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Bring Children to the Cities: Parenthood and Family Dynamics of Rural-to-Urban Migrant Workers in South China

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China's rural-to-urban migration has given rise to the issue of internal migrant families. After 2000, when the Chinese government has been gradually relaxing its household-registration (*hukou*) control and some urban areas have been offering some basic social welfare to migrant workers, more and more rural-to-urban migrant parents bring their children to the cities. The number of floating children or migrant children in urban China increased from 19.82 million in 2000 to 25.33 million in 2005. Although the left-behind children of migrant workers have attracted great attention from both the public and the academic, the issue of floating children/migrant children is understudied. Limited studies on floating children (e.g. Lan, 2014; Ling, 2015) focus on their institutional incorporation in urban China, especially their segmented incorporation in the urban education system. Little attention has been paid to how these migrant children are raised by their migrant parents in urban China. To fill the gap, this research investigates the migrant parenthood of rural migrant workers bringing their children to urban China. Drawing on the qualitative data obtained from 43 migrant parents who bring their children to the cities in South China, this research argues that family migration, structural constraints on migrant workers, and the inferior socio-economic status of migrant parents in the cities have greatly shaped their family dynamics, conjugal collaboration in childrearing, and their perceptions and practices of gendered parenthood. Migrant parents with migrant children in the cities are caught in and struggling between their desire for urban parenthood and their limited resources in measuring up to the standard of urban parenthood. To cope with this parenthood dilemma, migrant parents in this study have been found to adopt various strategies to fulfill their parental duties. Meanwhile, the traditional gendered parenthood and labor division in childrearing in rural China has been greatly challenged and transformed by these migrant workers' parenting practices and experiences in urban China.