''We are the Floating Ones, you know.''

Male Migrant Workers and Family Transformation in China

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Abstract

This thesis explores whether and how rural-to-urban migration alters the Chinese migrant family in the case of divided rural households of 10 male migrant workers. The study relied on in-depth semi-structured interviews with married men, who are fathers, husbands and sons, and who are currently working on construction sites in Beijing. Drawing on Lusher & Robins' (2009) theory of masculinity, this thesis found that male migrant workers reposition themselves in the family (personal), mobilise alternative resources (interpersonal) and other discourses of manhood (cultural) due to their low status in society, and the separation from their left-behind family members. Men in this research reconstruct a form of manhood in which a man's success is measured by his efforts to take care of the family and sustain family harmony. To achieve this and to compensate emotional turmoil stemming from long-term spatial separation, these men alter their family practices by making compromises on their masculinity. These compromises include adopting a more permissive attitude as fathers (1); selective acceptance in task negotiations as husbands (2); and, increased obedience as sons (3) The thesis, however, concludes that patriarchal elements are still apparent in gender relations within marriages, which remains male dominant.

Keywords: *rural-to-urban migration, family dynamics, masculinity, male migrant construction workers, low-status, manhood, compromises, patriarchal elements.*

Acknowledgement

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1   INTRODUCTION

In April 2017, the Wall Street Journal once more reported about the magnitude of Chinese migration that they try to illustrate by interviewing Mr. Guo, a migrant labourer working in Beijing (Qi, 2017). The strategy of interviews with individual migrant workers is widespread in newspaper articles – understandably within the light of such great numbers of migrants. However, rarely do those articles provide a more-than-sensational analysis of migrant workers' floating life, their relations with their rural homes, and let alone their emotion or their self-perception as fathers or mothers or in the light of other family relations. Furthermore, although numerous academic articles and books deal with such themes, the transformation in Chinese society is complex and many questions remain unanswered or need answers from multiple different angles, especially those concerning migration and family dynamics. How does rural-to-urban migration play out in the Chinese family? Drawing on in-depth semi-structured interviews with 10 migrant men in Beijing, China, this thesis examines the impact of rural-to-urban migration on gender and generational relations in Chinese migrant families. The focus lies upon alterations in self-perception and understanding of what the family is from the point of view of men and masculinities.

China's economic success since the restructuring and opening up (Gàigēkǎifāng; 改革开放) towards the rest of the world since the 1970's is considered a significant landmark in its pursuit of Modernisation. This modernisation was made possible through economic reforms accompanied by a neoliberal market economy, launched by Deng Xiaoping (in office 1982-97) (Lin, et al., 2003). Rapid transformations of economy, politics, society, and culture were part of this modernisation process. The much-discussed increase in factories and factory labour in the coastal areas, as well as the increase in major constructions of infrastructure and buildings, has been fuelled by migrant construction workers originating from the countryside, providing cheap labour throughout the country (Wong, et al., 2007). The gross domestic product (GDP) generated by migrant workers was equivalent to 32% of Beijing's economic aggregate in 2016 (NBSC, 2016).These migrant workers have moved out of their native villages, away from family and the safety of their homes to work as construction workers in the city. They migrate in order to provide an income sufficient to sustain their left-behind family members (Zhang, 2011; Wu & Ye, 2016; Zhao, et al., 2018). In the case of construction workers, with a few exceptions, mostly men are recruited from villages. Due to the men leaving behind their social relations and wider families in the villages, relations change (Ying & Yu, 2014).

Changes include reorganisation and transformation of gendered labour, expectations, and relations between the migrants and the left-behind family members. This thesis focuses especially on changes in gender relations and generational relations.

1.1   Context of the Study

According to the National Bureau of Statistics of China *NBSC* (2016) there were 281.7 million rural labourers working in China's cities in 2016, composing about 35 percent of China's total workforce of around 807 million. Men constitute 56,7 percent of China's rural to urban migrant workers, and female migrant workers form roughly only 43,3 percent in 2016, with the number of female migrant workers increasing slightly by roughly 0,5 percent annually over the past three years (NBSC, 2016).

Migrant workers are usually engaged in physically demanding, low paid labour in the cities, while their husbands, wives, children, and parents are left behind in the countryside. Those who are staying in the countryside are looking after land contracted to the family to grow food for the family while men are away. The family that is left behind have been labelled with terms such as left-behind children (*liúshǒu'értóng*; 留守兒童), left-behind women (*liúshǒu funü;* 留守妇), and left-behind elderly (*liúshǒu lǎorén*; 留守老人).

Families are coping with long-distance relationships in exchange for a higher household income in order to assure sufficient financial resources for the family's basic needs, building new homes, and children's education (Jacka, 2013; He & Ye, 2014; Wu & Ye, 2016; Zhao, et al., 2018). While families stay behind, migrant men and women face a world of modernity and development in cities, with themselves being the cheap labour surplus making rapid modernisation possible (Wu & Ye, 2016). The rural-to-urban migration has not only contributed to a flow of cheap labour to China's rapid economic development over the past four decades, but has also shaped the lives of migrants and their left-behind family members in rural China.

Although women form a great part in rural-to-urban migration, this thesis focusses on how men reposition themselves within the family. Much research has been done on female migrants, especially in relation to family dynamics. However, research about men in the context of family relations, gender roles, emotions and masculinity in a patriarchal and post-migration setting (after the men have migrated to the city) is still scarce, yet crucial for developing a better understanding of Chinese migrant families.

1.2   Study Aim and Research Questions

This thesis aims is to acquire a better understanding of how external factors such as migration impacts gender and generational relations of divided migrant families[1] from the vantage point of men. By researching male migrant's reflections, this thesis aims to gain an understanding of the effect migration has on family relations, gender roles, and masculinity from men's perspectives. It additionally aims to fathom how these men reposition themselves within their family as well as in society within the context of patriarchy. The information gathered from migrant workers is built up around a main question and three sub-questions around the themes of gender roles, family relations, and patriarchy:

- How has rural-to-urban migration altered the Chinese family?

Sub-questions:

Theme 1: Gender roles

- How do married male migrants as part of a family view and negotiate the division of tasks and marital power? How do these men uphold traditional and patriarchal gender norms with the reality of post-migration life in the city?

Theme 2: Family relations

- How do male migrant construction workers cope emotionally with the separation from their left-behind family members, and how do they reinterpret their roles as fathers, husbands, and sons?

Theme 3: Patriarchy

- How do male migrant construction workers live Chinese patriarchy, and how do these men reconstruct masculinity and manhood in post-migration settings?

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[1]In this thesis, divided migrant families refers to a family in which the husband has migrated to another location, working and living away (long-term) from his wife and other family members.

1.3   Significance of the Study

This study contributes to understanding of how the Chinese family is changing under the ongoing migration processes, and is an insightful addition to the scarce literature on the effect of migration on gender relations in the fields of, for example, Migration Studies, Gender Studies, Sociology, and Anthropology. Numerous important studies related to gender have examined the left-behind wives of the migrant workers (Jiang, M. & Zhou, Y., 2007; Attané, I., 2012; Jacka, T., 2013; Chen, L., 2014; Wu & Ye, 2016). Instead, this study places men's perspectives and positioning at the centre, contributing to a recently opening field (Lin, 2013). Due to the fact that patriarchal Confucian beliefs are supposed to be engrained in the Chinese family and society, in which men hold power as opposed to women's subordinate position, researching changes in men's life constitutes a crucial factor for understanding changes in gender relations and the patriarchal Chinese Family (Tuana, 2016; Santos & Harrell, 2017). The dearth of research regarding migrant men's voices may stem from the belief that these men are the main beneficiaries of patriarchy, and their experiences are therefore often seen as unproblematic and conducting extensive research into them is deemed unnecessary (Lin, 2013). This thesis contributes to remedy this idea.

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is divided in six main chapters. After this introduction, chapter 2 outlines Lusher & Robins' (2009) theoretical Feminist 'Framework of Masculinity'. Thereafter, chapter 3 provides an overview of relevant literature consisting of two main components: the institutional component including the functionality of the *hùkŏu* system, and the thematic component including the three themes: gender roles, family relations, and patriarchy and masculinity. The procedural qualitative research methodology is described in chapter 4. The main findings and the analysis of these findings are provided in chapter 5. Having analysed the main findings, the final chapter draws conclusions based on these findings and formulates an answer to the main research question.

2   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND CONCEPTS

2.1   Conceptualising the Social Construction of Gender

Gender as a social construct is an important concept in sociological, feminist and philosophical theories and differs from sex, which defines the biological characteristics of women and men. It is determined by the conception of tasks, functions and roles prescribed to women and men in society, public and private life (Tickner & Sjoberg, 2010). Gender roles are social roles encompassing a range of behaviours and attitudes that are generally considered acceptable, appropriate, or desirable for people based on their actual or perceived sex or sexuality (Tickner & Sjoberg, 2010). Gender roles are furthermore centred around conceptions of femininity and masculinity, in which expectations may vary substantially among cultures, while other characteristics may be common throughout a range of cultures.

In order to effectively study the ways in which migration affects the Chinese family in the context of gender roles, family relations, and patriarchy and how male migrants interpret and respond to certain transformations, feminist theory is used throughout this research in a broader sense. Feminist theory focuses on analysing gender inequality and gender relations in general, in which themes such as discrimination, objectification, oppression, patriarchy, stereotyping, masculinity are explored (Bondi, 2003). This approach is useful in detecting patterns of change in masculine behaviour in the context of gender relations. When utilising the feminist approach it is of importance to categorise perceived masculinity and femininity, and identifying specific objects, terms or phenomena that are associated as either masculine or feminine (Tickner & Sjoberg, 2010). Associations with masculinity or femininity can, for example, be extracted from the conducted interviews through analysing the choice of words or word combinations. Words can be used in specific contexts, through body language, or through, for example, ironic or sceptic undertones, certain common personifications in language and ultimately herewith assigning the male or female gender to a certain role within the household and society.

2.2   Lusher & Robins' (2009) Theory of Masculinity

Intertwined with the conceptualisation of gender roles, masculinity can be defined as a set of attributes, behaviours, and roles associated with men. Both men and women can possess masculine traits and behaviour, which vary by location and context, and are influenced by social and cultural factors (Letherby, 2003). Connell (1993) places masculinity in a theoretical

framework called 'the sociology of men in gender relations' (p.601). In a range of studies, Connell (1985, 1993, 1998, 2005) advocates that in most societies a culturally normative ideal of manhood[2] is present. Drawing on the notion of, Connell (1993) coins the term ''hegemonic masculinity'' which reflects, legitimises, and naturalises social constructions and arrangements that privileges men, the dominant group in society. Connell's framework is macro-sociological, giving micro-level detail to complement macro-structural relations through fine-detailed life histories of men. However, although Connell's research is one of the most influential in the field of gender studies and masculinities, due to utilising a macro-sociological framework while providing micro-level detail, her framework has been criticised for being too general. Nevertheless, critique on Connell's framework does not undermine the fundamental components, but rather seeks to elaborate on it (Jackson, 1991; Cornwall, 1997; Schippers, 2007; Beasley, 2008).

Lusher & Robins (2009) built on Connell's (1993) framework and constructed an alternative, expanded, and more localised theory to analyse masculinity. Lusher & Robins' (2009) theory elaborates through the establishment of a multilevel framework in conceiving masculinity through four main components: institutional (1), cultural (2), personal (3), and interpersonal (4). Institutional factors in this thesis include the institutional system causing structural inequalities regarding residency; cultural factors here include dominant discourses related to family obligations and the ideal manhood embedded in society; personal factors encompass someone's personal beliefs regarding gender roles; interpersonal factors include family relations (Lusher & Robins, 2009). This framework of Lusher & Robins' (2009) serves as an analytical instrument to detect patterns in men's attitudes and practices related to gender roles, family relations, and masculinity following the above mentioned four dimensions.

Additionally, Santos and Harrell (2017) focus on patriarchy in China specifically. In their and the other contributors' work in the edited volume, a fifth dimension can be added to 2.3 Lusher & Robins' (2009) Theory of Masculinity, namely: generation. Santos & Harell (2017) explicitly emphasise the importance of both gender relations and generational relations in researching patriarchal transformations within societies and families, since gender asymmetries are inextricably intertwined with generational asymmetries. In this thesis, patriarchy is regarded as the local context and is further discussed in the literature.

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[2] Manhood (masculinity or manliness) is in this research is considered as an overarching term referring to the state of being a man, which includes a number of *traits* perceived to be *masculine* and fits in one's own/society's understanding of manhood.

3   LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The literature review focuses on works dealing with migration in China, changes in the Chinese family system, and masculinity studies in China. In the first section, the hùkǒu system is discussed. This institution is crucial in understanding how the marginalisation and inequality of rural-urban migrant workers is perpetuated. Although this thesis focuses on gender, generation, and masculinity, the hùkǒu system is an underlying force which rules dominate every migrants' daily life, sense of security, self-worth, and legal status, and thus is played out sub-consciously. After having acquired an understanding of the institutional construction behind rural-to-urban migration in China, it is of importance to discuss literature concerning the social aspects of migration and changes in family dynamics. For this, section 3.2 draws on research about traditional gender and family values before and after the reforms and opening up of China in 1978. Lastly, section 3.4 provides an overview of literature regarding changes in masculinity and manhood as a result of migration.

3.1   The Hùkǒu System in China's Rural-to-Urban Migration

Scholars nowadays consider the *hùkǒu* system, in relation to gender, age and income, as one of the main variables defining exogenous constraints on individual behaviour in economic and social studies (Young, 2013; Gersovitz, 2016). China's *hùkǒu (户口)* system, alternatively referred to as the *household responsibility* system *(HRS)*, is an institution with the power to restrict population mobility (Gersovitz, 2016). According to Solinger (1999), the combination of the *hùkǒu* system is key to understanding why more than 800 million rural-to-urban residents are categorised and treated as ''secondary citizens'', suffering from the deprivation of the right to basic welfare and government-provided services enjoyed by urban residents. Rural-to-urban migrants are required to abide limitations ranging from small restrictions such as being denied to buy a city bus pass, to matters such as unaffordable school enrolment fees for their children in cities where the quality of education is significantly higher than in the countryside (Yang, 2010; Gersovitz, 2016; Uwamahoro & McJerry, 2017).

The Chinese *hùkǒu* system was one of the main measures used by the Chinese government to accelerate industrialisation and provide food security during the Maoist era (Chen, 2014). Today, the *hùkǒu* system does not only serve the purpose of providing food security throughout China by keeping a substantial, sufficient amount of the rural population

in the countryside, but it also entails an unequal system of entitlement to public welfare, urban services, and citizenship (Chen, 2014).

The system keeps peasants out of most urban jobs, except for jobs considered to be dirty, very low-paying, and dangerous. Although the system tolerates peasants to move to the city, it denies peasants the rights of permanent residency, basic welfare, and government-provided services enjoyed by urban residents. The status of one's *hùkǒu* is dependent on socio-economic eligibility and residential location, which both are mostly inherited from the parents. (Uwamahoro & McJerry, 2017).

The first classification for registration categorises every Chinese individual into either ''agricultural'' (*nóngyè;* 农业) or ''non-agricultural'' identity (*fēinóngyè;* 非农业). Agricultural *hùkǒu* provides access to farmland, whereas non-agricultural *hùkǒu* provides urban citizens with access to jobs, housing, employment, education, and access to medical care as well as other state-provided social welfare benefits (Chan & Zhang, 1999; Cheng, et al., 2014). Bearers of an agricultural *hùkǒu* status have no legal means by which to obtain these resources of urban citizens either inside or outside their registered location, which restrained migration outside the state plan significantly (Qi, 2017).

The second classification for *hùkǒu* registration is one's residential location. All individuals are categorised according to their place of *hùkǒu* registration (*hùkǒu suǒzàidì;* 户口所在地), referred to as someone's ''permanent'' or official place of residence. Each citizen is required to be registered in only one place of permanent residence under the *hùkǒu suǒzàidì* regulation. Holding a local *hùkǒu* registration determines someone's rights for many activities, especially concerning job opportunities, in a certain local area.

Most male migrant construction workers in Beijing hold a non-local and agricultural *hùkǒu* and migrated as ''temporary'' migrants to urban areas out of necessity in order to increase income and provide financial support for their families (Young, 2013). These migrants have been impacted heavily by the *hùkǒu* system, being regularly excluded and subordinated within the urban society. Rural-urban migrants are usually low-educated and therefore are forced to stay in the secondary labour market in urban China and need to accept dirty and often dangerous jobs with long working hours, low salaries, and limited access to social welfare undesirable to educated urban residents (Young, 2013).

The *hùkǒu* system causes three large groups of people to be categorized as 'left behind': children, women, and the elderly who are dealing with specific problems due to their responsibilities of taking care of the land, poverty, education, and psychological problems

caused by loneliness and social disruptions. Those who migrate feel the burden of leaving their families behind and sending remittances and education fees (Chen, 2014; Zhang, et al., 2015; Song, 2017).

Overall, the well-established *hùkǒu* system can be considered as a system creating ''cities with invisible walls'' exacerbating a rural-urban ''apartheid'', being a source of inequality and injustice (Chan, 2010). The categorised group possessing an agricultural, non-local *hùkǒu* suffer most from the institutional *hùkǒu* system, placing this group in a subordinate position and excluding them from the social welfare system, and violating their basic human rights. Rural-to-urban migrants are deprived from basic social welfare and other social services, while working under dangerous working conditions in order to provide a merely sufficient income for their families (Huang, et al., 2014).

3.2   Gender and Family Values

Davis & Harrell (1993) argue that before the ''restructuring and opening up'' in 1978, gender and family values relied on classic pillars of patrilineality, filial piety, virilocality, and intitutional powers of the patriarch. Within gender and intergenerational relations, patrilineal norms were a commonality and fundamental to family obligations and power relations (Baker, 1979; Davis & Harrell, 1993).

Patrilinealitiy constructs relations of power in Chinese families by appointing the older and/or male members of the family as superiors, whereas younger and/or female members are required to be obedient to the family's superiors (Hu, 2016; Zhang & Fussell, 2017). Since the male heir was viewed as a necissity to preserve the lineage of the family, authority was given to the eldest male in the family (Baker, 1979).

Filial Piety (*xiàojìng*; 孝敬), entailed by patrilinealitiy, is a Confucian ideology that prescibes the moral relation between parents and children (Xu, 2017). The principle *xiào* (孝) encompasses physical elderly care by adult children. *Xiào* was of crucial importance in the absence of a welfare state since it guaranteed the security of elderly. *Jìng* (敬) emodies the intangible aspect of showing respect, obedience, and gratitude to the elderly (Xu & Xia, 2014). In line with the element of displaying grattitude in the *jìng* priciple, is the honouring of parents by (male) children by achieving success (Xu & Xia, 2014).

With sons playing a crucial role in continueing the patrilineal and fulfilling the filial obligation, there has been a strong son preference among Chinese parents. The one-child

policy implemented in 1979 conflicted with this desire for sons, causing sex-selective abortion and infant abandonment. As a result, China has the world's most imbalanced sex ratio in which men outnumber women by 33 million in 2016 (Sun & Zhao, 2016). A family without a son was labelled *juéhòu* (绝后), which means ''finished'' and was considered a curse.

Furthermore, gender roles were prescribed by the distinct functions of men and women in the public and domestic spheres before 1978 (Hu, 2015). In agricultural China, conjugal relations were hierarchichally arranged with the husband as head of the household, executing productive activities in the public sphere. Wives were expected to manage domesticity, and to produce offspring to preserve the male lineage of the family (Evans & Strauss, 2011). Overall, marriage was considered a lifelong enterprise, in which divorce dishonours the family (Zhang, 2011).

In the contemporary Chinese society, we find contradictory and competing voices concerning gender and family values (Santos & Harrell, 2017). According to Mann (2011), patriarchal elements that are culturally engrained in the Confucian ideology and, therefore, visible in contemporary Chinese migrant families. Clear segregation of the sexes in which the outside, public domain is still reserved exclusively for men, and appointing the domestic sphere to women (Mann, 2011).

However, although rural women may still occupy domestic spheres in theory nowadays, in practice, it is still permitted or sometimes even expected in Chinese peasant households that women contribute financially to the household income with small-scale trading and household subsistence activities (e.g. weaving, spinning, etc.), placing women in the public spheres (Ye, et al., 2016). Nevertheless, these local deviations do not alter the identity of women, which is still centred around their responsibilities in the domestic sphere; it just means that women in peasant households have more tasks and responsibilities than men (Mann, 2011). Yet, in post-migration settings rural wives do not only manage housework, farm work, childcare, elderly care, and small-scale trading, but also take charge of all the household expenditures, including those of the migrated husband (Jacka, 2013).

Besides the outside/inside divide, Confucianism postulates the heavy/light, and sometimes skilled/unskilled dichotomies within a gendered division of labour, with the first term in these three binaries usually associated with men. However, according to Santos & Harell (2017), these binaries nowadays serve as stereotypes that can take different forms depending on the context. The establishment of gender roles based on these binaries is often considered as an ''equal system'', since it is viewed as complementary (Fincher, 2016).

Although tasks may be divided in a complementary manner, this does not exclude the fundamentally hierarchical structure entailing inequality. Enforcing such a gender order causes the exclusion of women from access to political power, economic resources, and social status; ensuring women's dependence on the family, making them subject to control of the patriarch (Fincher, 2016).

However, Santos & Harell (2017) argue that patriarchy in China is transforming. Pre-existing beliefs regarding hierarchy, are being challenged during social, economic transition since 1978. In the book *Transforming Patriarchy* Santos & Harell (2017) claim that Patriarchy is not a historical constant, in which they envision modernity as a force that transforms patriarchy instead of ending it. The changes in the social and economic context have impacted beliefs about marriage and family, and family life practice, such as living arrangements and care of children and elderly (Lin, 2013; Santos & Harell, 2017).

One significant change in social context, indicated by several studies, is the individualisation of the Chinese society due to the deinstitutionalisation of family and gender relations (Yan, 2010; Davis & Friedman, 2014). Davis & Friedman (2014) explain that the ethical, social, and legal norms that have governed marriage are replaced by a voluntary contract that relies on emotional satisfaction, which allows for greater individual variation. However, this deinstitutionalisation also entails increased complexity as for how to best approach and understand marriage (Santos & Harrell, 2017).

Previous studies have shown that, as a result of the deinstitutionalisation of marriages, women divorce faster when they think their husband is not suitable. In addition, women increasingly use the threat of divorcing their counterpart as means to sanction male behaviour when men refuse to alter certain behaviour (Santos & Harrell, 2017). However, even though changes in family dynamics, such as individualisation pared with deinstitutionalisation, have changed through rapid socioeconomic developments, development is in numerous cases unequal (Zhang, 2011). Many villages stay much attached to traditional ways of thinking when it comes to gender and family values, and socioeconomic developments do not always reach rural areas (Hu, 2016). For this reason, divorce is not frequently used as a bargaining tool by wives within divided migrant families since the land many rural wives are working with belongs to their husbands' families and is accordingly expropriated after a divorce (Chen, 2014).

Even with increased individualisation, people's lives still continue to be shaped by social networks, expectations, and rules (Santos & Harrell, 2017). According to Santos & Harell (2017) gender relations, while deinstitutionalised and/or individualised to some extent,

remains male dominant. They argue that male dominance now relies more on gender roles defined and learned through family interactions (Santos & Harrell, 2017).

Now returning to the topic of patrineality, Santos & Harell (2017) claim that the reproductive choice of having at least one son is transforming in Northeast China, in which an increasing number of rural couples have chosen to have a singleton daughter. Despite the fact that the Birth-Planning Policy has been relaxed, Santos & Harell's (2017) research suggests that parents still decide to have only one child out of economical reasons. In addition, Santos & Harell further argue that the role of sons shifts from care providers to financial burdens. Due to raising costs of weddings, which the parents of the son are obliged to finance, and the decline in physical filial support, rural couples in Norteast China have developed a ''fear of sons'' (pà érzi; 怕儿子) (Santos & Harrell, 2017).

Another change in the social and economic context is the abolishment of the old pension system. Rural parents (those holding a non-local agricultural *hùkǒu*) do not have a pension and rely on their children for their old age. Adult children often become the primary source of income for these parents, resulting in increased pressure on migrant men to provide a sufficient income for both their own family and their parents. (Huang, et al., 2014).

Commonly, migrant contruction workers see their family once a year with Chinese new year depending on the attitude of the manager in charge of the construction site (Zhang, et al., 2015). However, studies on migration show that between 55% and 65% of the migrant construction workers in China's Fujian province frequently do not have enough finiancial resources to finance their journey home (Chan & Zhang, 1999; Xiaodong & Mac an Ghaill, 2013).

To compensate emotional cost of separation and to reconstruct their image of a good father and husband, migrant workers often send presents to their left-behind family members, satisfying their material needs. According to Choi & Peng (2016), providing material satisfaction fits the Chinese father's traditional duty as ''breadwinners'' of this family.

However, in order to thoroughly sustain long-distance relationships with left-behind family members, migrant workers rely extensively on telecommunication to express concerns and obtain information, herewith upholding some form of intimacy (Jingzhong & Lu, 2011). Nevertheless, contradicting findings indicate that telecommunication and exacerbates the pain caused by spatial separation (Jingzhong & Lu, 2011; Madianou & Miller, 2011). This extensive reliance on mobile phones by migrant men is similar to behaviour displayed by transnational mothers, who also use telecommunication to sustain long-distance relationship with their children (Vertovec, 2004; Madianou & Miller, 2011). However, spatial distance

between the migrant men and their wife, children, and parents remains complex in sustaining in-depth relationships. Several studies on migration have found that migrants in China seek alternatives to compensate with the emotional burden entailed by long distance relationships (Zhang, 2011; Ying & Yu, 2014; Swider, 2017). A common phenomenon Ying & Yu (2014) explain, is that male migrants are regularly involved in love affairs in the city where they reside, entailing complex interpersonal relationships between themselves and their lovers, wives, children and parents, in which Ying & Yu (2014) present the migrant workers as mobile subjects.

3.3   Manhood and Masculinity

Choi & Peng (2016) detected a pattern in Chinese migrant families, in which migrant men establish a new form of manhood called ''respectable manhood''. Within the concept of ''respectable manhood'' migrant men consider the act of migration and the hard life (*dǎgōng;* 打工) in the city as a necessary self-sacrifice for the family. This pattern to sacrifice oneself on behalf of the family is usually ascribed to women (Duara, 1998). In Duara's (1998) article called *The Regime of Authenticity: Timelessness, Gender, and National History in Modern China* he explains how women were viewed by Nationalists and cultural essentialists in the nineteenth century as embodying the eternal Chinese civilizational virtues of self-sacrifice and loyalty and, elevating them as national exemplars. Migrant men compare their ''respectable manhood'' to what they observe as the 'urban from of manhood'. According to the migrant workers in Choi & Peng's research, the urban form of manhood in which masculinity is defined as a men's entrepreneurial success and the ability to provide a financially carefree and comfortable life for their children and wife.

Choi & Peng (2016) further argue that Chinese male migrants adopt different strategies herewith strategically compromising on their masculinity to compensate emotional pain from separation and to ensure family happiness. This includes selective acceptance of the wife's demands, in which the husband accepts several demands of their wives that are according to him considered unimportant or small.

Furthermore, although neglected in previous studies concerning male migrants, emotions connected to this spatial separation are constitutive components of male migrant workers' perception and experiences as members of the family (Beasley, 2008), and therefore strongly emphasised in this research project. Expressing emotion is regularly associated with femininity and therefore excluded from the realm of manhood (Beasley, 2008). In many

patriarchal societies, a man who expresses emotion can be viewed as weak, threatening one's gender identity (Connell, 1998; Beasley, 2008). However, this does not necessarily mean that men are unemotional. As Montes (2013) points out, emotions are embedded in sociocultural contexts. In Montes' (2013) article titled *The role of emotions in the construction of masculinity: Guatemalan migrant men, transnational migration, and family relations*, Guatemalan migrant men avoid emotions such as worry, sadness, and anguish since these emotions are associated with femininity, whereas pride, anger and confidence are linked to masculinity.

4   METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In this chapter the research method is clarified. The first part, section 4.1 to 4.4 explains what data is collected and how the data is collected. In the second part of this chapter, section 4.5 to 4.9, the challenges, limitations, risks and ethical issues for the fieldwork and my role in it are outlines.

4.1   Study Design

Qualitative research carried out by collecting primary data through semi-structured interviews. Since I collected qualitative data concerning how male migrant workers personally perceive and position themselves within gender relations, semi-structured interviews were the most suitable method of data collection concerning personal perceptions and understanding of one's position in society, more specific, family. Semi-structured interviews provide opportunities to learn about the way in which people represent themselves, their beliefs, motivations, ideologies, and aspirations (Bryman, 2012; Brinkmann, 2014). In addition, semi-structured interviews allow for flexibility in tailoring questions based on the response of the interviewees while at the same time they allow for interviewees to bring up own concerns without being restricted to preconceived notions of the researchers (Brinkmann, 2014). This way, as opposed to other data collection methods, a semi-structured interview creates a learning environment in which a certain flexibility and freedom arises for both the interviewer and the interviewees, necessary in the process of ''exploring'' social constructions. Overall, semi-structured interviews require a framework of themes to be explored (Bryman, 2012). Recurring themes in this research are: gender roles, family relations, and patriarchy.

Secondary data from research on the *hùkǒu* system, gender and family values, manhood and masculinity, and transformations of patriarchy is also employed in this thesis for comparison.

Moreover, prior to the main interviews, participant observation was carried out. Participant observation was chosen since members of a social setting are confronted in their natural environments, giving a naturalistic emphasis to this research (Bryman, 2012). Interviewing is less amenable to this feature since it disrupts members' normal flow of events, even when the interview is informal. In addition, because of the unstructured nature of participant observation, participant observations might uncover unexpected topics or issues. The participant observation is further described in detail in subchapter 4.5 ''interview process''.

4.2   Sampling

The sampling is executed based on a set of specific criteria, referred to as purposive sampling (Bryman, 2012). All participants are: male migrant workers (1); husbands and part of a divided family in which the wife and child(ren) are left behind in the country side (2); execute construction work in the Beijing (3); hold an agricultural, non-local *hùkǒu* [3] (4).

In total, ten male migrant construction workers in Beijing are interviewed. The reason for choosing the subgroup construction workers is because this profession is practiced mostly by rural-urban migrant workers throughout the country, herewith aiming to cover a larger representativeness.

All respondents are aged between 28 and 45 and are relatively low-educated with not more than a primary school degree. Another commonality between these construction workers is that all construction workers originate from relatively small villages with a population ranging from 2.300 inhabitants to 30.000 inhabitants. This information regarding age and village population was firstly provided by Professor Shen Huifen based on her previous research and thereafter verified personally by the participants.

Beijing was chosen as a base to carry out field work for two main reasons. Firstly, with a male migration rate of 3,68% in 2016, Beijing has one of the highest rural-to-urban male migration rates in the country, which makes it an ideal city for studying migrant workers

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[3] The hùkǒu system is a system that permits or denies people to move to the city based on their type of hùkǒu registration. People holding an agricultural non-local hùkǒu are officially not permitted to live in the city and are mainly migrants originated from the countryside outside the city. These people are not allowed to reside in the city, but they are allowed to work in cities as migrants workers.

(NBSC, 2016). Secondly, the field work course takes place at Peking University in Beijing, allowing for sufficient supervision during the field work.

4.3   The interview process and contextualising the field

Professor Shen Huifen from Xiamen University, who conducts research into left-behind women of Chinese divided households, indicated several construction sites in Beijing where migrants work as construction workers. Professor Shen kindly gave me telephone numbers of three male migrant construction workers that she had due to her previous research, meeting the specific sample criteria above. Firstly, the three participants were contacted by phone by myself to ensure that they feel comfortable with the topic and conducting the interviews. During these phone conversations, the migrant workers were also told I would conduct the interviews myself, being a Dutch researcher who can speak Mandarin. In addition, the participants were asked if they could ask some of their colleagues to participate as well, possessing the specific sample criteria mentioned above in section 4.2. A couple days later, I received several phone calls of migrant construction workers who volunteered to participate in the interview. In agreeing upon a date and time by phone, I adapted to the preference of the migrant workers when they indicated what was most convenient for them.

Prior to the main interviews, I visited the by Professor Shen indicated construction sites to observe the working conditions of the migrant workers. For this observation visit, I asked all the workers' permission by phone, which they granted me.

The migrant workers were active at three different construction sites in Beijing. Five of the participants were building an office building at a construction site in Chaoyang district (*Cháoyáng Qū*; 朝阳区). On this construction site, the basic foundation of a building was worked on. During the entire observance I sat on the sidewalk about four meters from the construction site, close enough to observe the whole site, but far enough to not be considered an intruder. The observance took about 1 hour between 11:00 and 12:00. The construction workers were already busy working when I arrived, and took a break around 12:00 for lunch. I used a similar timeframe for the observance of the workers at the other two construction sites. In total, twelve construction workers were present, as well as one other person who walked around with a blue plastic helmet writing notes on paper, who seemed to be holding a supervisory position. Some of the construction workers were carrying away debris, without a wheelbarrow, from the construction site to large containers that were located just a few meters away. They were making groaning sounds when lifting up what appeared to be heavy chunks of concrete from the construction site. Other construction workers were up in the scaffolding,

working on the outer structure of the building without safety ropes. When the construction workers stopped working at 12:00 to go out for lunch, they grouped in front of the building and started chatting enthusiastically while walking to a small restaurant. Once they arrived at the restaurant, they all ordered dishes below 10 RMB (1,30 euro or 14 SEK).

At the second construction site, three of the participants were finishing a department store, which was also located in in Chaoyang district (*Cháoyáng Qū*; 朝阳区). In total, there were six construction workers present at the construction site. The building appeared to be almost finished from the outside, although much still remained to be done within the building. The site was dusty, and none of the construction workers were wearing mouth caps. These workers stopped working a bit after 12:00 and went for lunch all together, and ordered dishes below 10 RMB, similar to the first group.

The other two w were building the basic foundation of a fitness centre in Wudaokou (*Wǔdàokǒu*; 五道口). The construction site was noisy since some of the workers were drilling, without wearing safety goggles or safety earmuffs. At some point someone who appeared to be a supervisor walked in. All eight construction workers stopped their activities, walked towards the supervisor, and neatly formed a row. The supervisor started to shout about working hard, fast, and effectively for the company, while the men stood at attention. This scene encompassed elements of a military set-up, reminding ''soldiers'' of their duty. Similar to the previous two observances, the workers grouped around 12:00 to go out for lunch, and ordered lunch for a similar price.

After the observances, the interviews were held between the 9th and 20th of March 2018. Every interview took place between 18:00 and 20:00 on both weekdays and weekend days. The interview itself consists of four main parts; background information; gender roles; family relations; and Patriarchy (see Appendix B).

The interviews were conducted in Chinese (Mandarin) in order for the participants to express themselves as freely and precise possible in their native language. Although all of the male migrants spoke Mandarin, some of them spoke with a slight accent. Despite these accents, all participants were understandable and understood me. The interviews lasted between 15 and 30 minutes.

Due to the fact a sensitive topic is researched in this thesis, the interviewees regularly showed signs of sorrow. For this reason, the interviews were occasionally paused. Nevertheless, after a short break the interviews always continued. Although I speak Mandarin

(*Pǔtōnghuà*; 普通话), a Chinese PhD researcher from Peking University kindly agreed to join the interviews and assist in the translation process.

The interviews itself took place in small cafeterias between two and three blocks away from the construction site. The cafeterias were rather small, between 15 and 20 square meters. In all three cafeterias one could order tea, coffee, and other beverages, but no food was served. The cafeterias were simple and practically furnished. At least ten people were inside each of the cafeterias when starting the interview.

During the first few interviews I asked the participants if they would allow me to record the interviews. However, the participants did not agree to record the interview out of fear, since their voices might be recognisable on the recordings. Therefore, I wrote down as much as possible in English during the interview together with the afore-mentioned Chinese PhD researcher from Peking University, who is highly proficient in English and wrote down his notes in English as well. After the interview, I sat down together with the PhD researcher for at least an hour to compare, discuss, and outline all the responses as clearly as possible in a Word document.

4.4   Data analysis

The first step in the data analysis was to code the data. In this research, the coding practice 'open coding' was utilised. Open coding is defined by Bryman (2014) as ''the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing data'' (p. 569). Prior to thoroughly analysing the data obtained from the interviews I read through the text once, while highlighting specific repetitive and relevant words or sections of the text. Thereafter I read the text again to check if I did not miss any relevant information. After this, I categorised the relevant data and started to detect patterns. These patterns were thereafter interpreted by using a narrative analysis. This analysis was chosen since it focuses on the ways in which people tell stories to interpret the world (Frank, 2002).

In retelling events in narratives, the tellers (interviewees) directly or indirectly provide their own interpretations and explanations of events and thereafter evaluate, according to their own terms, the main protagonists and others appearing in narratives, the meaning of events and wider relevant contexts (Bryman, 2012).

A recurring difficulty that often arises in a narrative analysis is the phenomenon of contradictory narratives, and finding the truth among them (Loubere, 2017). Pearce (2017) firstly addresses the definition of the 'truth' and says: ''Obviously 'truth' is a really difficult

word, because you can have so many versions of the truth or claims to truth''. Pearce (2017) then states that the narrative stands above the truth and that, instead, it is important to ask yourself why a person is speaking in a specific way, and what the truth is that they want me to hear. Therefore, listening and hearing becomes sometimes more important than a 'factual' or 'truthful' accounting of events. Overall, it is of importance to focus on how people make sense of what happened instead of finding out what actually happened (Bryman, 2012). Accordingly, the focus in the data interpretation process was laid upon how participants talk about gender roles, family relations, and patriarchy.

After having applied the narrative analysis, the next step was to refer to the literature in the data analysis. In this process of analysing and interpreting data, certain findings made me aware of alternative relevant topics and angles, which forced me to strengthen my literature review.

4.5   Limitations and Demarcation

The sample in this research does not represent all male migrant construction workers in China, however, it does provide an example and can be useful in understanding how migration impacts gender relations and masculinity from the point of view of the participants. The possible reason why this qualitative research sample could be considered unrepresentative is that the aim of qualitative research is not representativeness in the first place (Brinkmann, 2014). Qualitative research aims to provide an in-depth understanding and therefore targets a specific group, type of individual, event or process. This is opposed to quantitative research in which a random sample ensures to be representative of the entire population, and therefore, the results could be generalised to the entire population (Bryman, 2012).

A second limitation in this research is the lack of resources required to also research the women's perspectives on gender ideology within divided households in order to provide a more complete picture concerning the impact of migration.

Finally, to limit the scope of this research I did not further consider questions of ethnicity, which is an important component in the context of migration and family studies.

4.6   Reflexivity

Reflexivity explores the awareness of the ''necessary connection'' between the researcher and the research situation including the researcher's effect upon the situation (Bryman, 2012). In this context, relevant questions are: What difference does it make that I am a young, urban, white, female, western, feminist interviewer interviewing Chinese, rural, male, migrant men about their role in the household? How does my personal experience influence the research? These questions are of importance, since the interpretation of results still allows for a certain level of subjectivity. Although the migrant workers and I do not share the same identity, we do share affinities that helped the interviewee and I have some common ground from which to speak (Haraway, 1991).

Commonalities such as the fact that I am able to engage in Mandarin in regular conversation helped me to not only cross a language barrier, but also to create an atmosphere in which the interviewee felt comfortable to talk in his native language about sensitive subjects. In addition, from a humanistic perspective, both the interviewee and I are concerned about the migrant workers' families and their family relations, and therefore 'care' is considered as common ground.

However, cultural, social, and educational distance remains apparent. Thus, when talking to someone from the margins of society, I was very alert because I am enquiring into circumstances I have no idea about (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2017)**.**

Furthermore, as Grugel (2017) mentions, it is impossible to escape your gender as it is one of the most visible identifiers of who you are. Grugel (2017) states that: ''If you are a young woman you will be patronised, if you are an old woman you will be ignored''. Although this statement is made in the case of researching elites, it is still relevant to my field work being a young woman interviewing older men.

Generally, everyone perceives and understands experiences based one's personal experiences, which is why it is important that I studied my target group in-depth in order to gain a better understanding of male migrant construction workers when executing field work. I am not in the same situation and perceive things differently than my male participants. Therefore, understanding certain power relations between men and women in the Chinese society prior to going to conduct field work was beneficial.

Moreover, a Chinese PhD candidate of Philosophy from Peking University, who was a man, joined the interviews. His and the workers' social distance might have been further apart than mine and theirs since I am an outsider. As an outsider, I do not belong to that society and

thus do not matter as much. Therefore, perhaps the philosophy student's presence, as a male member of the elite society, might have weighed more on limitations than I did.

4.7   Reliability and Validity

The reliability of one's work refers to trustworthiness and consistency of the findings and determines whether the findings can be utilised by other researchers (Brinkmann, 2014). As mentioned before, I received external aid from a Chinese PhD candidate of Philosophy at Peking University, who assisted during the interview process and revised translations. Generally, a translator can affect the reliability of the results, however, since my language skills are proficient, the translator and me worked together to translate the responses which in this case improves the quality of the translation given the fact that two people are constantly revising and interpreting information.

In order to further ensure reliability, it is necessary to formulate the questions as clear as possible to make the respondents understand the questions thoroughly. This is important in their construction of clear and comprehensive answers, which consequently affects the quality of the results. Therefore, I repeated each question to the workers.

Secondly, the validity can be referred to as the degree to which a method investigates what it is intended to investigate and if it leads to valid knowledge (Brinkmann, 2014). The validity is dependent on the quality of the research design, especially during the process of data collection and the process of data interpretation (Brinkmann, 2014). To ensure this quality, the design of the thesis is set up in a way that the questions posed analyse and investigate the research   question.

4.8   Ethical considerations

The Swedish Research Council (2017) established ethical guidelines which are expected to be carried out during field research by all Master students in Asian Studies. This guideline specifies how data collection during field research ought to integrate ethical considerations such as transparency, anonymity, free will, and confidentiality (The Swedish Research Council, 2017). And I followed this advice.

The consent of the respondents was obtained firstly though a phone call, and secondly, by a consent form. The consent form provided the participants with written proof that personal identity will not be revealed and actual names will not be used. First of all, it states that

responses to interview questions are kept confidential and that responses be exclusively read by the researcher and the responsible teacher, ensuring confidentiality. Secondly, the form mentions that the participant's real names will be concealed in order to safeguard anonymity. Thirdly, the free will of respondents is emphasised by providing them with the possibility to withdraw at any time, stressing that participation in this study is completely voluntary. Finally, the consent form states transparency by mentioning the research topic, research purpose, my full name and details about how to contact me personally. In addition, I verbally informed the participants about the fact that the collected data will only be used for the Master's thesis and that the Master's thesis will be published at a public website managed by Lund University Library.

Besides informing the participants both verbally and with a consent form, other measures taken to protect the identity of the migrant workers. Village names were concealed by translating the characters of the village names into some form of English in order to eliminate traceability. Also, I did not reveal the names of the cafeterias in this work, and always waited for the participants in the cafeterias, to avoid being seen too much together with them in public.

Construction workers are among the largest group that are often on strike due to bad pay (Cheng, et al., 2014). Due to the semi-illegal status of rural-to-urban migrant workers and other factors relating to the strained relationship between construction workers and the companies hiring them, obtaining information from migrant construction workers is a delicate process. Therefore, I took great care in following the ethical considerations and ensuring that the men felt safe, that there is a safe place for the information obtained, and that the interviewees can be assured that I deal responsibly with their data.

5 FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

In this chapter, the main findings present and analyse how migration influences Chinese migrant families and reshapes identities of male migrant construction workers. Firstly, the background information is displayed, which was the first part of the interview. Thereafter, cultural, personal, and interpersonal components are analysed and discussed. These components are based on Lusher & Robins' theory of masculinity. The 4th component 'generation' that I have added in accordance with Santos & Harrell (2017) is considered part of the cultural factor. Cultural factors include dominant discourses related to family obligations and ideal manhood embedded in society; personal factors encompass someone's personal beliefs regarding gender roles; interpersonal factors include family relations between the migrant worker and his left behind family members. These three components are divided over the three main themes (gender roles, family relations, and patriarchy and masculinity) and are inevitably intertwined.

5.1 Background Information

The information extracted from the background information section in the interviews, is divided into two parts. The first part consists of a table with relevant facts about the participants (see Table 1). The second part displays and interprets further empirical findings.

Table 1. *Background Information of Participants*

Participant	Age	Originally from	Date	Length of interview	Other details
1	41	Autumn leaves village, in the Henan Province.	9th of March	18 minutes	Two daughters, 6 and 8 years old
2	38	Temple village, Shaanxi province	10th of March	16 minutes	One son of 11 years old, and one daughter of 9

					years old
3	32	Crane bird village, Shanxi Province.	11th of March	20 minutes	One son of 6 years old
4	34	Half red village, Guizhou Province.	144h of March	19 minutes	Two daughters, of 11 and 14 years old
5	29	Mountain pass village, Hunan Province.	15th of March	20 minutes	Two sons of 5 and 3 years old
6	28	Pathway village, Fujian Province.	15th of March	28 minutes	One son of 5 years old
7	32	Camphor tree village, Hubei province.	18th of March	16 minutes	Two sons, 8 and 11 years old
8	45	Icicle village, Henan Province.	18th of March	22 minutes	Two sons of 11 and 14 years old. One daughter of 17 years old. His parents passed away
9	39	Summer cave village, Shaanxi province.	20th of March	25 minutes	One son of 13 years old, and one daughter of 10 or 11 years old (he is not sure)
10	44	Crow's nest village, Hubei province.	20th of March	30 minutes	One daughter of 7 years old

Dăgōng life and the Reconstruction of Manhood

From the background information could be implied that my participants experience what is commonly known as the *dăgōng* (打工) life. As mentioned in the literature review, *dăgōng* life can be described as having a salary that is so low that the worker struggles to meet his city expenses and support their family in the village; a life without status, prospects, or hope (Choi & Peng, 2016). *Dăgōng*'s meaning also includes separation from their family and discrimination from urban locals. Although none of the participants have mentioned any form of discrimination during the interviews. *Dăgōng* life is considered lonely, boring, and exhausting (Chan, 2016; Choi & Peng). Participant 2 explains this *dăgōng* life:

''My life in the city is boring and monotonous. I breathe, work, and eat, not much more. My job as a construction worker is without prospects, and above all has no status.

I don't feel I have a very nice job because I get paid very little and I have to work too many hours. My colleagues are quite friendly, I think because we are in a similar situation and have similar emotions. But my supervisor is not a good man. If we make a mistake he sometimes lowers our salary. Last January, one of my colleagues received only half his usual salary. The supervisor told him [the colleague] that he [the colleague] made a mistake, which is why he lowered the salary… but my colleague didn't know he made this mistake because the supervisor didn't tell him before.''

Similar to the other interviewees, participant 2 constructs a form of manhood, which hinges on a sense of masculinity based on the effort and self-sacrifice these men make when living a *dǎgōng* life to take care of their family financially and sustain family harmony (Choi & Peng, 2016). This concept of ''respectable manhood'', coined by Choi & Peng (2016) is a reconstruction of Chinese migrant men's manhood in which, despite of possessing a low status in society, they still feel respected since they work ''hard and honestly'', while sacrificing themselves to provide for the family. Participant 5 describes his life in Beijing and the self-sacrifice he

''My life here is very boring… and extremely hard. I feel unhappy most of the time here. My job is not considered a job to be proud of in China. But, well, I work honestly. I don't earn dirty money, so I feel good about that. I need to live this hard life for my family…they need the money. My children need to go to school in the future, which is very expensive to fund… I cannot provide a future for my children without living this hard life.''

Furthermore, Participant 9 states:

''It is very hard to work as a construction worker in Beijing. Besides long working hours, the working conditions are dangerous some times. We don't always have the right equipment to protect us. Many accidents happen [pause] that we are not allowed to talk about. But nobody cares, we are the floating ones, you know,.''

Besides describing the hardships of working as a construction worker in Beijing, Participant 9 refers to migrant workers, including himself, as ''the floating ones''. His statement indicates awareness of the institutional force of the *hùkǒu* system and its constrains on migrant life.

5.2 Theme 1: Gender Roles (personal component)

This subsection deals with the participant's reflection on gender roles and the interpretation of personal gender roles within the household. Overall, this subsection answers the sub question: How do male migrants view and negotiate the division of tasks and marital power and (how) do these men uphold traditional gender norms with the reality of post-migration life in the city?

Differing Views on Division of tasks

My findings show that participants respond differently to divisions of tasks and associated gender roles. Out of the 10 participants, 3 participants mention the word ''natural'' and/or ''normal'' when referring to gender related tasks in their own family, culturally legitimising gender roles in which it is perceived natural for women to take care of the family, and for men to work in the city. These answers are conform to the statement of Mann (2011), arguing that the Confucian value concerning the outside/inside divide is still apparent in contemporary Chinese migrant families. Participant 9 states:

> '' I work as a construction workers and make sure that there is enough money for my family. My wife cooks, cleans, and raises my son and daughter. With migration, this division of tasks came naturally (zìrán; 自然). I don't really have an opinion about it, it is just the way it is.''

Moreover, the words ''natural'' and ''normal'' are mentioned by participant 1 in the context of task division:

> ''My wife takes care of the children and my parents. She does household chores like cooking and cleaning, and she farms the land. I have the most important task, since I contribute most to our household income. Without my money, my wife, children, and parents would have a very hard time because we are not a rich family. I think this division of tasks is natural (zìrán; 自然), it is normal (zhèngcháng de; 正常的) for a man and woman to have these tasks in a migrant family. Even though my task is very hard, it is normal.''

Participant 1 also emphasises the importance of his own tasks and calls it ''the most important task'', referring to his financial contribution to the household income. By stating ''Even

though my task is very hard, it is normal'', he implies that he is willing to take on a hard task of providing for the family while working under physically demanding working conditions, herewith creating a self-image encompassing a sense of self-sacrifice, which is similar to behaviour displayed by women in the nineteenth century embodying the eternal Chinese civilizational virtue of self-sacrifice on behalf of the family (Duara, 1998).

However, research suggests that the burden of rural wives in post-migration settings increases significantly since their husband cannot help them anymore with managing housework, farm work, childcare, elderly care, and small-scale trading (Jacka, 2013).

Contrary to previous responses, participant 4 interprets the division of tasks from both his own and his wife's perspective, emphasising the heavy burden of his wife having relatively more different daily tasks than himself to execute downplaying the weight of his own burden:

> *''My wife has a lot more tasks. She [his wife] takes care of the children and the household, and farms a little bit together with my parents. I try to make enough money in order for them to live comfortably. Although I have less different tasks I think we spend the same time of the day working. Nevertheless, because she [his wife] has more tasks, she [his wife] has more different things on her mind which takes a lot of energy, whereas I only work and eat. However, I think the division of tasks is fine the way it is now. We [his wife and him] cannot change it.''*

Participant 5 also emphasised the heavy burden of his wife:

''... my wife has more domestic chores and more worries about the children I think, because she lives close to them.''

Selective Acceptance and Family Harmony
When taking a closer look at specific changes in tasks after migration, a remarkable finding in this research was that 7 out of the 10 participants indicated that their wife took over the management of the household finances. The reasons why financial management transfers to wives after husbands migrate differs among the participants. Regularly participants answered that their wife has a better overview of the financial needs of the family, and therefore logically reasoned that it is normal and common that the management of the finances transfers to the female counterpart.

Participant 2 explains:

''My wife takes care of the family's finances including my personal finances. When I was living with my family, I took care of the finances, but since I do not know how much my family needs every month, my wife took over this task. She is quite good at it. It is normal for a wife to take over this task when their husband moves to the city, my colleagues' wives also manage their families' and their [the colleagues'] personal expenditures.''

Participant 2 considers the transfer of management of the finances as a commonality amongst migrant families and utilises his social environment (colleagues) as a point of reference to justify this transfer. Alternative reasons for this change in tasks mentioned by participants are: ''I am too busy to care about that'', ''She [wife] has more time than me'', and ''She knows how to handle it well''. Such answers suggest a pattern in which participants utilise the strategy of delegation, allowing their wife to manage the family's and his personal expenditures out of convenience. This pattern is similar to the pattern found by Choi & Peng (2016), who also found that migrant workers – working in a variety of fields in the informal sector – use delegation of trivial matters as a strategy to sustain family and marital harmony.

Besides the management of household expenditures, several participants let their wife manage their personal finances because they experience difficulties resisting material temptation in Beijing. This Participant 8 describes that material indulgements are tempting, as they serve as a substitute for emotional discomfort:

''My wife manages the family's and my budget. I trust her to take care of the finances. Before, I used to spend a little bit too much here in the city. The city is a very dangerous place for an unhappy man. Material things can sometimes soften the pain a little bit and therefore it is better that my wife gives me monthly budget, otherwise I spend too much...''

Negotiations about the division of tasks among the participants happens through cell-phone conversations in an often arguing manner. Participant 3 explains how he believes certain tasks belong to a certain gender, and how he and his wife negotiate a suggestive deviation from these tasks initiated by his wife:

''It just comes naturally. Women are more suited (héshì: 合适) to take care of the children, because they are more caring than men. Men are less caring, and are a

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little bit less emotional than women so it is better for men to make money. Sometimes my wife and I argue through the phone. She [his wife] likes to sell more products on the local market and I think she [his wife] should pay more attention to the children. But I decided to let her sell more on the local market. Sometimes I have to agree with her in order to sustain harmony in our marriage and in the whole family.''

From this narrative can be implied that the participant still beliefs in traditional gender roles, emphasising women to be ''more suited'' for childcare since they [women] are more caring and emotional than men, making men more suited to make money as they are ''less emotional and caring''. In addition, by stating that these roles ''came naturally'', he legitimises the traditionally established gender roles (Mann, 2011). However, traditional gender roles are upheld while selectively accepting the wife's demands in order to sustain marital and family harmony (Choi & Peng, 2016), allowing for female emancipation to a certain extent since his wife moves from the ''domestic spheres'' to the ''public spheres''. This pattern of change in post-migration settings can also be detected among other participants. Participant 6 outlines why he usually agrees with his wife on household expenditures:

''...I usually agree with my wife in the end, otherwise it takes too much time. I also feel guilty (yǒuzuì; 有罪) that she [his wife] has so many things to do, so I just try keep peace by agreeing, which keeps her happy most of the time.''

5.3 Theme 2: Family Relations (interpersonal)

This subsection aims to answer the sub-question: How do male migrants cope emotionally with separation from their left-behind family members, and how do they reinterpret their roles as fathers, husbands, and sons?

Emotions

A key component of this research is to understand the emotional world of the migrant workers. Although neglected in previous studies concerning male migrants, emotions connected to this spatial separation are constitutive components of male migrant workers' perception and experiences as members of the family, and therefore strongly emphasised in this study. Men are regularly described or prescribed as rational, realistic, and practical, whereas expressing emotion are associated with femininity and is considered a female characteristic (Beasley, 2008). Even though the men in this study have indicated that being emotional is indeed

according to them feminine, they express emotions openly and explore the opportunity of sharing personal stories with colleagues to improve emotional well-being.

Dealing emotionally with separation from left-behind family among my participants is complex and problematic. Migrant workers in this research have in common that they leave for work in the city when their children are between 1 and 6 years old, before establishing an in-depth connection. Emotions such as ''sadness'', ''guilt'', and ''sorrow'' are regularly experienced in this research. This finding indicates that men in this research do not fit the image that Montes (2013) illustrates, in which men avoid emotions such as sadness since they perceive such emotions as feminine. Participant 8 openly explained his emotional state:

> ''I feel empty being so far away from them. I think about them every day. Sometimes I try to make a plan in my head to bring them to the city, but it is too expensive. I cannot afford it. In the first few years I was working in the city, I cried a lot. I just couldn't deal with living without them [his family]. After the first few years I got more realistic and pushed myself to keep on going and to talk more to my colleagues. They [his colleagues] are often experiencing similar kinds of sorrow.''

Participant 6 also turned to his colleagues for comfort:

> ''It is impossible to deal with this situation, I don't know how... Sometimes I feel very weak emotionally. But talking to my colleagues helps sometimes, they also have left-behind families that they miss. I left my son for work in the city when he was 1 year old, so he does not know much about me I think.''

As Participant 6 mentioned above, migrant workers often migrate when their children are at a young age. This entails complexities in the establishment of an in-depth relationship between migrant fathers and their children since the fathers' children do not carry the special connotation of 'father' before that age (Abbott, et al., 1992). Participant 9 tells a story in which he leaves his son and daughter for the first time:

> ''I have a son and a daughter. My son is 13 years old. My daughter is 10 or 11, I am not sure. I have been away for about 10 years now, it has been very hard for me during this 10 years. My relationship with my children is poor. I ask a lot about them every time my wife and I call, but I want to see them in real life. I will never have an in-depth relationship with them, it is just impossible to do this with so much distance between us. I have been visiting them once a year with Chinese New Year. In the first

few years when they were young, I visited two or three times a year. I remember sitting in the train back to Beijing after just having visited my family. My wife stood next to the train to wave me goodbye, holding my son's hand and holding my daughter in her arms. After I waved them goodbye I forced myself not to look back again, because it would hurt too much... I needed to stay strong [shedding a few tears]. I am afraid... that my children won't recognise me anymore.''

Not all migrant workers in this study found emotional issues concerning a lack of an emotional bond with their children a problem. Other participants did not think that the emotional distance between themselves and their children is something bad, however, they mentioned it. Participant 7 explains:

''I am blessed with two sons. They are 8 and 11 years old and both in school. I left our home to work in the city when they were 2 and 5 years old. Even though I still visit my family once a year with Chinese New Year, I don't have a strong emotional connection to my sons. However, I don't really care because sons usually don't have such an intense emotional connection to their father anyways.''

This reaction may derive on the one hand from his lack of knowledge or confidence concerning winning his child's heart from afar. On the other hand, this attitude could be a result of the intimacy entailed by telecommunication. Several scholars have indicated that the intimacy entailed by telecommunication exacerbates the pain caused by spatial separation to some extent, and forces fathers to take emotional distance from their left-behind children to suppress the pain stemming from long-term separation (Madianou & Miller, 2011; Jingzhong & Lu, 2011).

A Proud Father

Nevertheless, participants attempt to compensate and stabilise emotional struggles with a sense of pride stemming from their children's academic success, which is an important source of happiness. This is in line with the element of displaying grattitude in the *jing* (敬) priciple. As mentioned in the literature review, *jing* is one of the two priciples of filial piety (*xiaojing*; 孝敬) in Confucian ideology, in which *jing* prescribes the moral relations between children and parents (Xu, 2017). In the jing principle, (male) children honour their parents by

achieving success, herewith making them feel proud (Xu & Xia, 2014). Participant 2 externalises this feeling of pride:

> *''A few weeks ago my wife told me that my son was the best of his class in mathematics [smiles extensively], this made me so proud. I hope he can become a smart man with a good job, with a high status. I am not as smart as my son, and I never have been given the opportunity to study for a long time, that is why I have to accept a hard life. I don't want a hard life for my son. With my daughter I don't have as much contact as I have with my son, she is too busy helping her mother I think.''*

From the response of participant 2 can be implied that a strong bond exists between his son and him, while he does not have as much contact with his daughter. Although this research indicates a lack of emotional attachment between fathers and their children, disregarded whether children are sons or a daughters, certain responses do indicate the favouring of sons and the importance of a son's success in a family. Participant 8, a father of two sons and one daughter explains a decision he took to send his daughter to work in Shenzhen to increase the household income:

> *''I have two sons who are 11 and 13 years old and one daughter who is 17 years old. One of the things that keeps me going every day is the success of my two sons now that they are older. They are doing very well in school. Having excellent sons, makes me happy and proud. However, I still feel guilty that I couldn't pay for my daughter's tuition at the time. She was 14 when she had to drop out of school. She migrated to Shenzhen for work. I felt heartbroken and so sorry for her. She was only a little girl... and she must have had a very hard time like me. Sometimes I call her to ask how she is doing. She can be rude to me sometimes and doesn't always answer. But I understand that she [his daughter] acts this way, because she feels less important than her brothers. Of course she is equally as important, but her brothers were just too young to start working at the time. Also it is better for the family to have successful sons, for our family reputation. Also, when they [his sons] earn a lot of money later, they can take care of us when we [his wife and him] are old. She must understand this. Decisions like these are very hard for a father to take.''*

Even though participant 8 explains that his sons were too young to work at the time that the family needed money, he also reasons that it is better for the family to have successful

sons, because of the family reputation and taking care financially of him and his wife in the future. Firstly, this narrative implies that the possibility of daughters becoming successful and financially supporting their parents is not an option for participant 8, bringing us to the complex issue of son preference. Participant 8 emphasises the crucial role of a son in continueing the patrilineal and fulfilling the filial obligation, which are key elements originating from the culturally embedded Confucian ideology (Santos & Harrell, 2017).

However, in my research, participant 10 has only one daughter (singleton daughter), and participant 1 and 4 each have two daughters. The choice for daughters may stem from Santos & Harell's (2017) finding that the reproductive choice of having at least one son is transforming in Northeast China, in which an increasing number of rural couples have chosen to have a singleton daughter. In this transformation, sons shifts from care providers to financial burdens because of the raising costs of weddings and the decline in physical filial support, creating a ''fear of sons'' (pà érzi; 怕儿子). Strong financial capacity is prefered to having at least one son (Santos & Harrell, 2017).

Fatherhood and Material Satisfaction

Five out of ten migrant workers in this study mentioned to compensate their children by satisfying their material needs. This coping mechanism is in line with Chinese fathers' traditional responsibility of providing for their families. Participant 4 explains how he handles his daughter's material needs:

> *''Sometimes my elder daughter asks me to buy something for her and send it to her. I usually do it, because I want to make her happy. I know it is probably not good to spoil your kids, but what choice do I have?''*

Being the breadwinner of the family, satisfying material needs is considered a basic component of being a father. Nevertheless, to construct their role as a ''good father'', satisfying material needs is not considered sufficient among my participants. All participants except for one state to not perceive themselves as a ''good father''. To them, a deciding factor in being a good father is the so-called ''quality time'' that children spend with their parents and the intimacy stemming from this time spend together.

Participant 9 is one of the migrant workers, not considering himself a good father. He strongly emphasises that ''a good father and husband stays with his family''. Participant 9 cannot return home, as he would not be able to finance his children's education if he would

lose his job in the city. As a result, these migrant workers are stuck in a situation in which they obstructed to practice what they consider ''being a good father'', and are stuck in a situation in which they are obstructed to being a ''good father'' and therefore sacrifice personal happiness, all in order to fund their children's future academic career. My participants are aware of this devil's dilemma, but accept the sacrifice. Participant 9 states:

> ''No. definitely not. I am not a good father. I try my best, but it doesn't matter because a good father and husband stays with their family. But I should not be selfish to go back, my children need the money to study later. If I go back and we live in poverty, I will never be able to pay my children's education and I will regret that for ever.''

Participant 4 further elaborates on the ideal form of fatherhood, which according to him is ''one of those rich guys from the city'':

> ''I think I am not a good father or husband, because I am not one of those local urban rich guys. These guys can play with their children, be with their wife while providing for them. They [local rich guys] are real fathers...''

In the narrative of participant 4, father practices are compared with those of local men in Beijing, feeling guilty towards his children that he cannot spend as much time with his children as these men in Beijing. Having lived in Beijing for 5 years, the understanding of successful manhood of participant 4 is shaped by urban discourses in which masculinity is mainly defined as men's entrepreneurial success herewith providing an enjoyable, comfortable life for their family while staying together as a family (Choi & Peng, 2016).

Permissive attitude

Another pattern in this research is that participants have indicated to become less strict and more permissive towards their children after migration. Participant 4 describes this change in attitude:

> ''I have 2 daughters, one is 11 years old and the other 14 years old. They don't have a strong relationship with me. Sometimes, I try to tell them that they should study hard and help their mom, but why should they listen to a father who is never there? I try to be less strict to avoid trouble in the family and to strengthen our bonds.''

Participant 4 is afraid that strict discipline will negatively affect the vulnerable bond between him and his children and therefore adopts a more permissive attitude.

Marital Infidelity

Findings in this study imply that marital relations become increasingly complex after migration of the husband. The migrant workers do not mention being proud of their wives, which they do express when talking about their children. Nevertheless, as previously indicated in the section ''Gender Roles'' they do empathise with their wives heavy burden as a left-behind wife.

Several participants have told a story in which they either experienced temptation or have acted on the temptation to engage in extramarital affairs, entailing an increased complexity in interpersonal relations (Ying & Yu, 2014). Participant 8 explains:

> ''I spend my money on dinner for my friends sometimes, and you know, occasionally on women [other than his wife].''

Marital infidelity or even suspicions of infidelity entailed by migration of the male counterpart, causes tensions between husband and wife. Participant 7 mentions that his wife does not expand his budget because he claims that his wife is scared that he spends that money on prostitutes:

> ''I sometimes want more money to go out with colleagues. She almost never gives me money for this, because she doesn't want me to drink. She also mentioned some times that she is scared that I will do weird things like going to other women when I drank too much.''

These insecurities and suspicions surrounding faithfulness are also displayed by migrant workers in this research. Participant 8 explains how he dealt with a rumour from his friend about his wife:

> ''A few months ago I heard from an old friend that she [his wife] cheated on me. But when I asked my wife she got angry and denied it... so in the end I believed her. My wife and I have not seen each other for over 12 years, so staying faithful is hard, even for me.''

Although participant 8 heard about this rumour from an old friend, he still chose to believe his wife. One of the reasons why he chose to believe his wife may be because he might have been unfaithful himself, implied from the statement: '' ...*staying faithful is hard, even for me.*'' In his narrative, participant 8 externalised this sensitive matter in a calm, compact, clear way without expressing any emotional discomfort. Therefore, there is reason to think that this information might not be new to the migrant worker or that he might have taken emotional distance from his wife to suppress emotional instability.

Overall, none of the participants consider themselves a ''good husband'' for the same reason that these men do not consider themselves a ''good father'', which is spatial separation. Some have stated to be a satisfactory husband because of financial contributions to the family, but none view themselves as a ''good husband''. Participant 10 explains:

> ''...*I am not a good husband either [in addition to not being a good father]. I want to be there for my wife, but it is just impossible. I try to send them [his family members] some more presents when my wife feels very sad. Sometimes this [sending presents] helps them feel a little bit better I think, but it is only a temporary solution.*''

Besides the feeling of inadequacy, participant 7 mentions the ideal situation in which he would ''be home and make enough money''. This ideal is similar to the previously mentioned situation of ''ideal fatherhood'' being a local urban man, and working in close proximity to his family:

> ''*I should have found a way to be home and make enough money. But this can only happen in my dreams. On the other hand, I never cheated on my wife, so this makes me a better husband, father, and son than some of my colleagues who made a mess and cheated (zài wàimiàn luàn lái; 在外面乱来).*''

Participant 7 also emphasises above that in contrast to his colleagues, he did not engage in extramarital affairs, which makes him a better husband, father, and son than his co-workers in his perception.

Filial Piety

In addition to left-behind children and left-behind wives, migrant workers in this study also left their parents behind. Similar to prior research, the left-behind wives in this research all provide elderly care, which it is rather normal and expected from wives (Jacka, 2013). Migrant men in this research often do not have the financial resources and cannot take care of

their parents physically from afar. However, findings in this research indicate that filial piety remains an important pillar in society. Firstly, filial piety includes obedience; a filial son does not bother their parents and follows their advice (Xu & Xia, 2014). Among others, participant 5 is increasingly obedient in his relationship with his parents to compensate for his absence:

''Besides taking care of the household income, my parents expect me to listen to them, and follow their wise advice. Sometimes the advice is very old-fashioned, but I follow it anyways. Now that I cannot take care of them physically, I feel like I need to listen more to them. I don't want to bother (máfan; 麻烦) or cause trouble (tiān máfan; 添麻烦) with my parents, they are old and they need to be respected... so I never argue with them.''

Secondly, cultural practice has its own version of filial piety in Confucian philosophy in which men fulfil their filial role by compensating their absence by migrating and earning money.

Throughout this research, several participants believe that their parents perceive them as ''okay sons'' or ''good sons''. Participant 10 perceives himself as an ''alright son. He was obedient to his parents and fulfilled his responsibility as a filial son by accepting his father's proposal to migrate, and mentioned that his father initiated the idea of migration to increase household income:

''As a son, I might be an alright son, because my parents wanted me to move to the city. My father saw that the family was getting too poor, so he persisted that I would go to the city to work.''

Participant 4 believes he is viewed as a ''good son'' emphasising the duty he fulfils as the main financial contributor of the family, which is in his opinion why his parents perceive him as a good, adequate son, fulfilling his filial duty by earning sufficient money:

''I think I am a good son, because I don't need to be close to my parents. As long as I work hard and send my family enough money, I think they consider me as a good son.''

One of the participants mentioned to have coped with difficulties when his parents' physical state weakened. Participant 8 expressed frustration while explaining how he was unable to

pay his parents medical expenses or travel back for his father's funeral. As a result, he does not consider himself a good son and blames himself for not earning enough to be able to afford a last-minute train ticket to attend his father's funeral:

''...But I don't think I was a good son. I didn't take care of them when they needed my help, because I didn't have the money to pay all their medical expenses or travel back. When my father died I couldn't even go back for the funeral, because it was very sudden and there were only expensive train tickets left... I couldn't afford the ticket. It took me half a year to get over my father's death and missing his funeral. I blamed myself for not earning enough to buy that one stupid train ticket.''

This story illustrates the complexities of elderly care in rural China, intensified by the culturally embedded responsibility a migrant son has to take care of their parents. Rural parents (those holding a non-local agricultural *hùkŏu*) do not have a pension and rely on their children to finance expenses medical care. As a result, this pressures migrant men to provide a sufficient income to support both their own family and their parents. (Huang, et al., 2014)

Alcohol

Furthermore, this study finds that alcohol use plays a significant role in dealing with emotional distress among my participants. Several participants explain this resort to alcohol, Participant 4 states:

''I try to spend as less as possible here, but it's hard because when I feel bad I want to spoil myself with too many drinks [alcoholic drinks].''

Participant 9 explains how alcohol makes him forget the life he is living:

''... I sometimes drink a little bit much because I want to forget who I am and where I am.''

5.4 Theme 3: Patriarchy (cultural component)

In this subchapter main findings are displayed and interpreted concerning the sub-question: How do male migrant construction workers live Chinese patriarchy, and how do these men reconstruct masculinity and manhood in post-migration settings?

Male Dominance

All participants except for one believe that a hierarchy is necessary in a marriage. Participants value the notion of family harmony highly and use it to reason that a hierarchy in which men hold substantial power over women is necessary in a marriage to sustain family harmony, herewith justifying women's subordination. Participant 1 explains this justification:

> *''Yes [hierarchy in a marriage is necessary], because husbands should always have a little bit more control in a marriage then their wives, otherwise it will be chaos. If things would be equal, then there will be too much arguing. Traditionally, women in China always marry into the men's household and women should keep this in mind when they [women] marry.''*

Participant 2 emphasised his expectation of the adaptation of women when getting married. In addition, participant 2 provides examples of other desirable behaviour of wives and states his opinion on what he believes his wife expects from him:

> *''A man needs to keep being in charge, always. Women marry into the families of the men, so they have to adapt. She needs to know when to give you face [miànzi; 面子, meaning to show respect]. I think it also gives my wife a comfortable feeling, knowing that she can count on me and that I will lead the way. I feel this is what my wife expects from me. ''*

Participant 10, being part of an arranged marriage, he also emphasises a hierarchical structure in which husbands should have more control than wives to achieve smooth family practices:

> *''I was part of an arranged marriage [fùmǔ bāobàn hūnyīn; 父母包办婚姻]. In my opinion a man should have a little bit more control over what happens in the household than women, in order to make sure things go smoothly.''*

From the three narratives above can be implied that gender relations within these marriages, while possibly individualised or deinstitutionalised in theory, remains male dominant in practice (Santos & Harrell, 2017). This male dominance rests on the classic pillar of patrilineal inheritance and the institutional power of the patriarchs.

To the question whether the participants think that women can take over tasks that, right now are considered ''men tasks'' such as working in the city, while men take over tasks that, right now are considered ''women tasks'' such as staying behind and manage childcare and

do domestic chores, 8 out of the 10 participants indicated not to be open to this suggestion. Participant 2 explained why this reversed situation seemed illogical to him:

''That sounds illogical to me. Men should be working and women should be taking care of the children. I wouldn't want to take care of children because I don't think I will be good at it, I am too harsh. I also don't know how to cook very well, so that would be a problem too... and learning how to do all that takes a lot of time.''

In contrast to participant 2, participant 4 does not exclude the possibility of his wife working in the city. He considers the possibility of his wife working in a factory, although he argues that a construction site is not women-friendly and that a man who would manage childcare would ''lose face'' *(diūliǎn; 丢脸),* which is a Chinese expression for being humiliated or publicly disgraced (Louie, 2002):

''I think it will not be good for my wife if she works on this construction site, it is not really women-friendly. There are mostly men working here, making often harsh jokes about women. But in another environment it might be possible, like working in a factory here in the city could work for my wife... but then who takes care of the children then? I wouldn't mind taking care of the children, but I think people in my village would think it is weird, and I don't like to lose face (diūliǎn; 丢脸). Also, I feel better knowing that my family has a better life than me.''

The narratives of participants 2 and 4 again strongly emphasise the cultural embeddedness of a gender order in which women are excluded from access to political power, economic resources, and social status; ensuring women's dependence on the family, making them subject to control of the patriarch (Fincher, 2016).

However, contrary to participant 2 and 10, participants 1 does believe that women can take over ''men tasks'', but nevertheless emphasises that he thinks too much change is not natural:

''I think they [women] can do it, but I think that it is better for men to do work in the cities and women to stay at home. We should not change these things too much, because I think it is not natural.''

Participant 10 also states that women can take over ''men tasks'':

>*''I think women are capable of it. However, I think there will always be tasks that are better suited for men and the other way around. Women are more sensitive and emotional, which are good qualities to have for raising children. But, a man is made to work hard, like all men do. It is just a pity that it is necessary that we men have to work so far away from our families.''*

The two above mentioned participant 2 and 10, who both stated that they think women are capable of taking over ''men jobs'', have in common that they both have families in which offspring exclusively consists of daughter(s).

6   CONCLUSION

This thesis has examined the way in which rural-to-urban migration alters the Chinese migrant family in ten cases of divided rural households. In particular, my research has analysed changes in the perception of manhood and masculinities entailed by migration within the thematic framework of: gender roles (1), family relations (2), and patriarchy (3).

The traditional Chinese family has strong emphasis on labour and symbolic significance; the father as the head of the household and male presence for the main annual rituals is an ideal, but strongly required and desired. In Chinese history, this has been able to be practiced only in some elite families and during the years between 1949 and 1978 when rural *hùkŏu* holders were not allowed to migrate (Davis & Harrell, 1993). It is against this background that I asked: how does the rural Chinese family change when the man, who is a father, husband, and son, leaves to work in the city? I restricted myself here to inquire only into the man's perception of his own roles in the family. In this, I mostly focus on the emotional, personal, interpersonal, and cultural level. My discussions thus left out the ritual and spiritual dimensions of family life, which is a fascinating topic for further research.

From the data analysis can be concluded that the male migrant workers in this research adjust their role in the family and change their interaction practices with family members after migration, herewith altering gender relations and generational relations in the family. In turn, changes in gender and generational relations have strongly shaped male identity and manhood. These findings fit well into other research showing how female rural-to-urban migration alters the patriarchal family (Yan, 2010; Jacka, 2013; Chen, 2014; Santos & Harrell, 2017).

Drawing on Lusher & Robin's theory of masculinity (2016), institutional constrains entailed by the *hùkŏu* system force men to migrate and undergo the hardships of *dăgōng* (打 工) life. The personal is inseparably intertwined with, although never fully corresponds to, the interpersonal. Migrant men in this research reposition themselves (personal) in the family, mobilise alternative resources (interpersonal) and other discourses of manhood (cultural) due to their low status as construction workers in society and to sustain long-distance relationships between themselves and their left-behind family members. Emotional suffering from the separation from their families and the consequences of the separation forces these migrant men to apply several destructive and constructive coping strategies, such as alcohol consumption and the (ab)use of prostitutes.

The migrant workers in this research expressed their emotions openly: guilt and pain dealing with long-term separation from family members, longing and nostalgia for their

children, frustration and sorrow caused by being unable to succeed economically, and their pride for their children's academic success.

Filial piety and patrilinealitiy are still core components of the Chinese society, and therefore taken seriously. However, although Santos & Harell's (2017) argue that the reproductive choice of having at least one son is transforming, this study emphasises the complexity of this matter. Despite the fact that three families in this research do not have sons and express their love and worries for their daughters extensively, which could indicate a transformation in preference, several migrant workers in this research remain much attached to son preference.

Furthermore, this study has found that family in general, and fatherhood in particular force men to create a new form of manhood. In this reconstruction of manhood the man's success is measured in terms of efforts a man makes to support his family, emphasising hard work, earning honest money, and sustaining family harmony. As caring, proud fathers, responsible, leading husbands, and obedient, filial sons, migrant men take pride and feel respected in supporting their family financially (1), and especially, herewith contributing to the academic careers of their children (2). In order to sustain family harmony and to compensate emotional instability stemming from long-term spatial separation, these men alter their family practices by making compromises with their wives and thus renegotiate their masculinity. This study identifies three main compromises on masculine behaviour altering family dynamics: a more permissive attitude as a father (1); selective acceptance in task negotiations as husbands (2); and, increased obedience as a son (3).

Based on the findings of this study I argue that patriarchy is transforming, yet it does not eliminate gender and generational inequality (Santos & Harrell, 2017). Selective acceptance of a wife's demands in discussions entails the occasionally shift of wives from the 'domestic sphere' to the 'public sphere'. However, male dominance remains upheld since men in this study rarely justify such concessions with reference to the principle of gender equality. Instead, these concessions are interpreted as practical delegation of trivial matters to sustain family and marital harmony. With this justification migrant construction workers keep traditional gender roles intact, in which the ''natural abilities'' of women are inextricably linked to primarily housework, childcare, and elderly care (Jacka, 2013). Gender relations within marriages, while possibly individualised or deinstitutionalised in theory, remain male dominant in practice (Santos & Harrell, 2017). This male dominance rests on the classic pillar of patrilineal inheritance and the institutional power of the patriarchs.

7 APPENDICES

Appendix A: Consent Form

Consent form/同意书

Researcher/研究员: Roos van der Meijden

Please consider this information carefully before deciding whether to participate in this research.
在决定是否参与本研究之前，请仔细考虑这些信息。

Purpose of the research: to acquire a better understanding of how external factors such as migration impacts gender relations, in this case in the context of families.
以更好地理解移民等外部因素如何影响性别关系，在这种情况下是在家庭背景下

What you will do in this research: If you decide to volunteer, you will be asked to participate in one interview. You will be asked several questions.
如果你决定参与，你将会被安排一次访谈。

Duration: The interview will last 10 to 30 minutes.
持续时间: 面试将持续 10 到 30 分钟。

Risks: No risks are anticipated.
风险：没有风险

Confidentiality: Your responses to interview questions will be kept confidential. At no time will your actual identity be revealed. You will be assigned a random letter. Anyone who helps me transcribe responses will only know you by this letter.

The interviews are done as part of research training course work at Lund University. The data collected will only be read by myself and the responsible teacher, and will not be distributed, published, or used in any other way. I won't use your name or information that would identify you in any publications or presentations.

保密性：您对面试问题的回应将被保密。 任何时候都不会透露你的真实身份。 你将被分配一个随机字母。 任何帮助我抄写回复的人只会通过这封信知道你。

访谈是作为隆德大学研究培训课程工作的一部分完成的。 收集的数据只能由我自己和负责的老师阅读，不得以任何其他方式分发，发布或使用。 我不会使用您的姓名或信息来识别您的任何出版物或演示文稿。

Participation and withdrawal: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you may otherwise be entitled. You may withdraw by informing the experimenter that you no longer wish to participate (no questions will be asked). You may skip any question during the interview, but continue to participate in the rest of the study.

参与和撤回：您可以拒绝参加或者退出这次研究，而不会受到任何惩罚或者个人权益的损失。您可以通过通知实验者您不再希望参加（不会提问）。 在面试过程中，您可以跳过任何问题，但可以继续参与其余的研究。

To Contact the Researcher: If you have questions or concerns about this research, please contact me via my WeChat account (WeChat id: RoosBeijing2013) or my email: roosvdmeijden2@gmail.com:

联系研究人员：如果您对本研究有任何疑问或疑问，请通过我的微信账号（微信号：RoosBeijing2013）或我的邮箱与我联系：roosvdmeijden2@gmail.com：

Whom to contact about your rights in this research, for questions, concerns, suggestions, or complaints that are not being addressed by the researcher, or research-related harm: sidsel.hansson@ace.lu.se

在本研究中与谁联系有关您的权利，对于研究人员未解决的问题，疑虑，建议或投诉，或与研究有关的伤害：sidsel.hansson@ace.lu.se

Agreement/协议：

The nature and purpose of this research have been sufficiently explained and I agree to participate in this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time without incurring any penalty. 这项研究的性质和目的已经得到充分解释，我同意参加这项研究。我明白我可以随时免费退出而不会招致任何处罚。:

Signature (签名): _____ Date (日期): _____

Name (名字): _____

Appendix B: The Interview

Section 1: Background information

Q1: Where are you from? (Province & city/town)

Q2: Where are your wife, children, and parents now?

Q3: What are the main differences between your hometown and the city?

Q4: How would you describe your life in the city? What do you think about your job as a construction worker?

Section 2: Gender roles (personal)

Q1: What changed for you after having migrated to the city?

Q2: Who takes care of the finances within the family? Did this change after migration?

Q3: What tasks does your wife have in the family? And what tasks do you have within the family?

Q4: How did you decide/negotiate these tasks? Do you feel these tasks have changed after having moved to the city? Do you or does your wife have certain extra/less tasks after having moved to the city?

Section 3: Family relations (interpersonal)

Q1: How do you feel being away from your family? How do you deal with this?

Q2: What is your relationship with your son (1), wife (2), parents (3) like? How other do you see them?

Q3: Do you consider yourself a good father (1), husband (2), son (3)? Why?

Section 4: Patriarchy (cultural)

Q1: Do you feel like a hierarchy between men and woman in a marriage is necessary? Why?

Q2: Do you think that women can take over tasks that, right now are considered ''men tasks'' such as working in the city, while men take over tasks that, right now are considered ''women tasks'' such as staying behind and manage childcare and do domestic chores? Why?

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