

(Library ebook) Out to Work: Migration, Gender, and the Changing Lives of Rural Women in Contemporary China

## Out to Work: Migration, Gender, and the Changing Lives of Rural Women in Contemporary China

*Arianne M. Gaetano*

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**Arianne M. Gaetano : Out to Work: Migration, Gender, and the Changing Lives of Rural Women in Contemporary China** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Out to Work: Migration, Gender, and the Changing Lives of Rural Women in Contemporary China:

Out to Work is a fresh, engaging account of the lives of a group of migrant women who, while in their teens, moved from rural towns to Beijing to take up work as maids, office cleaners, hotel chambermaids, and migrant schoolteachers. Part of the vanguard of China's great rural-urban migration in the 1990s, these women were deprived of an education because their parents were unable to pay school fees for both sons and daughters. They also faced strong objections from parents, who feared for their daughters' safety and reputations. Gaetano kept in touch with several women for over a decade, and her longitudinal perspective and biographical focus provide a rich empirical basis for her analysis. Through sustained and close contact, she learned about the women's employment searches and interviews, first jobs, promotions and job changes, shopping and leisure activities, self-study efforts, illnesses, romantic relationships, and marriage and motherhood. By accompanying them to visit their rural families at festival time, and meeting their coworkers, friends, employers, and eventually even their in-laws, she obtained fascinating insights about their lives. Gaetano shows that the structural constraints the women experienced stem from ideological barriers and discriminatory practices associated with gender and rural-urban hierarchies. To some extent the women themselves accepted prevailing ideas about gendered obligations and propriety and internalized prevailing ideas about rurality's inferior status. However, they sought to transform themselves and realize their aspirations by cultivating social networks that connected them to more desirable jobs and marriage prospects; by careful selection of a future spouse who shared their vision of social mobility; and through smart economic and emotional investments in their spouses, children, and affines. This multifaceted exploration of migrant women's lives demonstrates how the intersection of gendered norms and rural-urban inequalities shaped the women's identities and desires and makes clear the palpable material consequences the decision to migrate made in their lives. Overall, the book convincingly shows that migration for work advances rural women's gender equality and increases their ability to exercise agency and thus their chances to achieve success and build better lives for themselves. But it also makes clear that the socioeconomic mobility they find is inadequate to completely dismantle the wider gender and rural-urban inequalities that have made these women's journeys so difficult.

This book is a fresh, engaging account of the life stories of a cohort of rural Chinese migrant women who worked in Beijing as domestic workers and hotel housekeepers, based on the author's ten-year-plus period of ethnographic work.-- G. Li, California State University, Long Beach "CHOICE" This book is a fresh, engaging account of the life stories of a cohort of rural Chinese migrant women who worked in Beijing as domestic workers and hotel housekeepers, based on the author's ten-year-plus period of ethnographic work. (G. Li, California State University, Long Beach CHOICE) This book's unique approach offers readers an intimate look at the impact of labor migration on young women over a ten-year period. We follow Gaetano's informants as they adapt to Beijing, visit their home villages, and move on to new jobs and postmarital homes. Gaetano does an excellent job showing how these young female migrants navigate constraints and challenges, enhancing their own and their families' social and economic status. (Hong Zhang, Colby College) This fresh, highly readable book demonstrates vividly how gender norms and rural-urban inequalities not only shaped women's identities and aspirations but also had palpable physical and material consequences for them. Yet despite the discrimination and hardship they experienced, they were able to build better lives for themselves. Gaetano's book convincingly shows that labor migration has increased many rural women's possibilities for exercising agency. (Rachel Murphy, University of Oxford)