The Powerless in Contemporary China:

News Representations of Rural Women and Female Migrants

BY

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THESIS

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SUMMARY

China is celebrating the 35th anniversary for economic reform. It is a good time to revisit political and sociocultural implications of the state's neoliberal globalization. Millions of rural women have migrated to cities. The migration provides cheap labor force for neoliberal economic development. Also, plenty of women stay in rural areas. To reveal power structures and social problems these women face, this study conducts an analysis of news representations of rural women and female migrants. This project adopts content analysis and discourse analysis to study news reports selected from a commercial newspaper. It addresses how rural and migrant women appear across different news topics, how news associates rural and migrant women with social groups and how frequently rural and migrant women appear as news sources. It further analyzes the construction of meanings and values, and hegemonic ideology and power relations embedded in news discourses. News underrepresentation of female migrant workers neglects their complex subjectivities and gender politics in life situations. News constructions symbolically marginalize rural women and female migrants in urbanization and modernization. Although news media sustain market values and patriarchal and hierarchal power relations, they reveal certain social problems and inequalities from which rural women and female migrants suffer. Voices of these women display their struggles and construct their subjectivities.

The study reveals oppressive political and cultural conditions in which rural and migrant women live. Although the state propaganda promotes its socialist legacy, it normalizes neoliberal ideology and prioritizes economic development over social
justice and equality. The patriarchal state and neoliberal market subordinate and marginalize rural women. Rural women's migration does not fundamentally change their disadvantaged positions in political and sociocultural relations. News media have the potentiality to reveal disadvantaged situations of powerless women, and to draw public attention, which could possibly leads to social change.
1. INTRODUCTION

An 18-year-old dagongmei\(^1\) migrated from rural areas in Hebei province to the capital Beijing. While working as an assistant in beauty salons, she abandoned her new-born baby who later died from an illness. A court sentenced the 18-year-old dagongmei to jail for four years (Wen 2011). The news report framed her as a criminal. She feared that her boyfriend would abandon her because of baby was her ex-boyfriend's and she had no money for abortion. The report represented simple facts of the crime and blamed the tragedy on the dagongmei. News representation objectifies complex subjectivities and avoids to critique systematic inequalities and structural forces. The news reveals disadvantaged social, economic and cultural conditions in which the dagongmei lives.

Since 1984, millions of Chinese rural women have migrated into urban areas to work as cheap laborers. Other rural women stay to continue rural life. Rural people were once the main force in the Communist Party's success of civil war and the foundation of new China. But later the land policy and hukou\(^2\) system prioritized privileges of urban residents. Since the 1980s, migrant workers have become the main force to realize the economic miracle of reform China. But they suffer from political, economic and cultural exploitation. The “Made in China” labels in global markets reflect how female migrant workers work days and nights at factories' assembly lines. Political, economic and cultural inequalities form a fundamental feature of their lives.

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1. Dagongmei refers to young and unmarried female migrant workers in China.
2. Hukou system of household registration, formally set up in 1958, banned peasants from leaving the rural land.
Mass media play a complicated role in the privileged system. Mainstream media embrace the patriarchal party-state and neoliberal market to marginalize and dominate powerless groups. On the other hand, media representations expose certain social problems and inequalities rural and migrant women face. To address existing power structures powerless groups live in and their life situations, I analyze news representations of rural and migrant women. From the perspective of feminist media studies, I explore how Chinese news media have represented and constructed women staying in rural areas and women who have migrated to cities. To combine empirical approach, which addresses the distribution of symbolic power in news, and critical approach, which unravels the sustaining of hegemonic power, my project adopts content analysis and discourse analysis. Content analysis provides empirical descriptions about news representations of rural women and female migrants’ identities. Discourse analysis examines values, meanings and power relations embedded in news discourse.

News media do not question the legitimacy of neoliberal market values and patriarchal and hierarchal relations in China, but they bring social inequalities rural and migrant women face into public attention. Different identity politics in news representations disclose how the state's neoliberal transformation subordinates rural women and female migrants. Voices of rural and migrant women in news reveal their struggles and concerns, and help construct their subjectivities.

This study discusses the neoliberal transformation in China sustains atriarchal and hierarchal power structures and does not bring democratic equalities to social groups. Rural women are in the subordinate position in political economic and soci-
ocultural relations. Economic contributions of female migrants do not empower them politically and culturally. This research adds to the feminist critique that patriarchal and hierarchal relations subordinate women. It contextualizes situations of powerless women in oppressive political and cultural conditions of China. It assesses democratic implications of news media in authoritarian countries like China. News media have the potentiality to reveal social problems from which subordinate women suffer, and to draw public attention, which could possibly leads to social change. Rural women and female migrants’ voices in news disclose concerns and construct subjectivities, and they empower them to respond to unequal power relations.
2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the reform era in the 1980s, China's embracing of neoliberalism has exploited the cheap labor force from rural migrants. Media and communication normalize the party-state hegemony and legitimate neoliberal values. Feminist media studies analyze how media reinforce hegemonic ideologies to dominate women. In China, commercial news media cater to state's propaganda and neoliberal market. News media defend and reproduce the dominant ideology by transforming certain values into facts.

2.1 The Powerless in Neoconservative China

In 1978, the Deng Xiaoping government launched an economic reform to use market forces to ensure the country's economic security. The reform is responding to the pressure of increasing corporate globalization. The state authoritarian control over the incorporated neoliberal elements embraces neoconservatism and it is “neoliberalism with Chinese characteristics” (Harvey 2005, 102). The state collaborates with markets to appeal to transnational capital. Policy changes on agricultural land and urban residency documentation have driven millions of rural people to migrate into urban areas. Rural migrants constitute the cheap labor force for neoliberal development in China. They take low-paid and low-skilled jobs and work in construction sites, assembly lines and small restaurants. In Europe, the emergence of capitalist accumulation and the accumulation of labor coincided with peasants' being expelled from their land and capitalists introducing forced wage-labor. The privatization of land and the commercialization of agriculture impoverished its rural population (Federici 2004).
The economic success of reform China depends on the commodification of rural labor as the cheapest labor force. Millions of rural migrants fulfill the rising need for city expansions and domestic and transnational corporations' profit-maximizing.

China has a long history of patriarchy in feudal society. Patriarchal relations create gender subordination in the redistribution of accesses to welfare, materials and goods. “Patriarchy is a set of social relations which has a material base and in which there are hierarchical relations between men and solidarity among them which enable them in turn to dominate women” (Hartmann 1996, 187). Despite of different classes, ethnicities and regional identities, men unite in the shared relationship of control and dominance over women. Male migrant workers can competitively take skilled jobs with more wages and security. Female workers have limited opportunities and work as assembly line workers, nannies and waitresses. These jobs have short-term contracts and little job security. For example, in restaurants and hotels, male migrant workers can take managerial and skilled positions, while female migrant workers take temporary and low-skill jobs. Men's control over women's labor power prevents women from access to essential productive resources. The “Made in China” labels in global markets reflect how female migrant workers work days and nights at factories' assembly lines.

To prioritize industrialization and urbanization and make the process inevitable and undeniable, the state launches political and economic policies and normalizes hegemonic ideologies through media. “Continuous reinvention and rearticulation of the ruling doctrines and the party's hegemony have been an integral part of the Chi-
ese state's post-Mao transformation” (Zhao 2008, 31). State propaganda normalizes ideologies of urbanization and modernization as hegemonic ones and drives people to internalize them. For example, *People's Daily* reported the key slogan of 18th People's Republic of China National People's Congress to bring more welfare to its people, the country will accomplish modernization before the middle of this century under the leadership of the party-state (Hui and Gao 2012). Media and communication normalize the party-state hegemony by marginalizing powerless groups. The powerless lack authority, social status and even a sense of self. It is the group defined and stereotyped by the dominant culture as the deviant other (Young 1990). Media reinforce subordinate identity for powerless groups and construct inferiority. Media exercise with political and economic power to sustain a system of privilege that marginalize disadvantaged groups (Bartky 1990). Analyzing how Chinese media construct underprivileged groups will reveal power relations in contemporary privilege systems.

### 2.2 Feminist Media Studies

Feminist media scholars aim to demonstrate how media representations prioritize patriarchal and hierarchal ideologies to dominate women. Socialist feminists draw gender issues into traditional Marxist analysis and approach subordinated gender relations from two perspectives: material and cultural. A cultural perspective can analyze media role in complex situations and multiple subjectivities of women and minority groups (Valdivia 1995; Van Zoonen 1994). The material perspective looks at labor exploitation, political exclusion, lack of access to legal protection and so forth. Marxist feminism locates gender issues in the analysis of ideology and hegemony.
Hegemonic ideologies transform patriarchal and hierarchal power relations into common sense. For example, postcolonial states restructure and promote gender formulations to be compatible with the needs of state development (Blackwood 2005). Powerful groups legitimate their domination and transform ideological assumptions of power relations into common sense.

Basic issues in feminist media studies have remained the same over the past thirty years: power, values, access and exclusion (Gallagher 2004). Global projects on women's representation around the world show that representations of women in news are much less frequent than that of men, because the main focus of news is politics and economics (Gallagher 2004). Media articulate gender along with discourses such as race, ethnicity, class, sexuality and global regions. They construct meanings around these identities. Women all over the world share common experiences, inequalities and inadequate protection from legal institutions (Steeves 2004). Globalization deepens exploitation of female labor and bodies, particularly women of color and lower-class women and girls from poor countries (Mohanty 2003). Rural and female migrants in China are among these women. They face economic exploitations of their cheap labor. Examining media representations of rural women and female migrants displays political and cultural conditions in which they live, and reveal the media role in their life situations.

In China, mainstream media represent and construct women within Party-state ideology and neoliberal ideology. Stereotypes of women as homemakers and caregivers in media reinforce old gender patterns. The ideological urban preference in
women's representation excludes rural women in magazine fictions (Glasser 1997). Representations of women in Chinese TV commercials show the synthesis of tradition and modernity (Wu and Chung 2011). The influence of feminism on journalism is much weaker than that of the state and market (Chen 2009). A manifestation of market influence is that popular discourse constructs consumerist and ideal feminine identities of women (Li 2011). Media representations of Chinese women embrace neoliberal ideology and patriarchal relations.

Media and popular discourses on migrant women exercise a symbolic domination over the population. “The cultural turn enables us to better understand the inequality of culture.” Inequalities of culture “refers to unequal access to an array of symbolic resources,” which includes the right to present self and to have voices in public sphere (Sun 2013, 27). Media discourses on female migrants sustain the state ideological discipline and neoliberal market values. “The state and societal discourse on migrant workers is powerful in that it constructs them as inadequate, inferior to local urban residents, lazy and slow-witted” (Xu 2000). Urban cultural elites have constructed cultural distinctions between urban insiders and rural outsiders in popular media (Lei 2003). Official news media represent female migrant workers in an anti-individualistic and patriarchal discourse, while commercial media adopt fetishistic and voyeuristic discourses. The two converge to construct a controlling gaze towards disadvantaged groups in China (Sun 2004). Episodes on official TV encourage urban media consumers to help the poor by giving money. Media present moral solutions to social economic problems and avoid critiques of social inequalities (Sun 2009).
Media representations construct the rural-urban dichotomy and cater to ideologies of urbanization. There are few media specifically targeting rural and migrant women, and news media have relatively less coverage of them (Bu 2006; J. Xu 2007; Deng and Zhang 2010). A television drama about two dagongmei working as domestic workers portrays a good maid and a bad one through suzhi discourse (Sun 2009). Suzhi (personal quality) discourse has been widely appearing in media texts and popular discourses, which refers to a person's good manners, behaviors and noble morality. The very term, deployed as standards to evaluate a person's modernity and civility, embodies identity politics of subject formation. “Modernity implies empowerment and disempowerment, liberation and restrictions” (Sun 2001, 36). Popular culture and mainstream media reflect social changes through their visualization and dramatization of social life, and they constitute of and contribute to those changes (Sun 2009).

Feminist media studies provide theoretical framework to analyze how media transform patriarchal power relations and ideologies into common sense. Prior studies critique media constructions of rural-urban dichotomy, but they overlooked different identity constructions of dagongmei and female migrant workers in media representations. Scholars studied media representations of rural women and female migrants separately, and they neglected political and cultural relations between them. Also, prior studies did not address political and cultural relations between rural women and female migrants in media representations. The analysis lacks attention to subordinate women's voices in media. “We should welcome the information retrieved from si-
lenced areas where subaltern groups are not heard” (Spivak 1988, 91). An analysis of media representations of rural women and female migrants might fill in the gap.

2.3 **News and Power Relations in Society**

News media serve as hegemonic constructions that reflect and/or sustain power structures and discipline social members in specific historical periods. There are power relations, ideologies and politics involved in news representations. News media legitimate certain ideologies and values to sustain and consolidate existing power structures. They are main sources for social members to know the outside world. Dominant culture and ideology create a resonance between journalists and audiences by providing an already understood and anticipated framework to code events and communicate meanings. In Gramsci’s concept of hegemony, the dominant class has the power to conform subordinated classes to its way or exerts authority over social formations as a whole through consent. Ideology is a set of ideas through which people make sense of the world as a subjective experience (Hall 1977). News values are culturally specific story-telling codes (Bird and Dardenne 1988). Each society has a social-cultural center of values and beliefs that reflect prevailing power relations, in which media operate (Sonwalkar 2005). Enduring values help define newsworthiness in a period of time. Examination of news representations of subordinate women in China will reveal political and sociocultural relations they are involved in.

In cultural studies, ideology is a set of collective ideas that powerful groups adopt to exercise domination (Barnhurst 2005). Although everyone participates in submitting to the ideological arena, it is the dominant groups who benefit from it
It is the hegemonic process without violence or direct state control (Gramsci 1971). Media are among the most powerful and effective tools for dominant groups to control subordinate ones. Analyzing ideology requires a close attention to the examination of power relations (Mitchell 1986). The study to reveal how ideologies involve groups should embrace inclusive content analysis of texts (Barnhurst 2005). Analyzing news representation of rural women and female migrants can reveal their positions in the ideological process of culture and values in China.

News media transform certain values into facts to defend and reproduce dominant ideologies. Hegemony works in journalism as techniques, assumptions and choices. Journalists preserve their autonomy in choosing the news using objective methods of fact-gathering (Gitlin 1980). Yet, objectivity and fairness themselves are values. When deciding what news is, journalists subjectively distinguish what is right and wrong, normal and abnormal, which derives from enduring values of a larger nation and society (Gans 1979). Mass media operate within the culture and shape the culture. They influence audiences’ views through interpretative frameworks and provide categories to think about related matters. Media elites defend the political-economic system that preserves their power and prestige. News reporting tends to skew coverage to avoid fundamentally contradicting dominant hegemonic principles. News media operate in reformist ways along hegemonic routines (Gitlin 1980). To unpack hegemonic ideology and values embedded in news facts should involve inclusive textual analysis of news representations.
On the practical level, news-workers’ subjective selection, assessment and interpretation of news stories, reflect power relations in a society (Tuchman 1972). People from dominant groups are verbal actors who can speak out for themselves or groups; People outside the powerful groups are physical actors whose voices remain silent (Barnhurst forthcoming). The underprivileged are subordinate in their relations to journalists as news sources. The access of sources to journalists reflects hierarchies of nation and society. Generally, eager and powerful sources develop a solid and consistent relationship with journalists because they can always supply information with authority. Those in power consciously manipulate some news stories by providing materials for journalists (Bird and Dardenne 2009). The powerless resort to disturbances to obtain access, while the U.S. president as a powerful source has access to almost all news (Goldenberg 1975). Objective methods journalists adopt to get the truth are subjective and value-orientated with elitist, patriarchal and racial privilege (Allan 1998). Studies of news, journalists and sources over the twentieth century show that journalists prefer official group and institutional resources to ordinary individuals. This pattern continues in 21st century (Barnhurst forthcoming). Adopting the social-cultural binary of us and them, news discourse helps reify values and prejudices prevailing in society (Sonwalkar 2005).

Chinese media vacillate between state propaganda and market profit-making. In China's media and communication system, the newspaper, newspapers are structurally more diverse and more commercially important. Local evening papers are among bestsellers, under control of municipal Party propaganda and aimed at urban readers.
Contents of local evening papers are usually about everyday urban life. Dependence on the market makes the papers cater to urban readers and their consuming sensibilities. The wide popularity of evening newspapers also comes from the addressing of city residents' concerns and complaints (Zhao 1998). Although newspapers are under relatively loose control by Party government, the Party's coercive power suppresses any oppositional political and ideological ideas and formations (Zhao 2008). To look at how Chinese newspapers construct rural women and female migrants will reveal political, social and cultural implications of the state's neoliberal transformation, and will address the subaltern's life situations and problems.

A study of how rural women, *dagongmei* and female migrant workers appear in a commercial newspaper could explore descriptive and theoretical questions. A content analysis, for instance, might ask descriptive questions: How frequently do rural women and female migrants appear as news sources and in what ways? How does the news associate rural and migrant women with social groups? And how do rural and migrant women appear across different news genres and topics? By contrast discourse analysis might ask theoretical questions: What ideologies and values do stories represent the same women and place their lives in priority? What identity politics does Chinese news construct? What power relations do stories represent along spectrums of gender, class, local region and urbanity? What macro power structures and micro-politics of their life situations do the stories reveal? Content and discourse analysis of news texts might show political and sociocultural conditions in which rural women and female migrants live, and reveal their positions in the ideological process.
of culture in China. The new China appears to have constructed and normalized op-
pressive political-economic conditions that exacerbate existing inequalities, but fur-
ther study might show whether the changes offer new possibilities for negotiation,
incorporation and contestation (Chakravartty and Zhao 2008).
3. METHOD

The report about the 18-year-old dagongmei comes from a best-selling evening newspaper in northwestern China. Is it typical news for female migrants? Do subordinate groups get access to news coverage only when they supply dramatic stories (Goldenberg 1975)? The following research combines a content analysis and discourse analysis to find out and to analyze how news represents identities of rural and migrant women and power relations in which they live. It particularly examines their voices in news, and narratives can disclose micro-politics of their life situations and their responses to macro structures. The study began with content analysis to provide an empirical description of news representation, and concluded with discourse analysis to explore hegemonic ideology and values in the news construction of identity and power relations.

3.1 Content Analysis

To address empirical research questions, this study coded news representations of rural women, dagongmei and female migrant workers. Since 2000, the Chinese government has deployed the China Western Development policy to boost the economy of less-developed western regions. The policy appealed to foreign investment and labor-intensive industries. It attracted hundreds of migrant workers from rural areas to work in cities as cheap laborers. Huashangbao, founded in Xi'an in 1995, is a commercial newspaper with the largest circulation in northwestern China. This newspaper has a daily circulation of 500,000. It targets at urban residents in northwestern areas. The population of western China encompasses diverse classes and
regions, all qualities that make it a good place to study news coverage of rural and migrant women.

To examine news genres and sections (topics) and social groups surrounding them and the extent their voices appeared in news, I coded news coverage on rural women, *dagongmei* and female migrant workers separately. Rural women (*nongcunfunv*) are the female population in rural China. *Dagongmei* is a popular term widely used in media and popular discourse to refer to young and unmarried female migrant workers. Female migrant worker (*nvxingnongminggong*) is a broader term representing the whole population of women who migrate to work in cities from rural areas.

### 3.2 Sample

To gather a census of relevant news, I used search terms on *Huashang* news website archives, which are available from 2005 to the present. The census produced 1122 reports on rural women (*nongcunfunv*), 728 on *dagongmei* and 30 on female migrant workers (*nvxingnongminggong*). A constructed week sample for reports on rural women and *dagongmei* made two large categories manageable (Song and Chang 2012). A calendar sampling frame identified 52 Mondays for randomly selecting one first day of the week. Selecting other days followed the same procedure. Two constructed weeks are adequate to represent the one-year population of a daily newspaper (Song and Chang 2012), so I selected two per year for a total of 18 constructed weeks for the sample news reports. Due to the small number of female migrant worker reports, I began with the full census of female migrant worker reports, and then excluded nominal instances, where the term appeared but in minor or incidental ways. The
process resulted in 124 reports on rural women, 113 on dagongmei and 27 on female migrant workers.

3.3 **Unit of Analysis and Coding**

News reports served as units of analysis. Coding included news genres, news sections in which the women appeared, voices (types of quotations) from the women and identities of others appearing with them. Referring to a textbook for journalistic news writing (Liu, Xu and Zheng 2002), coders classified news genres as regular news, including event news, non-event news, descriptive news, analytical news and feature stories. News sections were thematic sections of the Huashang news website. Coding for voices of the women included direct, indirect, both and none. Identities were the most complex categories, including gender, class, ethnicities, regions and rural-urban. Gender included female, male and queer. Class coding followed the Report of Social Stratification in Contemporary China published by the Social Science Academy of China (Lu 2002), based on occupation: lower, middle and upper classes represent the basic social strata of China. Region coding was based on provinces in developed, developing and underdeveloped areas. Rural or urban identities reflected political regions of origin (See Appendix).

To assess reliability, two coders went through the coding procedure independently, then compared results for each coding section. The study adopted Cohen's Kappa to measure intercoder reliability. Based on the newspaper directory layout, coding of news sections was clear. Coding for gender, class and rural-urban identity required adding the case when stories did not mention gender or coders could not in-
fer it from titles or names, such as persons appearing only with professional titles or group terms. Coders could not determine the class of persons when professional title and political title both appeared. They followed a standard of priority by the higher level of social stratification. For example, if a rural person was also a representative of the National People's Congress, the related political power made them middle class despite a lower-class profession. Rural-urban identity followed political region naming, so that cun (village) refers to rural areas, while chengshi (city) or xiancheng refer to urban areas. Intercoder reliability values for the first pilot coding of news genres, regions and voices were each below 0.80 because of the careless coding. Two coders conducted the second round of coding for another twenty reports to test revised coding schemes, and to insure the reliability of coding for news genres, regions and voices. All intercoder reliability values for the second round of coding were above 0.80.

I also ran crosstabs to analyze how frequencies of three groups, when cited as news sources, varied along with their appearance in different news genres, sections and with different social groups. Results with statistical significance were reported.

3.4 Discourse Analysis

To further explore relations of domination based on gender, class, regions, rural-urban identity rural and migrant women's experiences, to analyze the construction of values and meanings, and to discover macro-power structures of the embedded subaltern and micro-politics of their life situation, this study adopted critical discourse analysis to examine texts, discourse practices and sociocultural practices (Fairclough 1995b). Based on empirical findings, I selected the corpus from each of the identified
genres, topics, sources and associated social groups. Textual analysis looked at meanings surrounding identities of different social groups and forms of relations represented, with sensitivity to absences and presences in the texts. I analyzed the ways news represented rural women, *dagongmei* and female migrant workers, implied identity politics in news constructions and embodied meanings and ideology. Discourse addressed “various aspects of processes of text production and text consumption” (Fairclough 1995a, 312). I looked for how existing political and sociocultural power structures shaped news texts by exploring social groups’ differing access to news and power relations constructed around them. Sociocultural practices provided different contexts for the analysis of communicative events, which I examined for political power and ideology as well as cultural value and meanings in China’s embracing neoliberalism. Finally, I analyzed the stories rural and migrant women tell about particular issues and explored micro-politics of their life struggles.
4. RESULTS

News media do not question patriarchal and hierarchal relations in China, but they reveal existing power structures and bring social problems from which rural and migrant women suffer into public attention. Different identity politics in news representations disclose how the state’s neoliberal transformation dominates rural and migrant women in different ways and places them into different power relations. News media symbolically marginalize rural women and female migrants. News underrepresents female migrant workers, constructs the rurality and backwardness of rural women, and exercises a symbolic domination over *dagongmei*. News representations reveal certain social inequalities rural women and female migrants face. Narratives from subordinate women in news reveal their struggles and concerns. Their voices empower them to negotiate and construct subjectivities.

4.1 Identity Politics in News Representations of Rural and Migrant Women

Content analysis reveals different identity politics in news representations of *dagongmei*, rural women and female migrant workers. The underrepresentation of female migrant workers leads to the neglect of their complex subjectivities and gender politics. News discourses symbolically marginalize rural women and female migrant workers in modernization and urbanization. News construction of *dagongmei* identity complicates the rural-urban dichotomy in China. Privileged groups share about symbolic power, while underprivileged groups have limited access to news.
Female migrant workers have appeared much less frequently in news, compared with rural women and *dagongmei*, who have more news representations. News tends to adopt *dagongmei* to represent all migrant women, which overlooks different identity politics between them. *Dagongmei* represents young and unmarried female migrant workers. But as more and more female migrants have become old, gotten married and settled down in cities in past thirty years, their existence faces underrepresentations in news media. The underrepresentation leads to the neglect of female migrants’ complex subjectivities and life situations.

News representations of female migrant workers associate them with male migrant workers to construct migrant workers’ identity. Reports on surveys about social problems are very common in news representations of female migrant workers. Usually, academic institutions or government departments conduct the surveys. Topics cover marriage situations and sexual needs, as well as working conditions and life situations in cities. In such news reports, female migrant workers are often appearing with male migrant workers to represent migrant workers (*nongmingong* or *mingong*). Male migrant workers constitute the majority of male, rural and lower class persons appearing with female migrant women. News representations neglect their female identity and gender subordination in patriarchal relations. A news report is about factories’ rules which prevent male workers from living with female workers in factory dorms (The Health department: 80% of rural migrant workers have sexual avidity 2012). A survey by the national institute of health follows the story. It shows that 80% of rural migrant workers have unsatisfied sexual need and have adopted various ways
to release it. The news does not separate female migrant workers from male ones. It does not specify needs of female workers. News representation overlooks gender politics and female subjectivities in situations of female migrant workers.

There is a similar pattern in news representations of female migrant workers and rural women. In Table I, female migrant workers and rural women appear more frequently than *dagongmei* do in Shaanxi section, while *dagongmei* appear more in Society section and Other section. Other section includes Health, Feature, Finance, Industry, International, Picture and Lady Life and Opinion. Particularly, there are no news reports on rural women and female migrant workers in the Industry, International, Picture and Lady Life sections. Also, female migrant workers and rural women appear mostly with persons from underdeveloped areas. *Dagongmei* appear much often with developed areas persons (refer to Table II). The frequencies of rural and urban persons appearing in female migrant workers news and rural women news are similar, but urban persons appear much more often than rural ones in *dagongmei* news (refer to Table III). Although female migrant workers are an essential labor force for urbanization, news representations symbolically marginalize them in urban life.

There is a distortion in news representation of female migrant workers. The unbalanced economic development in China leads to economic and political divisions of three areas, eastern developed areas, central developing areas and western underdeveloped areas. The more developed the area is, the more cities the area has. There are more rural people living in underdeveloped western areas, while migrant workers tend to live in developing and developed areas. News representations of rural women
and *dagongmei* reflect such trends, but female migrant workers mostly appear with persons from underdeveloped areas in news (refer to Table II).

**TABLE I**

**NEWS SECTIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Rural women</th>
<th><em>Dagongmei</em></th>
<th>Female migrant workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shanxi</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE II**

**REGIONS OF PERSONS APPEARING IN NEWS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Rural women</th>
<th><em>Dagongmei</em></th>
<th>Female migrant workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underdeveloped</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developed</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE III**

**RURAL OR URBAN IDENTITY OF PERSONS APPEARING IN NEWS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>R-U identity</th>
<th>Rural women</th>
<th><em>Dagongmei</em></th>
<th>Female migrant workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As for voices, rural women, *dagongmei* and female migrant workers have limited access to news. About half of news reports have no quotes from rural women,
*dagongmei* and female migrant workers (refer to Table IV). Reports on the three groups include more direct quotes than indirect quotes. Direct quotes are generally one-sentence long and they are often parts of journalistic descriptive stories. Indirect quotes tend to be longer than direct ones. Voices from these women are usually stronger when they are quoted in investigative and analytical news. Discourse analysis gives a close examination of the voices.

### Table IV

**Quotes of Rural Women, *dagongmei* and Female Migrant Workers.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quotes</th>
<th>Rural women</th>
<th><em>Dagongmei</em></th>
<th>Female migrant workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No quotes</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>62.1</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Middle class and men have more access to news. Middle class persons appear mostly in news representations of all three groups (refer to Table V). Men appear more than women do in news on rural women and *dagongmei* (refer to Table VI). Most government officials appearing in news are men. Officials range from grass-roots levels to leading levels, including village head, province governor and minister of the state department, to name a few. A chi-square test is performed, and a strong relationship is found between classes of persons appearing with rural women and rural women’s voices in news, $X (2, N = 124) = 65.99$, $p < .001$. When rural
women appear with middle class persons in news, they have fewer voices (refer to Table VII). Dagongmei face the similar marginalization. A chi-square test is performed, and a strong relationship is found between classes of persons appearing with rural women and dagongmei’s voices in news, $X (2, N = 113) = 94.07, p < .001$. When dagongmei appear with middle and upper class persons, their voices have limited access to news media (refer to Table VIII). News sustains the patriarchal and hierarchal power middle class and men have, and it places these women into powerless positions.

**TABLE V**

CLASS OF PERSONS APPEARING IN NEWS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Rural women</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>77.4</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>83.1</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>59.7</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>63.7</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE VI**

GENDER OF PERSONS APPEARING IN NEWS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Rural women</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>61.9</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE VII

**CLASS OF PERSONS AND QUOTES FROM RURAL WOMEN**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Not</th>
<th>Direct</th>
<th>Indirect</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Both</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L &amp; M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L &amp; U</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M &amp; U</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[X = 65.99, p < .001\]

### TABLE VIII

**CLASS OF PERSONS AND QUOTES FROM DAGONGMEI**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Not</th>
<th>Direct</th>
<th>Indirect</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Both</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L &amp; M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L &amp; U</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M &amp; U</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[X = 94.07, p < .001\]
The ways news constructs rural women and female migrant workers symbolize their rural identities. News representation of *dagongmei* identity complicates the rural-urban dichotomy. Different ways in which news represents *dagongmei* and rural women exemplify their separation from rural identities, but they are apparently not identifying with urban people. The voices of these women have limited access to news. Middle and upper class men share about symbolic power in news. Discourse analysis further discusses values, meanings and power relations embedded in news discourses on rural women, *dagongmei* and female migrant workers.

4.2 **Marginalization of Rural Women and Female Migrants in News**

The discourse analysis of news representations of rural women and female migrants reveals their symbolic marginalization in urbanization and modernization. News constructions of rural women degrade their rural identity and normalize the legitimacy of urbanization. News discourses on *dagongmei* sustain market values to underpin neoliberal reform. Patriarchal cultures in news objectify and sexualize *dagongmei*. Rural women's migration does not fundamentally change their subordinate positions in the hierarchal and patriarchal China. The economic gaining of female migrants does not bring them political and cultural capital. Examining news representations exposes oppressive political and sociocultural conditions in China.

News constructs rural women as the symbol of the rurality and backwardness of rural China. Identities of urban people in news are often persons to help or govern rural women. News reports construct helpless, passive and powerless rural women and construct helpful, active and powerful urban groups. In a news report about the
“mother water project” investigated by the China Women Development Foundation, rural women appear as a group of people getting help from an urban organization and a corporation (The sixth construction project of "mother water" launches in Huanglong 2005). The report represents the relationship between rural women and urban persons as being helped and helping. Appearing urban persons in the report include corporation employees and managers. In another news report, Meili Liang, a rural woman, accidentally falls into a well and was saved (A Lintong rural women falls into a well, and the police collaborate with rural residents in the successful saving 2005). The report describes how a group of people overcomes difficulties and collaborates to save Meili Liang. It includes many descriptive details but has no quotes from the saved woman. The report celebrates the cooperation among rural residents (cunmin), firemen, doctors and government officials. It objectifies the woman without any contextualized subjectivity and portrays her as voiceless and submissive.

News discourses about dagongmei sustain neoliberal market values and exercise symbolic domination over the women. The state of China prioritizes urbanization and modernization. In a short report about an entrepreneurship theme lecture, a successful businesswoman gives a speech about her experience (Entrepreneurs’ series of lectures in college 2011). The report uses terms “chairman” and “lady” to describe the identity of the businesswoman. Chairman is her professional title and lady is a respectable term for women with higher social status. News discourses seldom use “lady” to represent the identity of dagongmei. News constructs dagongmei as a subordinated group to compare with the businesswoman's accomplishment and to
acknowledge her success. In three feature stories about successful women, two Olympic champions and a pop singer star, reports describe that they “almost became dagongmei” or “were working as dagongmei” (Yuying Yang expects to become TV host 2012; Siling Yi almost becomes a dagongmei because of poverty 2012; Olympic champion Wenjun Guo once gave up shooting 2012). News representation highlights the superiority of the middle class identity and the inferiority of the dagongmei identity. News implies that becoming dagongmei or working as dagongmei is a symbol of hardship and an indicator of a person's failure and incompetence. The neoliberal values embedded in these discourses symbolically legitimates the class subordination of dagongmei.

News constructions objectify and sexualize dagongmei. News reports often represent these women as victims of crimes like rape and robbery, the powerless who are saved and the evil who are crime suspects. News representation of sexual crimes constructs social problems as individual matters. Criminals or suspects in news are mostly men. Male suspects include strangers, colleagues, friends and even relatives. Sexual crime is a systematic means by which men control dagongmei women's bodies. In one report, a dagongmei is raped and killed by her boyfriend's brother in-law, who is a maintenance worker (A dagongmei is raped and killed 2011). In another news report, a dagongmei is gangbanged by seven teenager strangers (Seven teenagers rapes a daongmei and takes her naked photos 2011). Another report is about a dagongmei being kidnapped and treated as a sex slave by a man (Dagongmei became a sex slave 2011). News reports represent sexual violence towards dagongmei as individual dis-
turbances, and they seldom address gender subordination as a systematic inequality. In a report, a 16-year-old *dagongmei* is sentenced to prison because she blackmails a government official. The young woman attempts to have sexual relations with the official. The official reports to the police that she blackmails him with obscene photos (Vice deputy of the bureau of radio and television reported to the police about being blackmailed by his 16-year-old girlfriend 2005). This news particularly describes the *dagongmei*’s body and beauty with the terms *tingtingyuli* and *zhangxiaoqingxiu*, which refer to the prettiness of teenage girls. It also indicates the official’s political power by presenting his identity as a national cadre. The news constructs the *dagongmei*’s body and beauty as the source and tool for the crime. The news report includes indirect quotes from the official to describe the event, but there are no quotes from the *dagongmei*.

### 4.3 Powerless Women in Unequal Power Relations

Although news constructions do not critique hegemonic power, patriarchal culture and hierarchal relations, they reveal unequal power relations and certain social problems that rural women and female migrants suffer. Social problems and inequalities indicate disadvantaged political and culture conditions in which these women live. Voices of rural women and female migrants appear in news display their concerns and construct their complex subjectivities. News representations have the potentiality to draw public attention to powerless women’s life situations.

The patriarchal state and hierarchal political relations lead to rural and migrant women's severe lack of political participation and representation. In a news Xi'an
Women's Federation works on educating rural women with technological knowledge and labor skills, and it provides unemployed women with professional skills and improves the capability for female grass-roots officials' political participation (Improving Xi'an women's ability for political participation 2007). The news reveals that though rural and unemployed women have acquired economic assistance, they have little political power. In another news report, there are unprecedentedly five migrant workers among the newly elected deputies of Shaanxi province People's Congress. Two of five migrant workers are female. The discourse “first time” (shouci) reveals that migrant workers used to have no representatives in the province's People's Congress. Ironically, while the news tends to acclaim how state officials invite political participation from the powerless. It reflects their marginalized and subordinate positions in China's political hierarchy.

Domestic violence on rural women and female migrants also embodies patriarchal dominations and hierarchal relations. Domestic violence on rural and migrant women appears in many news reports. Issues include individual instances, surveys from government departments and the Women's Federation and editorial opinions. In a news article, the National Women's Federation conducts a survey on domestic violence. It shows that 11.6% of rural women and 13.5% of female migrant workers have encountered domestic violence in a year of 2006. The title of the report calls for attention to domestic violence on female migrant workers (The Women's Federation: the domestic violence on female migrant workers needs urgent attention 2007). The report quotes Yuee Jiang, the minister of National Women's Federation, that because of
being mobile, female migrant workers have more limitations to get legal as well as social help when encountering domestic violence. These women have to pay a higher price to get rid of domestic violence. Most of them choose to live with it, which makes the situation even worse. This female minister appears in several news reports as an authoritative source for comments and opinions. The speaking power and her upper-class identity with political influence is in contrast to the underprivileged lower class identity. In another news report about a husband biting off his wife's nose, the victim is a rural woman who has been suffering from domestic violence for years. She has been asking for help from related departments, but has received no replies or help (A violent husband bited off his wife's nose, but the police did not offer help 2005). Though the report does not tell what “related departments” are, it mentions that the local police did not take any action after getting help call from the woman. The police is another group of persons frequently appearing in news, and they are typical middle-class men to symbolize the patriarchal power. In the end, experts call for public attention to domestic violence on rural women, who are vulnerable members of society. Experts and scholars appearing in news media to give opinions represent the political and cultural power of the middle class.

Currently, there are no laws against domestic violence in China, and it is often considered a private matter between married couples. Many female victims find it difficult to get help from official or public institutions. Though victims can resort to the local Women's Federation for help, they lack legal and systematic protections from such violence. The situation is even worse in rural areas, where it is culturally ac-
ceptable for men to beat wives. Male supremacy culture in rural areas prevents suffering wives from getting divorced. Rural and migrant women have limited access to getting political voices and social support.

Another social problem news addresses is high rates of rural women’s suicide. News article about the phenomenon of rural women's committing suicide investigates the case (Over one thousand rural women have committed suicide in Hebei Qinglong village in three years 2006). The story about a rural woman committing suicide exemplifies a social problem of women left. Women left (liushoufunv) refers to a group of rural women living in rural villages, and their husbands work in cities. The particular type of tragedy is not uncommon among rural women in China. Because of long-distance relationships with their husbands, rural women often lack emotional care and sexual lives. The situation brings anxiety and even desperation. In a follow-up opinion piece, the vice president of the local Women's Federation comments that economic earnings cannot compensate for rural women's emotional needs. Also, rural women have far fewer opportunities to learn new skills, and they are likely to be self-isolated. The news makes these women’s situations accessible to the public.

News has the potentiality for rural women and female migrants to get their voices to enter the discussion of social problems. Narratives from rural and migrant women in news reveal their struggles and concerns. In the news about rural women’s committing suicide, an old rural woman, who was the mother of a suicide victim, tells her daughter's tragic suicide story. The woman describes the lack of emotional care and support. The victim's husband works in a faraway city and hardly goes home. The
woman's death leads to the break-up of a family and the 10-year-old son is now living with his grandmother. The vivid and moving story told by the old woman reveals struggles of women left in rural areas. The story adds to political discussions of rural women’s particular life situations. Rural women’s voices in mainstream media enable them to politicize personal matters.

The sexual harassment female migrant workers encounter at work is also a social problem. The situation requires public attention and policy protection. News reports a survey on sexual harassment towards young female migrant workers (Survey shows about 70% of young female migrant workers in Hunan have encountered sexual harassment 2006). The survey shows that 70% of young female migrant, who work in service industries, have experienced sexual harassment; many of them gradually get used to the assaults after working for a while. Because bosses or managers refuse to offend clients, and sexual harassment is considered “not a big deal” in service work, some young workers prefer to keep silent. Others come up with tactics to protect themselves, such as finding excuses to leave the spa room or negotiating with clients.

Voices of female migrant workers display their subjective awareness, practices and struggles in disadvantaged situations. Direct and indirect quotes from young service workers share their feelings and tactics when encountering with sexual harassment. In an interview about spa service, a young female servant describes her feeling “felt humiliated.” She talks about situations when male clients ask her to perform massages in their sexual areas and keep flirting with her. She says, “it is my work to
do the spa for the full body, but their requests made me feel humiliated and very disgusting.” Another worker expresses her embarrassment when male clients tell sexual jokes, “it feels like I am made naked. I am making livings by my labor, and I am not a prostitute.” The two women claim their professional capability, and they emphasize their subjective awareness and refusal. They are quite aware of their female identities and rights to resist sexual harassment. They insist that they deserve respect and good treatment. The sexualized bodies remind workers of their femininity, and the submission and obedience they face. Some women choose to resist the mistreatment, and others take advantage of it to acquire what they need. Xiaotang (pseudonym), who works at a bar, complains that “to flirt with clients or even allow them to hug or touch us is the way we earn money.” The powerless respond differently to disadvantaged situation. Their subjective awareness empowers them to act.

By becoming migrant workers, rural and migrant women respond to local encounters with neoliberal globalization. Many rural women make their own decisions to migrate, and to make money and seek better lives. As Liu Mingxia (real name), a female migrant worker living in cities for almost twenty years, says in a news interview, who is a female migrant worker for almost twenty years, “to make a living in cities enables me to see the outside world. I can live away from the trivia back in village” (Rural migrant workers who are making livings in cities 2012). Female migrants are making their own history by accumulating material and symbolic power. Talking to the press provides a negotiating space for subordinate women, and it enables them to construct and co-construct their subjectivity.
5. CONCLUSION

This study exposes unequal power structures and social inequalities and problems in China. The neoliberal market intertwines with the patriarchal party-state, which results in the exploitation, oppression and marginalization of rural and migrant women. This study calls the attention to political and sociocultural impacts of China's neoliberal transformation on underprivileged groups.

Since the state launched its reform policy in the 1980s, economic development and wealth accumulation have become prevalent in state and societal discourses. As the state is celebrating its rising economic power on the world stage, injustice and inequalities from which rural and migrant people suffer deserve attention. The state's propaganda promotes its socialist legacy to legitimate the party-state. It conceals the gender and class subordination in power structures. The normalization of neoliberal ideology prioritizes economic development over social equality and justice. Mass media embrace consumerism and market values, which symbolically disregards and marginalizes powerless groups.

Patriarchal and hierarchal structures place rural women and female migrants into disadvantaged and oppressed positions. Normalizing of patriarchal and hierarchal relations in news representations underpins existing power structures. Middle class and men have more power to get access to news media. News constructs the rurality and backwardness of rural women to symbolize rural China and stabilize the urbanization. The underrepresentation of female migrant workers leads to the systematic ne-
glect of the group's female subjectivities and life situation. News discourses on dagongmei sustain market values and exercise symbolic domination over them. News constructions objectify and sexualize dagongmei’s bodies.

News representations reflect tensions and negotiations among patriarchal and hierarchal structures and disadvantaged groups. Rural women's migration does not change their subordinate positions in unequal power structures. The economic contributions and significance of female migrants do not bring them political and cultural empowerment. Rural and migrant women lack political participation and representation. Their subordinate positions in patriarchal power relations lead to sufferings from domestic violence and sexual harassment. Voices of rural women and female migrants enable them to politicize their personal matters. Rural and migrant women can act through unequal power structures to accumulate capital and empower themselves.

News media have the potential to expose certain social problems and draw public attention, possibly leading to political, cultural and social changes.

In the instance news report about the 18-year-old dagongmei abandoning her baby, the study questions the report in following ways: It is typical news for female migrants. The powerless dagongmei gets access to news only when she provides this dramatic story. The news represents the situation as an individual matter, and it ignores the social and structural forces. The fear displayed by this dagongmei reveals male cultural supremacy and patriarchal values. Patriarchal culture leads to this woman's subordination and dependence in her relationship with this man. The report accuses her of immorality and of abandoning the baby, but does not mention insuffi-
cient legal protections and disadvantaged economic conditions. The news fails to present the girl's voice to narrate her specific situations, concerns and worries. The news report does not question unequal power relations in which the *dagongmei* live.

This study examines a period of time during which China has launched the western development policy to boost economy in underdeveloped areas. The policy contributes to the economic reform that primarily focuses on eastern economy. This research contextualizes policy changes and social conditions in a given period of economic reform. Future studies can expand the time frame of analysis to reflect the full historical context of China's reform. Future research can also include comparative analysis of news representations of rural men, male migrants and urban people, which could provide more examination of power relations. Textual analysis does not encompass visual analysis of images from rural and migrant women. This is an analysis of one commercial newspaper. It refrains from discussing other forms and types of news media, for example, official newspaper, TV news and third sector media. This will provide a systematic and historical analysis of media representations of subaltern women. Political economic analysis can join with cultural studies to analyze third sector media, which are specifically targeting disadvantaged groups.

This analysis combines a descriptive content analysis and critical discourse analysis. The combination contributes to the understanding of relations among power structures, news media and subordinate groups. Content analysis adds to empirical descriptions of news constructions of rural women and female migrants and privileged groups’ symbolic power. Content analysis also provides empirical basis for ide-
ological analysis of power and values. Discourse analysis further examines how news media sustain hegemonic power, and it looks at news media’s potentiality to reveal powerless women’s sufferings. The two approaches unravel the ideological process of values and culture in China.

This research analyzes powerless groups’ positions in ideological processes of culture and values. On one hand, patriarchal culture and market values symbolically marginalize and dominate powerless women. Privileged groups have more power and access in patriarchal and hierarchal relations. On the other hand, subordinate groups enter the process with their voices. The voice in news empowers them to construct subjectivities and to express their concerns. News media serve as a negotiating space for the encountering between subordinate groups and unequal power structures. This analysis contextualizes news media’s role in the relation between China’s economic reform and life situations of subordinate women. News media sustain existing power structures by normalizing the legitimacy of patriarchal and hierarchal party-state and neoliberal market. News discourses exercise a symbolic domination over disadvantaged groups. The democratic implication of news media is that news representations can reveal certain social problems and inequalities, which could draw public attention and possibly lead to social change.
APPENDIX

NEWS CODEBOOK

A.1 General Information

I. Coder number

1. Siyuan Yin

2. Haifeng Lu

II. URL links of the news story (consecutively numbered, 1-124; 1-113; 1-27).

A.2 Story Coding

I. Type of news genres

1. regular news (event news, non-event news, descriptive news, and analytical news)

2. feature stories (exclusively reporting a particular person or group of people)

II. Type of story

1. Shaanxi

2. Society

3. China

4. Regional (Xian Yang, Ankang, Yulin, Weinan, etc)

5. Feature

6. Health

7. Culture

8. Finance

9. Industry

10. International
APPENDIX (continued)

11. Picture news
12. Lady life
13. Opinion

Content coding

Coders categorize human subjects appearing with either of the two groups into social groups along the spectrums of gender, class, ethnicity, regions, and rural-urban identity

A.3 Social group

I. Gender: code gender of social groups appearing in news other than rural women and dagongmei. Gender is explicitly mentioned or inferred by titles or names. Professional titles or group terms without clear reference to specific gender are not coded.

1. Male
2. Female
3. Other
4. Male and female

II. Class. Class is coded based on occupation. And when particular political identity is mentioned, like representatives of NPC, class is coded by higher level of social stratification.

1. Lower class. (the unemployed, the half unemployed, and farmers in poverty, servants, workers, and farmers)
APPENDIX (continued)

2. Middle class. (primary professional or technical personnel, small business owners, and junior staff for corporation or government, leading cadres at and below city levels, senior staff in large enterprise, managers in small and medium-sized enterpriser, advanced professional or technical personnel and the medium business owners; representatives of National People’s congress at all levels)

3. Upper class. (leadership cadre above city levels, managers in large enterprise, and large private business owners)

4. Lower class and middle class

5. Lower class and upper class

6. Middle and upper classes

7. All three classes appear

III. Regions. Regions are coded primarily based on provinces.

1. Developed areas (Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Chongqing, Shandong, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, Guangdong, Hongkong, Macau, Taiwan, Hainan)

2. Developing areas (Heilongjiang, Liaoning, Jilin, Henan, Shanxi, Henan, Hubei, Hunan, Jiangxi, Sichuan)

3. Underdeveloped areas (Neimeng, Shaanxi, Gansu, Ningxia, Qinghai, Xinjiang, Xizang, Yunnan, Guizhou)

4. Developed and developing areas

5. Developed and underdeveloped areas

6. Developing and underdeveloped areas
APPENDIX (continued)

7. All three regions appear

IV. Rural-urban identity: rural and urban areas are distinguished by political region naming, for example, cun refers to rural area, while city or xiancheng refer to urban areas. “Expert” are coded as urban identity.

1. Originally coming from rural areas

2. From Urban areas

3. Both appear

A. 4 Being cited as sources

Whether news present voices of rural women and female migrant workers.

I. Direct quotes

II. Indirect quotes

III. No quotes

IV. Both direct and indirect quotes appear
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