Moving Up or Staying Put? Mobility, Marriage and Gender in Transitional China

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Abstract

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In China, despite longstanding inequalities based on gender, social class, and rural/urban status, several factors have potentially challenged the existing socially stratified structure in the recent decade – namely the prevalence of migration, recent socio-political reforms, cultural similarities, better education for the general public, and improvement in transportation. This dissertation asks how China's stratified structure is shifting and/or reworking through marriage. Special attention is paid to intermarriages between rural and urban people, as these couples characterize how walls that delineate rural-urban boundaries begin to erode and how other structures like gender and class factor in. To answer these questions, my dissertation is organized into three chapters. First, I draw on the Chinese General Social Survey to examine the trends, prevalence, and the characteristics of rural-urban marriages. The results show that intermarriages are rare across periods despite the rising trend. The

intermarriages that occur are characterized by exchange relationships in which rural people trade their higher education with the "urban" status of their spouse. Second, based on 138 in-depth interviews with participants in regions that send and receive migrants, I find that *hukou* (China's household registration system) continues to stigmatize rural migrants. This creates a hierarchical and segregated social environment for rural-urban interactions that is unfavorable to people with a rural *hukou* in the urban marriage market. *Hukou* intersects with gender when people construct masculinity and femininity along rural-urban lines and make gendered choices during partner selection processes. Third, I find that the structural inequalities of *hukou* and gender extend into the conjugal power of intermarried couples. Specifically, rural women, who make up the majority of the rural spouses intermarrying into urban households, are treated as "double denigrated outsiders" in both the household and the host society. The results reveal how inequality is reproduced through partner selection and marriage despite socio-demographic factors that potentially expand the normative marriage pool. It also suggests *hukou* reform, which claims to blur the rural-urban boundary, still has a long way to go.

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Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION

On September 16, 2013, the *Shenzhen Metro News* circulated a story with a catchy headline: "*Love diminishes after meeting her parents: They said I am from the rural and have no house."* This story is about Xiao Long, a college-educated rural man who fell in love with Jia Wei, a city girl with less than a high school education. They worked together in Shenzhen and lived together for a year. He bragged to all of his friends about her being cute and clever. She cooked and he did the laundry. They enjoyed each other's company very much until Xiao Long met her parents before marriage. Jia Wei's family despised him for being rural and not owning a house. Her parents thought their daughter would be likely to suffer after marrying that man. The couple eventually broke up with much pain. This article is presented as a tragedy, while raising concerns as to how genuine the city girl's love was for the rural boy. It triggered a lot of discussion on the web.

OVERVIEW

Such media feature stories captivate public attention because these unusual couples are adventurously attempting to challenge the deep-seated stratified social structure of gender, social class, and rural-urban boundaries. The traditional Chinese family structure is patriarchal with a gender and age-based system of authority (Harrell 2015). Social class also organizes family formation and the matching of couples. Families negotiating marriages are guided by the old maxim of "matching wooden doors with wooden doors, and bamboo doors with bamboo doors,"

meaning the bride and the groom's families should be of similar socioeconomic status (Croll 1981). While the reform of the New Marriage Law in 1950 promoting "free and independent marriage" and the influence of Western values after the Opening of China in the late 1970s may have encouraged the notion of emotional love and individualized marriage (Xu and Whyte 1990), people find themselves deeply anxious about their social status in an ever more stratified society (Otis 2008; Han 2010). Increasingly, some seek to achieve higher status through marriage (Mu and Xie 2014). Inequalities–on top of the dual structure of class and gender–are further intensified by *hukou* (household registration status of rural/urban) that has organized marriage since 1958. *Hukou* was adopted to ban internal migration from rural to urban areas. However, even after the Opening of China, it continues to favor the urban population who are given access to more rights and privileges, like housing subsidies, health care, pensions, and unemployment insurance benefits, than rural *hukou* holders (Wang 2005). Against this background, stories about people trying to challenge the rural-urban frontier and class boundaries, and overturning traditional gender expectations in mate selection are noteworthy.

Although rural-urban marriages are rare, they likely have increased in recent years because of drastic demographic, social, and cultural changes since the turn of the century that erode existing social structures. First, there has been an upsurge in rural migrant workers moving to urban centers for work: around 163 million in 2010 (National Statistics Bureau 2013). Second, there has been an increase of unmarried migrants (National Population and Family Planning Commission 2011). Third, there have been waves of *hukou* reforms since 1998. For instance, the *hukou* of a child does not necessarily follow the mother's (Nie and Xing 2010). This benefits rural-mother/urban-father couples as the child can inherit the father's urban *hukou*. In addition, there was a blueprint issued by the State Council in 2014 which asserts their goal to convert 100

million rural *hukou* statuses into urban (Chan 2014). These reforms also potentially challenge rural-urban boundaries. Also, economic restructuring that gives rise to service sectors and the increase in the level of education of rural migrants further reduces rural-urban segregation in the workplace (Qing Hua Sociology 2005). Lastly, with more technological advancements, media has proliferated in villages. The spread of "modern values" through the mass media homogenizes rural-urban culture (Yan 2008). These forces give rise to the possibility of rural-urban love relationships, as seen in the news account.

Situated in the context of a transitional China, this study examines the matching patterns, processes, and outcomes between rural and urban people to uncover how the stratified structures of *hukou*, gender, and class shape marriages and are in turn shaped through marriage. I mainly focus on the mate selection of rural migrants, while using other groups for comparison, since rural migrants are the pioneers who transcend rural-urban boundaries. They are a select group: more educated, more influenced by the media, and more open-minded (especially those women who migrate alone) in comparison to rural non-migrants. Therefore, these people are best positioned to rework the interlocking system of inequalities.

While there is a myriad of research about the condition of rural migrants in urban areas, studies about marital assimilation are small in number (cf. Wang and Schwartz 2015). Yet understanding mate selection and marriage among rural migrants is important for understanding social stratification and social mobility. Stratification is about differential life chances: who gets what and why, as determined by structural forces. Migration and marriage can be ways to improve one's life chances. Individuals lack the ability to choose the circumstances into which they are born, but they do have agency to select their mates and choose to migrate to a better place. Thus these decisions can be a potential strategy to negotiate structural constraints and

opportunities. In other words, migration and mate selection outcomes not only reflect social stratification, but can also contribute to the reworking of stratification for society at large.

APPROACH

To understand how the walls that delineate overlapping inequalities are maintained and/or reworked through marriage, I use the mixed methods of national surveys, demographic surveys, semi-structured interviews, and ethnographic fieldwork from July to December 2013, and from April to September 2014, in both migrant-sending and receiving regions in China. First, I broadly examine the prevalence and the nature of inter-*hukou* marriages. Informed by the finding that inter-*hukou* marriages are unlikely despite widespread rural-to-urban migration, I discuss why this might be the case by focusing on the mate selection process of rural migrants in urban China. Through this, I discuss the embedded principles that shape various groups' preferences and opportunities in searching for mates. Lastly, I delve deeper into the rare cases of inter-*hukou* families–which presumably should be the most receptive to "border crossing" (Childs 2005)–to explore how the interlocking systems of gender, class, and *hukou* are reconstructed and/or reworked. This approach of using multiple sources enables triangulation and comprehensive empirical analysis of the relationship between marriage and inequalities by developing a more thorough understanding of the general pattern of inter-*hukou* marriage, a richer analysis of mate selection processes, and the marital power dynamics of inter-*hukou* families.

SUMMARY OF ANALYSES

The first chapter details the trends, the prevalence, and the characteristics of inter-*hukou* marriages from the period 1949 to 2010. I identified three plausible scenarios underlying intermarriages that have different implications for structural inequalities. They are the 1) endogamous intermarriage scenario, which assumes dissolving group boundaries and hence people in different *hukou* can marry equally desirable spouses; 2) status exchange scenario, which assumes intermarriages happen when urban people marry more educated rural spouses than the rural *hukou* members; and 3) in-group preferences scenario, which assumes that people in general prefer to marry within groups and intermarriages happen just because there is no marriageable mate within the group. I use the Chinese General Social Survey, a nationally representative survey, and design loglinear models that take *hukou,* gender, education, and time periods into account to identify the likelihood of rural-urban marriages across time, and whether there are exchange relationships for different subgroups by gender and *hukou*.

The results show that marrying across *hukou* is rare, although it is more likely than in the past. I also speculate that inter-*hukou* marriages are characterized by a status exchange relationship, meaning these marriages are likely to be formed under conditions of group inequality and that rural *hukou* can only be compensated by other status indicators such as higher education background. My findings also suggest that urban men do not judge their partner's *hukou* as severely as urban women do. This suggests that women can achieve upward mobility in *hukou* through marriage easier than men.

The second chapter relies on ethnographic field observations and 138 in-depth interviews that I conducted in rural and urban South and Southwest China during 2013-2014. This empirical chapter discusses the mate selection process of rural migrants and urbanites. Past studies always

portray the mate selection process as a market experience in which individuals seek the "best" possible mate based on their preferences and the options available (Becker 1991; Kalmijn 1998; South and Trent 1988). While "preferences" could be broadly understood in personal, economic, and cultural terms, highly cited articles on Chinese marriages, in particular, narrowly describe mate selection in economic and instrumental terms (e.g., Fan and Huang 1998).

Although my results do not dispute the importance of economic considerations in mate selection, I argue that such an emphasis lacks a gender perspective. Specifically, I find that the choice to marry people with a different *hukou* is structured by a marriage preference hierarchy that intersects economic calculations with gender norms, expectations, and practices in the migrant sending region and in the migrant receiving region. In particular, people construct different types of femininities and masculinities along rural-urban lines that shape mate selection preferences. This limits inter-*hukou* marriages. Facing these constraints, individuals operating under global and translocal forces employ creative strategies to break those boundaries. However, inter-*hukou* matching might not imply a reduction in inequality because rural women are found to marry urban men at the social margin. This indicates there are tradeoffs for rural people in order to marry an urban spouse. Urbanites' strategies to "pass" rural partners – by describing how similar the rural spouse is in "urban" outlooks and manners – discredit the rural identity. Exchanges between women's beauty and men's *hukou* also reinforce gender stereotypical ways of matching.

The third chapter delves deeply into the married life of inter-*hukou* couples. Using the intersectionality approach, I investigate how power and inequalities based on gender, class, and rural/urban status are sustained or reworked in families formed from different *hukou*. The analysis focuses on comparisons between different sets of gender, rural/urban, and class

configurations in different familial contexts. Based on 26 in-depth interviews and participant observation, I argue that in general migrant spouses are denied both legal and substantive urban citizenship. I also find variegated power dynamics in different family settings that work through the intersection of government policies and patriarchal structure. For rural wives in the urban husband's family, they are treated as "unpaid reproductive workers." While their children are readily accepted as "insiders" of the urban family and the community, the rural mother is not. The separation of their reproductive function and the women themselves relegates them to be reproductive workers. I also found them to be consistently oppressed by their urban husband and in-laws in day-to-day interactions because of their dependency status. Conversely, urban spouses in poor rural families are seen as knowledgeable and venerable. The urban spouses often possess *hukou* advantage in the rural family. They have power to change the attitudes and behaviors of the rural parents-in-law–subverting the generational hierarchy. Rural husbands in urban wives' families behaved like nostalgic sojourners. Although the urban family despises their rural identity, the rural husband has a gender advantage by urging the urban wife to practice "a modified version of patrilocality" by traveling frequently between the man's rural home and the urban home. Lastly, I also demonstrate how the higher social class of rural families can possibly reverse the rural-urban power structure. Arguing that even the most oppressed group–rural migrant wives–have creative strategies to resist, I discuss how playing by urban rules, playing a two-faced project in filial piety, and creating gender alliances can legitimize intersectionality.

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study uses marriage as a site to illustrate the co-construction of *hukou,* gender, and class inequalities in China. Their overlapping nature suggests that we cannot adequately explain inequalities in China by understanding one form of oppression *alone.* This implies that *hukou* reforms that aim at weakening the rural-urban boundary should also take gender and class inequality into account (or in general, adopt a social justice perspective). For example, in the recent blueprint to grant 100 million rural *hukou* holders an urban *hukou,* which group of "rural" are they targeting? Do they equally grant urban *hukou* to rural people of different classes and gender? Or are they targeting a particular group of people, like rural people with college education and rural landlords of richer provinces (who are usually men and have a higher socioeconomic status)? Without taking gender and class inequalities into account, the *hukou* reform could further hierarchize Chinese society.

Specifically on partner selection, it is really too soon to use *just* the increase in the rate of intermarriages as evidence of greater social equality. My study shows that inter-*hukou* marriages are formed under both the gendered expectation of hypergamy for women and class inequality (in which rural people trade their relatively higher socioeconomic status for the urban status of their marriage partner). The last chapter on married life of inter-*hukou* couples consistently portrays the power difference as unfavorable to rural and poor urban women. This study thus calls for future research to study the power dynamics in intermarried families, instead of just the matching patterns of couples. This can help us understand to what extent inequalities between different groups are sustained or diminished.

My findings suggest the importance of third parties in familial power negotiations. However, further nuance is needed. For example, future research can expand my analysis to

understand the meaning of "filial piety" and parents' roles in their adult children's partner selection, wedding arrangement, and married life. Against the forces of globalization, migration, and economic restructuring of parental dependence, how does the parents' role differ for adult daughters and sons, urban and rural people, and non-migrants and internal/international migrants? So far, the existing literature has portrayed a rather conflicting picture of filial piety.

Theoretically, I demonstrate a more fluid picture of intersectionality which is "interaction seeking" and "context sensitive" (Choo and Ferree 2010). I discuss a more dynamic analysis within which inequalities are produced and reproduced in different familial contexts. Here I move beyond the comparison of inequalities based on demographic categories, and discuss how the structure of inequality informs the micro-interactions of self and self-other, and how these interactions connect with power relations and sustain inequalities. Future research can adopt and improve this approach of intersectionality.

Chapter 2. *HUKOU* INTERMARRIAGE PAIRINGS FROM PERIOD 1949 TO 2010

Most studies on intermarriages between groups rely on the prevalence of intermarriage to assess the strength of group boundaries. Yet the characteristics underlying the intermarriage pairings are seldom examined. In this study, I analyze intermarriages across *hukou*, China's household registration status of designating people as "rural" or "urban" categories based on parents' place of origin. I do so to assess whether these intermarriage pairings reflect a scenario of 1) endogamous marriage; 2) status exchange; or 3) in-group preferences. Using Chinese General Social Surveys, I show that intermarriages across *hukou* are rare, but increasing over time. Controlling for educational homogamy, time periods, and marginal differences in education between rural and urban *hukou* holders, I find that intermarriages build on group inequalities based on *hukou* in which urban *hukou* holders are able to marry more educated rural spouses because of their urban status advantage.

INTRODUCTION

The prevalence of interracial marriages is often viewed as an indicator of the strength of racial and ethnic boundaries (Alba and Nee 1996; Kalmijn 1998; Qian and Lichter 2007). Increasing marriage rates between US born and foreign born also lead some studies to claim increasing

assimilation and cultural incorporation within American society (Bean et al. 2004). Yet other studies challenge the straight-forward interpretation of the rate of intermarriages, arguing that intermarriages between groups could be built upon inequalities (Hwang, Saenz and Aguirre 1997; Kalmijn 1993; Qian 1997; Schoen 1995; Schoen, Wooldredge and Thomas 1989). For example, Fu (2001) found that intermarriages between blacks and whites in the United States show signs of a status exchange relationship, in which the white partner is more likely to "exchange" their status privilege by marrying blacks with higher education. His findings triggered discussions about the interpretation of the characteristics underlying intermarriage pairings (Rosenfeld 2005; Kalmijn 2010; Gullickson and Fu 2010; Rosenfeld 2010; Gullickson and Torche 2014), which are important for understanding whether and how group boundaries and social inequalities are produced and/or reworked. This study uses the rural-urban intermarriage pairings in China as a case study to understand the characteristics of intermarriage and the implications for the shifting social inequalities in Chinese society.

In China, race and ethnic issues are less salient than in the United States, partly because 91.51% of Chinese are from *Han* ethnicity according to the official figures (*China Daily*, cited from National Bureau of Statistics of PRC 2011). Yet division of people into "rural" *versus* "urban" by household registration system in China *(hukou)* is analogous to the apartheid system based on race (Alexander and Chan 2004; Au and Shan 2007). Established in 1958, household registration of people is more than a geographical marker. It is a status assigned based on parents' place of origin (before 1998, individuals could inherit from the mother only) and cannot be changed *just* through migration alone. Only a relative few can convert their *hukou* status through educational attainment or employment. Similar to the apartheid in South Africa, this system aims at buttressing cheap-labor economies (Alexander and Chan 2004). It shapes the

power, wealth, and prestige of individuals because of the distinct rural-urban divide: 1) the spatial differential in economic development creates rural-urban gaps in income (Xie and Zhou 2014; Sicular et al. 2007; Park 2008), health outcomes (Ministry of Health 1999; Yip 2010), and education (Hannum, Wang and Adams 2010); 2) urban *hukou* holders are endowed with urban privileges like housing subsidies, health care, pensions, and unemployment insurance benefits, while rural *hukou* holders – in particular the rural migrants – have fewer basic rights and privileges (Wang 2005; Whyte 2010); and 3) Popular Chinese discourses indicate biases along urban/rural lines: urbanicity represents the ideal of sophistication, modernity and civilization, while rural residents are denigrated and regarded as "low others" (Yan 2008).

Research about marriage and stratification in China mostly focuses on patterns of marital homogamy by education, income, and age (Han 2010; Mu and Xie 2014). For instance, Han (2010) found an increase in education homogamy since 1980. This supports the notion that education is an increasingly important means to attain a high social position, and thus it becomes more important in marital choices. On age homogamy, Mu and Xie (2014) found that it has decreased since 1990, while age hypergamy has been increasing. They speculate that the occupational disadvantage has driven some women to resume status hypergamy through marriage; while men are waiting longer to accumulate more resources to become more attractive on the marriage market. These studies on marriage patterns show that there are greater class and gender inequalities over time. However, so far there is a paucity of research examining marriage patterns by *hukou* status (See Wang and Schwartz 2015; Nie and Xing 2010 for exceptions). Of those studies that discuss the homogamous marriage pattern based on *hukou*, they focus exclusively on the incidence of intermarriage. Wang and Schwartz (2015) and Nie and Xing (2010) find that intermarriage rate is increasing over time, although the reported percentages are

different because of the definition of "inter-*hukou* marriages." While Nie and Xing (2010) attribute the increase in intermarriages to the success of *hukou* reform that aims at reducing rural-urban boundaries, Wang and Schwartz (2015) suggest that intermarriages are associated with greater rural-urban inequalities. Given the conflicting results, in addition to estimating the trend and the prevalence of inter-*hukou* marriage, this study uncovers the characteristics of intermarriage pairings and systematically tests the different scenarios underlying the intermarriage rate which has different implications on structural inequalities and group boundaries.

There are three major scenarios underlying the characteristics of intermarriages. First, it is an *endogamous intermarriage scenario* (Fu 2001). Intermarriages arise because of dissolving group boundaries. Since marrying across groups is not uncommon, individuals of different groups can marry equally desirable spouses (Fu 2001). In other words, the most desirable individual – for instance, as characterized by education – can match with the most desirable spouse regardless of their group membership (e.g., race, caste, and *hukou*). In this case, a higher intermarriage rate reflects a weakening of group boundaries. In the second scenario, intermarriages happen *because of* group inequalities. The *status exchange scenario* suggests that there is a generalized hierarchical structure of status based on groups. Some groups are considered to have a higher status than other groups. Group membership, like education, can be a resource that can be "exchanged." Therefore, under this scenario, members of the majority group can marry better educated spouses than the members in the minority group, and better educated individuals are able to marry a member in the majority group (Fu 2001; Gullickson and Torche 2014). If such a relationship occurs, intermarriage happens on the basis of hierarchical group orderings. The higher incidence of intermarriage hence may not imply group equality and

diminishing group boundaries. Third, the *in-group preference scenario* suggests the importance of cultural and social affinity (Fu 2001). Intermarriages happen only because people cannot find a partner within their own group. This scenario does not necessarily assume the hierarchical ordering of groups. The prevalence of intermarriage may also indicate factors like a marriage squeeze in the market that make people marry outside the normative group, instead of weak group boundaries, as is usually believed.

Given three different possible explanations for the rate of intermarriages, it is critical to tease out the characteristics underlying the intermarriage pairings. This paper has several specific objectives: First, what is the prevalence of inter-*hukou* marriage? Is *hukou* still an important determinant of marriage partner after controlling for education homogamy and population characteristics like marginal intergroup differences in education? Second, how does *hukou* affect marriage, if at all, across different sociopolitical periods characterized by varying levels of migration? Third, how exactly are patterns of intermarriage pairings connected to the nature of group boundaries? Is higher education of the lower status group (i.e., rural *hukou*) exchanged for a higher status (i.e., an urban *hukou*) through marriage in when the urban and the rural marriage markets are increasingly overlapping?

HUKOU POLICY AND INTER-*HUKOU* MARRIAGES

The Chinese government policy of *hukou* shapes the meaning of the rural-urban social boundary, and strongly affects inter-*hukou* marriages (Wang and Schwartz 2015). Adopted in 1958 and modeled after Stalin's strategy of *propiska* (a residency permit), it was implemented to ban internal rural-to-urban migration so as to benefit the Communists' economic goal of Big Push

industrialization projects. Keeping the rural people in the village reduced labor cost and the cost of agricultural products. It serves to feed the urban population and subsidize the cost of industrialization. Between 1958 and early 1980s, all "upward spatial movement," meaning movement from rural areas to the cities, was forbidden, while horizontal (rural-to-rural/ urban-to-urban) or "downward" (urban-to-rural) movement was allowed. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), 17 million urban intellectuals were "sent down to rural villages" to "learn from the peasants" (Siu and Stern 1983). After the opening of China in 1978, many urbanites who had served in the village returned to the cities (Yip 2010). Against this background, it is plausible that rustication policy enabled closer rural-urban proximity and might give rise to more inter-*hukou* marriages. However, recent studies also showed that urban young people who were sent to the village were deferring marriage instead of marrying rural people (Song 2015). Therefore, the rural-to-urban migration ban in general limited people's distance in mate search before the early 1980s. People were likely to find a marital partner within a very close distance (Harrell 1992; Xinmin Wang Bao 1989).

Between 1984 and 1991 saw a nascent stage of migration when the migration ban was lifted a few years after the Opening up of China in 1978. Since then, apart from "rural" versus "urban," *hukou* is further stratified by migration status ("migrant" versus "local"). Rural migrants were usually drawn to the coastal areas in search of factory jobs because of "push and pull factors." They sought to escape rural problems such as lack of land for farming, non-farm jobs, basic social security, and credit or income for entrepreneurial investments. They were also pulled by the job opportunities arising from investment projects in coastal urban areas (Wang 2005). However, these rural migrants ended up mostly working in "dangerous, dirty, and degrading" jobs, which segregated them from people with urban *hukou* (Wang 2013 p. 42). They were also

severely discriminated against and were often treated as *mangliu* (translated as "blind flows") which describes the irrational and senseless migration of labor into the cities (Chan 1996). During this period of time, most rural-to-urban migration was characterized by temporary solo male migration and couple migration (leaving behind children and the elderly parents).Given the characteristics of rural migrants and the discrimination they faced in the host society, inter-*hukou* marriages were expected to be limited in this period of time. However, contrary to this expectation, Wang and Schwartz (2015) found an increasing percent of inter-*hukou* marriage upon the lifting of the migration ban in the early 1980s. In addition, some "mate-matching ads" in the late 1980s highlighted that some urban men did not mind whether the person was urban or rural; yet they still showed prejudice as they specified that the woman should be very good-looking, if she has a rural *hukou* (*Funu* Magazine 1986).

A migration boom occurred between 1992 and 2010, which is likely to give rise to more inter-*hukou* marriages. In 1992, the Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping staged a "southern sojourn" (tours and speeches in southern cities) that promoted more radical liberalization of China's market. This high-profile gesture as a sign of commitment to market reform restored foreign investments lost after the Tiananmen Massacre in 1989 (Wong and Zheng 2001). From 1979 to 1999, China attracted a total Foreign Direct Investment of US$306 billion, of which 92% was gained after the south sojourn (Wong and Zheng 2001). Demand for workers increased and thus rural-urban migration was heightened. For instance, in the early 1980s the intercounty migrants were estimated at around 7 million. By 1995, it had reached nearly 44 million. By the 2000 census the floating population was estimated at 79 million (Liang and Ma 2004), and it reached 163 million by 2010 (National Statistics Bureau 2013).

In addition, *hukou* reforms and some policy directives since the late 1990s that could possibly weaken the legal boundaries on rural-urban intermarriages might have contributed to an increase in the incidence of intermarriage. For example, the children of a rural-urban or cross-regional couple who married after 1998 were no longer required to inherit the mother's *hukou*. In other words, the children of an inter-*hukou* couple can enjoy the rights and privileges of an urban citizen even if their mother was not one. This new measure in 1998 could reduce one important barrier to *hukou* intermarriages. Since 2010 some provinces (such as Chongqing, Chengdu, and Guangzhou) have begun to implement pilot programs for reform that would allow for some rural migrant workers to gain an urban *hukou* in the province through a point system. Although the number of rural migrants who can actually gain an urban *hukou* is still minimal (30,000 among 1.6 million rural migrants), the reduction of marriage restrictions and *hukou* boundaries might encourage more rural migrants to stay in the city (National Population and Family Planning Commission 2011) and perhaps seek an urban partner. Intermarriages could also be more likely because of the demand for a more diverse rural labor force during the third period. The entry to the global market and the booming service sector since 2000 has opened up job opportunities in different occupations from different social strata (Li 2006). In addition, the newer generation of rural migrants has higher educational attainment than the previous generation of rural migrants, and they are more educated than the national average (Qing Hua University 2005). As a result, rural migrants ended up in more diverse work settings that potentially draw the rural and the urban population closer.

Past studies show there is an upward trend of inter-*hukou* marriages. Nie and Xing (2010) found that in 1980 the percent of inter-*hukou* marriages was around 5% that dropped a bit in the late-1980s, then rose again up to around 10% in 2005. Wang and Schwartz (2015) similarly find

an upward trend, although their estimation is markedly higher than Nie and Xing's findings. They find that 20% of marriages formed between 1958 and 1964 were *hukou* intermarriages and 30% were formed between 2000 and 2008. They suggest that the increased inequality is associated with increased *hukou* intermarriage, because with growing inequalities the incentive for rural people to marry urbanites may override the increased "cost" effect of urbanites marrying "down." Among rural *hukou* holders, women are more likely to marry urbanites than men. Based on the past literature on *hukou* homogamy, this study also expects *hukou* intermarriages to be rare, with more intermarriage in the second period (1984-91) than the first period (1949-1983), and lastly, *hukou* intermarriages should be most prevalent in the third period (1992-2010).

The definition of inter-*hukou* marriages used by Wang and Schwartz (2015) differs from that used in this research and Nie and Xing's work in three ways: First, Wang and Schwartz (2015) use only samples from the urban site to study the incidence of inter-*hukou* marriages. This strategy excludes rural migrants who have returned to the village, and thus underestimating the number of rural people in the marriage pool and overestimating the percent of rural-urban matches. Second, they also categorize *hukou* converters (from rural-to-urban converters) as "rural," who may or may not convert because of marriage. Rural-to-urban conversion can happen through a variety of ways depending on the policy at different periods of time. For example, land expropriation, higher education of the rural *hukou* holders, and entry of certain professions are some ways that people can convert their *hukou* other than through marriage (Chan and Buckingham 2008). Therefore, including these converters with rural origin as "rural" might be confounding. Lastly, the study's categorization of "rural" conflates rural migrants and people with ***local*** rural *hukou* in the urban site. "Rural local people in the urban areas" is a category

arisen because of urbanization that leads some big cities to demarcate the rural villages at the urban outskirts to be part of their city population. However, those rural residents do not change their *hukou* because they can still enjoy their land rights by keeping their rural *hukou*. Unlike Wang and Schwartz (2015), I try to exclude this group as much as the data allows in estimating rural-urban marriages because being "rural local" people, they can enjoy many benefits and sometimes even more than the urbanites owing to their unique situations. Hence it is likely that they have different opportunity structures for marriage than the typical "rural" group (Wang 2005).

THEORIES OF MATE SELECTION

Spousal selection in marriages is often conceived as a "market experience," in which individuals seek the most desirable mate based on their preferences and the available opportunities (Goode 1964). The outcome is usually that people with high levels of resources will marry spouses who possess similarly high levels. There are three major reasons for this pattern: First, as Goode (1964) and Elder (1969) suggested, individuals instrumentally look for a mate who promises the highest possible socioeconomic status and the greatest potential for future economic prosperity. Every individual seeks the best "possible" match, the highest status men pairing with the highest status women, the second-highest men with the second-highest women, and so forth. Second, people with similar education tend to share similar tastes, lifestyles, and cultural interests (Bourdieu 1984; Kalmijn 1998). Cultural similarities produce a bond of solidarity and empathy and a common basis for conversations and participation in joint activities. It is thus common for people to seek a mate with whom they have strong affinity (McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Cook

2001). Lastly, schools are a place for interactions and provide an arena for potential spouses to meet and mingle with people who are generally similar to them (Harris and Ono 2005; Mare 1991).

For the above reasons, homogamy may be the dominant pattern. Nonetheless, it can be undermined when socioeconomic status is exchanged for other purportedly desired resources, such as race (Schoen and Wooldredge 1989; Kalmijn 1993; Qian 1997; Fu 2001), physical attractiveness (e.g., Elder 1969; Sassler and Joyner 2011), and homemaker skills (Becker 1991). Davis (1941) and Merton (1941) introduced the idea of status-caste exchange regarding the Hindu caste system in India. They found members of ethnic minority groups who marry majority group members often trade their higher socio-economic status for the ethnic status of the majority group.

Based on this logic, one can tease out whether interracial/ intergroup marriages are formed out of "exchange" relationship by comparing how stochastically similar the education of the spouse is for people who marry within-group and across group lines (Fu 2001; Gullickson and Torche 2014). If the groups are equally valued, the education homogamy model suggests that people who intermarry across groups should share similar education background as those who do not. This is also related to Weber's notion of social closure, in which economic inequalities are cemented as status differences, and status groups try to maintain in- and out-group distinctions by reducing interactions with out-group members (Weber 1946; Fu 2001). These processes may confine marriages within status circles. When interracial marriage rates go up, it indicates weak racial group boundaries (Fu 2001; Kalmijn 1998).

Status exchanges might result in intermarriages (Davis 1941). In this sense, racial groups with higher status should be able to marry more educated spouses relative to members of lower-status racial groups (Fu 2001). This involves a market exchange relationship which implies a broad stratification by groups like race, caste, and *hukou* (Gullickson and Torche 2014). For example, less educated white women might marry black men with higher levels of education. Empirical support has been found for the status exchange perspective for interracial marriages between whites and minority groups (Schoen and Wooldredge 1989; Kalmijn 1993; Qian 1997; Fu 2001; Qian and Lichter 2007; Gullickson 2006; Gullickson and Torche 2014; But see Rosenfeld 2005; 2010).

An alternative theoretical approach to status exchange theory is the in-group preference perspective. This framework emphasizes individuals' preference to marry spouses from their own group. Racial and ethnic identity could reflect cultural resources: values and behaviors, such as child-rearing values, political attitudes, cultural literacy, taste in art and music, and styles of speech that do matter in the spouse searching process (Kalmijn 1994). This is important as these resources govern the way people interact with each other. Cultural similarity between couples produces a bond of solidarity and empathy (Kalmijn 1998). In contrast to the endogamous model, the underlying principle of this perspective is that groups are arranged horizontally (Fu 2001) and cultural boundaries between groups are strong. These group boundaries, however, do not necessarily imply status inequalities. People simply prefer marrying within their group; and people marry outside the group only if they cannot find any desirable spouse within the group (Fu 2001). If more attractive individuals are more likely to realize their marriage preference, then more educated people should be able to marry within their group. In contrast of the prediction of

status exchange perspective, more educated people within a group (despite being a minority group in the society) do not "exchange."

In the Chinese context, similar to the notion of homogamy based on socioeconomic status, *mendang hudui* (translated as matching of doors and households) is a common practice, meaning that the socio-economic status of the married couple's family backgrounds should be similar. There is evidence suggesting that family background is not as salient as in earlier decades (Xu and Whyte 1990), but that the education (Raymo and Xie 2000; Xu, Ji and Tung 2000; Smits and Park 2009; Song 2009) and *hukou* (Wang and Schwartz 2015; Nie and Xing 2010) of the potential mates remain important. Leaving *hukou* unstudied in educational homogamy models risks the confounding of "education" with *hukou* status because while they are correlated, they denote concepts that are distinctively different. Education levels measure "human capital" and potential future economic well-being; *Hukou* has other economic and social significance because people with an urban *hukou* receive a more privileged package of social protection including education, health care, unemployment benefits, social welfare, and housing allowances. In addition, some qualitative studies also inform us that *hukou* is a unique signifier of "social prestige" vs. "stigma" for themselves and their offspring (Yan 2008). Separate variables are needed to tease out the effects of education and *hukou* status.

As for the characteristics underlying inter-*hukou* marriage pairings, in application of the three different scenarios in the mate selection literature, the endogamous intermarriage model suggests members of different *hukou* can marry people within the similar education level. Status exchange perspective assumes a strong *hukou* status hierarchy and it sees both "high" *hukou* and high education status as important attributes. Since attractive people marry each other, individuals of higher *hukou* status (i.e., urban) can marry better educated spouses and vice versa.

Inter-*hukou* marriage is thus a result of an exchange of statuses. Finally, the in-group preferences perspective assumes no *hukou* hierarchy so there are no "exchanges." But then people prefer to marry within the same *hukou.* If more attractive individuals are more likely to realize their marriage preference, then more highly educated people should be able to marry within their group (Fu 2001). Similar to the status exchange perspective, urban *hukou* holders who are better educated should expect marrying within the group; but different from the status exchange perspective, rural *hukou* holders who are better-educated do not "exchange," instead, they prefer to marry within their group.

Informed by some ethnographic studies, I expect that the status exchange perspective is more plausible than the endogamous intermarriage model and the in-group preference model. Lu (2004), for example, studied marriage patterns in a small village and found that people rank an urban *hukou* higher than a rural *hukou* in their preferences of a spouse. He also found that low-income urban women match with richer rural men who can use their higher economic status to compensate for their *hukou* disadvantages. Lu's results are also corroborated by Lavely's study (1991) of one prosperous Sichuan county (Shih-Fang) at the end of Mao's era. He found that those women from relatively poor and undesirable areas who married into the Shih-fang area were better educated than those who do not, but generally they ended up with husbands from the poor strata of Shih-fang.

To summarize, the literature suggests the following hypotheses:

1) *Hukou* intermarriages increase over time. I expect *hukou* intermarriages to be rare, with more intermarriage in the second period (1984-1991) than in the first period (1949-1983), and lastly, *hukou* intermarriages should be most prevalent in the third period (1992-2010).

2) People marry homogamously based on *hukou* even after controlling for education.
3) There are status exchanges between *hukou* and education in China.

DATA AND METHODS

The data for this study come from 18,386 first-married couples identified in the Chinese General Social Survey Data (CGSS) for 2006, 2008, and 2010. CGSS is a biannual national social survey having a four-stage stratified sampling scheme with unequal probabilities. It oversamples big cities with a ratio of urban to rural of 59:41. It samples over a total population of 2,801 county- or district-level units in China including 22 provinces, 4 autonomous regions, and 4 central government designated municipalities, but excluding Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau. To date, this is the largest and the most recent publicly available national data with individual-level variables that include both migration and *hukou* status. The variables of central importance for testing my hypotheses are as follows: (1) wife's *hukou* status, (2) husband's *hukou* status, (3) wife's education, (4) husband's education, and (5) period of prevailing first marriage.

Hukou Status

The *hukou* status of the wife and the husband is either rural or urban. This is defined by 1) their current *hukou* status; 2) whether they are migrants or locals; 3) the interview location (rural or urban areas); and 4) whether and when they converted their *hukou* (For details, see Appendix A). Here the "rural" group includes rural-to-rural migrants, returned rural migrants, rural non-migrants in the rural areas, and the rural-to-urban migrants. People in the transitional category of "urban in small towns" (*jizhen, zhilihouliang*) used by some local governments hoping to progressively change to urban are also considered "rural." This population is largely rural

because it includes those who work on collective farmland or in forestry. These people self-identify as "rural" despite the legal term. Yet rural *locals* who are living in *urban* areas are excluded. These people are living in villages that are peripheral to the urban center and are undergoing rapid urbanization. They are not converting to urban *hukou* because they have legal rights to the land as long as they remain rural. As defined by Chan and Buckingham (1999), they have a very different experience, socio-economic status, and level of government protection from rural migrants or rural non-migrants in the rural villages. Including them as "rural" conflates the actual incidence of rural-urban marriage.

One limitation of the 2006 and 2010 data is the inability to tease out whether the respondent's partner is a rural *local* or a *migrant.* There is thus a possibility of *over*estimation of rural-rural marriages. Another complexity is that some people convert their *hukou* from rural to urban. Depending on policies in different cities, *hukou* conversion is possible through marriage, higher education, professional recruitment, parental conversion, and confiscation of rural land. Unfortunately, the CGSS data does not provide an option of conversion through marriage. Therefore, to make a more nuanced analysis of the original *hukou* status before marriage, I will follow Wang (2012)'s strategy of treating those who convert earlier than the first marriage as "urban," and assume that those who convert after their first marriage are "rural." The biases should be minimized because most people finish their education and start working before getting married, although premarital birth is increasing (Yeung and Hu 2013).

Education Status

The education of the wife and husband is categorized as "less than high school" or "high school or above." Although it is desirable to have a category of "college and above," the percent in the

sample is rather small. In addition, current educational attainment instead of the educational attainment at the year of first marriage is used mainly because this information is missing for the respondent's spouse.

Period of First Marriage

Married couples are also categorized into 3 periods of marriage: 1949-1983; 1984-1991; and 1992-2010. Each period represents a different social-political climate with somewhat different levels of internal migration control. The data in 2006, 2008, and 2010 are merged in order to reduce the number of sparse cells, but the problem is that there is an underestimation of the number of marriages from 2008-2010. However, this should not too greatly bias the results because for the purpose of this study it is not the absolute number of marriages that matters as long as the sample for each period is representative of the larger population.

Prevailing first married couples are the most ideal for testing intermarriage rates (Blackwell and Lichter 2000) as it reduces biases from data of prevailing marriages for multiple cohorts, which often suffer from variation in marriage timing, divorce rates, and increases in education after marriage (Raymo and Xie 2000). Comparatively, first marriages should be more accurate to test both the effects of temporal changes on who marries whom (Raymo and Xie 2000). The CGSS data contain an option to distinguish whether it is a first marriage or a re-marriage (n= 429).

Model Specifications

My three main theoretical questions are: 1) How prevalent is inter-*hukou* marriage over time? 2) After controlling for (i) the general likelihood of intermarriage, (ii) marginal educational

differences between rural and urban *hukou* holders, and (iii) the association between husband's and wife's schooling, is there still an association between respondent's *hukou* and spouse's schooling across time? 3) If so, what pattern does the association follow? What is the nature of inter-*hukou* marriages? Is there an exchange relationship between the respondent's *hukou* and the spouse's schooling? Using a theory-driven approach to model selection, I have constructed 3 models to answer the above questions. Log-linear models are the most appropriate methodology for analysis of cross-tabulated marriage data. They hold constant group differences in marriage market opportunities by controlling for the marginal distributions of the groups like the marginal education distribution (Qian and Lichter 2001) of rural men, rural women, urban men, and urban women. This model thus provides more accurate estimates of association and asymmetry (Kalmijn 2010).

I have modified the endogamous model suggested by Fu (2001), who studied interracial marriages in the US. I modify his models in the context of *hukou* intermarriages in China:

$$\begin{aligned} \boldsymbol{log\ m_{ijklm} = \lambda + \lambda_i^{WH} + \lambda_j^{HH} + \lambda_k^{P} + \lambda_l^{WE} + \lambda_m^{HE}} \\ \boldsymbol{+ \lambda_{ik}^{WHP} + \lambda_{jk}^{HHP} + \lambda_{ij}^{WHHH} + \lambda_{ijk}^{WHHHP}} \\ \boldsymbol{+ \lambda_{km}^{PHE} + \lambda_{jm}^{HHHE} + \lambda_{jkm}^{HHPHE} + \lambda_{kl}^{PWE} + \lambda_{il}^{WHWE} + \lambda_{ikl}^{WHPWE} +} \\ \boldsymbol{+ \lambda_{lm}^{WEHE} + \lambda_{klm}^{PWEHE}} \end{aligned} \qquad \text{(Model 1.1. Endogamous model)}$$

where $\log\left(m_{ijklm}\right)$ is the expected number of marriages or unions between men in different *hukou i* and women in different *hukou j*. Here, $\boldsymbol{\lambda_{ijk}^{WHHHP}}$ represents the association between husband's *hukou* and wife's *hukou* in various time periods of first marriage (i.e., *k* = 1949-1983;

1984-1991; 1992-2010), controlling for education of wife and husband and their interaction with *hukou* and time. The *l*'s represent different levels of husband's education, and the *m*'s represent different levels of wife's education. I control for marginal distributions of these characteristics (by interacting men's *hukou* with men's education in $\boldsymbol{\lambda_{km}^{PHE}}$, $\boldsymbol{\lambda_{jm}^{HHHE}}$ and $\boldsymbol{\lambda_{jkm}^{HHPHE}}$, and interacting women's *hukou* with women's education in $\boldsymbol{\lambda_{kl}^{PWE}}$, $\boldsymbol{\lambda_{il}^{WHWE}}$, and $\boldsymbol{\lambda_{ikl}^{WHPWE}}$). I also account for the interaction between *hukou*, education of wife and husband, and period of first marriage, while not incorporating an interaction between husband's *hukou* and wife's education (or wife's *hukou* and husband's education).

The second plausible model is a status exchange model (Fu 2001):

$$\begin{aligned}\boldsymbol{\log m_{ijklm}} = \boldsymbol{\lambda} &+ \boldsymbol{\lambda_i^{WH}} + \boldsymbol{\lambda_j^{HH}} + \boldsymbol{\lambda_k^{P}} + \boldsymbol{\lambda_l^{WE}} + \boldsymbol{\lambda_m^{HE}} \\ &+ \boldsymbol{\lambda_{ik}^{WHP}} + \boldsymbol{\lambda_{jk}^{HHP}} + \boldsymbol{\lambda_{ij}^{WHHH}} + \boldsymbol{\lambda_{ijk}^{WHHHP}} \\ &+ \boldsymbol{\lambda_{km}^{PHE}} + \boldsymbol{\lambda_{jm}^{HHHE}} + \boldsymbol{\lambda_{jkm}^{HHPHE}} + \boldsymbol{\lambda_{kl}^{PWE}} + \boldsymbol{\lambda_{il}^{WHWE}} + \boldsymbol{\lambda_{ikl}^{WHPWE}} + \\ &+ \boldsymbol{\lambda_{lm}^{WEHE}} + \boldsymbol{\lambda_{klm}^{PWEHE}} \\ &+ \boldsymbol{\lambda_{im}^{WHHE}} + \boldsymbol{\lambda_{ijm}^{WHHHHE}} + \boldsymbol{\lambda_{jl}^{HHWE}} + \boldsymbol{\lambda_{ijl}^{WHHHWE}}\end{aligned}$$

(Model 1.2: Status exchange model)

This adds four sets of "exchange" variables. The $\boldsymbol{\lambda_{im}^{WHHE}}$ and $\boldsymbol{\lambda_{ijm}^{WHHHHE}}$ parameters represent respectively the association between the wife's *hukou* status and husband's education level for rural men and urban men, respectively. The parameters $\boldsymbol{\lambda_{jl}^{HHWE}}$ and $\boldsymbol{\lambda_{ijl}^{WHHHWE}}$ represent the same association, with the genders reversed. These four parameters allow us to determine

whether urban *hukou* holders' spouses are stochastically higher (Agresti 2001: 285) in education than rural *hukou* holder's spouses. The distribution of the stochastically higher observation is more likely to include observations at the higher end of the scale (i.e., in this case, more likely to receive a "high school or above," than "below high school" education).

The results can show 3 different scenarios (Fu 2001: 1) If the association parameter shows the odds of being in a higher category of schooling between urban *hukou* holders' spouses and rural *hukou* holders' spouses are the same, this supports the endogamous model that people belonging to different *hukou* groups are able to marry equally desirable (as defined by education level) spouses. This shows that *hukou* is not an important signifier of status and only education matters in matching. 2) If the association parameters show greater odds that urban *hukou* holders have spouses with more schooling relative to the spouses of rural *hukou* holders, this supports a status exchange model. This would indicate a hierarchical ordering of groups, because members of higher-status groups (urban *hukou*) are able to marry more educated spouses because of their status advantage. 3) However, if better educated members of a rural or urban *hukou* prefer to marry someone of the same *hukou* despite the spouses' poorer education, this supports the in-group preference hypothesis. People are likely to prefer and marry within their group, but for those with less education, if they cannot find a mate within their group then they have to marry someone from another group.

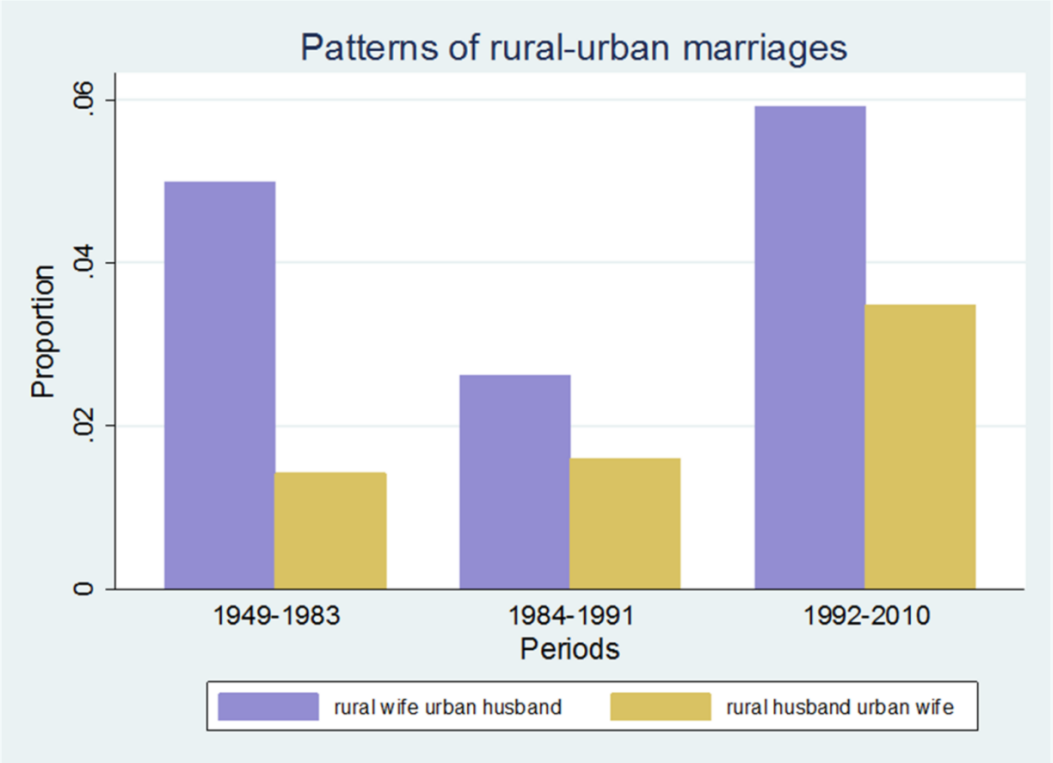
RESULTS

Descriptive Data Analysis

The sample restrictions yielded a total of 18,386 marriages. The primary scientific goal is to determine the inter-*hukou* marriage pattern and how it has changed across the three political periods. Figure 2.1 shows the trends for rural men and women in marrying urbanites for the periods 1949-1983; 1984-1991; 1992-2010. Overall, rates of marrying urbanites for rural women (6%) and men (3.5%) are very low across time. This result is similar to Nie and Xing's (2010) study using 2005 Census data. In the first period of the migration ban (up to 1980s), the percent of rural-urban marriages is surprisingly higher than during the second period. There are two major reasons for this: 1) although migration from rural to urban areas was banned, there was also a policy of rustication in which young people were sent down from urban areas to work in rural areas to "learn from the peasants," making rural-urban marriages possible. 2) The percentage of inter-*hukou* marriage could be overestimated because when compared to Period 2 and 3, many people who were born in Period 1 were deceased at the time of the survey. As shown by considerable research on rural-urban health inequalities (Yip 2010), it is more likely for rural people who marry urbanites and move to an urban setting to survive than rural people who marry rural and remain in the village. Period 2 and Period 3, however, are more comparable. It shows that the percentage of intermarriage is higher in Period 3 than 2. The result is also corroborated by Nie and Xing's study (2010) about the effect of the *hukou* reform of late 1990s, which allowed for inheriting *hukou* from either parent instead of from the mother only. Gender differences are evident in intermarriage patterns across time. The gender difference is statistically significant, with a higher percentage of rural women than rural men marrying urbanites.

Models and model selection

Table 2.1 shows the likelihood ratio test statistics (G^2) and BIC statistics for the log-linear models of marriages. The endogamous model assumes that the matching of couples based on education is most important for explaining the marriage pattern, after controlling for marginal group differences in education, time periods, and an overall tendency toward inter-*hukou* marriage. The likelihood ratio shows this model does not fit the data as well as the saturated model ($P[G^2 > 143.9] < 0$). The BIC statistic also suggests that it is worse than the saturated model, thus it is less plausible. The status-exchange model has added a set of constrained exchange parameters to the endogamous model (which indicates the respondent's exchange of schooling for the spouse's *hukou*). Its fit is a big improvement over the endogamous model ($P[G^2 > 28.2] < 0.043$), although the p-value is still less than 0.05. This model has the lowest BIC. Based on the BIC statistics and the likelihood ratio, the status exchange model is substantially more plausible than the endogamous model and the saturated model.



Note: The gender difference is significant at p=0.000 in all periods. For the difference in time period:
(a) The difference in between 1949-83 and 1984-91 is statistically significant at p = 0.000 for rural wives marrying urban husbands, but not for rural husbands marrying urban wives ; (b) difference between 1949-83 and 1992-2010 is statistically significant at p=0.000; (c) difference between 1984-91 and 1992-2010 is statistically significant at p=0.000.

Figure 2.1: Trends for rural men and women in marrying "urbanites" by periods

Table 2.1. Likelihood Ratio and BIC statistics for marriage models

Models	Degrees of freedom	G^2	BIC
1.1 Endogamous model	21	143.9	562.9
1.2 Status exchange model	**17**	**28.2**	**462.7**
1.3 Saturated Model	0	0	500.3

Importance of hukou in intermarriages over time

The graph in Figure 2.1 and the percentages of intermarriage shown do not account for possible differences in the proportion of persons in each *hukou* category or differences in the marginal rates of marriage in each *hukou* category. Using loglinear methods that controls for the effects of population composition, the analysis describes how the counts in each cell are contrasted with a model of perfect independence. These are chi-square tests, in which the expected value is calculated based on the marginal frequency. The first column of coefficients in Table 2.2 presents crude odds ratios representing the likelihood of marrying members of one's own group without accounting for other characteristics of the spouses like education and the period of time during which they are married. The odds of people with rural *hukou* marrying with rural *hukou* are 198.71 times the odds that an urbanite would marry a person with rural *hukou*.

Based on the status exchange model, the second column of coefficients in Table 2.2 offers answers to two key questions posed earlier. First, *hukou* is statistically significant after adjusting for education, meaning that people tend to marry within the same *hukou* status. Second, for marriage the *hukou* boundary is more important in the earlier periods (1949-1983 and 1984-1991) and less important in 1992-2010. From 1949 to 1983, the odds ratio of rural marrying rural rather than urban to the odds of urban marrying rural rather than urban is 863.44. The corresponding odds ratio for 1984-1991 is 1312.91. The odds ratio is significantly higher than for the first period, indicating the barrier of marrying outside *hukou* is higher than in the first period. For 1992-2010, the corresponding odds ratio is 237.46. This suggests that it is unlikely for people to marry outside their *hukou*, but the barrier to *hukou* exogamy is weaker.

Table 2.2. Log Odds Ratio and Odds Ratio of Intermarriage

Odds of rural marrying rural rather than urban vs. Odds of urban marrying rural rather than urban	**Crude**[a]	**Adjusted**[b]
Overall		
Log odds ratio	5.29***	
Standard error	0.06	
Odds ratio	198.71	
Period 1: 1949-1983		
Log odds ratio		6.76***
Standard error		0.22
Odds ratio		863.44
Period 2: 1984-1991		
Log odds ratio		7.18 ***[c]
Standard error		0.20
Odds ratio		1312.91
Period 3: 1992-2010		
Log odds ratio		5.47 ***[d.e]
Standard error		0.15
Odds ratio		237.46

*** The coefficient is significant at p=0.000

Notes:

a. The crude odds ratio does not account for group differences in education or any other characteristics.

b. Adjusted odds ratios are taken from the preferred model in Table 2.1.

c. The difference between 1949-1983 and 1984-1991 is statistically significant at p=0.000

d. The difference between 1949-1983 and 1992-2010 is statistically significant at p=0.000

e. The difference between 1984-1991 and 1992-2010 is statistically significant at p=0.000

Status exchanges for rural hukou holders

From the status exchange model which specifies a set of exchange parameters, Table 2.3 disentangles whether members of the higher-status group (i.e., urban *hukou* holders) are able to marry more educated spouses because of their status advantage. The model has already adjusted both for marginal differences between husbands' and wives' education and for differences in education between rural and urban women, and rural and urban men. Thus, this odds ratio shows differences beyond what is attributable to education differences alone. Two of the parameters are

consistent with the status exchange hypothesis; one is also consistent with both the status exchange hypothesis and the in-group preference hypothesis; and the remaining coefficient is consistent with the endogamous intermarriage hypothesis.

First, an urban wife's rural husband has higher education than a rural wife's rural husband. This is consistent with the status exchange hypothesis, and it runs counter to the in-group preference hypothesis because better-educated rural men are marrying urban wives. The odds that an urban woman's rural husband falls into the "high school or above" rather than the "below high school" category is 208% ($e^{0.73}$) the odds of rural women's rural husband doing so. The second set of coefficients is consistent with the endogamous intermarriage hypothesis and suggests that urban husbands of urban wives and urban husbands of rural wives have equivalent amounts of schooling. The third set of coefficients also supports the status exchange theory, because rural wives with urban husbands have more schooling than rural wives with rural husbands. The odds that urban men's rural wives fall into "high school or above" category rather than "below high school" is 241% ($e^{0.88}$) the odds of rural men's rural wives. The last set of coefficients is consistent with the in-group preference hypothesis and the status exchange hypothesis. The urban wife with more schooling is more likely to prefer an urban husband than a rural husband. The urban wife of an urban husband is 1.61 times ($e^{0.48}$) more likely be in the higher education category than the urban wife of a rural husband. From the perspective of an urban wife of an urban husband, they are not "exchanging *hukou* statuses" with an urban man because they share the same "status" (i.e., *hukou*). However, the rural husband is marrying an urban woman with less schooling – supporting the status exchange scenario.

To summarize, the results indicate that the urban woman who marries a rural husband is likely to be less educated than the urban woman who marries within *hukou*. However, it also

shows that the urban woman is more likely than the rural woman to marry a more educated rural man. In addition, the urban husband is also more likely to marry a better educated rural wife than the rural husband. These are evidences for *hukou* inequality. In addition, the educated urban man is as likely to be the husband of an urban woman as the rural woman. Therefore, the urban men seem to be less worried about the partner's *hukou* unlike the urban women. This indicates a difference in gender preferences.

Table 2.3. Log-Odds Ratios and Odds Ratios That Rural Spouses Have More Schooling Than Urban Spouses

	Urban vs. rural *hukou* holder's chances of marrying a spouse with high school or more rather than less than high school education
Rural husband's education: urban wife vs. rural wife	
Log odds	0.73***
Standard error	0.12
Odds ratio	2.08
Urban husband's education: urban wife vs. rural wife	
Log odds	0.05
Standard error	0.08
Odds ratio	1.05
Rural wife's education: urban husband vs. rural husband	
Log odds	0.88***
Standard error	0.1
Odds ratio	2.41
Urban wife's education: urban husband vs. rural husband	
Log odds	0.48***
Standard error	0.12
Odds ratio	1.61

*** The coefficient is significant at p=0.000

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Overall, the evidence presented here shows the social boundary based on *hukou* remains strong in China. Inter-*hukou* marriages are rare, although they have become more common in recent decades. Further probing into the characteristics of spouses for individuals who intermarry has revealed a status exchange relationship, which reflects a *hukou* hierarchy that is favorable to urban people. Urban *hukou* holders can exchange their status privilege to marry more educated rural spouses. This implies that intermarriages across *hukou* are formed under conditions of rural-urban inequalities. Rural-urban relations in China thus share the characteristics of the racial hierarchy in the United States (Fu 2001) or a caste system (Davis 1941). *Hukou* status in China, which assigns people into rural or urban status, creates unequal citizenship (Solinger 1999; Whyte 2010). The results reported here, based on a test of the status exchange hypothesis, are largely consistent with Lu (2004)'s ethnographic study. He suggests rural people who marry urbanites often have compensating disadvantages like higher income than average rural people. Such exchange relationship shows that the marriage market in China is largely governed by a *hukou* hierarchy. Although I used different measurements than Wang and Schwartz's (2015) study and the exact percentage of inter-*hukou* marriage is different, we similarly point out that increased inequalities go along with increased inter-*hukou* marriages. While they focus on the trend, here I specifically uncover the condition of group inequalities underlying inter-*hukou* marriages.

Furthermore, gender affects people's marital choice. The descriptive data shows that intermarriages across *hukou* are most prevalent in matches between an urban man and a rural woman. The percentage is much lower for pairings between an urban woman and a rural man. This holds true after controlling for education homogamy, *hukou* homogamy, and marginal

differences in education between groups. While an educated urban man is equally likely to be the husband of a rural spouse, an educated urban woman is less likely to be the wife of a rural spouse. This shows that mate selection in terms of *hukou* is also a gendered decision.

This study shows that the rate of intermarriage should not be the only dimension of intermarriage used to investigate group boundaries. Examining intermarried couples' characteristics provides additional information about the nature of stratification and group boundaries: a marriage market that is governed by socio-economic status as in an educationally endogamous society, a vertical structure with strong implications for group inequalities, or a strong in-group preference that may reflect tastes other than a hierarchical structure between groups (Fu 2001).

One identified problem is that the data does not allow for an accurate estimation of the overall change in the percent of inter-*hukou* marriage over time. The analyses rely on those who were alive at the time of the survey. It is possible that the sample of people who were married in the first period is not representative of all persons who married between 1949 and 1983. Thus the percent of inter-*hukou* marriage in the first period is likely to be overestimated. In addition, the surveys in 2006, 2008 and 2010 use different measurements to get at people's *hukou* status. Slight differences in defining "rural migrants" and "rural locals in the urban" might occur from year to year. This is, however, inevitable, mainly because the policy that defines people's *hukou* is changing across time. It is important to note there might be slight over-estimation or underestimation of inter-*hukou* marriages depending on the years.

Another shortcoming is that the data cannot exclude rural people who never migrate to the urban areas. This might provide an alternative explanation for the higher likelihood of the

rural wife who marries an urban husband to have a higher education than the one who marries a rural husband. For instance, one argument could be that higher educated rural women are more likely to migrate than the less educated ones. In other words, instead of an exchange relationship, less educated rural women may be less likely to meet urbanites. While this is a plausible argument, studies show that more than half of the rural villagers have moved to the urban areas for work in their life time (Wang, Atsushi and Masao 2007), although this percentage varies by village. In addition, I re-run the data which includes *only* the urban site (which only contains the rural migrants at the time of the interview). The result shows a similar pattern except the first set of exchange coefficient that indicates rural husband does not exchange their higher education for urban *hukou.* Yet the "urban site only" sample excludes a large amount of rural people who have returned to the village (one-third of the total rural migrants each year by estimation) (Murphy 2002). Therefore, the "urban site only" sample is not an accurate estimation of their "exposure" to the urban population. Future questionnaires should improve to include a variable to measure whether the respondent is a returned migrant.

The patterns of mate selection reflect existing inequalities embedded in the society. Future research can use similar strategies in uncovering not only the rate of intermarriages, but also the nature of intermarriage between groups including race, *hukou*, religion, and social class. Specifically in China, the low intermarriage rate and the inequalities underlying intermarriages imply the stickiness of *hukou,* and raise questions about the effectiveness of the consecutive waves of *hukou* reforms in China that claim to break down rural-urban boundaries. It also uncovers the plausible mechanism that reproduces social stratification in China through marriage.

Chapter 3. LOVE ON THE MARGIN: MATE SELECTION FOR RURAL MIGRANTS IN URBAN CHINA

This study brings the literature on intersectionality into conversation with the economic perspective on mate selection to investigate how rural-urban inequalities in China are reproduced in decisions regarding intermarriage. Based on 138 in-depth interviews with participants from migrant sending and receiving regions of China, I find that the "almost-ascribed" status of rural or urban *hukou* (China's household registration system) creates a hierarchical and segregated social environment for rural-urban interactions. This environment is unfavorable to people with a rural *hukou*, who are stigmatized in the urban marriage market. Gender intersects with *hukou* when people construct masculinity and femininity along rural-urban lines and make gendered choices during the partner selection process. The partner selection process is also mediated by migration experiences, which differ between women and men. Rural-urban migrants re-work their identities and their preferences for a desirable mate, and in doing so, they often reproduce inequalities of *hukou* and normative gender practices around marrying "up" or "down." The results reveal a co-constitutive relationship between structures of social stratification and individual agency in the decisions to marry and migrate; that is, structural inequalities shape migration and marital decisions, and in turn, migration and marriage dynamics influence stratification.

INTRODUCTION

A common measure of the strength of social boundaries is the rate of intermarriage across status categories. In the United States, extensive research measures racial/ethnic intermarriages to better understand racial relations and racial stratification in the country (Qian and Lichter 2001, 2007; Fu 2001; Rosenfeld 2005; Kalmijn 1998). In China, race/ethnicity is not a particularly salient social category, but the "almost-ascribed" household registration (*hukou*) status is. *Hukou* policy is a state system that assigns Chinese citizens a rural or urban status based on their parents' place of origin. The system shares similarities with apartheid systems based on race (Alexander and Chan 2004; Au and Shan 2007) and has governed a long history of unequal citizenship in China by endowing one group of citizens (urban citizens) with more power, wealth, and prestige than the other (Whyte 2010; Chan and Buckingham 2008; Solinger 1999). Yet recent factors challenge this division – namely, socio-political reforms, growing cultural similarities, and improvements in transportation. The imbalanced sex ratio of marriageable men and women in the urban marriage market may also encourage urban men to cross the rural-urban boundary by marrying outside the normative marriage pool. Though a number of studies examine rural migrants' experiences in urban areas, few examine rural-urban intermarriages. Though we know that over the last several decades, the rural-urban intermarriage has been around 5% (Nie and Xing 2010), we do not yet understand the factors shaping this low rate. This paper pays special attention to how *hukou* policy organizes identity boundaries, rural-urban interactions, and individual mate selection and to how such experiences differ for women and men, people of different *hukou* status, and people of different social classes.

The study of mate selection among rural migrants to urban areas is important to understand social stratification in contemporary China. Dynamics of migration and marriage

influence stratification, and in turn, social stratification affects patterns of migration and marriage. Stratification refers to differences in life chances as determined by structural forces. Migration and marriage are both strategies to improve an individual's life chances. Individuals lack the ability to choose the circumstances they are born into, but they have agency to select their mates and choose to migrate. Thus, these decisions provide the means to negotiate structural constraints and opportunities. Thus, this paper examines the strategic decisions of rural migrants to urban areas, a select group of rural *hukou* holders who have higher educational attainment, are responsive to media influences, and aspire to improve their life chances. Rural migrants act as pioneers as they transcend rural-urban boundaries. Their mate selection processes and outcomes reflect not only the current state of social stratification but also potential changes in existing social boundaries.

China is an ideal case study to study the intersecting social dynamics of marriage, migration, and stratification. Even in the context of rapid modernization and a high rate of internal migration, marriage remains a normative life stage and many individuals (especially women) use marriage to achieve upward mobility. This research addresses the question: how are the boundaries delineating rural-urban stratification maintained and/or disrupted in the marriage partner selection processes of rural-urban migrants?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND BACKGROUND

Two major theoretical perspectives guide the study of mate selection. The most prominent is the economic perspective, which treats mate selection as a market experience. The economic perspective emphasizes individual rational choices to select the best possible mate. Less

prominent is the intersectional approach, which suggests that overlapping structural inequalities shape individual choices and create different experiences of mate selection for members of different social groups. These two perspectives are equally compelling, but they have yet to be brought into conversation with one another. To gain a thorough understanding of rural-urban migrants mate selection processes, I bring together these two perspectives and review their application to the China context.

Marriage Market

The demand side: mate selection preferences

Classical economic models treat spousal selection as "markets" where individuals seek the "best" possible mate based on their preferences and opportunities in the market (Becker 1991; Pollak 2004; Iyigun and Walsh 2008). Goode (1951) and Elder (1969) suggest that individuals seek the highest possible socioeconomic status or the greatest promise for future earnings. More recent contributions to research following the economic model recognize the importance of cultural values, like tastes, lifestyle, and beliefs about gender (Pollak and Watkins 1993; Kalmijn 1998). When each individual makes his or her best match in economic and in cultural terms, the highest status man matches with the highest status woman and so on down the line, producing an efficient matching of status (known as homogamy). In the particular case of immigrants, better educated immigrants are shown to be more likely to intermarry with a native-born spouse (Chiswick and Houseworth, 2011; Kalmijn and Van Tubergen 2010; Furtado 2012). Yet this dominant pattern of homogamy can be undermined in status-exchange relationships (Davis 1941). People might exchange socioeconomic status with other desirable resources like homemaker skills (Becker 1991), beauty (Sassler and Joyner 2011; Burdett and Coles 2001), and

race (Fu 2001; Schoen and Wooldredge 1989; Qian 1997), which is largely found in interracial married couples (but see Rosenfeld 2005).

In traditional China, concern with status homogamy is expressed in the old saying *mendang hudui* (matching of doors and households), which means that the two marital partners should share a similar socio-economic status. Recent evidence suggests that family background is not as salient to Chinese homogamy as it was in the past (Whyte and Xi, 1990), but that potential mates' education level remains important (Raymo and Xie 2000; Xu, Ji and Tung 2000; Song 2009). Against this background, it should not be surprising that contemporary Chinese tend to marry someone with the same *hukou* status. Urban *hukou*, under the legal framework of unequal citizenship, denotes social honors and economic privileges as compared to the rural *hukou*. Migrants with rural *hukou* status working in urban areas are deprived of all urban rights and privileges (e.g., housing subsidies, health care, pension, unemployment insurance benefits, and education rights), no matter how long they stay. In addition to these material concerns affecting the desirability of mates, *hukou* also constructs the identity markers that distinguish *suzhi* (the qualities) of "civility, self-discipline, and modernity" along urban-rural lines. It associates "urban" with "modernity" and "progress" and "rural" with the "emaciated" others (Yan 2008). In this hierarchy, urbanites are more desirable than rural *hukou* holders.

However, some people believe that recent reforms and cultural homogenizing forces have started to diminish *hukou* boundaries, which might alter the rural-urban marriage hierarchy. In 1998, a national law stopped requiring the children of rural-urban couples to inherit the mother's *hukou* (typically a rural one). The children of the inter-*hukou* couple can now enjoy the rights and privileges of an urban citizen, regardless of the gender of the parent holding the urban *hukou*. Since 2010, some cities (like Guangzhou) have implemented pilot programs for reform to allow

some rural migrants to gain an urban *hukou* through a point system. More recently, in 2014, the Chinese government issued an important policy directive granting 100 million rural people urban status by 2020. Culturally, rural and urban lifestyles are converging with the improvement of technology and media in the rural areas. Like urbanites, the majority of rural migrants watch TV every day, own mobile phones, and text frequently (Peng 2008). Images of Beijing, Shanghai, and even New York are popular in the villages (Sun 2002). With an emerging mass culture, old differences between peasant and city dwellers may diminish. Taken together, these factors support positive rural-urban interaction and possibly inter-*hukou* marriages.

The supply side: mate selection opportunities

Preferences are limited by the sex ratio, which informs both the number of eligible mates and opportunities for potential spouses to meet in schools, workplaces and neighborhoods (Harris and Ono 2005; Lichter et al. 2007). Studies show that demographic changes like the growth of immigration, urbanization, and the growth of mass communication tend to produce greater openness in the marriage market (Smits, Ultee and Lammers 1998). With the increasing cultural and economic incorporation of immigrants and their children, minorities' marital assimilation into the dominant society may increase as well (Gordon 1964; Smith and Edmonston 1997). Yet some scholars challenge this prediction. For instance, Qian and Lichter (2001; 2007) found that some immigrants of minority groups might not marry members of native dominant groups but instead replenish the supply of potential marriage partners within the ethnic group; that is, when minority populations grow in size, opportunities for intragroup contact increase and interaction with the majority population declines. Other scholars like Furtado (2012) emphasize the

possibility of an enclave effect in which, because of ethnic residential segregation, people are more likely to meet potential mates with similar ethnic backgrounds, producing higher rates of homogomy. This effect is less salient among more educated immigrants (Furtado 2006).

In China, massive internal migration since the 1980s has increased the geographic proximity of rural and urban *hukou* holders. According to National Bureau of Statistics (2013), 163.36 million rural migrants were working in urban China in 2013. Many were single people migrating alone: 42.69% of the migrants younger than 25 had never married. Among married migrants, 53.68% were solo migrants who married after they arrived in the city. Rural migrants in the 1990s were more diverse in education background and workplace than today (Qing Hua Sociology 2005; Li 2006). The younger generation of rural migrants (born in the 1980s and 1990s) aspires to stay in the city to improve their life chances (National Population and Family Planning Commission 2011). Together, these factors increase the odds of rural-urban interaction for a longer period than experienced by previous generations.

Intersectionality in Mate Selection

Mate selection and the construction of femininities and masculinities

Though more recent research following the economic perspective attempts to incorporate changes in gendered expectations into its mate selection framework, the literature on intersectionality more explicitly discusses how the process of mate selection varies among different social groups. The classic exchange perspective suggests that men prefer women's domestic skills while women seek men who can provide (Becker 1991), but recent studies examine changes in women's and men's preferences in economies where women's work is

increasingly important (Pollack 2004). This literature provides important insights into changes in the subjective valuation of mate characteristics (such as beauty or domestic skills), but the model is ultimately narrow, static, and reifying.

In the economic perspective, "race" and "gender" are treated as variables that affect economic and cultural considerations. By contrast, the intersectional perspective argues that race and gender provide the very social structure in which these relations take place (Bonilla-Silva 2010; Connell 1985). They are the "totality of the social relations and practices" that reinforce privileges and shape social behavior and choices (Bonilla-Silva 2010: 9). Although they have real effects, this approach does not "reify" the racial or gender differences; rather, it highlights the fluidity of the construction of racialized masculinities and femininities. These gendered constructions affect mate selection. For instance, Pyke (2010) found that some Korean and Vietnamese American women view white men as "desirable partners" and invoke racialized gender stereotypes of masculinity, idealizing white Western men as "egalitarian knights" and denigrating Asian American men as inferior, domineering partners. Nemoto's study on intermarriage (2006) also suggests the importance of intersecting race, gender, and national origins in explaining the gender gap in the out-marriage rate of Asian American men and Asian American women. People construct a social discourse of race, and Asian American women who marry or partner with white men strategically participate in the reproducing a particular racial discourse in which Asian American women are overly feminine, exotic, and sexual and Asian American men are sexually undesirable, thus upholding white masculine hegemony. Here, the literature does not deny differences in women's and men's criteria for choosing a mate but emphasizes how class-based and race-based constructions of femininities and masculinities affect mate selection preferences.

Although race does not have a prominent influence on the construction of masculinities and femininities in China, the *hukou* structure constructs rural and urban femininity and masculinity as different, though the meanings of these categories have changed with time. Rural femininity is sometimes considered as the embodiment of the "iron girl" ideal of the Mao period that constructed women as equal to men in physical strength (Honig and Hershatter 1988). This image of femininity was largely rejected as a social ideal after 1978 (Yan 2008) when it was replaced by the sophisticated domesticity of urban femininity. Yet the ideal Chinese femininity may be changing once again in the 21st century, as contemporary urban women, especially economically successful women, are often treated as lacking emphasized femininity and as too dominant. Some are portrayed as "leftover" women (*shengnu*) who are unwanted as marital partners (Fincher 2014). Though scholars have discussed these shifts in idealized femininity and masculinity along the rural-urban lines, we have yet to examine the effect of rural-urban gender construction on mate selection preferences. In my paper, I bring gender as a social construct into conversation with the economic model of mate selection to understand how gender and *hukou* intersect to affect people's marital selection criteria and aspirations.

Migration and intersectional experiences

Migration expands the normative marriage pool and has the potential to re-define women's and men's self-identity and preferences for mate selection. Studies of US immigrants suggest that migrant women and men have divergent gendered experiences of migration; i.e., young migrant women find the migration experience liberating as it opens possibilities for autonomy and self-sufficiency (Collins 2003; Menjivar 2006; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2003), whereas migrant men find

the experience de-masculinizing (Ye Espiritu 2003). This is not surprising. As suggested by Chant (1992), many sending migrant countries provide more stable and better job opportunities for men than for women. Such discriminatory treatment creates gender differences in the migration experience, and in turn, in mate selection preferences. For instance, Ye Espiritu (2003) found that many Filipino immigrant men in the US prefer to seek wives from their home villages because they have low social status in the US but are considered wealthy in the rural Philippines. By contrast, young single rural migrant women who migrate for work in urban China tend to pursue a "modern identity" and find rural men "hick-headed" and undesirable in the marriage market (Yan 2008). So far, very few studies provide a thorough picture of how migration changes individuals' mate selection preferences. In this study, I examine how the length of migration might possibly change individuals' self-perception and their preferences of mate selection.

Combining the economic model and the intersectional approach to mate selection, I discuss how *hukou* and gender shape people's preferences, the inclusion and exclusion of "potential partners," and day-to-day rural-urban interactions that lead to opportunities for mate selection. These processes reflect, reproduce, and/or rework social stratification in China.

METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a grounded theory approach to study rural migrants' mate selection experience in the city (Glaser and Strauss 1967). I conducted surveys and field interviews from July to December 2013 and from April to Sept 2014. I coded and analyzed my field notes, interview transcripts, and songs written by a migrant band to understand rural migrants' and

urbanites' subjective experiences of mate selections, and to learn about their perceptions of people with different *hukou.*

I recruited various groups of people using respondent-driven sampling methods (RDS) (Heckathorn 1997). This was particularly useful because some rural migrants work in informal sectors such as domestic work or sex work. It would be hard to locate these migrants using any other method. RDS incorporates representatives of a population into a study through a systematic chain-referral procedure to reach groups of people who may not have a very clear sampling frame. It has been used successfully to recruit samples of men prostitutes (Liu et al. 2009), drug users (Wang et al. 2007), and rural migrants (Qiu et al. 2012). I identified potential interviewees as seeds for the RDS through connections with a voluntary organization, a Shenzhen migrant band, a factory owner, and some chance encounters. Individuals were given a small incentive to participate and to recruit their peers into the study, who in turn referred their peers. Each participant was limited to referring three peers to avoid favoring those with large networks and to diversify the sample. I used a similar method to recruit urbanites, though the "double incentive" was less attractive to them, as evidenced by the smaller number of referrals among the urbanites. For a general reference on the application of RDS, see Salganik and Heckathorn (2004).

This research took place in various sites in the migrant receiving region and migrant-sending regions. Rural-urban migration involves at least two distinct geographic areas, and the mate selection experience can vary greatly across these areas. The sending communities involve two main study groups: those who returned home and those who never migrated. I traveled to two rural villages with two factory workers when they returned home for a holiday to study sending communities. In the receiving region of urban Guangdong province, I studied both temporary migrants and migrants who settled there. To understand rural migrants' desirability to

urbanites, I also interviewed urban people in the receiving region. I chose Guangdong province because it is the biggest migrant receiving region according to the 2000 census (National Bureau of Statistics 2002). It has the highest GDP among all the provinces and has a booming service industry. It is also one of the pilot provinces that pioneered *hukou* reform in 2010. In addition, unlike in Shanghai and Beijing where there are more migrant men than migrant women, in Guangdong, the situation is reversed. Among migrants between the ages of 20 and 30, there are more women than men, which suggests that rural migrant women might be able to fill the gender gap in the urban marriage market (Renmin University 2005). In particular, I chose to study migrants in the two largest cities within Guangdong, Guangzhou and Shenzhen. In total, I interviewed 138 people in these two cities and in two rural villages in Guangxi and at the border of Guangdong province. Table 1 provides a descriptive profile of the respondents.

Table 3.1. Profile of respondents

	Urban *Hukou*				Rural *Hukou*			
	Urban native	Urban migrant	Urban converter	Total	Rural migrant	Returned migrant	Non-migrant	Total
Marital Status								
Single/ Divorced	9	4	7	20	19	9	1	29
Married	12	10	9	31	29	17	12	58
Education								
< HS	2	2	1	5	35	20	12	67
HS	3	2	2	7	8	4	1	13
> HS	16	10	13	39	6	1	0	7
Gender								
Male	5	8	9	22	11	2	10	23
Female	16	6	7	29	38	11	15	64
Urban/Rural				51				87

The interview procedure combined a short, close-ended survey with a long, open-ended interview. For the survey, I asked a series of standardized questions to ascertain individuals'

demographic backgrounds. In the interview, I covered the following themes: 1) village life; 2) migration history: motivation to migrate, experience of migration, connection back home; 3) mate selection and love history; 4) identity construction; 5) future plans. The interviews took the form of a conversation that covered all topics in a manner that was informal, natural, and flexible. I also observed some of the participants' activities and took careful notes on the conversations and settings. In particular, I observed respondents in natural settings, such as their homes/dorms, community centers, workplaces, restaurants, or other public areas.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Very few of the respondents saw staying single as a "happy" option; marriage remains normative in China. To understand how social structure produces different preferences for intermarriage, I categorized participants based on their *hukou* status and gender. I find that beyond their basic criteria for a desirable mate, individual preferences for intermarriage are based in aspirations that are prescribed by social structures and reinforced by people around them.

Rural migrant women: Economic provision as a baseline - Urban Hukou as an aspiration

Rural migrant women discuss their criteria for a potential partner using phrases like "money," "potential to succeed," "ambition," "provision" and "sense of security." Many rural migrant women reject rural men from poor and mountainous villages. Li Ping (all names are pseudonyms), who was in her 50s at the time of our interview, married and migrated to a rural

area of Guangdong through matchmaking. She asserted that her main reason for choosing her husband was to escape poverty:

> For those who can, marrying someone from Guangzhou is a source of a pride. Some girls marry men who migrated to Hong Kong. We called those men 'Hong Kong customers.' They are 20 years older, but you have to marry them because we are so poor. Even though they are 20 years older, marrying a Hong Kong customer is glorious… Once married, the whole family can move there [to Hong Kong]. I saw some people remit money, clothes, trendy pants – Wow! This is so cool! Marrying a Hong Kong or Guangzhou guy is a dream come true.

Rural migrant women's aspiration to marry someone from the city (Guangzhou) is driven by the patrilocal tradition where a married couple resides with or near her husband's parents. Under this tradition, a woman's spousal choice is also a choice of her future place of residence. Min Jun, 25 years old, jeered at the idea of an arranged marriage in the rural village near her parents' home. She said,

> I have come here after all, why do I want to marry and go back home? Girls have to consider where they want to marry, right? … Li Jiang [her co-worker] has a crush on me, our massage teacher told me that. I just ignored him. Well, he is a nice person, and he is very funny and honest. But he is from Sichuan. I want to find one from Guangzhou… My god-sister, who was my customer in the beauty parlor, likes me so much. She will recommend her co-worker, a designer to me [to be my boyfriend]. He is from Guangzhou.

Though many rural migrant women share Min Jun's aspirations to marry an urban man, their "low" *hukou* status creates a power differential that makes some "dare not think" about it. Su Chuan, 28, recalled her breakup from her urban ex-boyfriend: "We are from the countryside. He just looked down on me. There is a barrier. [*Author: How?*] The way he spoke. He has an attitude." She added, "So when he found a better one, he just ditched me." Rejection was a real risk for rural migrant women dating urban men. Xiao Mei told me, "I am too trivial to match with urbanites."

Urban *hukou* denotes more than just economic privilege. Younger respondents (30 or under) aspired to marry a less chauvinistic man, they saw this as an urban characteristic. Many believed that "rural men are ruder and less civilized; urban men are more like gentlemen." Thus "ruralness" intersected with "masculinity" to construct rural non-migrant men as rude, violent, and dominant. Zhong Ling, a 30-year-old rural migrant woman from rural Guangxi, told me,

> Even if all men in the world died, I wouldn't search for a mate in Guangxi. Never. [*Author: How come?*] They are very bad. They can just beat their wife casually. They beat women. [*Author: Seriously? Did you see that?*] Yes. A lot! That's why I said even if all men in the world died, I wouldn't find a Guangxi man.

Many rural migrant women had seen rural husbands engage in physical abuse back home. I found that rural non-migrants, older cohorts of women, and temporary migrants who come for a short period of time were especially likely to equate "not beating women up" as a trait of "good men." Migrating to find a husband in the city who might be rural migrants or urbanites was thus a strategy to escape not only poverty but also potentially abusive marriages. However, rural migrant women who stayed in the city longer had stronger financial aspirations Ren Yingying, a 26-year-old rural migrant woman from rural Guangdong, Maoming told me,

> I want to have our own house, a car, and once a year, he should afford our trip to travel outside the country. I have friends whose partners can provide them with these […] He should have the fighting spirit to move forward and be ambitious. I don't like those who want to go back home [to rural villages]. I like those who want to develop in Shenzhen because the villages are underdeveloped.

Some women sought a man who was "romantic", "caring" and "loving" or a man who would "make major decisions," "pay for the meals," and "be active in pursuing for [their] love." This discourse of rural migrant women who had spent more time in the city was similar to the discourse of "urban women" portrayed in the mass media. Some migrant women told me they were no longer "*cun gu*" (a derogative term for rural women meaning outdated, rustic, and ignorant). Their self-negation of the rural identity changed their expectations for a desirable man.

One rural migrant woman explicitly expressed her loathing for rural men, saying, "I can no longer stand rural men… [because] their world is too small."

Rural migrant men's preferences: Patrilocal family life and rural femininity

Nearly every rural migrant man I interviewed struggled with his search for a mate. Their desperation is captured by some of the songs written and performed by a migrant band founded in 2008. Dong Guo, the songwriter, is also a rural migrant worker from rural Hubei, and he told me about the inspiration for his favorite song – *Men's Dorm*:

> When I first arrived in Shenzhen, I lived in a crowded dorm. During the night, our roommates gathered to play mahjong, drink beer, and eat peanuts. We just stared out our door, hoping that a beautiful girl would pass by. When we saw one, our whole group whistled and cheered raucously. It was like an everyday routine. But no one actually dared to ask them out. Such beautiful girls don't belong to us – migrant workers (*dagongzai).* There are definitely better people who can deserve them.

For many rural migrant men, it was difficult to "find *anyone*" (to use the words of Ao Yang), let alone to find a wife with an urban *hukou* status. One returned migrant told me, "How can a toad crave swan meat?" Aware of their own low status, some migrant men self-eliminate from the urban marriage pool; but some migrant men found urban women undesirable. They instead looked for women who were willing to return to their rural villages and who were family-oriented. Given the patriarchal and patrilocal tradition, none sought a wife with more economic resources and/or aspired to marry someone from a richer province or with an urban local *hukou*.

Most rural migrant men despised *shanmen*, the matrilocal practice where the husband would live with or near his wife's family because her family was richer or lacked a male heir. Wang, a 26-year-old from rural Hunan, had two dating experiences that almost resulted in marriage, but both failed because he disagreed to *shanmen*. Bo Tong, a 25-year-old from rural

Guizhou, had the same experience. He said, "Men (who *shanmen*) are bound to be a doormat. If you move to the wife's family, you have nothing. You can't even hold up your head." *Shanmen* challenged men's masculinity as providers. Men were supposed to marry down, not up. Therefore, marrying a woman with an urban *hukou* was as undesirable as it was impossible.

Rural migrant men's feminine ideal was a "filial" wife with "knowledge of managing a family" (*chi jia*). These men wanted a wife who was "simple, innocent," and "presentable" (i.e., used the manners appropriate to rural villages) and who would "withstand hardship" and work hard. One 32-year-old male rural migrant, Chen Jinnan, used the picture in Figure 3.1 to illustrate why his own wife was ideal.

Figure 3.1. A drawing from a rural migrant man asked about the qualities of an ideal wife

Concurring with Becker's sex-specialized preferences, Chen Jinnan idealized women with good domestic skills. He explained the illustration: "In her left hand, she carries a broom and in her right, she carries a rice cooker. My wife is very mindful and detailed in childcare and managing household labor." The rural ideal of femininity also included a "passion for labor" (Chinese

words on the left) and a "passion for life" (Chinese words on the right). This seemed to align with a more "collaborative" marriage preference, where both men and women were expected to participate in the labor market (Sanchez et al. 1998). However, this ideal was not fully "collaborative" because women were expected to perform most of the housework.

Bo Tong also gave a "rural definition" of his ideal femininity. He preferred a wife who could communicate with members of his rural village back home:

> In the city, we might need to take five or more years to know our neighbors. But in the village, we have been together since we were young. I can recognize everyone from two years old to 80 years old. In the city, you can just ignore people who pass by […] but in the village, you can't. If you don't greet them, this is disrespectful and impolite. People will say you don't have *suzhi* (good character). They gossip. Then there are rumors. So when I look for a wife, I have to make sure she has these *suzhi.*

Rural migrant men like Bo Tong associated a good wife with rural status. Lin Feng, a 26-year-old from rural Hunan said that he would probably find a non-migrant wife back in his village because they were more "simple," less "pragmatic," and could withstand hardship (*chi ku*). These definitions of rural femininity were echoed by some returned migrant men and non-migrants in Guangxi who treasured "diligence" and wives' filial qualities.

The intersection of gender and *hukou* status shaped rural migrants' aspirations and preferences for intermarriage. Whereas rural migrant women either wished to intermarry or "dared not think about it" because of their less desirable status, rural migrant men did *not* prefer to marry urban women. Even though inter-*hukou* marriage might mean upward mobility in terms of economic wealth, such marriage was socially dishonorable for rural migrant for whom relying on a women's wealth was a de-masculinizing experience. Upholding their sense of masculinity was more important than economic wealth.

Urban people's perception of rural people and their preferences

Urban *hukou* holders include urban local citizens, urban migrants, and urban converters. Most urban *hukou* are ascribed, but some are achieved through professional skills and higher education. Some urban *hukou* holders are migrants from other cities and some are locals. The *hukou* policy, which created subtle differences within the category "urban," affected people's preferences. Not all urban *hukou* holders preferred marriage partners with an urban *hukou*, and urban *hukou* holders' mate selection choices were guided by very different factors than the economic and cultural preferences guiding their rural counterparts.

Urban local citizens

In the stratified structure of *hukou* status and social class, rural men from other provinces usually occupy the bottom stratum. In line with Becker (1991), urban women expect to marry up. As a result, it is hard for urban women to imagine marrying a rural man. Wang Yong, a 32-year-old Guangzhou local woman, complained about the wedding of her rural university friend: It was "too far away," "the food was so bad," "people sat like they [we]re squatting," and she could "never imagine there were people so poor."

Thus beyond economic calculations, *hukou* status was also a mechanism of allocating social stigma, so urban people looked down upon rural *hukou*. Affected by the prejudice that equated "rural" with low "*suzhi*" (quality), local urban women treated rural migrants with suspicion. Rural migrants were stigmatized as "criminals" and "dishonest and greedy people" regardless of their education level. Zhao Min, a 31-year-old urban Guangzhou woman told me:

> I only hire locals. The reason is that we have a lot of cash. I can't let people without a local *hukou* handle the money. [*Author: What about the educated migrants?*] It is not a matter of education. It's whether they are trustworthy. They steal and cheat. I have to find someone who is kind-hearted. Not those who have "evil" thoughts.

Zhao Min's perception of rural people as having "evil thoughts" resonated with other urbanites' prejudices against rural people. Guang (2003: 622) found the following notice in a Shanghai elevator: "Beware of fire and migrants during the holidays. Many peasants steal before they head home for the New Year." Accordingly, urban people are skeptical of rural people who want a relationship that may lead to marriage:

> For those university friends with a rural *hukou* who pursued me, I could see they just wanted one thing: my Guangzhou *hukou.* I don't think they were genuinely interested in me. It's like they want to cast a big net, and see who among us will take the bait.
>
> (Wong Yong, a 32-year-old urban Guangzhou woman)

> The outsiders just don't do work and they are lazy. They are greedy people. For Guangdong people, they really want to spend a life with you. They want to maintain the well-being of the family. For *Lao Mei* [a derogatory term for non-local women], they won't. They call you husband if you have money.
>
> (Liu, a 45-year-old, urban Guangzhou man)

Urbanites have a general mistrust of rural people. Though the education homogamy model suggests that people should prefer a mate with a similar education, urban local citizens consider more factors than just education. The *Hukou* system reproduced stigma against rural people, making them undesirable in the urban marriage market. While some urban men, like rural migrant men, idealized "rural femininity," they also worried about the implication of marrying a rural woman. Bai yun, 40, a Guangzhou urban man (with a US passport), told me,

> Around us, there are so many urban men that regretted marrying urban women. Rural women are earthy, hardworking, devoted, innocent. The family is their life, their everything. They will follow us until they die. But if we could choose again, we would still marry an urban woman because the implication of marrying a rural woman is that we were inadequate to find an urban wife, so we had to resort to Plan B.

In line with Becker's argument that men seek domesticity in their wives, some urban men found

rural women desirable and preferable. Yet the rural *hukou* was constructed as a social stigma that potentially shamed urban men and put their status at risk. *Hukou* thus structured a hierarchy of marriage preferences that intersected with gendered ideals.

Urban migrants

Urban migrants have an urban *hukou* from birth but move to Guangzhou for work or to gain a university education. One major feature of this group is that regardless of gender, they valued their partner's education level and economic independence over *hukou* status because they were also "outsiders" or "migrants" to the local area. They also held relatively egalitarian views of gender. Yet the preference for compatible education level filtered many rural migrants out of their marriage pool because the average rural migrant has only a junior secondary education. This filtering applied to both men and women. Huzhong, a 26-year-old urban migrant man from Qing hai said,

> Well first, we should love one another mutually and equally. Second, she has to be as educated and economically independent, right? This is healthier as a family. In this case, we can communicate well, and have more topics for discussion. Also, don't interfere too much in other's life. We should have mutual respect.

Education was the key factor determining intermarriage between rural and urban migrants. Fang Yi was an urban migrant and an investment banker who married a rural migrant from Hunan who was accepted to Xian University to study dentistry before pursuing a Ph.D. in Singapore. Fang Yi did not hold any prejudice toward "rural" *hukou* holder, but she was initially "shocked" to see the "mud houses" in her husband's parents' village. Over time, however, she grew to love the village's quiet and its natural landscape.

Education and economic independence seem to be the most important criteria for urban migrants' mate search probably because of selectivity. That is to say, for those urban migrants who move from a smaller urban city to a big one like Guangzhou and Shenzhen, they can survive and maintain a similar or a better standard of living only when they are more educated and economically well-off. Urban people who are not as competent are likely to stay in their local city which gives them a comparative advantage over rural migrants.

Urban migrants' selectivity applied not only to education, but also to gender equality. Urban migrant men desired women who were independent and more collaborative in their decision making. These men talked about "mutual love" and "respect" as ideal characteristics in a wife. Finding a rich partner was not a priority for either urban migrant men or women because they did not want a power differential in their marriages. Zeng Rou, a 27-year-old urban migrant woman from Wuhan said,

> That guy's [one of her suitors'] income was much higher than mine. I felt stressed. [*Author: How come there was stress?*] …The gap is too big. I really can't hold up my head […] I don't aim to find a rich man. I am looking for a man who will stay with me for life. If the income gap is too big, he will have a sense of superiority.

Urban converters

Some individuals born with rural *hukou* were able to attain urban *hukou* through employment as professionals, home ownership, or entrance into a university. This group of urbanites was the most accepting of rural migrants as potential marriage partners. Though the urban converters were more educated than most rural migrants, they did not deny their rural origins. On the contrary, some interviewees repeatedly reminded me: *I am a rural person too.* All urban converters said that they would not mind finding a partner with a rural origin, though women

converters struggled with the decision to marry a rural man with low education because women typically marry up.

The institutional policy permitting rural people to convert *hukou* enables upward mobility through talent. Although converting made rural men more desirable on the marriage market, most urban male converters in my sample did not seek urban women. They were dating, engaged, or married to women who were originated from the rural villages. They preferred women who were family-oriented, passive (*han shu*), virtuous, and wifely (*yan wei*) – characteristics associated with rural *hukou* women. Guo Zheng, a 41-year-old rich male urban converter who owned several houses and worked as a chef in a five-star hotel was in his second marriage to a young rural woman. His first wife had been an urban migrant from Anhui. He said that both woman were "very pretty," but he found rural women more desirable:

> My parents were born in the '50s, and they wake up early at 5:00 to 6:00 am. They were rural, so they are so used to hardship. So my old parents think… 'We old people wake up so early. You as a daughter-in-law shouldn't be sleeping!' Well, my ex-wife is a city girl and the only daughter in the family. She never needed to work so hard, no suffering at all…You can hardly urge her to do housework. She is so spoiled. […] (My current wife) is very virtuous because she just came out of the rural village and she knows nothing. She is very diligent and simple. All I care about women is that they handle the household well, including my son, my father, and my mother. You stay at home obediently, and I don't care whether you work or not. I told her not to work; she quit her job. I told her to take care of kids; she took care of them.

In line with Ye Espiritu's study (2003) of Filipino American men who preferred a wife from their home town, urban converters and rural migrant men sought women from their native villages or women with limited migration experience because rural femininity was associated with domesticity, diligence, and simplicity. Guo Zheng rushed to marry his current wife after only several months of dating to protect her from "urban" contaminations. He explains, "I don't let her work because 8 out of 10 rural women "turn bad" after working in the city. Yang Xiao, a

29-year-old, also associated a woman's virtue with her rural origin. To him, urban girls were too "active." When he was in college in Guangzhou, he dated a local urban girl who had sex with him very quickly. He said he despised this kind of activeness. His sexist remarks illustrate that activeness in sex violated his gendered expectations for women but not for men.

While some urban converters sought rural women because they desire "rural" attributes, others sought a rural wife or urban converter because they shared life experiences. Xu Da a 27-year-old urban converter from Huizhou Guangdong who now held a Shenzhen *hukou* was engaged to a rural woman who received some post-secondary education. In addition to her filial attributes, he liked that they shared similar life struggles:

> *Hukou*... whether it is rural or not rural, I just can't categorize people this way. I should say we have a similar rural experience and [a similar experience of] striving to achieve something through formal education. This is very different from people in the city. In addition, I think she is very filial to her parents. Just like me.

Opportunities for rural-urban marriages

Government policies strengthen the rural-urban division through spatial segregation that makes rural-urban friendship, dating, and marriages rare. Based on my field observations, urban-rural interactions occurred in unequal power settings. For example, in restaurants, urban people were the customers and rural people were the servers. In government offices, urbanites were officials and rural people were applicants for legal papers.

One place where people commonly meet potential mates is at school. Yet as in other big cities in China, rural migrants and their children received segregated education in Guangdong. Many second-generation rural migrants in my sample studied in schools for the children of

migrant workers. Their parents could not afford expensive local public school fees or tuition for prestigious private or international schools. In addition, without a local *hukou*, second generation rural migrants are prohibited from continuing their education into high school in receiving migrant regions. They were instead sent back to their rural villages to further their studies. Thus, it was hard for rural migrant children to build rural-urban friendships.

No law forbids rural migrants from working in a particular setting but the majority of rural migrants work in factories located far from the city center. Many rural migrants work in low-paid service sectors (e.g., as a masseuse, waiter, street cleaner, or construction worker). These migrants come into close contact with local urban people, but because their jobs are of lower rank and dirty, difficult, and dangerous, many rural migrants said they were "looked down upon" (*kan bu qi*) by urbanites. Workplace segregation resulted from an unwritten rule that one should always hire "locals" first. Thus, though Chen Jinnan's education level was on par with that of most civil servants, he was unable to get into the civil service in Shenzhen as "an outsider." A Shenzhen local who was also a university graduate corroborated Chen Jinnan's observations, saying, "The local parents bribe the officials, and they have ways to let locals work in government. No one with high education wants those positions. They are usually people who are local, rich, or have *guanxi* (network) and aren't very educated." Job segregation based on *hukou* reduces the chances of rural-urban contact, let alone inter-*hukou* marriages.

Urban spaces are class and *hukou*-segregated. Many rural migrant workers avoided going to areas that looked "pricey." Su Chuan, a 28-year-old woman from rural Guangxi said, "Here food is around RMB$10, and my stomach can be filled. But it's impossible in Tianhe [the central business district]. It is so pricey. I don't even want to go to those places. [Pointing to the big mall opposite to her workplace] I rarely go there. They belong to the rich." In Shenzhen, even

newcomers distinguished "inside the gate" (*guannei*) from "outside the gate" (*guanwai*). *Guannei* was where urbanites lived alongside commercial centers, 5-star hotels, luxury residential housing, large entertainment districts, and theme parks. By contrast, rural migrants lived in *guanwai* where factories, supply shops, and wholesale markets were located. Urbanites said that "*guanwai* is more dangerous than *guannei*" even though they had never visited "outside the gate." Yang Xiao, a 29-year-old urban converter said, "People in *guanwai* have more complicated backgrounds."

Despite the structural constraints of segregation, many rural migrants created global and translocal networks. Dong Guo, a 33-year-old rural migrant man from Hubei, met Na, a 27-year-old urban converter from Beijing, in an internationally supported non-governmental organization. The global platforms brought together people with similar interests. The Internet was also a way to meet friends and "hook up" with people. Ren Yingying, a 26-year-old rural migrant woman from Guangdong Maoming, met her ex-boyfriend, an urban converter, through an online social networking site called QQ. She explained, "There are many groups in QQ, and it specifies Shenzhen groups. People organize a lot of outdoor activities, though we didn't know one another. I joined their groups for biking, badminton, hiking, and picking strawberries. I met my ex when we went hiking."

Some respondents found that discussion in online forums made them feel equal with their "Internet friends" despite rural-urban mistrust Pang, a 35-year-old Guangzhou man, "met" his rural fiancée online and they discussed his "essays" on QQ for two years before dating in person. Internet social networks cross-cut real-world divides, reducing inequalities as suggested by Blau and Schwartz (1984). In addition, some people used translocal networks for marriage referrals.

Some inter-*hukou* married couples were matched by relatives who had a rural origin but married in Guangzhou.

Intermarried couples: pioneers for rural-urban equality?

Changes to the political economy in China – including economic restructuring, prevalent rural-to-urban migration, and the influence of globalization – have the potential to challenge structural inequalities in partner selection. Cases of intermarried couples are rare but increasing. Yet my study found that intermarriage is still built on an exchange of attributes. Specifically, urban citizens in my study who married rural migrants were living on the social margin of urban society. They were usually older, never-married bachelors or divorced and poor (by urban standards); one man was disfigured. Intermarriages thus seemed to build on group inequalities.

In addition, some rural migrants who married urbanites were able "pass" because they had few "rural markers." For instance, rural people are usually stereotyped as having dark skin tone, as short, and as stout. Several of the rural participants who had romantic relationships with urbanites defied these stereotypes. Li, a 25-year-old urban Guangzhou woman, said, "My ex [who was rural] has nothing 'better' than me […] He is just handsome. 190cm tall. He is really very handsome. Very pale skin tone. 190 cm. Clean and 'white'." Li defied normative gendered practices of mate selection by choosing her partner based on appearance, but her emphasis on her partner's height and pale skin showed that she saw her ex-husband as passing for urban. This passing reveals the stigmatization of the rural body as undesirable. In a similar manner, Pang, a 35-year-old urban Guangzhou man said:

> [My rural fiancée] actually leads a city life. Her habits are very urbanized. She is very conscious about health. She is no longer a '*cun gu*' [derogative term for village women meaning outdated, rustic, and ignorant]. And she always interacts with Hong Kong people and Guangzhou people. Her conduct is very city-like.

By emphasizing his rural fiancée's "city-like" manners and her social connections with friends, Pang also implied the need to "upgrade" negate her rural status to justify their intermarriage. These examples illustrate that even as migration, economic restructuring, and the influence of global and translocal networks have increased the number of inter-*hukou* couples, the gendered structure of rural-urban inequality still exists.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Sewell (1992 p. 20-21) argues that the "kinds of desires people can have, what intentions they can form, and what sorts of creative transpositions they can carry out vary dramatically from one social world to another depending on the nature of the particular structures that inform those social worlds." This study illustrates that the key stratifying principles in China – gender, *hukou,* and wealth – constrain opportunities for interacting with potential partners and shape people's desires, intentions and preferences for a desirable mate.

Putting the literature on intersectionality into conversation with the economic model of mate selection, my study suggests that gender, *hukou* status, and class are not simply variables involved in individual rational calculations; rather, these intersecting factors were systematically patterned structures with deep, long-standing effects on every aspect of people's lives (Bonilla-Silva 1997). The *hukou* system distributes economic privileges, social honor, and legal power in China. It therefore creates a hierarchy of marital preferences that do not favor rural migrants eager to marry out of the countryside. The desirability gap is strengthened by the invidious

distinction between worthy citizens (urbanites) and the underclass (rural people), which is exacerbated by a segregated and hierarchical social environment. As a result, urbanites are generally more desirable as marriage partners than rural people. Following Blau (1964), these differences in rural and urban social privileges result in serious power differentials that strengthen group boundaries and create mistrust. There are no norms of reciprocity between the two groups because these usually form through repeated interactions. Many urban citizens are skeptical of rural migrants' intentions: Does this rural person want to marry me for love or money?

But the marriage preference hierarchy I found did not involve a simple equation of urban partners with economic advancement. Instead, this hierarchy involved intersecting desires regarding gendered expectations for rural and urban men and women. Some rural migrant women wanted to marry urban men to escape from the gender discrimination and/or violence against women they saw in their rural villages. Though they had little experience with urbanites, they constructed urban men as practicing a more ideal type of masculinity where men were both good economic providers and "more polite." They saw rural men as poor, violent, chauvinistic, and rude – a marginalized type of masculinity. This echoes Gaetano and Jacka's (2004) finding that some rural women who "escaped" from the countryside looked for non-material criteria like the partner's respect for gender equality.

Men also had gendered considerations. In the eyes of rural migrant men, urban women were not only out of reach but also undesirable. They believed that urban women did not live up to the "rural" feminine ideal of hard work, submissiveness, and the endurance of hardship (*chi qu*). This was especially true for rural men who expected to follow traditional patrilocal practices. Here, I am not reifying the stereotypes of women and men. Unlike the static use of "gender" in

many studies following the economic model, here, the different constructions of rural women – as "simple" and "naïve" or "deceitful" and "pragmatic" – demonstrate the fluidity of gender and *hukou* constructions. Such constructions are mediated by migration. Thus women subjectively experience migration as liberating while men experience it as de-masculinizing in comparison to life in rural villages. These gendered experiences of migration shape men's and women's different desires to stay in the city, and post-marital residence is an important part of mate selection in China.

Finally, I found that class also intersects with immigration status. People from a higher social class cared less about *hukou* and more about education in their marital decisions. Urban migrants looked for people with a compatible high education level and a more egalitarian view of gender in relationships. They cared less about the *hukou* origin of the potential partners than other urbanites because they were also migrant outsiders. Therefore, the structures of *hukou*, gender, and class, shaped rural-urban inequalities in both day-to-day interactions and in the process of inclusion and exclusion in the marriage market. In this sense, mate selection processes and outcomes played a role in reproducing rural-urban stratification.

My study suggests that social changes like migration, economic restructuring, globalization, and social reforms enlarged the marriage pool and potentially challenged the existing structure. For instance, the Internet was a useful tool to expand social networks that transcended the hierarchical and segregated social environment. Yet even for inter-*hukou* married couples, their marriages were often based on group inequalities and exchanges of compensatory attributes. In line with exchange theories, rural-urban matches involved compensating qualities in the two partners. Urbanites who married rural migrants were already on the urban social margin. My structural approach thus added to an economic model of mate

selection by establishing the terms of these attribute exchanges. My findings also suggest than rather than simply using the prevalence of intermarriage as a measure of the strength of group boundaries, scholars would do well to evaluate the nature of group boundaries as well.

This research speaks directly to the recent *hukou* reforms. *Hukou* policy has provided an unequal framework for Chinese citizenship for over 55 years. Despite recent reforms, the rural-urban divide created by *hukou* policy persists. As my findings around marital integration show, rural-urban integration is slow to progress. Focusing not only on the outcome but also on the process of mate selection, this study probes the perceptions and preferences of people in different social groups and analyzes the opportunities for rural-urban interaction. I demonstrate that rural-urban boundaries remain strong. Working within the hierarchies of *hukou* status and gender, individuals embed macro inequalities into their mate selection processes. Sometimes individuals resist the hierarchies; more often, they reify them. My analysis concurs with some scholars' skepticism regarding the effectiveness of *hukou* reforms (Chan 2014). My findings regarding intermarriage show that to achieve true rural-urban integration, future reforms must combat: 1) the stigmatization and denial of rights to rural people in social institutions like the government, the media, families, and schools; 2) serious gender discrimination in the rural villages; and 3) urban-biased economic development.

Chapter 4. INTERSECTIONALITY AND POWER IN INTER-*HUKOU* FAMILIES IN CHINA

Does intermarriage between groups mean greater equality? This article uses an intersectional approach to investigate how inequalities of gender, class, and rural/urban status and power are sustained or reworked in marriages formed between partners with different "citizenship statuses" in the Chinese context. Though the term "citizenship status" is most commonly used to describe the legal status of cross-border migrants, I deploy the concept in relation to *hukou*, China's household registration status, which shapes the basic social rights of rural-to-urban migrants within China. My analysis compares among various gender, rural/urban, and class configurations in marriages using data from 26 in-depth interviews as well as participant observation. I find that variations in marital power dynamics work through the intersection of government policies and patriarchal structure. The rural wives of urban men are treated by their husband's family as "unpaid reproductive workers." Conversely, urban spouses in poor rural families are seen as knowledgeable and treated with high regard. The rural husbands of urban women behaved like nostalgic sojourners, always hoping to return to their rural home. I also show that the standard rural-urban power dynamic (where urban status is regarded as powerful) can be reversed when the rural partner comes from a higher socioeconomic status than the urban partner. Finally, I argue that members of even the most oppressed group – rural migrant wives – have creative strategies to resist their subjugation within the family by playing by urban rules, enacting a two-faced filial piety, and creating gender alliances.

INTRODUCTION

Many scholars utilize the prevalence of intermarriage between groups (especially racial groups) as an indicator of the strength of social boundaries between those groups (Alba and Nee 1997; Kalmijn 1998; Qian and Lichter 2007). Yet even among intermarried couples, group boundaries is not as blurred as we might assume. Power dynamics can be recreated within intermarriages based on group inequalities – for instance, when members of the majority group trade their status for a desirable quality in a minority group partner, including qualities like beauty (Sassler and Joyner 2011; Burdett and Coles 2001), a higher education level (Fu 2001), and domestic skills (Becker 1991). The literature discussing the persistence of power dynamics in intermarriage tends to focus on the matching of couples –who marries whom and how structural inequalities shape marital decisions. Few studies examine the intermarried life of minority and majority group members (or immigrants and locals) to examine how inequalities persist after marriage.

This study uses an intersectional approach to examine the lived experience and enactment of power for intermarried couples with different citizenship statuses in China. The intersectional approach emphasizes how inequalities of race, class, gender and other social categories are connected to one another and embedded in various social systems like work, family, and "citizenship" policies. I share Evelyn Nakano Glenn's (1999; 2002; 2011) understanding of intersectional inequalities as "relational concepts which involve both representational and social structural processes in which power is a constitutive element" (p. 9). China is an ideal case study to understand how power dynamics play out in marriages formed between partners with different "citizenship statuses," namely, between rural migrants and urban citizens.

These marriages – and the families that extend from them – are situated at a crossroads where the embedded inequalities of gender, class, and unique to China, *hukou* (China's

household registration system) are made obvious. These intermarried couples are pioneers who transcend rural-urban boundaries and challenge existing inequalities. Studying them enables an understanding of the process of social change and people's responses to that change. Most studies on marriage and migration focus on cross-national migrants and are analyzed on the basis of race, ethnicity, and immigrants' citizenship. Less attention has been paid to rural-urban social divisions and the massive internal migration that is especially salient in developing countries like China, Vietnam, and India. Rural-urban divisions in China are legally framed by the "almost-ascribed" household registration status of *hukou*, which categorizes people as either rural or urban based on their parents' origins. Like racial apartheid systems, *hukou* has governed a history of unequal citizenship that endows one group of citizens with more power, wealth, and prestige (Alexander and Chan 2004). While urban people enjoy basic rights and privileges, migrants who leave their rural villages are deprived of most social rights in the urban center (Chan and Buckingham 2008; Solinger 1999; Whyte 2010).

How does the differentiated citizenship status affect the power dynamics of the conjugal relationship? *Hukou* is not likely to affect women and men in a similar manner. China has a deep-rooted patriarchal culture characterized by a patrilocal tradition and power differences between women and men and between elder and younger generations (Zuo 2009; Harrell 2015). Gender and *hukou* are likely to engage in a complex interplay where rural husbands and wives negotiate differently their status with urban partners and within partners' families. Likewise, power dynamics may also differ by gender when urban wives and husbands are situated in rural families. To date, most qualitative studies of rural-urban intermarriages focuses on couples where the wife is the migrant, and these studies often lack a comparison group. Finally social class background – as reflected by educational background and wealth – may also intersect with

hukou and gender to shape the intermarried couple's negotiation of power within the household. In particular, as the younger generation of rural migrants increasingly receives higher education, some find themselves marrying down to partners from the lower strata of the urban host society, and this may alter patterns of power in the family (Constable 2005). This study explores all three intersecting factors – *hukou*, gender, and class – as they shape the experiences of intermarried couples.

This paper is part of a larger study involving surveys and ethnographic fieldwork in migrant receiving and sending regions of China. As part of this research, I oversampled 26 people who married or cohabited with someone with a different *hukou.* This research contributes to scholarship on how inequalities and power in society are extended and enacted in families, even among the select group of people who are most receptive to cross-status marriages. To date, this study is the first in the fields of marriage and migration to examine negotiations of conjugal power as they are structured by intersections of *hukou*, class, gender, and generation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Great Divide: Hukou as Citizenship Status

Citizenship can be defined as formal or substantive. T.H. Marshall (1950) suggests that formal legal status endows people with civil rights (the rights necessary for individual freedom like freedom of speech and thought and the right to own property), political rights (the right to participate in the exercise of political power), and social rights (the right to economic welfare). In addition to formal citizenship, Glenn (2011) introduces the concept of substantive citizenship to refer to a matter of belonging constructed through everyday interactions indicating recognition or exclusion by other members of the community.

In China, political and civil rights are limited, but the majority of the citizens do enjoy social rights. Yet one exception is rural migrants who are excluded from social and substantive citizenship rights in urban areas through the *hukou* system (household registration system) – a dual system of citizenship that stipulates an individual as "rural" or "urban" and "local" or "migrant" based on the parents' place of origin (Chan and Buckingham 2008). This system endows "urban" and "local" citizens with greater power, wealth, and prestige. Established in 1958, the *hukou* system was originally modeled after the Soviet Union's *propiska* (internal passport), which also divided people along the categories of "rural" and "urban" (Chan and Li 1999). The original purpose of the *hukou* system was to ban rural-to-urban movement so that the rural countryside can primarily serve as a source of low-cost agricultural products to feed the population of urban centers where big industrialization projects are concentrated (Naughton 2007). Yet even after this ban was lifted in the early 1980s, inequalities based on *hukou* persisted. Instead of dissolving rural-urban boundaries, another layer of inequalities was added to the structure – "local" *versus* "migrant".

Today, most rural migrants who work in urban areas are deprived of all urban rights and privileges, no matter how long they stay. This includes housing subsidies, healthcare, pensions, and unemployment insurance benefits (unless these are provided in the workplace). Rural migrants also have restricted access to urban housing (Logan et al. 2009) and their children are deprived of education rights in public schools (Chan and Li 1999). Mobility through *hukou* conversion is possible but not easily granted. Only a relatively few can convert through educational attainment, work, land confiscation, and marriage (Chan and Li 1999). Although there are waves of reforms that claim to dissolve rural-urban boundaries, *hukou* policies are administered at the provincial governmental level, resulting in a situation where conversion to

urban *hukou* is difficult in big cities (like Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou) and relatively easier in small counties (Chan and Buckingham 2008; Chan 2014). This further stratifies *hukou.*

Specific to cross-*hukou* marriages, although a visa is not required for the migrant partners to live in an urban setting, citizenship status (or rather, an urban *hukou*) is not automatically granted after marriage. Further, in cases where the couple divorces during the application process, the rural migrant cannot continue the process of *hukou* conversion. Table 4.1 shows the requirements needed for conversion after marriage for China's major cities.

Table 4.1. Requirements needed for conversion of *hukou* for spouses originating from other areas

Cities	Duration of wait after registering a marriage	Other requirements
Beijing	10 years	The couple must be over age 45; The couple has not violated one-child policy; and Their child should be under 18
Shanghai	10 years	Not specified
Hangzhou	Not specified	Both husband and wife should be over 35 years old; The couple's children should be under 18; and The couple should own legal permanent housing
Guangzhou	2 years (married after August 2014); 6 years (married before August 2014)	Not specified
Shenzhen	3 years	The couple should follow Shenzhen's Family Planning Policy (e.g., the one-child policy)

(Source: China Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen and Hangzhou 2015; People's Daily 2014)

Restrictions on migrants' conversion to urban *hukou* through marriage in China's big cities are even more stringent than the citizenship requirements in South Korea, Germany, and the United States, which require only a 2-year waiting period for international marriage migrants (Kim 2013; Constable 2003; Mix and Piper 2003; Narayan 1995). Studies suggest that legal regulations

frame marriage migrants – mostly women – as a provisional member of the marital family and the state (see Kim 2013, for example).

Beyond the legal framework of citizenship, face-to-face interactions affect people's substantive rights (Glenn 2011). In relations to *hukou*, studies show that rural migrants are often denied access to substantive citizenship. Their lived experiences as "outsiders" and the day-to-day construction of identity markers often distinguish them from urban people (Whyte 2010). For instance, the *suzhi* (qualities) of "civility, self-discipline, and modernity" are judged along urban-rural lines. Public discourse tends to associate "urban" with "modernity" and "progress"; by contrast, "rural" has connotations of "emaciated" others (Yan 2008). This discourse deprives rural migrants of access to substantive citizenship in the urban host society. However, little attention has been paid to the substantive citizenship of cross-*hukou* couples – a select group of people who transcend *hukou* boundaries. To fill this gap, this study explores whether and how various social inequalities are extended and enacted in inter-*hukou* families.

Intersectionality and inter-hukou families

This study adopts an intersectional approach to understand inter-*hukou* families. The theory of "intersectionality" marked a significant breakthrough in feminist scholarship by illuminating how race, class, and gender are closely intertwined in stratified societies. Though intersectionality is a highly cited "buzzword," its meaning is often unclear (Davis 2008). According to Choo and Ferree (2010), some studies focus on understanding the standpoint of a multiply-marginalized group (like Childs 2005) while others suggest that intersectionality is a process and that power is relational. This latter group views "the interactions among variables as multiplying oppressions at various points of intersection and drawing attention to unmarked

groups" (Choo and Ferree 2010 p. 129) (e.g., Lareau 2003). Finally, some studies emphasize the co-construction of class, race and gender in the social system (e.g., Flippen 2013; Kim 2013). This study adopts the third perspective to analyze the intersection of family and citizenship as it organizes the everyday interactions and lived experiences of cross-*hukou* couples. Evelyn Glenn Nakano (2002) suggests that the analysis of systemic inequalities involves various levels of analysis: 1) representation, like the deployment of symbols, languages, and images (also see Bourdieu 1991); 2) micro-interactions, like the application of race/gender norms, etiquette, and spatial rules; and 3) social structures that regulate the allocation of power and resources along race/gender lines. These interactive processes deny or allow access to substantive citizenship (Glenn 2011).

Past studies on international marriages and rural-urban marriages discuss migrants' family experiences in light of intersectionality. For example, Tan and Short (2004) discuss rural migrant wives' marriage experience with urbanites in a small county in Jiangsu China and their day-to-day experience as "double outsiders" – in the city, as a newcomer in the community, and in the context of family life as a woman. Their study provides an in-depth analysis of the interlocking processes of gendering and performing and/or resisting rural identity in the family and host society. Their discussion in relation to the Chinese patriarchal system enriches the micro-analysis of rural migrant women in the urban setting, but it falls short of conceptualizing how power is shaped and structured by *hukou.* Kim's study (2013) of Filipina marriage migrants in South Korea highlights how the patriarchal ideology and practices embedded in state programs shape migrant wives' role as biological and cultural reproducers of "Koreans." In day-to-day interactions, they are constructed as "gendered dependents" and "ethnic others." She suggests that "ethnicized maternal citizenship" intersects with class as women with more

economic resources can decide to live separately from their in-laws. This provides a good example of how multiple institutions overlap to govern the day-to-day construction of the identities and power relations that co-determine inequalities.

This framework is useful in situating wives and husbands of cross-*hukou* families in "the inequality regime" (Acker 2006) of the *hukou* system (where urban is privileged over rural) and in the deep-rooted Chinese patriarchal structure – the system of authority where men have power over women and senior family members have power over junior family members (Watson 2004; Harrell 2015). By comparing across contexts and identities within the category of inter-*hukou* families, this study provides a comparative, contextual, and complex analysis of inequalities and power in couples' day-to-day experiences.

Familial power and resistance

In *Husbands and Wives,* Blood and Wolfe (1960) put forward the relative resource theory which posits that one spouse's greater socioeconomic resources can be traded for greater authority at home. They argue that wives are likely to be at a disadvantage because 1) the resources that the husband brings are more valued; 2) men usually marry down according to the mating gradient; and 3) gender inequality in the labor market reduces women's earning power. Their theory has been challenged, however, by empirical studies showing that women are sometimes the main providers (e.g., Tichenor 2005). The relative resource theory oversimplifies marital power as a cause of inequalities; and if it is *just* a cause, it is hard to square with the intersectional claim that "no one is ever just privileged or oppressed" (Choo and Ferree 2010; cited from McCall 2005).

In my approach to intersectionality, I treat power neither as only an outcome nor as simply a cause of inequalities. Power is an agent that is constitutive of the system that

interweaves in everyday interactions. Power takes on three different dimensions in families – manifest, latent, and invisible (Komter 1989; Lukes 1974). The interplay of these dimensions may produce social inequalities. Power is manifest when one spouse is able to use *overt* action to get the other to do something he or she would not otherwise. For instance, Wang's study (2007) of Vietnamese brides in Taiwan suggests some fathers-in-law prohibit their foreign daughters-in-law from working outside the home. This is an exertion of overt power that produces "gender," "race," and "generational" inequalities. Latent power involves the ability to suppress issues or potential issues. Another example from the same study involves foreign brides' avoidance of discussing their interest in working outside the home to avoid confrontation with parents-in-law. Finally, invisible power is the ability to secure compliance by shaping beliefs and desires in such a way that the dominated comes to see the point of view of the dominant as natural, beneficial, and reasonable (Komter 1989). Explanations based on one's "essential nature" like "women enjoy housework" are examples of invisible power because the husband's privilege is "hidden." Following Komter's conceptualization of the three dimensions of power, this study explores the use of power in the marital negotiation process, which reproduces multiple inequalities in families with cross-*hukou* couples.

According to Foucault, "Where there is power, there is resistance; and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" (Foucault 1976, p. 95). This study also tries to uncover immigrants' strategies to resist oppression while bearing in mind that tensions arise from the unequal status of different social groups constitute power and lie at its very center (Foucault 1976). Past studies show that marriage migrants utilize creative, desperate, and versatile modes of resistance that may alter or reproduce existing inequalities. These strategies might include migrants distancing themselves from stereotypical

behaviors (Field 1994), leaving the marriage or host country (Wang 2007; Freeman 2005), striving for economic independence (Tan and Short 2004; Kim 2013) and creating a "hidden space" to assert their own identity without coming into conflict with the dominant norms (Wang 2007). Building upon the existing literature, this paper describes rural migrants' strategies to maneuver multiple inequalities and examines the processes in which gender, class, and generational differences are enacted by all social actors (i.e., "doing difference") (West and Fenstermaker 1995).

METHODS

In July-December 2013 and April-September 2014, I interviewed 138 individuals of different *hukou* and conducted observations in receiving migrant regions (urban Guangdong province) and sending regions (two small rural villages in Guangxi and Guangdong province). Twenty-six cross-*hukou* married or cohabited individuals were included in this larger sample (See Table 4.2 for details).[1] I recruited the respondents through respondent driven sampling by identifying some "seed" respondents through my personal connections to voluntary organizations, a Shenzhen migrant band, a factory owner, a Chinese film director, and others I met through chance encounters. Each seed recruited up to three other respondents, and these respondents recruited up to three people. This procedure diversified my sample and avoided favoring respondents with large networks (Heckathorn 1997). All respondents received an incentive of RMB$100 (around US$7) for the interview and RMB$20 (around US$2) for each referral.

[1] For the urban category, I include urban local, urban migrants, and urban converters who become "urban" because of the rapid urbanization of Shenzhen. While understanding urban migrants and urban local people are different social categories, I decide to combine the two groups in this study mainly because past studies have shown that urban migrants share similarities in terms of their socioeconomic backgrounds and that they are more easily accepted in the local urban context (See Wang 2005 for details). However, I do not include respondents who were born rural, but achieve an urban status after the age of 18. The major reason is revealed in the findings of another of my papers (Lui, unpublished dissertation), which shows their similar mentality of people with rural *hukou*.

Table 4.2. Profile of cross-*hukou* married/cohabitating respondents

Urban wife rural husband			
Pseudonym of couples *(The woman's name is displayed first)*	**Present Age**	**Occupation**	**Current marital status**
1) Juan Juan Liu Fei	27 28	Business owner Construction foreman	Divorced
2) Yuan Hong Gang Fai	37 36	Accountant Project officer	Married
3) Zhuang Yuying Xue Chi	28 25	Homemaker Hairdresser	Married
4) Jiayi Kao Bo (1st rural partner) Fuhua (2nd rural partner)	42 45 39	Present: Factory owner Past: Homemaker Business owner Administrative Officer	 Divorced Separated
5) Ling Lin Jingguo	34 39	Account clerk Officer at a petroleum company	Married
6) Huilang Kang	23 25	Kindergarten teacher Salesman	Cohabiting
Rural wife urban husband			
Pseudonym of couples *(The woman's name is displayed first)*	**Present Age**	**Occupation**	**Current marital status**
1) An Su Hua wei	28 29	Massage worker Business owner	Separated
2) Baozha Guotian	40 50	Homemaker Business owner	Married
3) Ming Chun Tao	61 60	Cleaner Driver	Married
4) Hai Shilin	32 47	Homemaker Business owner	Married
5) Ju Youpeng	---- 36	Factory officer Internet designers	Engaged but deceased
6) Lian Qiu	30 28	Finance officer Factory owner	Married
7) Fang Duyin	30 32	Homemaker Business owner	Married
8) Mei (1st rural partner) Yanyu (2nd rural partner) Chang	30 37 42	Homemaker Clerical officer Merchandizer	Divorced Cohabiting
9) Shan Dacheng	30 29	Homemaker Interior designer	Married
10) Shun Tao	30 30	Museum receptionist Web designer	Married

11) Ting Anguo	26 38	Homemaker Business owner	Married
12) Xiang Jin	44 54	Nanny Unemployed	Married
13) Nan Shi	45 75	Homemaker Business owner/ Stockholder	Cohabiting
14) Yong Wen	39 47	Shopkeeper Primary school teacher	Divorced
15) Fen Missing data	40 Missing	Teahouse manager Hotel manager	Engaged
16) Lan Liang	29 33	Homemaker Fix and repair shop owner	Married
17) Min Yaochuan	30 31	Financial officer Web designer	Married
18) Ning Qianfan	30 30	Graduate student Graduate student	Married
19) Mei fung Guo zheng	30 40	Homemaker Hotel Chef	Married
20) Sumei Songfei	32 42	NGO worker Salesperson	Married

This research adopted the grounded theory approach, in which data collection and data analysis often happen simultaneously (Glaser and Strauss 1967). This enabled me to "find what doesn't fit" (sometimes called "theoretical sampling") and drove discoveries of new patterns of causes and consequences that required further replication and verification. Initial samples of rural-wife-urban-husband couples show codes like "inequalities," "emotional oppression," and "marital dissatisfaction," illustrating how the overlapping identities of rural, migrant, woman, and wife in cross-married families were experienced differently than homogamous marriages based on *hukou*. But the data did not reach saturation with this set of couples. I therefore continued to look for the less-common cases of rural men with urban wives, and I found that these men displayed and negotiated marital power differently than rural women. When I further added rare cases of relatively rich rural men (and women) marrying urbanites, I found myself filling in the "property spaces" that "cross-classify different qualitative variables" (Lazerfeld

1948; Becker 2008). This process complicated the sample procedures but made "maximal use of… empirical variety" (Becker 2008: 165) and provided rich data regarding the marital experiences of people with different combinations of identities (See Table 4.3).

Table 4.3. Cross-classification of couples

Hukou Status	**Socioeconomic Status**	**Sample size**
Urban wife Rural husband	Husband higher	1
Urban wife Rural husband	Wife higher	2
Urban wife Rural husband	Similar	3
Urban husband rural wife	Husband higher	14
Urban husband rural wife	Wife higher	0
Urban husband rural wife	Similar	6

Three major methodological issues also help to problematize the situation of cross-*hukou* married or cohabiting couples: First, they are very hard to reach (especially for rural husbands paired with urban wives) because these cases are rare. Many rural wives are also home-bound. I managed to reach some only through a relationship formed by chance with the administrator of an online mothers' group. Second, I received more rejections from this group than others, mainly because, according to the seeds, the suggested respondents were in unhappy marriages. To protect potential respondents' feelings, I did not pursue an interview after an initial rejection. In addition, in some cases, the women's husbands constrained their personal freedom to be interviewed. Third, my respondents were disproportionally women (20 women: 6 men) mainly because my identity as a woman was most reassuring and trustworthy to respondents of the same gender, especially when we touched upon intimate topics.

Though I designed a semi-structured interview guide, I did not strictly adhere to a sequence of questions. Instead, I began the interviews by asking respondents to narrate their migration experience, the history of their romantic relationship, and their family history. I then followed up with prompts to cover all questions in the interview guide. This approach was

intended to allow respondents to raise the issues they considered most important. I did not ask direct questions about identity, instead, this topic usually emerged in the conversation naturally, especially as the respondents talked about family conflicts and their experiences of discrimination in the social milieu as a migrant spouse.

I did not rely on interview data alone because interviews are limited as "a source of information about events not witnessed" (Becker and Geer 1957: 29). My analysis also relies on observations I made as I interacted with the respondents during interviews and at social gatherings (at their homes or in their neighborhoods). Observations are particularly useful to understand familial power. I paid special attention to body language, tone of voice, emotions, and interactions with other family actors. For example, as I was interviewing Baozha alone in her home, I observed that she trembled a lot and she jerked every time she heard a small noise. Wide-eyed, she would turn her head to slowly scan the house. I reflected on her behavior: What does it mean to feel so uneasy in one's own home? Who makes her fearful? Sensitive to her reactions, I suggested that we move the interview at a nearby café. There, she recounted her beating by her husband as if she were reliving the experience.

The data were coded through line-by-line and focused coding and I interpreted the meaning based on my analytic interests. Because abstract concepts like power are difficult to interpret, I read between the lines to analyze people's thought processes. For example, to interpret latent power, I asked myself about how respondents rationalized and legitimized social arrangements they considered "wrong" or "unfair." To interpret invisible power, I looked for unquestioned consensus and the taken-for-granted beliefs underlying their recounts (Komter 1989). I also tried to "hear" the silence (e.g., in values that were reflected in their conversation but not overtly articulated by the participant). I engaged in continuous dialogue with the

empirical data by writing memos throughout the process to reflect on the concepts and to make associations among them. I used the basic steps of Boolean analysis as refined by Becker (2008) to identify combinations of social identities (citizenship status, gender, and class) and to examine how variations in these attributes produced different or similar outcomes (like marital power). This analytical process revealed the layers of intersectional experiences. Emerging themes concerning the enactment of power and inequalities in cross-*hukou* families included rural migrants' discredited identity, their negotiation of their marital family's status, culture, and legality, and the diverse gendered and classed strategies for adaptation in urban families.

SUBSTANTIVE CITIZENSHIP FOR RURAL MIGRANT SPOUSES?

> [*Author's name*], when you see those people who have bad manners and who like pushing in the crowd, remember they are different from us. They are '*lao mei*,' '*lao zai.'* We, Guangzhou people, are more civilized.
>
> (The second encounter with a seed respondent, a woman with urban *hukou*)

During my fieldwork and interviews, I heard rural people called multiple names, including "*lao*" (a vulgar word for "rural outsiders"), "*cungu*" (a derogatory term for rural women), and "country bumpkins." These names were used to suggest that rural people were outdated, rustic, and ignorant. Urban people sometimes used language to separate "us" ("we are from the big city") from "them" ("the mainlanders"). Many rural migrant spouses recounted instances of similar exclusion when they were buying groceries, visiting bathrooms, or interacting with neighbors and relatives. These acts of discrimination denied their access to substantive citizenship. Furthermore, citizenship and family intersect to construct the image of rural migrants involved in intimate relationship with urbanites as "gold diggers" or "love scammers":

> Working in hotels and restaurants, the rural migrant women are all fishing… fishing for rich people. They are very experienced. They are poor, and it's hard to sustain a living. They all try to find a rich man. I saw too much. Even though those men have a wife,

> those girls just give themselves away easily […] Here, she has a few husbands; there, another few and they give her a 'salary' each month.
>
> (Guo Zheng, a 40-year-old urban man with a wife from rural Maoming)

> There are too many love scams on the Internet. And we as Guangzhou people try to avoid these scams by of course confirming that they are really local Guangzhou people. […] It's not hard to tell as we speak in Cantonese and when we type those words, you will know whether they are from Guangzhou or the mainland.
>
> (Youpeng, a 36-year-old urban man with a fiancée from rural Zhengxi)

The act of distinguishing "mainland" people from Guangzhou people (even over the Internet) and the reiteration of stereotypes casting rural migrant women as "gold diggers" reflect the process that Schwalbe (2000) called "oppressive othering," or defining others as morally inferior. In our interviews, urban people told me anecdotes and rumors about rural migrants who flirted or had sexual relationships with bosses, professors, and customers. In some cases, migrants also embraced these stereotypes and spoke against one another. Sumei, a rural migrant woman from Maoming who had worked in Shenzhen for more than 10 years recently married a Hong Kong man who worked as a sales manager in Shenzhen. Her ex-factory colleague spread the rumor that Sumei shared her same husband with her sister. Sumei argued with the ex-colleague through their village networks and over the Internet, and the two women badmouthed each other as "prostitutes." Sumei said:

> We call her 'Huazhou chicken' (a sex worker from Huazhou). She got to the managerial level just because she slept with our boss [an urban man]. My friend found out. Everyone hides it because she is powerful in the firm. Once, she fired a girl just because the girl was beautiful. Whenever she knows the boss is coming, she rushes to make herself up – putting on that red lipstick – and walks as if she is on a runway and moves her ass like this [imitating her posture] in front of him. I didn't badmouth her because we are from the same village, but since she badmouths me, I am going to tell everyone.

Sumei's gossip about a rural migrant who flirted at work to advance her position was not uncommon among rural migrants. These stories legitimized rural migrants' devalued identity as "gold diggers" that was perpetuated by the dominant group. Though urban partners usually acted

as “the wise” (Goffman 1963) and said “my rural partner is different” (like Guo Zheng, the hotel chef quoted above), these stories justified the poor treatment of rural migrant women who had intimate relationship with urbanites.

Because rural migrants were stigmatized and denied recognition as substantive citizens in the urban city, cross-*hukou* marriages were often labeled as “problem marriages,” and were not supported by the friends, neighbors, and relatives of urban spouses. Close friends usually felt sorry for urbanites marrying a rural spouse. Yun, an urban woman who married a rural man from Jiangxi, told me, “Many friends, relatives, and others told me that those outsiders are unreliable. My friends said I was too silly, too hasty, and too bold. Why did I not think more carefully before marrying him?” Ironically, rural migrant women experienced a similar lack of empathy from their close social networks. Youpeng, an urban Guangzhou man, told me that his rural fiancée’s parents accused their daughter of “going after [his] money and being [his] second mistress.” Interactions in close social networks defined rural migrants as outsiders and stigmatized them as inferior, depriving them of the full membership associated with substantive citizenship. This denial of membership set the stage for unequal marriages.

RECONSTRUCTING GENDER, *HUKOU*, AND CLASS IN CHINESE FAMILIES

Individuals’ lived experiences of power relations in the family varied based on the intersectional configuration of their particular context. Power differences in family relationships emerged not from identity alone but from the inter-subjective relations embedded in the intersecting patriarchal, *hukou*, and class systems. In this section, I illustrate the intersectional nature of family power dynamics through reference to four scenarios: rural wives in urban husbands’

families; urban spouses in poor rural families; rural husbands in urban wives' families; and finally a scenario where the rural spouse has a higher socioeconomic status than the urbanites.

Rural wives in urban husbands' families: Unpaid reproductive workers

> Our marriage was not registered. My mother-in-law doesn't like me. She wants my husband to marry an urban and a more educated woman. […] She also checked my date of birth and learned from a fortune teller that I can never bear a son. She has to make sure I have a son first before registering our marriage. […] My husband is very obedient. He listens to his mom no matter what. […] My husband said, 'If I forced Mom to give me the *hukou* book, she would do crazy things that I can never imagine.' Then I told myself: *I should let go. Although the elderly parents aren't nice to me, it's okay if my husband is.* So I just bore with it. […] After I gave birth to a son, I asked them to register me. She still turned me down and wanted one more son. But there is a huge fine in China for a second child. I wasn't happy. But at last, I backed down. They bullied me together.
>
> (Lan, a 29-year-old rural migrant woman from Guangdong Weizhou)

Typically, urban parents do not support cross-*hukou* marriages. Their opposition makes it difficult for rural brides to register their marriage and convert their *hukou*. Here, power involves more than a dyadic negotiation between husband and wife – it also involves "third parties" like the mother-in-law. These families experience a complex power dynamic. The husband rarely advocates for his wife in part because he has a strong filial duty to be obedient and to get parental consent for his marriage – an indication of invisible power. In Lan's case, the husband excused his inaction by suggesting that his mother's power was "legal" – the unmarried son's *hukou* is combined with the mother's in a book, and this book is needed to register the marriage – but this claim was in fact false due to a revision to the marriage registration processes that occurred in 2004. Thus, Lan's husband used this claim to talk her into accepting his mother's control because he and his mother wanted a son. Another excuse he used with Lan was that he was concerned with his mother's feelings. In truth, he had the power to decide whether to register the marriage, and he chose not to.

This case illustrates an interlocking system of gender and generational hierarchy that oppresses junior brides. Despite her resistance, Lan's self-talk rationalized her tolerance of the situation even as she recognized it as unfair. This suggests that latent power was at play in her family situation. In addition, gender and generation also intersected with the *hukou* system to construct a system of authority where the bride's identity as "rural" gave license to urban families to exercise power.

Through her husband and mother-in-law's enactment of power in the urban household, Lan was denied recognition as a full member of the family, though the family treasured her ability to produce a male heir. This distinction between "rural wives as outsiders" and "children as insiders" is reflected in *hukou* conversion policy. Whereas the children of cross-*hukou* couples can automatically become urban, the rural spouse must satisfy a waiting period before changing her status. The legal evidence required to prove her "qualification" for a conversion often lies with the spouse – giving the urbanite power to withhold this process.

Min was a rural migrant woman from Hubei who had been married to an urbanite for four years and who struggled to become an "insider" in urban society and in the urban family. She told me, "I do not share their *hukou* but my son shares it. I am an outsider in *their* family." Like Lan and Min, rural wives are often excluded as "outsiders," while their children are "insiders." This practice denies rural women access to social and substantive citizenship in urban societies. The separation of women from their reproductive function relegates them to the position of "reproductive workers" within the family.

The rural migrant wives in my sample were restricted by their urban families: they were not allowed paid work, their leisure time was limited, and they were given a fixed schedule for

chores and childcare. Hai, a 32-year-old rural migrant woman from rural Hainan described her distressing family situation:

> [My mother-in-law] always describes the scenarios of daughter-in-laws in the past: they wake up early to sweep the floor, to clean the table, polish x-y-z. She keeps commanding me. She also questions why I don't take my daughter to the park and why I wake up late. But since my daughter can't sleep at night, I can't sleep either because I need to take care of her. It was around 10:00 by the time I made breakfast, and then I have a lot to clean. After doing those chores, it's 12:00. How can I take her to the park earlier? [*Author: What about your husband?*] You can't ask him to do anything. I tried that before. His parents saw and said, 'Wow. See? She pushes our son around. How arrogant!' Then she told my daughter, 'It's fortunate that your mom is penniless. If she were richer, she wouldn't need to do anything after marriage.'

Hai's account of her mother-in-law's control over her daily life shares similarities with the conditions some exploited live-in domestic helpers, except Hai and other wives like her were not paid (Constable 1997). In Hai's narrative, the mother-in-law draws upon the historical roots of patriarchy ("in the past") to legitimize her power over the daughter-in-law. She also continued to shame Hai into "doing gender" even though her husband originally agreed to help with the chores. After learning that her mother-in-law scrutinized her behaviors, the *manifest* power of the in-laws became *latent* power as Hai no longer dared to negotiate housework with her husband. Yet this quote is also missing men's *invisible* power. Hai did not complain that her husband did not do housework (nor did she mention him until I raised this question) – a common trend in most rural wives' accounts (but not in urban wives' interviews). In addition, gender overlapped with class as her mother-in-law mocked her "penniless" status and used it to justify Hai's reproductive role doing housework and childcare.

In these accounts of rural wives marrying into urban families, "third parties," such as parents-in-law, enacted power in day-to-day interactions. In my sample, urban migrants were less likely to live near or with their parents, leaving their rural wives less oppressed in day-to-day interactions as compared to the rural wives of the urban local people.

Urban spouses in rural families: the V.I.P.s

> My mother-in-law often asks me to have another baby. I explain to her that we would need to invest a lot of money and it's already hard to maintain the quality of life we have right now. My mother-in-law said, 'The children don't need to receive too much education. You just let them grow naturally.' I argued, 'Your two sons did not study enough and now they need to work hard to earn money. Don't you understand?' (*Author: It seems that your words have some weight*). Yes. My mother-in-law believes in whatever I say. In her eyes, I am from the big city. I've seen more of the world than she has. Her worldview is very narrow. If my [rural] sister-in-law said it, she definitely wouldn't accept it. But whatever I say, she will say, 'It's very scientific,' and she accepts it. [Yuan Hong]
>
> (Yuan Hong, a 37-year-old urban local Guangzhou woman who lived in the rural village for a year; and visited her rural in-laws three times a year thereafter.)

> [Describing her second marriage partner] My fiancé's parents love me so much. They must think, 'Wow! This woman is from the big city!' […] I stayed with their family [in the village] for a while. My fiancé's mother woke up at 6:00 and cooked and cleaned and did so much work. Her status in the family is so low. She has no personal belongings and she wears her sons' old clothes. She even eats in the kitchen. Once I saw my fiancé's father talk to her in their dialect pointing at the desk. She looked so frightened and rushed to the kitchen and took out a tablecloth. After that, my fiancé's father pulled her hair and forced her down on the table. She screamed and he kept saying something like, 'Do you know how to clean?' I went between them and I looked at him and said, 'This is your wife. Do you know what you are doing?' I separated them and I comforted my fiancé's mother, 'Don't be afraid. Let me help you.'
>
> (Jiayi, a 42-year-old urban local Guangzhou woman who visited her fiancé's village once)

Both Yuan Hong and Jiayi had ex-partners from a poor rural village in Jiangxi. These urban-daughters-in-laws had an entirely different experience of their conjugal families than the rural wives/daughters-in-law living in the urban context. Both Yuan Hong and Jiayi realized that they were privileged as women "from the big city." Yuan Hong was able to make her own fertility decisions and to talk back to her mother-in-law because her identity as an urban woman signified "science," "knowledge," and "modernity" – invisible power (according to Foucault 1976). She also possessed latent power in that she was not questioned by her in-laws. Likewise, Jiayi's identity as an urban woman gave her the courage and power to lecture her rural father-in-law and

protect her rural mother-in-law from his violent behavior. These cases illustrate the high status of urban daughters-in-law in poor rural families. These wives were often treated as "knowledgable persons" and their urban advantage enabled them to reverse the generational hierarchy.

Urban husbands shared a similar experience, even when they were as poor as their rural conjugal family. Tao, a 60-year-old urban Guangzhou man was described as "penniless" by his rural wife and did not pay a bride price, but he was still loved by his rural parents-in-law and her fellow villagers. Ming Chun, Tao's wife, said,

> When my husband and I came back to my village, all the people in the village were very jealous of me and my husband. Everyone likes talking to him. Everyone listens to him. Once I went back there by myself. My village head asked, 'Where is your husband? Why didn't he come with you? I miss him so much!' My whole village misses my husband.

Having an urban *hukou* seemed to boost one's status, especially when the rural spouse came from a lower social class. Tao was treated as a V.I.P. and readily embraced by the whole rural village. Unlike rural migrant wives in urban families, urban husbands and wives had the *hukou* advantage in the rural family. This even gave some the power to change the attitudes and behaviors of their rural parents-in-law, who should have ranked higher in the generational hierarchy.

Rural husbands in the urban wife's family: Nostalgic sojourners

> I am a big man. I am not handicapped. I have earning power. [*He pounds the restaurant table with both fists*]. Why do I move to her place? I am from Hengyang, so she has to become a Hengyang person. […] I will break up with her if she doesn't compromise.
>
> (Kang, a 25-year-old rural migrant man from Hunan cohabiting with his girlfriend)

> I am a married daughter. My father proposes that we should stay in my natal home. […] I wish we could move out one day. Living in my parents' home, I sense that he feels like he has 'married into' my family. The reason why he wants me to travel back and forth with him is partly because of this. I guess he is a bit depressed. Once he said, 'If I always live here, am I abandoning my own home? Just abandoning it?' I understand his emotions and I cater to that. Whenever he asks, I will go with him. I think this is natural and

> common sense (*ren zhi chang qing*). [...] Commuting takes an 8 hour bus ride and my kid gets nauseous. Whenever I think about commuting, I just can't stand it. Because I stayed there for a while, I also needed to quit my job. But it's easy for me to get another one.
>
> (Yuan Hong, a 37-year-old urban local Guangzhou woman)

Unlike rural migrant wives, the rural male partners of urbanite women perceived the non-patrilocal arrangement as frustrating and depressing because China is marked by a strong tradition of "returning to the roots." Living in the wife's house after marriage is called *Shanmen.* This phrase, which has a derogatory tone, recurred in the rural migrant men's interviews. Yet in practice, rural migrant husbands who married an urban woman but were unable to afford a house of their own in urban Guangzhou, had little choice but to live in the home of their wives' families. Though Kang claimed that he had "earning power," based on his reported salary, it would have been difficult for him to afford housing in Guangzhou. In addition, his rural *hukou* limited his access to urban housing. Yet mentioning his earning power allowed him to do gender in front of a woman (me).

In Yuan Hong's account, her husband's failure to fulfill a provider's role produced a situation of "subordinated masculinity" (Connell 1987). He compensated for this subordination by urging Yuan Hong to commute back and forth in a compromised version of patrilocality. At the same time, Yuan Hong drew upon the patrilocal structure to explain her husband's emotional state and his demand that she commuted. She complied even though she did not enjoy the commute and once had to sacrifice a job because of it. Her justifications for this compliance – "[catering to him] is common and natural" and "it's easy for me to find [a job]" – signify the latent power that works through the gendered expectation of patrilocality. "A symmetry between the production of those actions on the one hand and their recognition on the other" results in the intersubjectivitiy of action that reproduces gender (West and Festermaker 1995).

Rural men's sense of desperation is aggravated by the fact that the rural migrant husbands, like rural migrant wives, are despised by urban families. Thus, Juan Juan, a 25-year-old urban woman who was married to a rural Sichuan man, said, "My parents always said my ex-husband has nothing good. He has no money, no career, no house. Nothing. I provide for everything. They thought I was joking when I said I was marrying him. […] My husband also knows that my parents don't like him." For Yuan Hong's husband, despite living under the same roof, the in-laws and the rural husband are like strangers:

> They don't really like one another, but there is no big fight. My husband always eats out and he doesn't talk much. And as for my parents, they understand that there is no other way but to bear with the situation: What is done is done [Referring to her premarital pregnancy]. They need to accept him.

Though the urban families did not welcome rural husbands they also did not expect these men to take up the duties of a homemaker as was expected of the rural migrant wives. This gave men more freedom to avoid the day-to-day enactment of power differences in the urban family. In some cases, rural sons-in-law were even praised for occasionally helping with the chores. In other words, rural men had gender advantages, though their rural identity conferred a low status in urban families.

Class – a reversal of hukou disadvantage

It is rare for a rural spouse to be better educated and hold a higher social class position than the urban spouse. However, in these rare cases, I found that the higher socioeconomic status of the rural spouse compensated for their *hukou* disadvantage in day-to-day negotiations of conjugal power. Though most poor rural migrant women who married urbanites received no bride price and held no wedding celebrations, rural migrant women who have better or equivalent socioeconomic status as their urban husbands garnered a bride price of around RMB$30000

(around US$4800) and a wedding ceremony. The urban parents-in-law also generally had a good relationship with these rural migrant women. For instance, Lian was a rural migrant woman who had a university education while her husband did not have a degree. Lian was well-accepted by her parents-in-law such that she even occasionally found herself in a more powerful position than her mother-in-law:

> My mother-in-law doesn't say much. Sometimes I am more 'powerful' than her. [*She laughs*] For instance, I can't agree with her way of taking care of my daughter. I will tell her directly about the correct way. She won't talk back to me or bear grudges. Sometimes, I want to hang out with other girlfriends. For example, we went to Foshan to shop around and take some classes together, [so] I just called my mother-in-law to take care of my daughter.

Class conferred resources upon rural migrants that could balance their power in the urban household. Some rural wives who earned more than the husbands (like Lian) gave money to their poorer urban in-laws for childcare, which also "bought" their freedom outside home. In some circumstances, class was so powerful that it entirely overturned the power imbalance between urban and rural *hukou* spouses. Jiayi, a lower-middle class urban Guangzhou woman at the time of her first marriage, was married to a rural migrant man whose parents had an important political position in a rich rural village in Shunde. She moved to the rural village, which resulted in a drastic reversal of power between rural and urban. This is a small excerpt of Jiayi's description of her first marriage:

> My ex-husband's family was really too rural and too traditional. I was so shocked. I remember on the first day after our marriage, I needed to kneel in front of each person one-by-one in the whole village to offer tea. My mother-in-law forced me down and made me ask everyone. It was really hard for me to adapt. It's not like one or two persons, but the whole village! My husband wanted everyone to like me, so he just asked me to comply. It was really hard to accept. Then, my mother-in-law told me a lot of rules as a Shunde woman, including the 'three obediences and four virtues to the husband.' I had to eat in the kitchen while others ate at the table. Once I said, 'Maybe we should live separately. I don't accept this.' Then my mother-in-law yelled at me, 'Do you know how to be a wife?' She scolded me like crazy. I lived under great fear.

Unlike Jiayi's second experience as a "knowledgeable" person in the poor rural village of her fiancé, her first marriage to a rural husband from a higher-class rural family presented a totally different experience. Her situation in this marriage was far more similar to that of rural migrant wives in urban families. In this rural family, the mother-in-law forced her daughter-in-law to comply with regional rural Shunde culture. Coming from the urban Guangzhou culture, Jiayi resisted. Yet the overt power displayed by the mother-in-law forced her to comply. In addition, she rationalized her compliance by saying that she did it for her husband without challenging the unfairness of the request – an indication of latent power.

Another indication of latent power from Jiayi's interview was her recollection that she stopped complaining after she was beaten by her mother-in-law for talking about these daily conflicts with her rural husband. Hidden in this story is patriarchal power over the mother-in-law. Though the mother-in-law was executing these rules, she herself once deferred to men and to her mother-in-law when she was young. By unquestioningly repeating generational cycles of gendered oppression against her daughter-in-law, she sustained the patriarchal system without noticing it. Though the rural family's high socioeconomic status was only mentioned as background in Jiayi's interview, this case shows that the urban power was reversed in this context. This experience contrasted starkly with Jiayi's later engagement where she intervened in her rural father-in-law's abuse of his wife; she did not display such boldness in this rich family.

Strategies to Resist Multiple Oppressions

The stories presented thus far suggest that, in the matrix of domination involved in cross-*hukou* families, there were "few *pure* victims or oppressors" (Collins 2002, p. 287). For instance, some husbands possessed little status under the *hukou* system but still enjoyed a man's gender

privilege. These differentials of privilege across categories allowed individuals to reduce their oppression using various strategies. For instance, rural husbands did gender and resisted deferring to urban practices by actively demarcating the rural village as "their home" and the urban site as "a workplace." They also resisted speaking the urban local language and questioned why their urban wives spoke Cantonese rather than Putonghua with their children. None of the rural husbands in my sample converted to an urban *hukou*, and they all invested primarily in rural housing. Such investments signaled the importance of patrilocality to their urban wives. By emotionally detaching from the urban family and accumulating wealth in the rural villages, these men created "alternative prestige hierarchies and forms of power" (Schwalbe 2000: 427).

Jiayi, the poorer urban wife who was oppressed by her rich rural family resisted by divorcing her husband. Though she lost custody of her son because of her inability to provide, her urban *hukou* provided her with basic social security. She also was able to use her privilege in her urban job search, and eventually became a senior manager, then a factory owner. In the next section, I focus on the most oppressed group – poor rural migrant wives – to illustrate that, even though they appear to be "pure" victims under the matrix of domination, they have agency to improve their stay in the host society. Admittedly, "doing difference" is still ubiquitous among these women.

Cultural adaptation – Playing the urban rules

One strategy used by all rural migrant women was attempts "to obliterate signs that have come to be stigma symbols" so that they would not attract attention as outsiders (Goffman 1963). This was especially evident in migrant women's private effort to master the local language. Regardless of whether they were from Hubei, Hunan, Sichuan, or Guangxi, many successfully

spoke fluent Cantonese with their urban family members. Some learned the language by watching TV shows, and others through language classes, and yet others through networks of migrants who had stayed in the city for a long time. They adapted so well that some even forgot their own native languages:

> [*Author: Really? Is Cantonese easier for you?*] I have spoken it for so long and have stayed here for so long. It's not that I can't speak Hunan dialect. If I stayed there longer, I can pick it up again. It's very hard for me to change back and forth as I am not very educated.
>
> (Ming Chun, a 61-year-old rural migrant woman from Hunan)

Rural wives gain greater acceptance from their parents-in-law when they speak the local language. But I did not hear of any case where urban in-laws or urban spouses learned the language of rural spouses.

Rural wives also adapted to avoid teasing for looking like a *cungu* and having no fashion sense by changing their style of dress to "pass." Like the rural migrant women in the service sector in Otis's study (2008), these rural wives practiced "aspirational urbanism" as they strategized to reduce their association with the social stigma against rural migrants. Culture, body, and language are all terrains for power. Though the subordinate group (in this case, rural migrant women) can adapt to the local culture and "derive… compensatory benefits from relationships with members of the dominating group" (Schwaltz 2000), doing so also legitimizes and reproduces inequality.

Filial piety – a two-faced project

> I never fight with my mother-in-law. I need to care about her feelings and my husband's feelings. No matter what, she is old and a local here. She won't listen to me anyway. I only nag my husband, but when I talked about his mom every day, he got mad at me. Therefore, I sometimes keep this to myself. A message often appears in my dreams: *I need to change the environment, or our marriage will end.*
>
> (Ting, a 26-year-old rural migrant woman from Sichuan)

Most rural daughters-in-law coped with their position in the family by maintaining good relationships with urban relatives in their everyday interactions. They emphasized the importance of deference through "bearing with their patronizing manner," "saying 'yes' all the time," or "just pretend[ing] that they cannot understand." However, the practice of filial piety prescribed that the son and his wife must not only respect the husbands' elderly parents but also live with them. Yet as the rural migrant wives who live with the husband's elderly parents appeared to honor filial piety, they also launched a secret project against it by pleading with their husbands to "change the environment" and move out of the parents-in-law's home. For rural migrant wives, this was the most practical choice to reduce their obligation to "do difference" in day-to-day interactions. However, from the husband's perspective, it was not the most economical choice. Rural migrant wives had very little say in the decision move because they were not the major or even an equal provider for the household and they could not buy a house on their own without formally converting to a local urban *hukou*:

> I always said, 'I want to move. I want to move.' But my husband wasn't very active. We could have applied for public housing a lot earlier but my husband was procrastinating. He is very lazy… dragging [his feet] and not submitting the form. […] Once he said if we move, who cooks? […] If I had money, I would definitely move out now. But I have no money and I have no say. I am willing to live in substandard housing in order to move out.
>
> (Hai, a 32-year-old rural migrant woman from Hainan)

Although it took time, nagging was often a successful strategy in the long run. For instance, this urban husband described his parents' relationship with his ex-rural wife:

> Their relationship was pretty good on the surface. But privately, my wife complained a lot: 'Dad and Mom were too harsh to me. They don't allow me to do so many things.' My wife wanted to play, but my parents wanted her to 'work like a horse and a cow' (*zuoniu zuo ma*). Huh… So I think, okay then. I rented a house for her between my place and her native place. Then, she occasionally came to see my parents.
>
> (Chang, a 42-year-old urban Guangzhou man)

Similarly, after complaining about their live-in arrangement for three years, Hai and Ting also convinced their husbands to take action by applying for public housing and by looking for a nice apartment, respectively. Although they had not yet moved, both women had hope that they would. But many wives – like Baozha, Shan, Shun, and Lan – were still working to launch their secret project that might never materialize. While such secret projects illustrate rural migrant wives' ingenuity to re-work power in the family, the invisible power as prescribed by *hukou,* class, and gender is reproduced: their fates remained very much contingent on the choices of their richer urban husbands.

Gender Alliance – A hidden space for coping

The third strategy was to amass social capital in the urban areas. Some rural migrant wives observed that their urban sisters-in-law also faced a common enemy (i.e., their mother-in-law) under the gender and generational hierarchy of the patriarchal system, though to a lesser extent than the rural wives. These women coped with their situation by asking their (mostly urban) sisters-in-law if they could look out for one another. For example, Ting befriended her three urban sisters-in-law, and they gossiped about their mother-in-law in secret, calling her names like "Black-faced god" (*Heilianshen*). Jokes like these brightened the lives of rural women, but their interactions with sisters-in-law remained precarious because of their rural background. For instance, Ting told me that her mother-in-law played favorites by smiling and greeting her urban sisters-in-law's parents with enthusiasm while ignoring her rural parents.

Instead of emboldening women to resist, these urban networks of sisters-in-law supported women to put up with their situation. Hai said,

> My (urban) sisters-in-law are very nice to me. They take care of me while I am pregnant. They emphasized a few times that it's lucky that I'll have the baby before getting married

> because the in-laws look down on me – a rural out-of-province woman. When I told them my grievances, they showed understanding but they asserted that I should bear with it no matter what, or I would put my husband in a difficult position.
>
> (Hai, a 32-years-old rural migrant woman from Hainan)

In addition, not all rural migrant women were able to get along with their urban sisters-in-law. Increasingly, rural women created a "telespace" to vent – a hidden space where they shared their suffering with others through instant messaging. Because many rural wives were homebound, they communicated with other mothers online. The Internet group that some respondents joined was the "Guangzhou mothers' QQ group." This group was open to people of different *hukou* staying in Guangzhou. These women often share complaints about in-laws and husbands, stories about their divorces, and advice on the legal process of *hukou* conversion, children, health care, and other issues. The "Guangzhou mothers' QQ group" had 187 members, and there were also numerous other similar groups online. These groups often engage in long discussions of individual cases. One such case involved a mother from Jiangxi who divorced her Guangzhou husband because he had an affair, but the mother-in-law hid the woman's son. That case produced 99 exchanges in the hours of 17:02-21:02 on 9 March 2015 alone. Though people's comments were brief, they showed sympathy for the "victim."

Online groups constituted a "hidden space" where women could air grievances and join a social network based on motherhood identity that cross-cut various social boundaries and seemed to reduce the *hukou* inequalities. However, these gender alliances were a double-edged sword. Because they built mostly same-sex networks, women remained trapped in highly gender segregated gendered worlds. The structural equivalence among women's various social spheres made it difficult for them to amass social capital that could reduce their dependence on their husbands. Furthermore, the relegation of women's actions to the hidden space of the Internet

space may reinforce the notion that the rural people cannot negotiate with urban people on equal ground, though the Internet also has potential as a revolutionary force.

CONCLUSION

This article focuses on inter-*hukou* families, applying intersectionality theory to illustrate how the legal framework of citizenship in China (the *hukou* policy) and the patriarchal system work hand-in-hand to construct systemic inequalities in terms of gender, the rural to urban divide, and social class. Despite sharing the same nationality as urban Chinese, rural migrants were denied access to substantive citizenship as full members of urban society. At the same time, they were also treated as outsiders within their urban families (corroborating Tan and Short's findings [2004]). By contrast, urban spouses were readily accepted by rural family members and the rural community.

Because these power dynamics varied alongside intersectional family configurations, they provide an example of a case where there were very few *pure* oppressors or victims (Collins 2002). While marginalized men (e.g., rural migrant husbands) were de-masculinized by the matrilocal experience, they maintained their gender privileges by establishing "a compromised form of patrilocality" – that was also embraced by their urban wives. As a multiply-marginalized group, rural migrant wives' experience was contingent upon their socioeconomic status, which seemed to trump hierarchies of generation and gender. Poor rural migrant women were trapped as "unpaid reproductive workers" in urban families by interlocking rings of oppression that were difficult to break. Even so, these women demonstrated creative strategies of resistance that sometimes reduced oppression in one way while reproducing an existing unequal structure in another. These findings suggest that power differences and inequalities are not rooted simply in

demographic categories. Instead, systemic inequalities are accomplished through "the prolonged experience of interactions informed by the structures of domination" (Bourdieu 1998).

This article provided three major contributions to the literature: First, by comparing the experiences of migrant husbands and migrant wives who intermarried with locals in the context of the host society, this study filled the gap of the citizenship/migration literature, which tends to focus only on migrant wives. My comparative approach included migrant husbands and provided insight into how gender organizes migrants' lived experiences and their strategies of adaption. Second, this study strengthened the literature on family and the feminist literature by moving beyond a dyadic negotiation of power in households. I argue that dyadic family dynamics are largely a Eurocentric concept. Past studies in Indian, Indo-Fijian, Chinese, Korean, Taiwanese cultures found evidence that senior women such as the wife's mother-in-law (Fernandez 1997; Counts, Brown, and Campbell 1999; Wang 2007; Kim 2013; Lui 2013) are deeply involved in power negotiation in the household. However, their importance is often less recognized in the family and the gender literature. Third, this study contributes to the literature on intersectionality through its system-level approach to complex intersecting identities that attends to the comparative, contextual, and complex dimensions of analyzing inequalities and power. This approach "can enrich microlevel analysis, tightening the connections among power relations, institutional contexts, and lived experience" (Choo and Ferree 2010 p. 136).

A caveat to the interpretation of data involves the small sample or zero sample among some groups. There is no sample of cross-*hukou* couples in which the husband is urban, the wife is rural, and the wife has a higher socioeconomic status than the husband. Though my sample includes a case where the wife is urban and poorer than her rural husband, it is only a single case. Most cross-*hukou* couples in my studies involved matches where the husband was urban and

richer than his rural migrant wife. The small sample therefore creates problems of representation and generalization, but Becker (2008) argues that we should attend to cases that were "absent" from the sample. Why were these types of matches rare? The rarity might reflect the overlapping forces of gender, class, and *hukou* as determinants of matches between partners, corroborating the mate selection literature with regard to how various inequalities shape marriage matches (e.g., Fu 2001; Sassler and Joyner 2010).

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APPENDIX A

Data	Whether the questions for respondents' *hukou* information are available or not					Strategies of identifying rural or urban [2]
	Current *hukou* (1)	**Time of getting urban *hukou* (2)**	**Reason for conversion (3)**	**Current registered place (local vs non-local) (4)**	**When move to local (5)**	
CGSS 2006	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	R= Report (1) is rural or Report (2) > first marriage U= Report (1) is urban or Report (2) < first marriage
CGSS 2008	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	R= Report (1) is rural or Report (2) > first marriage U= Report (1) is urban or Report (2) < first marriage
CGSS 2010	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	R= Report (1) is rural or Report (2) > first marriage U= Report (1) is urban or Report (2) < first marriage
	Whether the questions for partner's *hukou* information are available or not					
	Current *hukou*	**Time of getting urban *hukou***	**Reason for conversion**	**Current registered place (local vs non-local)**	**When move to local**	**Strategies to identify rural or urban**
CGSS 2006	Yes	No	No	No	No	R= Report (1) is rural U= Report (1) is urban
CGSS 2008	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	R= Report (1) is rural or Report (2) > first marriage U= Report (1) is urban or Report (2) < first marriage
CGSS 2010	Yes	No	No	No	No	R= Report (1) is rural U= Report (1) is urban

[2] Respondents reporting (1) as "rural" and (4) as "local" and interviewed at urban field site are not included in the sample.

VITA

Lake Lui received her Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Washington. Her research interests include family, gender, and migration. Her dissertation examined the mate selection process of rural migrants in urban China and the family life of inter-*hukou* married couples through combining national survey data with original ethnographic research conducted in Southern China. She has also written a book and some papers on the household division of labor among Hong Kong families. Current collaborative projects include a study of domestic violence against rural women in Shenzhen and Hebei, and the relationship between status competition and consumption of the newly rich Chinese.