often buy the vegetables in the market?

A: Yes, we have to buy vegetables in the market. We are not growing vegetables. It is too tired to grow vegetables. And it is a waste of time.

Q: How much do you spend for yourself every month?

A: No more than 100 Yuan.

Q: Are you satisfied with the traffic communication of the village?

A: Yes, I am satisfied with it. It is convenient.

Q: How long does it take you to do the housework every day?

A: I do more housework when I am staying at home. When I have part-time jobs, I do less housework. I have no time when I am doing part-time jobs.

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: My husband.

Q: Who makes a decision, when there is something important?

A: My husband.

Q: Do you often quarrel with your husband?

A: No, I get used to his temper. In addition, we have no time to quarrel.

Q: Do you think men's family status is higher than women's in a household?

A: Definitely man's status is higher than woman's. They are the head of the family.

Q: How do you think about the equality between men and women?

A: Men and women are equal.

Q: Do you want to move into the new building?

A: We want to stay here. But we can't. The flats in the new building seem nice. But they are a little bit small. It would be better if they can be larger.

Interview Z45

Ms. Lu

Part one: Basic Information

1. Age: (56)
2. Marital Status: (Married)
3. How many years have you been married? (36)
4. Education Background: (Primary school)

Part Two: Working Conditions

5. How much arable land do you have? (2 mu)
6. Utilization of Land: (I am using it)
7. Do you work on the land yourself? (Yes, I work on the land myself.)
8. What sort of fertilizer do you use? (Chemical fertilizer)
9. How long do you work on the land every day? (Less than 4 hours)
10. How often do you use farm machinery when you are working? (I often use it.)
11. Do you find part-time jobs in the slack season? (No)
12. Who distributes tasks in your family? (I distribute tasks.)

Part Three: Material Quality of Life

13. How much is the total annual income of your family? (10,000 to 20,000 Yuan)
14. What are the sources of income in your family? (Selling the agricultural products and my husband's wage)
15. What is the main expenditure in your family? (Living goods, food, children's schooling, gift money)
16. How much do you spend every month? (About 2000 Yuan)
17. Are you living in an old house or new house? (A new house. We built it six years ago)
18. What household appliances do you have? (TV, fridge, washing machine, rice cooker, and induction cooker)
19. You have a (mobile phone).
20. How often do you go shopping? (I go shopping when I need something)
21. What kind of things do you often buy? (Food and living goods)

Part Four: Family Life

22. How many children do you have? (Two)

23. How did you get to know your husband? (I got to know him on a blind date.)
24. Your husband's age (58)
25. The Education background of your husband: (Primary school)
26. Your husband's career: (He is working in the city.)
28. Are you satisfied with your marriage life? (Basically satisfied)
29. Who do your children like to communicate with in your family? (We don't have much communication.)
30. Are you living with the parents-in-law? (The elderly passed away.)
34. What kind of things do you often do in your spare time? (Watching TV, having a chat with others)
35. Are you satisfied with your leisure life? (Quite satisfied)
36. Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life? (Relatives and neighbors)
37. When you are communicating with them, which topic do you often talk about? (Nothing important, trivial things or gossips)
38. Are you satisfied with your social contact? (Quite satisfied)
39. When you need some help, whom will you contact with first? (Neighbors)

Part Six: Health and Safety Issues

40. Are you in good health? (Not very well. I get ill sometimes.)
41. How often do you go for a medical examination? (I never go for it.)
42. Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination? (No)
43. What will do you do when you feel under the weather? (I always take a "wait and see" attitude and avoid seeing the doctor as much as I could.)
44. Do you have medical insurance? (Yes, I have)
45. How much should you afford with this kind of medical insurance for the treatment? (50%)
46. Do you feel stress or pressure in your life? (No, I never feel stress or pressure.)
47. If you had got trouble, whom would you like to pour out? (Neighbors, friends)
48. How about the public order in your village? (Very good)

Q: Could you tell me some information about your children, e.g. age, education background, marital status and career?

A: I have two sons. The elderly one is 35 years old, and the young one is 30 years old. They are working in the city. They graduated from junior middle school. Both of them are married. And both of them have children. I am staying at home and looking after the children for them.

Q: What kind of fowl or livestock are you feeding?

A: I am feeding sheep.

Q: How many sheep are you feeding?

A: About ten sheep.

Q: Do you often buy the vegetables in the market?

A: Yes. No one grows vegetables in this village.

Q: Do you think you have got benefit from some agricultural policies?

A: I am not sure.

Q: Do you always feel tired when you do the farm work?

A: No. In these years, we all use farm machines. We don't feel tired. In the past, we did farm work without farm machines. We felt very tired. Nowadays, it is easier to do farm work.

Q: How much do you spend for yourself every month?

A: I seldom buy something for myself. I am old now. I buy fewer clothes than before. Sometimes, my sons buy me some clothes.

Q: How long does it take you to do the housework every day?

A: It doesn't take me a long time. Just cooking and feeding sheep.

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: No one manages the property. We have no property except a little money. It is unnecessary to manage.

Q: Who makes a decision, when there is something important?

A: My husband.

Q: Do you often quarrel with your husband?

A: No. We are old. We have nothing to quarrel.

Q: Do you think men's family status is higher than women's in a household?

A: Yes. The man is the head of the family.

Q: Do you want to move into the new building?

A: No. The new buildings have no elevator. I don't want to live on upper floors. It is not convenient for us. A few days ago, I told them: 'You young guys should live on upper floors. Some years later, we old people will be too old to climb stairs, so we should move into flats on the lower floors.' Then they said: 'Yes, now we are young, we can live on upper floors. You live on lower floors. But, just tell your son, when we become old we have to change houses with you.' This problem is really hard to deal with. No one wants to live on lower floors.

Interview Z46

Ms. Xu H

Part one: Basic Information

1. Age: (52)
2. Marital Status: (Married)
3. How many years have you been married? (31)
4. Education Background: (Primary school)

Part Two: Working Conditions

5. How much arable land do you have? (Four mu)
6. Utilization of Land: (I am using it.)
7. Do you work on the land yourself? (Yes, I work on the land myself.)
8. What sort of fertilizer do you use? (Chemical fertilizer)
9. How long do you work on the land every day? (Four to six hours)
10. How often do you use farm machinery when you are working? (I often use it.)
11. Do you find part-time jobs in the slack season? (No)
12. Who distributes tasks in your family? (I distribute tasks.)

Part Three: Material Quality of Life

13. How much is the total annual income of your family? (10,000 to 20,000 Yuan)
14. What are the sources of income in your family? (Selling the agricultural products, my husband's wage)
15. What is the main expenditure in your family? (Children's schooling, food, and living goods)
16. How much do you spend every month? (Above 2000 Yuan)
17. Are you living in an old house or new house? (An old house. I have been living in it for ten years.)
18. What household appliances do you have? (TV, washing machine, fridge, rice cooker, induction cooker and electric pan)
19. You have a (mobile phone).
20. How often do you go shopping? (Every day)
21. What kind of things do you often buy? (Food and living goods)

Part Four: Family Life

22. How many children do you have? (Three)

23. How did you get to know your husband? (I got to know him on a blind date.)

Q: Who introduced your husband to you?

A: One of my relatives.

Q: Could you tell me more details about your blind date?

A: (Laugh) It happened about 30 years ago. Let me see.....I came here in 1983 when I was 21 years old. I come from a small village in a mountain area in Shaanxi Province. My family was very poor at that time because I have so many brothers. And we had only a small plot of land. We didn't have enough food. My parents heard that peasants in Shandong Province had more food. They decided to send me there. One of our relatives knew a family living in Shandong Province. This is my husband's family. The relative told my husband to come to our village. He came and met my parents and me. Shortly afterward, he decided to marry me and my parents agreed. They asked me whether I was willing to marry him. I didn't know how to make a decision. I agreed because my parents agreed. Two days later, my husband gave my parents 400 Yuan as a betrothal gift. My parents let me go with him. So I came here and got married. It's just like I was sold by my parents. But they hoped for me to have enough food to eat at that time.

24. Your husband's age (54)

25. The Education background of your husband: (Primary school)

26. Your husband's career: (He is working in the city)

27. How do you distribute the housework? (I do it myself.)

28. Are you satisfied with your marriage life? (Basically satisfied)

29. Who do your children like to communicate with in your family? (No one)

30. Are you living with the parents in law? (No, they are living in their house)

31. Who are looking after the parents in law? (They don't need to be taken care of at present. Sometimes they are ill. I look after them. Sometimes, my sisters-in-law look after them. They are healthy. I have to look after my grandchild. And I have little time to take care of my parents-in-law.)

33. How are you getting on with your parents in law? (Not bad)

Part Five: Leisure Life

34. What kind of things do you often do in your spare time? (Watching TV, having a chat with others or playing cards)
35. Are you satisfied with your leisure life? (Basically satisfied)
36. Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life? (Neighbors, relatives)
37. When you are communicating with them, which topic do you often talk about? (Trivial things and matters happened in the village)
38. Are you satisfied with your social contact? (Very satisfied)
39. When you need some help, whom will you contact with first? (Relatives and neighbors)

Part Six: Health and Safety Issues

40. Are you in good health? (Yes, I am in good health)
41. How often do you go for a medical examination? (I never go for it.)
42. Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination? (No)
43. What will do you do when you feel under the weather? (I always take a “wait and see” attitude and avoid seeing the doctor as much as I could.)
44. Do you have medical insurance? (Yes, I have)
45. How much should you afford with this kind of medical insurance for the treatment? (I don't know)
46. Do you feel stress or pressure in your life? (No, I don't feel stress or pressure. Nowadays, we have enough food and money to live. Although we cannot live a wealthy life, I am content with my current life. There's nothing to worry about. I only hope my children can earn enough money for themselves and my grandchildren are in good health.)
47. If you had got trouble, whom would you like to pour out? (Neighbors and relatives)
48. How about the public order in your village? (Very good)

Q: Could you tell me some information about your children, e.g. age, education background, marital status and career?

A: I have a son and two daughters. They graduated from junior middle school. My son is working in the city, and my daughters are staying at their husbands' homes.

Q: Do you think you have got benefit from some agricultural policies?

A: Yes, we can get subsidies from the government.

Q: Do you always feel tired when you do the farm work?

A: No, I don't feel tired except when I am drying wheat.

Q: How much do you spend for yourself every month?

A: I spend a little for myself. I have nothing need to buy.

Q: Do you buy clothes?

A: My daughters often buy clothes for me.

Q: Are you satisfied with the traffic communication of the village?

A: Yes, I am satisfied with it.

Q: How long does it take you to do the housework every day?

A: Not very long. I never paid enough attention to it.

Q: In your opinion, what is housework?

A: Cooking, washing clothes, cleaning, feeding sheep...

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: No one is managing.

Q: Who makes a decision, when there is something important?

A: We make the decision together.

Q: Do you often quarrel with your husband?

A: No, we don't quarrel.

Q: Do you think men's family status is higher than women's in a household?

A: Nowadays, man and woman are equal.

Q: How much leisure time do you have in a week?

A: three or four hours a day.

Q: Do you want to move into the new building?

A: I like to live in this house. This house is bigger.

Interview Z47

Ms. Li C

Part one: Basic Information

1. Age: (48)
2. Marital Status: (Married)
3. How many years have you been married? (26)
4. Education Background: (Primary school)

Part Two: Working Conditions

5. How much arable land do you have? (4 mu)
6. Utilization of Land: (I am using it.)
7. Do you work on the land yourself? (Yes, I do farm work with my husband.)
8. What sort of fertilizer do you use? (Chemical fertilizer and farmyard manure)
9. How long do you work on the land every day? (Less than 4 hours)
10. How often do you use farm machinery when you are working? (I often use it.)
11. Do you find part-time jobs in the slack season? (No)
12. Who distributes tasks in your family? (No one distributes tasks)

Part Three: Material Quality of Life

13. How much is the total annual income of your family? (25,000 Yuan)
14. What are the sources of income in your family? (Selling agricultural products and my son's wage)
15. What is the main expenditure in your family? (Living goods, food, medical bills and gift money)
16. How much do you spend every month? (Above 2000 Yuan)
17. Are you living in an old house or new house? (A new house).
18. What household appliances do you have? (TV, fridge, washing machine, air conditioner, rice cooker, induction cooker and electric pan)
19. You have a (mobile phone).
20. How often do you go shopping? (Two or three times a month)
21. What kind of things do you often buy? (Food and living goods)

Part Four: Family Life

22. How many children do you have? (Two)
23. How did you get to know your husband? (I got to know him on a blind date.)
24. Your husband's age (53)
25. The Education background of your husband: (Primary school)
26. Your husband's career: (He is doing business in village. He is feeding and selling sheep.)
- Q: How many sheep does he raise?
- A: He is raising 31 sheep.
- Q: How much can you earn by raising sheep?
- A: About 25,000 Yuan. Sometimes we can earn 30,000 Yuan. It depends on the quality of our sheep. If they seldom get sick, we can earn more. On average, we can earn 1000 Yuan by selling one sheep.
27. How do you distribute the housework? (I do it myself.)
28. Are you satisfied with your marriage life? (Basically satisfied)
29. Who do your children like to communicate with in your family? (I am not sure)
30. Are you living with the parents-in-law? (No, they are living in their house.)
31. Who are looking after the parents-in-law? (They don't need to be taken care of at present.)
33. How are you getting on with your parents-in-law? (Not bad)

Part Five: Leisure Life

34. What kind of things do you often do in your spare time? (Watching TV, having a chat with others, playing cards)
35. Are you satisfied with your leisure life? (Quite satisfied)
36. Whom do you communicate with most frequently in your daily life? (Relatives and neighbors)
37. When you are communicating with them, which topic do you often talk about? (Trivial things in household)
38. Are you satisfied with your social contact? (Quite satisfied)
39. When you need some help, whom will you contact with first? (Relatives and neighbors)

Part Six: Health and Safety Issues

40. Are you in good health? (Yes, I am in good health)
41. How often do you go for a medical examination? (I never go for it.)
42. Have you ever gone for a gynecological examination? (No)
43. What will do you do when you feel under the weather? (I go to the drugstore in the village to buy some medicine.)
44. Do you have medical insurance? (Yes, I have.)
45. How much should you afford with this kind of medical insurance for the treatment? (60%)
46. Do you feel stress or pressure in your life? (No, I never feel stress or pressure.)
47. If you had got trouble, whom would you like to pour out? (Relatives)
48. How about the public order in your village? (Not bad)

Q: Could you tell me some information about your children, e.g. age, education background, marital status and career?

A: I have a son and a daughter. My son is 25 years old, and my daughter is 22 years old. Both of them got married. My son graduated from junior middle school, and my daughter graduated from senior middle school.

Q: Do they have children?

A: My son has a child. I am looking after the child for him. He and my daughter-in-law are working outside. They have no time to take care of the child.

Q: Does your daughter have a child?

A: Not yet.

Q: Do you often buy the vegetables on the market?

A: Yes, we don't grow vegetables. Growing vegetables wastes much time.

Q: Do you think you have got benefit from some agricultural policies?

A: I don't know much about that.

Q: Do you always feel tired when you do the farm work?

A: No. I feel more tired when feeding sheep.

Q: How much do you spend for yourself every month?

A: When I buy some clothes, I may spend about 100 Yuan. I seldom buy clothes.

Sometimes, my daughter buys clothes for me.

Q: Are you satisfied with the traffic communication of the village?

A: Yes, I am satisfied with it.

Q: How long does it take you to do the housework every day?

A: I do housework almost half of the day.

Q: In your opinion, what is housework?

A: Washing clothes, cooking, cleaning and feeding sheep.

Q: Who is managing your property?

A: My husband.

Q: Who makes a decision, when there is something important?

A: My husband.

Q: Do you often quarrel with your husband?

A: No, we never quarrel. We are too busy.

Q: Do you think men's family status is higher than women's in a household?

A: Man's status is a little bit higher than woman's. After all, man is the head of the family. They can deal with important affairs in the family.

Q: In your opinion, what is an ideal family life?

A: I am content with my current life. I just hope all of my family members can be healthy.

Q: How much leisure time do you have in a week?

A: One or two hours every day.

Q: Do you want to move into the new building?

A: It's not convenient for us to move into the new building. We have so many sheep. Now we put those sheep in our yard. If we move into the flat, we have to put the sheep in a public livestock farm. It is not convenient for us to feed those sheep.