

## **MIGRANT PARENTING IN CHINA**

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### **Key implications**

1. Mass migration makes families geographically dispersed and challenges family dynamics and parent-child interactions in their daily lives.
2. The impact of rural-urban migration on childrearing is complicated, which is mainly demonstrated in the transformation and resilience of the gendered labor division in childcare between migrant couples and across generations in migrant families.



### **Background**

Mass rural-urban migration in Mainland China since the 1970s has given rise to the issue of left-behind children, who have become a serious social problem in China and attracted both public and academic attention. Previous studies on this topic have mostly focused on the behavioral and psychosocial problems of left-behind children caused by their physical separation from their parents. The agency of migrant parents and their parental practices in childrearing have not been discussed. Meanwhile, an increasing number of rural-urban migrant parents in China bring their children to their city destinations in the past decade. When children join the migratory journey as dependents, family migration becomes more complicated because the migrant parents must reevaluate their migration and settlement decisions and negotiate family collaboration to attend to the various needs of their migrant children. This research project examines the parenting practices of rural-urban migrants in the context of both family separation and family migration.

### **Research methods**

Qualitative data were collected between 2014 and 2016. The main field sites include three receiving cities of rural-urban migrants (Shenzhen, Dongguan and Guangzhou in Guangdong province) and two sending provinces of these migrants (Sichuan province and Hunan province). Qualitative interviewing was used as the main research method and field observation was also used to supplement and verify the interview data. The main informants were migrant parents with children (either left-behind children or migrant children) at the time of interview.

### **Key findings**

The major findings of this project have shown that mass rural-urban migration in mainland China has greatly transformed the family dynamics and parenthood in migrant families.

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Specifically, it shapes the parental perception of good mothering/fathering of migrants in different periods of time and impacts their daily parenting practices and interactions with left-behind family members in different social contexts.



Although the transition of migrant parenting over time has been observed, the changes in gendered labor division in childcare in migrant families have shown a complicated picture. While many migrant mothers make economic contributions to their families, they are still the primary caregivers shouldering most childcare duties, such as physical and emotional care. While migrant fathers usually play the role of breadwinner, some young migrant fathers reported more involvement in childcare than their old counterparts. Grandmothers, both left-behind and migrant, provide great childcare assistance for migrant parents, yet their involvement to some extents reinforces the gendered labor division in childcare.

## RELATED PUBLICATIONS

Peng, Yinni. 2018. "Bringing Children to the Cities: Gendered Migrant Parenting and the Family Dynamics of Rural-Urban Migrants in China." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, DOI: 10.1080/1369183X.2018.1510308.

Peng, Yinni. 2018. "Migrant Mothering in Transition: A Qualitative Study of the Maternal Narratives and Practices of Two Generations of Rural-Urban Migrant Mothers in Southern China." *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*, 79(1-2): 16-35.

## REQUEST FOR MORE DETAILS

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