

# **Rural – Urban Differentiation, Migration and Emerging Educational Inequalities**

**A case Study of Left-behind Children in Ganqiu Village, Yunnan**

**Hongmei He**



**Submitted for the Master Programme in Anthropology of  
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**Department of Social Anthropology**

**University of Bergen**

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## Abstract

After China's policy of reform and opening up to the outside world was carried out in the late 1970s, millions of farmers are flocking to China's cities, seeking work with a hope of improving the living standard of their families in rural home villages. In Ganqiu village, over the past decade, many rural elderly, women and children have been separated from the family's breadwinner as sons, husbands and fathers head to the cities in search of an off-farm income.

The rise of internal migration (also known as floating population 'liu dong ren kou') in China has greatly stimulated researchers' interest in studying trends and the characteristics of this population and its role in the China's economic transformations. Recent estimates suggest that as many as 58 million children are left behind in migrant-sending regions while their parents are away working. China's household registration (hukou) system makes it very difficult for parents to bring their children to cities. The absence of working parents brings both short-term and long-term consequences for children left behind. The impact of the rural-urban migration on children of migrants is of interest to both academics and policy makers, not only because they affect current social stability both in the countryside and in cities, more importantly because these children are the future of the economic and social performance of China. Generally speaking, large-scale migration of people from rural to urban areas has caused a range of consequences: a)it changes the demographic composition of local rural communities; b)it changes the balance between workers and consumers in rural households; c)it changes the importance of off-farm income (remittances) to rural households; d)it changes consumption preferences in rural communities; f)it changes people's knowledge and understanding of their position in the wider world; g)it affects the way household development cycle have impact on left-behind children.

This paper focuses on the impact of migration on the education of left behind children. I shall try to address this issue by comparing the educational performance of children in families where at least one parent migrate with children who stay with parents in the rural home area. The issue of the impact of absent parents on children's education is a considered an important policy issue in China today. Given the enormous size of and variation within the Chinese population, I assume that there will also be variations in this impact and in the

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conditions that affect this variation. I shall try to explore this impact by a particular case study from Ganqiu village in Zhenxiong County, Yunnan province, and I don't assume that my findings are generally representative of the situation in the country as whole. However, some conditions such as hukou system, national economic policy, and the structure of the educational system are quite similar. Other conditions like local economic development, parents' social-economic positions, guardians' educational situation, etc may vary substantially. I shall try to explore of China-wide and particular local conditions are intertwined with each other to generate consequence on the left-behind children in Ganqiu. This may stimulate further research to explore how variations in local conditions impact education of left behind children.

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# Contents

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....III**

**ABSTRACT.....IV**

**CONTENTS ..... VI**

**LIST OF FIGURE ..... IX**

**LIST OF TABLE ..... X**

**1. INTRODUCTION ..... 1**

**1.1 PROBLEM FIELD ..... 1**

**1.2 RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE ..... 2**

**1.3 FIELD RESEARCH AND METHOD ..... 3**

**1.4 CONCEPTUAL CONSIDERATIONS ..... 5**

*1.4.1. Socialization ..... 5*

*1.4.2. Forms of Capital..... 7*

**1.5 PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS ON RESEARCH QUESTIONS ..... 7**

**2. A REVIEW ABOUT EXISTING STUDIES ON LEFT BEHIND CHILDREN IN A GLOBALIZING WORLD ..... 9**

**2.1 GLOBALIZATION ..... 9**

**2.2 COMPARATIVE STUDIES OF THE IMPACT OF MIGRATION ON CHILDREN’S EDUCATION AND LIFE CHANCES..... 9**

**3. CHINA SPECIFIC CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES ON EDUCATION..... 11**

**3.1 THE CONFUCIAN IMPACT ..... 11**

**3.2 GUANXI AND ACCUMULATION OF SOCIAL CAPITAL ..... 13**

**4. FEATURES OF CHINA’S POLITICAL ECONOMY ..... 15**

**4.1 THE HOKUO SYSTEM..... 15**

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4.2	DUAL ECONOMY .....	17
4.3	THE LEGACY OF MAO AND DENG .....	19
4.4	MODERN CHINESE PERSPECTIVES OF LEFT BEHIND CHILDREN.....	20
5.	SOME ASPECTS OF THE GEOGRAPHICAL AND EDUCATIONAL SETTING OF THE STUDY.....	23
5.1	GANQIU VILLAGE.....	24
5.2	ABOUT GANQIU PRIMARY SCHOOL.....	28
6.	THE SITUATION OF THE LEFT-BEHIND CHILDREN IN GANQIU VILLAGE.....	31
6.1	LEFT-BEHIND CHILDREN ---IN THE EYES OF VILLAGERS .....	34
6.2	VOICES FROM THE LEFT-BEHIND CHILDREN .....	35
7.	MIGRATION .....	39
7.1	REASONS FOR MIGRATING.....	39
7.2	VOICES FROM THE MIGRANTS.....	39
7.3	WHO MIGRATES?.....	41
7.4	WHY DO NOT MIGRANTS BRING THEIR CHILDREN ALONG TO CITIES? .....	42
8.	THE CONSEQUENCES OF MIGRATION ON LEFT-BEHIND CHILDREN.....	43
8.1	ABSENT PARENTS AND THE SITUATION OF LEFT-BEHIND CHILDREN .....	44
8.2	THE DURATION OF PARENTS' ABSENCE.....	45
8.3	THE MAIN TYPES OF GUARDIANSHIP .....	45
8.4	PARENTAL ABSENCES, REMITTANCES AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT .....	48
	8.4.1 Results and Discussion of second graders score.....	53
	8.4.2 Results and discussion of the fifth graders score .....	56
	8.4.3 Results and discussion of consequences of mothers' educational level.....	57
	8.4.3. Results and Discussion of grandparents' educational level.....	57

---

<b>8.5</b>	<b>COMPARISON BETWEEN THE LEFT-BEHIND CHILDREN AND NON-LEFT-BEHIND CHILDREN’S ATTITUDE AND INTEREST .....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>8.6</b>	<b>COMPARISON BETWEEN THE LEFT-BEHIND CHILDREN AND NON-LEFT-BEHIND CHILDREN’S STUDY TIME .....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>8.7</b>	<b>LEFT-BEHIND CHILDREN’S NEED FOR ASSISTANCE.....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>8.8</b>	<b>THE LEFT-BEHIND CHILDREN AND THEIR FUTURE LIFE CAREER .....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>9.</b>	<b>THE EFFECT OF MIGRATION ON THE LEFT-BEHIND CHILDREN’S FUTURE LIFE CAREER.....</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>9.1</b>	<b>LEFT-BEHIND CHILDREN’S EDUCATION, MIGRATION, LIFE CAREER.....</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>9.2</b>	<b>MOST DROPOUTS ARE LEFT-BEHIND CHILDREN .....</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>9.3</b>	<b>COMMENTS ON LEFT-BEHIND CHILDREN .....</b>	<b>68</b>
	<i>9.3.1 Comments from guardians.....</i>	<i>68</i>
	<i>9.3.2 Teachers’ Comments on the Left-behind Children.....</i>	<i>71</i>
<b>9.4</b>	<b>POOR RURAL SCHOOL EDUCATION HAVE NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THE LEFT-BEHIND CHILDREN’S FUTURE LIFE CHANCES.....</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>10.</b>	<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>78</b>
	<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>84</b>
	<b>INTERNET RESOURCES .....</b>	<b>94</b>
	<b>APPENDIX 1.....</b>	<b>96</b>
	<b>APPENDIX 2.....</b>	<b>98</b>
	<b>APPENDIX 3.....</b>	<b>99</b>
	<b>GLOSSARY .....</b>	<b>100</b>



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## List of Figure

<b>Figure 5.1 The location of Zhenxiong County in China. [Source: the Internet].</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Figure 5.2 The location of Linkou Township, Zhenxiong County. [Source: the Internet.]</b> .....	<b>24</b>
<b>Figure 5.3 The two left-behind children are making popcorn by themselves. Taken by Hongmei He, August, 2009.</b> .....	<b>27</b>
<b>Figure 5.4 The poster for the government advocating one child policy .Taken by Hongmei He, September, 2009.</b> .....	<b>27</b>
<b>Figure 5.5 Ganqiu Primary School. Taken by Hongmei He</b> .....	<b>28</b>
<b>Figure 5.6 I was a volunteer teacher in Ganqiu Primary School. Taken by my colleague, October, 2009.</b> .....	<b>29</b>
<b>Figure 5.7 The Pupils and the headteacher of the Ganqiu Primary School. Taken by Hongmei He, September, 2009.</b> .....	<b>30</b>
<b>Figure 5.8 My colleague’s dormitory. Taken by Hongmei He, September, 2009.</b> .....	<b>30</b>
<b>Figure 6.1 The Map of House Structure in Ganqiu Village. Drawn by Hongmei He</b> .....	<b>31</b>
<b>Figure 6.2 A left-behind child is having lunch. Taken by Hongmei He, September, 2009.</b> .....	<b>32</b>
<b>Figure 6.3 Grandfather, left-behind child and their house .Taken by Hongmei He, October, 2009.</b> .....	<b>34</b>
<b>Figure 8.1 The help and supervision from their guardians</b> .....	<b>60</b>

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## List of Table

<b>Table 8.1 Types of the Guardianship and the figure of the left-behind children in Ganqiu village .....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Table 8.2 The Second Graders' Scores in Ganqiu Primary School in the Spring Semester .....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Table 8.3 The Fifth Graders' Scores in Ganqiu Primary School in the Spring Semester' .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Table 8.4 Left-behind Children's Mothers Educational Level .....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Table 8.5 Left-behind Children's Grandparents' Educational Level .....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Table 8.6 Left-behind children's appeal for help in study and daily life .....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Table 9.1 The Comparison between the left-behind children and non-left-behind children on the motivations of study .....</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Table 9.2 Teachers' Comments on the Left-behind Children .....</b>	<b>74</b>

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Problem Field

According to UNICEF's Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC), which defines a child as "every human being below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable under the child majority is attained earlier"<sup>1</sup>. But the age limit varies according to countries (and policies). In this thesis, I will narrow down its definition of including anyone under 16 as a child. I will mainly focus on the children whose parent(s), have gone to cities to seek employment and to be a migrant workers (who have left behind their children in the home villages).

These children are often left behind in the care of a single parent, grandparents or other relatives. It is problematic to estimate the number of children. Difficulties in determining the age range to be used in defining childhood are difficult. In China, National migration statistics inherently complicated as different researchers have employed different criteria and calculation methods to calculate the number of left-behind children (*liu shou er tong*) in China. The statistics of migrant workers in China, varies from one study to the others, according to China's National Statistic Bureau, there were 0.149 billion migrant workers (*nong min gong*) in China. Some researchers say that there are more than 0.2 billion migrant workers in China, 14 million migrant children and 58 million left-behind children, and among them 40 million were under 14 years old.<sup>2</sup>

Due to the confusions of the conception of migrant workers and left-behind children, the figure of migrant workers as well as left-behind children vary from one researcher to the other.

My problem field is focused on the way migration has impact on left-behind children's socialization in general and on their formal education in particular. Socialization deals with

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1 Convention on the rights of the child U.N. General Assembly Documents A1RES144125 (12 December 1989) with Annex.

2 <http://news.163.com/09/1119/17/5OGGBQOA00013U8R.html>

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acquisition of knowledge in a broad sense as expressed by Barth “what a person employs to interpret and act on the world. Under this caption I wish to include feelings (attitudes) as well as information, embodied skills as well as verbal taxonomies and concepts: all ways the ways of understanding that we use to make up our experienced, grasped reality.”<sup>3</sup>(Barth, 2002:p.1) This relevance of this perspective for my problem-field is that it directs my attention to the different social mechanisms (informal and formal) that affects the knowledge children internalize and how relevant this knowledge is for their life chances (cope in modern Chinese society). This is important both on the individual level and on the macro level of political economy. It may be generally expected that absence of one or both parents will affect the kind knowledge children acquire. The question is how it affects it. Such absence of parents is quite common in many Asian countries. Is there anything special about the effects it has in China, or maybe it is something special in the way Chinese scholars assume it may affect educational performance. Comparing studies of left-behind children’s educational performance in other countries provides an important background to my study. Some important premises in China’s specific educational culture constitute another important context. Thirdly, there are some very important conditions in China’s political economic developments over the last 100 years that have created great intergenerational discontinuities and ambiguities that may affect the socialization of left-behind children in ways different from what is found in other countries. In order to give the reader an understanding of why we in China are so concerned about left behind children’s education, I find it necessary to discuss these general conditions before I present description and analysis of my own specific field material and some methodological considerations in the way I went about my study.

## **1.2 Research Significance**

### **(a) Scholarly**

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<sup>3</sup> (Fredrik Barth, 2002), An Anthropology of knowledge. .*Current Anthropology* Volume 43, Number 1, February 2002.

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Contribution to a comparative understanding of the problem field by showing the conditions that affect the particular form it takes in my particular case. The interesting point then becomes to compare with other cases where conditions are different. Such comparison may possibly serve to test the hypotheses I have developed.

**(b) Practical policy making**

The better understanding of has of the processes that affect acquisition of knowledge among children (left-behind and non-left-behind) the better chance one has of designing measures to improve education. Education is important because it affects children's life chances.

### **1.3 Field research and method**

Although I paid a short visit to a Yi <sup>4</sup>village in 2008,-I found that none of them speak Yi language; all of them speak a Han<sup>5</sup> language with a strong accent. Thus, at that time, I had to communicate with them via an interpreter. During the last short visit, I just had a general knowledge about the geographic situation and some basic knowledge of this place. My four and half months fieldwork trip was divided into four phases: first, I took a two-week survey (in the beginning of July, in 2009) in Linkou town as pre-investigation for choosing my field village. With the knowledge from both this travel experience and other materials, I selected Ganqiu village with 3689 people as my field site<sup>6</sup>. During the second phase, I spent two month from the middle of July to the middle of September in 2009 staying in Wanchang village group, and made a concentrated investigation in the village. The third phase: from the middle of September to the middle of November, I did an internship as a volunteer teacher to teach Grade Four and Grade Six students Chinese and math, sometimes also music. During the internship period, I managed to make students trust me and regard me as a teacher as well as a good friend. I played with them, told them some interesting stories. The last phase: from the middle of December to the end of December, I went back to my field site again and tried to deal with the problems and puzzles which I had encountered.

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<sup>4</sup> A minority ethnic group in China

<sup>5</sup> The majority group in China.

<sup>6</sup> The statistics was from the local government.

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Working as a teacher in the school was not an easy task for me but I really experienced what it means to be a teacher in rural school. Due to such a position, I got a chance to exchange feelings freely with my colleagues and got to know more about the pupils.

There are 410 students in the Ganqiu Primary School but just 8 teachers. Due to lack of teachers, I was persuaded by headmaster of Ganqiu Primary School to work as both Chinese and Math teacher for 75 pupils of Grade Six and 63 pupils of Grade Four. Usually I was in the school from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. At the very beginning, they were very shy to talk with me. In order to get more information about them, I asked the students to write some compositions and dairies. From these compositions and dairies, I could know what these children usually do after school and their feelings they expressed towards their parents.

In addition to participant observation in the school, I also visited 35 left-behind children's families and 20 non-left-behind children's families. I was able to gain more information on the living conditions of these children (both left-behind and non-left-behind children). Through talking with their family members, I was able to gain the information on the experiences of the parents, grandparents, relatives of the children, as well as the attitude towards children's schooling, and the future plans and so forth.

As to the language, I had no problem of communicating with my pupils and my colleagues in mandarin. But when I visited the pupils' families, I suffered from some communication difficulties, at the very beginning, because the local people, especially the old speak Han language with a very strong accent, but as time went by, I was able to understand them well in the end.

During my field work, I have combined the methods of field research (participation observation and semi-structured interviews) with reading of a range of written sources. In order to provide a literature review, I have consulted a variety of secondary sources combining both scholarly articles and monographs in English and mandarin Chinese. However, I found that most articles written by Chinese scholars in the fields of sociology, education, psychology are often written as policy recommendations. For the whole fieldwork period, participant observation always remained as central method of my research. I did participant observation not only in the school but also in the village. I worked with them in the daytime, helped them doing some farming work, such as picking potatoes and harvesting corns in the field and carrying potatoes and corns to their house. Sometimes, I did some

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housework for them, such as simple cooking and cleaning work. At night, I tried to chat with the villagers or listened to their gossips and so on. I worked as a volunteer teacher in the Ganqiu Primary School and tried to participate in the process of learning and teaching with the pupils and my colleagues.

As for the semi-structured interview, I prepared a range of questions from structured interviews with the flexibility and reciprocity of informal conversations. I have chosen to rely on short hand notes during the semi-structured interviews. Although, I know the accuracy a tape recording, I did not chose tape recording in my interviews, because I feared that the presence of a tape-recorder might have a negative impact on eliciting the interviewee's opinions and ideas.

In the evenings, I wrote detailed accounts, based on the jotted notes I made throughout the daytime. I wrote my field notes in Chinese characters and English. Entries for each day would include a presentation of the day's events sorted by topic, place or person according to the content, then a section for practical information and, questions and topics to pursue. In addition to data related to left-behind children's education, I gathered information about students' scores, spare time activities in the school, after schooling activities. I also gathered information about the pupils' families, such as main residence registration, the main channels of income, labour migration and kinship relations. Pictures, maps, as well as these scraps of information have been significant in the recollection of persons, situations and environments described in my thesis.

## **1.4 Conceptual considerations**

### **1.4.1. Socialization**

By the term socialization I refer to transmission of culture (values including morality and identity, ideas, knowledge including language, skills), i.e. the process of acquisition of cultural capital. This is a life long process but I shall here focus on the early years of childhood and adolescence, the period of most formative consequence for acquisition of motivations and competence. Following Keesing<sup>7</sup>, I see culture as ideational, i.e. referring to

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<sup>7</sup> Keesing ,1976. Cultural Anthropology: PP.184.

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values and ideas individuals acquire in the exposure to their natural, social and symbolic environment. Clearly individuals differ in the environments they are exposed to and what experiences (subjectively internalized culture) they harvest from such exposure. Some differences are related to gender, others to class, ethnicity, family situation, access to media etc. In any community individuals will differ in the culture they have acquired. Furthermore, part of the cultural inventory they have acquired may be shared only within small local groups while other parts of the culture they have learned have a national and even global distribution. Clearly culture is not like what text-books try to make us believe – it is not an integrated whole, it is not a ‘whole’ that correspond to a particular ‘society’ (e. g ethnic group, nation).

If one looks at the institutions that transmit knowledge (socialization) from a structural-functional, one will search for how the knowledge they transmit serve to maintain "society", e.g. By indoctrinating moral values they serve to create "harmony" / (reduce conflict, from a structural-functional perspective conflict may destroy the social organism, from a Marxist perspective class-conflict serve to bring society to a higher level of development).

Durkheim<sup>8</sup> emphasizes the importance of socialization of children to the moral values of society. Bourdieu<sup>9</sup> is in some sense similar to Durkheim since he emphasizes how the education system serves to reproduce the cultural dimension of class differences. From a macro perspective one may look at formal education as an investment in human capital. The amount of economic resources a nation spends on education is supposed to yield benefits for the future economic productivity of the country. From this perspective the emphasis is on technical knowledge that serves to improve the productivity of the country. This is a tricky field because a main factor in technological and economic development is entrepreneurship and there are no textbooks that tell you how to be a successful innovator. If we look at USA some of the most successful entrepreneurs were not highly educated. Furthermore if we only focus on technical knowledge, we may stimulate individual creativity but loose the moral glue (e.g. Confucian ideology of harmony) that makes society stick together.

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<sup>8</sup> Moral Education, New York:Free Press,1961.(First French Editioin, 1925).

<sup>9</sup> Bourdieu, 1990. Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture.



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## 1.4.2. Forms of Capital

To explore the connection between educational performance and life chances I find it is useful to draw on Bourdieu's perspectives on Forms of Capital: economic, cultural, social, symbolic.

Bourdieu<sup>10</sup> distinguishes between three forms of capital: economic capital, social capital, and cultural capital, who defines social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition"<sup>11</sup>. In his later studies of universities and academics (1984a), Bourdieu developed a more complex differentiation of social capital (power secured through family members, or other networks), symbolic capital (such as prestige or honour), economic capital (the ownership of economic resources such as property, shares and investments) and finally cultural capital (educational qualifications, different forms of knowledge). Cultural capital is thus used by Bourdieu in *Distinction* (1979) to distinguish between different fractions of the dominant class. The failure of children from the working class or from some ethnic minorities to reach the same average levels of educational achievement as middle class children of majority groups was often explained in terms of cultural deprivation. In Bourdieu's terminology cultural deprivation means reduced access to acquisition of cultural capital that significantly affects life chances.

## 1.5 Preliminary thoughts on research questions

(1) The economic situation of left-behind children's families and the living condition of left-behind children are poor, which may exist for a long time. Left-behind children's parents pour into the cities to find jobs, to some extent it has changed the original family structure, which may result in the poor family education becoming worse. To a great extent, it may have a negative impact on the rural left-behind children's education and as well as on their life career.

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<sup>10</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre (1986). *The Forms of Capital*.

<sup>11</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre. (1983). "Ökonomisches Kapital, kulturelles Kapital, soziales Kapital" in *Soziale Ungleichheiten* (Soziale Welt, Sonderheft 2), edited by Reinhard Kreckel. Goettingen: Otto Schartz & Co. pp. 249

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(2) Left-behind children's parents work in the cities, during the course of their working, they may hear, see, feel different from what they did before, to some extent, which may affect their original values. Inevitable, it may also have great impact on the family education (parental education) mode and attitude, and form multiple modes and attitudes towards children's education. To some extent, it may affect the rural left-behind children objectives, attitudes of study, and motivation of academic achievement, future life career, etc.

(3) Due to these left-behind children's parents are away, they may have such feelings, such as helplessness, loneliness.

(4) Rural left-behind children are very vulnerable to adverse factors, which may affect their self-discipline. At the same time, due to the lack of caring and mentoring, some left-behind children's security may be threatened.

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## **2. A Review about Existing Studies on left behind children in a globalizing world**

### **2.1 Globalization**

Anthony Giddens defines globalization in this way, ‘the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa’. Migration is just one part of globalization. Uneven development has encouraged more people to search for the better job opportunities both internationally and nationally.

### **2.2 Comparative studies of the impact of migration on children’s education and life chances**

In order to see the significance of my study of left-behind children’s education I find it useful to compare it with findings of similar studies in China as well as in other countries.

Different researchers got different results on the issue of education of left-behind children. But some studies (Bangladesh, Thailand, and Indonesia) show that a large proportion of the migrants’ remittances were used for children’s education, and school enrolment rates were higher among migrants’ families in the rural areas.

Migration is not only in China, but many Asian countries, like Thailand, India, Bangladesh, Mongolia etc, have encountered the problem of migration. With the hope of improving the living standard of the whole family, many are willing to suffer the adverse effect of leaving their children behind (Muhammad Farooq and Zahoor Hussain Javed, 2009.) The unique system of China (hukou system) distinguishes Chinese migration from migration in other developing countries. In China, due to the household system, many these migrant labourers have to leave their children behind with extended family members, other relatives or friends in the home villages, in their quest of improving livelihood circumstances for themselves and their families through migration.

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In India (Srivastava and Sasikumar, 2003), fathers' and brothers' migration lowers girls' chances of schooling because they have to take on more domestic responsibilities. While Kuhn (2006) found that migration of fathers and brothers from rural areas had positive impacts on the pace of schooling of left-behind children, in Matlab. The researchers found that (Philippines Study, 2003) migrants' children were mainly enrolled in private schools and performed better at school, and received higher grades as well as school awards when compared to children of non-migrants. In Thailand, (Jampaklay, 2006) found that absence of fathers had little impact on children's education chances but absence of mothers lowers educational chances of left-behind children. On the one hand, migrants' remittances raise the prospects of left-behind children remaining in schools; on the other hand, they also lure children into dropping out.

The comparative review of left-behind children in other countries did not indicate that they were more handicapped than children who stayed with their parents in the home area. In China, a variety of studies have done on the issue of left-behind children, and many of them indicate that left-behind children have high drop-out rates (Cao Chunhua, 2007), poor academic performance (Zhuang Meifang, 2006; Ma Yanlin, 2007; Fan Xianzuo, 2005; Zhou Zongkui, 2005); poor school attendance, poor sense of self-discipline and being totally indulged in the Internet (Huang Yingsheng, 2004; Wang Yuqiong, 2005); problems in socialization and psychological development (Fan Fang, 2005; Wang Dongyu, 2002). However, Xiang Biao (2007) found that in the sense that parental migration was not an independent factor contributing to children's withdrawal from school. In Mongolia, (Batbaatar et al., 2005) found that 'education of left-behind children in rural areas were affected by the out-migration of the community rather than by the migration of the children's parents.' The question is, to which extent is this difference between China and other countries differ with regard to the impact of absent parents on children's education?

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### 3. China specific cultural perspectives on education

I shall first look at premises embedded in the Confucian philosophical tradition and the impact this context may have on Chinese perspectives on education.

#### 3.1 The Confucian impact

China's education history is very long, during Zhou Dynasty (770-221 BC), the government founded five national schools to educate six arts of junior nobles, at that time, and numerous different schools enrolled the students. All of the five moral virtues of Ren (benevolence), Yi (righteousness), Li (propriety), Zhi (intelligence), and Xin (honesty) were adopted by Chinese education from Zhou Dynasty. The most famous one was the Confucianism and its leader Confucius (551-478 B.C), who lived in the time of Warring States (*zhan guo shi qi*), was seen as the founder of education for the masses. One of his saying was provide education for all people without discrimination (*you jiao wu lei*). Another was teaching according to the student's ability (*yin cai shi jiao*). During the long process of Chinese history, Confucianism has a profound influence on the construction of social value system as well as the political system. "In the Han Dynasty (221-206), Confucianism reached its peak, which was known as *fei chu bai jia, du zun ru shu* (suppression of the hundred of schools, and the exclusive recognition of Confucianism". (Lei Hui,2005: 5)

In the 200's BC, Qin Shihuang, favoured legalism, in order to get rid of Confucianism, Qin Shihuang carried out burning books and burying of scholars (*fen shu ken ru*). It was one major setback for Confucianism as well as China's education, because Confucianism has a great influence on the Chinese education system. The Cultural Revolution (1966-76) was another setback for the Chinese education system. The post-Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping viewed education as the foundation of the Four Modernizations (*si ge xian dai hua*). In the early 1980s, science and technology education became an important focus of education policy. To sum up, traditional Chinese education adopted Confucian teachings on morals and virtues. In the Chinese traditional society, the ultimate goal of education was developing social harmony and social stability by transmitting Confucian ideology, which still has great impact on contemporary Chinese education.

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Differences in the type of knowledge and life careers that are emphasized as highly valued in China, particularly in the Confucian tradition: “We can differentiate knowledge into two categories; first, understanding of the nature of the physical world, and second, understanding of what constitutes right conduct. In the Confucian classics *chia* refers to the second type of knowledge. Confucius even believed that the man who knew the moral norms did not necessarily need to know about nature”<sup>12</sup>

“—to Confucius, knowledge of nature was not so important and also shows his conception of his own social position. Men such as he are at the top; the ordinary people are at the bottom. The people must work hard on the land, but those at the top need only acquire and keep the respect of the people through upholding the *li* – justice and faith”.<sup>13</sup> Mencius was a Chinese philosopher who was the most famous Confucian after Confucius himself. Mencius held that: ‘*lao xin zhe zhi ren , lao li zhe zhi yu ren*’, which means people who engaged in the mental work are supposed to become rulers, while people who engaged in the physical work are supposed to be ruled. From the ancient times farmers engaged in the physical work-were in the lowest position in the hierarchy system. Until the present many Chinese still discriminate against the farmers, because they believe that the identity of peasant means stupid (*yu*), illiterate (*wen miang*), and poor (*qiong*).

The famous Chinese sociologist Fei Xiaotong has argued that the high evaluation of bookish ‘culture’ compared to ‘culture’ acquired through practice is dominating the thinking about education in China even today.<sup>14</sup> Given the emphasis on formal socialization in China scholarly debate tends to focus on the school system and its importance in promoting individual careers and most importantly in creating a new generation of citizens, both in terms of indoctrinating ‘right’ political and moral ideas, and in making them technical experts in important economic sectors, i.e. making students ‘red and making them expert’.

Formal education may provide on way of acquiring the cultural capital required for avoiding the stigma associated with rural identity. The question is how this cultural capital can be transformed into other forms of capital needed for success in modern China.

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<sup>12</sup> Fei Xiao tong: *China’s Gentry*. 1953. University of Chicago: page 61

<sup>13</sup> (ibid: page 62).

<sup>14</sup> Myron Cohen: *Kinship, Contract, Community and State*. 2005 Stanford: 24 -28

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## 3.2 Guanxi and accumulation of social capital

As I shall discuss later there are great differences between schools in rural and urban area with regard to the cultural capital pupils can acquire and how it can be converted to social capital. This conversion is furthermore complicated by another important China specific socio-cultural feature, namely guanxi

Guanxi refers to personal networks of social relations. One's life chances in society are to a large extent related to the scale and the power of the guanxi relations one can mobilize.

Such relations are primarily ascribed by birth and involve obligations to exchange gifts, to cooperate in economic activities and to support each other in politico-administrative activities. The relations making up guanxi networks may however also be actively created, typically by an initial gift leading to endless process of gift exchanges, including banquets, family ceremonies, administrative favours etc.

The obligations in guanxi relations are based on Confucian ethical values called renqing referring to understanding others' emotional situation, and to moral norms for how on the basis of such understanding to respond to them (morality of empathy). The morality of renqing does not only constitute the basis for small-scale guanxi networks of family and neighborhood, people also appeal to it when they expand their guanxi to networks of much larger scale, such as getting employment in the urban sector. Behaving according to the morality of renqing is also recognised in such extended guanxi relations.

A concept related to guanxi is mianzi (face). Face has both an external aspect (the observable face we see), and an internal aspect (my feelings, thoughts and self respect). These two aspects are closely related in the sense that the face we see is believed to mirror our inner selfhood. In important virtue emphasized in Confucian morality is that the inner selfhood should be in harmony. The physical face with its different features like the eyes (where others look to detect whether we are lying or not), the mouth (through which we may tell lies or truths), and other facial features (which may express anger, ridicule, love, pleasure etc) may indicate the state of our inner harmony. Consequently it is important to maintain a facial composure that does not indicate inner disharmony. Since inner harmony is a precondition for group harmony, people are concerned about not disturbing the inner harmony (mianzi) of individuals they are related to in networks or groups. This concern

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expresses the regard in which people hold each other, including self-respect and dignity as well as the prestige one enjoys in the community.

Both the concept of guanxi and the concept of mianzi are relevant for understanding of migratory careers as well as difficulties rural people experience in converting cultural capital acquired in the educational system into economic capital (e.g. favourable employment in the urban sector). I shall try to throw some light on the difficulties of making the conversion of cultural capital to social capital (guanxi) and into economic capital by describing some features of the political economy.

In traditional Han Chinese society (during the empires) there was a kind of cultural continuity in the sense that basic principles from Confucian ethics were widely agreed upon, although there were great discontinuities in the extent to which people had the opportunity to learn these principles and the means to live according to them, depending on whether they had passed the relevant exams required for recruitment to the administrative class. Formal education was a basic principle in the traditional dualism between the ruling administrative elite and rural masses. Chinese cultural ideals about the right kind of socialization have lived on, particularly in debates about the family and education. The institutions of the family or the school are often blamed for their failure to socialize individuals who go on to transgress social norms. China specific cultural premises don't exist in isolation. In order to further understand the way the impact transmission of knowledge to left-behind children we have see how they relate to features of the political economy of China

Today, this difference is important but it is complemented by another type of dualism emerging in the political economy.



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## 4. Features of China's political economy

An important context for understanding differences between the educational situations of children in China is the contrast between rural and urban areas. This contrast is explicit in the household registration (hukou) and the contrast between the rural and urban hukou with regard to access to a range of social services. In a way this contrast is part of a kind of dualistic development where the growth of urban enterprises benefits from the supply of cheap labour from rural areas.

### 4.1 The hukou system

The Hukou system established in the city areas in 1951,<sup>15</sup> was established in the rural areas in 1955.<sup>16</sup> It was formalized as a permanent system in 1958<sup>17</sup>. The officials claim that because the huge population of China, the hukou system can become an effective method to make sure the whole society stable. The government has a variety of views to explain or rationalize the existence of such a control system. The officials claim that the hukou system can serve for the public interests (*wei le ren min qun zhong de li yi*). To maintain this artificial imbalance under the condition of dual economy, the state had to create a system which blocked free flows of resources (including labour forces) between industry and agriculture and between city and the countryside. The hukou system was one of the important institutions to create and maintain such a social and economic structure. Under this perspective, the hukou system has curbed the mobility of population nationwide.

The first classification of one's hukou registration is the "hukou suo zai di" (the place of hukou registration: local and non-local hukou). It is based on one's presumed permanent residence. The local regular hukou registration defines one's rights for many activities in a

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<sup>15</sup> Ministry of Public Security, *Chengshi Hukou guanli zanxing tiaoli*(*Interim Regulations on Urban Household Administration*), issued on July 16,1951.

<sup>16</sup> Ministry of Internal Affairs, *Hukou dengji zanxing banfa (caoan)* in Teaching and Researching Unit of Civil Law, China People's University(ed).

<sup>17</sup> Decree of President of the People's Republic of China, *zhonghua renmin gongheguo hukou dengji tiaoli*. January 9, 1958.

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specific locality.<sup>18</sup> The government stipulates that each citizen has to register in one and only one place of regular residence. The most common categories of the place of hukou registration are urban (cities or towns) or rural (villages). The second classification is the "hukou lei bie" (the "status" or type of hukou registration), essentially referred to the "agricultural" and "non-agricultural" hukou. Non-agricultural status entitled the state-provide housing, employment, education, access to medical care and other social welfare benefits (especially before the 1990s).<sup>19</sup> This classification determines one's entitlement to get the state-subsidized grain and other privileges and is often more important than the hukou place of registration.

In education for migrant children, a major policy document issued by the state Council in 2001 which stipulated that local governments take up the responsibility of providing nine-year compulsory education for migrants' children through the public school system.<sup>20</sup> But there are still many serious problems for the migrant children: without local hukou, migrant parents have to pay additional fee (zan zhu fei/ jie du fei/ za fei)<sup>21</sup> to get their children access to the local schools, a cost hardly affordable to many migrant workers. Moreover, a significant proportion of them are in sub-standard schools (min gong zi di xuexiao / jian yi xue xiao) with poor quality of faculties as well as equipment. Moreover, the institutional barriers (the invisible wall between the rural and urban) and social exclusion associated with the hukou system create extra costs to some migrants who wish to bring their children with them. Therefore, the migrant workers have to leave their children and other families behind in their home villages.

Due to the great pressure from the migration, the government has reformed the hukou system. Since 2001, the central government has "abolished" the nong ye hukou in some

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<sup>18</sup> Starting from the mid-1980s, in order to deal with the increase in internal migration, a few temporary (non-local) hukou categories have been officially used, the most common of which is the zanzhu hukou ("temporary hukou"). See Dorothy Solinger, "Temporary residence certificate" regulations in Wuhan, May 1983," *The China Quarterly*, No.101 (1985), pp.98-103.

<sup>19</sup> Cheng and Selden, "The origin and social consequences of China's hukou policy"; Kam Wing Chan; Kam Wing Chan, *Cities with invisible Walls*; Feiling Wang, *Organizing through Division and Exclusion*.

<sup>20</sup> 'Guo wu yuan guan yu ji chu jiao yu gai ge yu fa zhan de jue ding' (state council's decisions on reforms and development of basic education'), <http://www.edu.cn/20010907/3000665.shtml>.

<sup>21</sup> In 2009, the central government stipulated that it was illegal to charge additional fees for the migrant children (during the nine-year compulsory education) who did not have local hukou, but the schools still charged the different kind of fees instead. <http://paper.xplus.com/papers/sgrb/20090220/n52.shtml>.

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selective cities, until present, there are 13 selective cities have phased out nongye hukou, and unified all the original nongye hukou and fei nongye hukou as jumin hukou. Wen, Tiejun, says : “ there are too many things attaching to the hukou system, and even if we phase out the nongye hukou, the gulf between the urban areas and rural areas still can not been narrowed.....”<sup>22</sup> Even if phased out the nongye hukou and fei nongye hukou, take the shijiazhuang as a example, “the city government has set up to lure the rich, professional, educated classes, and to settle hukou problems for family members of existing city residents and the local agricultural population whose land had been expropriate, but to open the hukou doors to low-skilled rural migrants.”<sup>23</sup> Therefore, the rural migrants just have slim chances to get the local hukou in destinations; the reformation of the hukou system is just huan tang bu huan yao: a change in form but not in content or essence.

## 4.2 Dual economy

The hokuo system serves to develop a kind of dual economy (er yuan jing ji) in China. The term dual economy was originally used by Boeke (1953), to describe the coexistence of modern and traditional sectors in a colonial economy. He explained the dual economy as a consequence of cultural differences between traditional rural cultivators in Indonesia and modern Dutch capitalist enterprises. At present, in the most developing countries there are still two different sectors: traditional agricultural sector and modern industrial sector. As a developing country, dual economy is the most prominent feature of Chinese society, which has restricted economic development of China. The China Center for Economic Research (CCER) investigators claims that within the urban area of Shanghai, the old rural-area urban-area dualism is being replaced by a new rural-migratory-worker urban-resident-worker dualism.<sup>24</sup>

It is ironic that the modern materialist Chinese Marxist elite has a perception of Chinese economy that in many ways seems similar to Boeke’s culturalist perception of differential economic development in the Dutch colony of Indonesia. Since 1911

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22 <http://news.sohu.com/20080213/n255140061.shtm>.

23 Kam Wing Chan and Will Buckingham, “Is China Abolishing the Hukou System?” *The China Quarterly*, 2008.

24 Migration, Labor Market Flexibility, and Wage Determination in China: A Review. *The Developing Economies*, XLIII-2 (June 2005): 285-312.

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the revolutionary elite has projected an image of the rural population as “a culturally distinct and alien “other,” passive, helpless, unenlightened, in the grip of ugly and fundamentally useless customs, desperately in need of education and cultural reform, and for such improvements in their circumstances totally dependent on the leadership and efforts of rational and informed outsiders, --” (Cohen 1993:p.154). The hukou system, which provides urban residents privileged access to modern commodities at subsidized priced, medical benefits and education gives legal confirmation to the second-class culture the peasants are identified with. (Cohen 1993: p.159)

With increased interactions between the rural and the urban sectors dualistic development trends have widened the gap between the urban and rural areas, because the rural areas supply cheap labour to the expanding enterprises in the towns. In 1980, China’s gini coefficient was 0.3 but in 1988, it rose to 0.382. In 1994, the gini coefficient was 0.434, which crosses the international warning line of 0.4, 1998 to rise again to 0.45. In 2006 gini coefficient was reached to 0.5, which was in excess of the internationally accepted alarm level. The higher the level is, the wider the gaps between the poor and the rich.<sup>25</sup>

From the perspective of income gap between the urban and rural residents, deputy director of the National Bureau of Statistics, Qiu Xiaohua said that in 2001, urban residents’ income was 6860 RMB, while farmers’ income was 2366 RMB. But in the farmers' income, which includes 40% of substance income, such as pigs, corns, rice and so on, actually a farmer’s monetary income is only 120 RMB each month. While the urban resident’ monetary income was per month for 600 RMB, the gap is 5:1. Moreover, urban residents have all kinds of invisible income, such as the welfare of education, housing, medical insurances have not been counted, fully consider these factors, China's urban-rural disparity may reach 6:1. Over the past 50 years, the gulf between the urban and rural areas has been broadened.

During the last three decades, with the opening up policy, the Chinese government has promulgated regulations to relax the mobility of the population. With the reform and opening-up policy, more and more rural people flow into the cities to find better job opportunities. In China, due to the household system, many of these migrant labourers have

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25 [http://www.stnn.cc/ed\\_china/200906/t20090601\\_1037142.html](http://www.stnn.cc/ed_china/200906/t20090601_1037142.html)

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to leave their children behind with extended family members, other relatives or friends in the home villages, in their quest to improve livelihood circumstances for themselves and their families through migration. In China, a range of studies has been done on the left-behind children's psychological, emotional costs of parental absences. Although, to some extent, the Chinese government has modified the hukou system, its basic structure remains until the present, in the sense that it maintains a wide discrepancy in social services between rural and urban hukou. This means that the Government's expenses for social services in the vast rural areas can be kept low at the same time as urban enterprises can benefit from cheap labour migrants from rural areas. During the transition from an agrarian society to an industrial society, the left-behind children issue (liu shou er tong wen ti) at the wake of migrant issue becomes very prominent. These systemic aspects of Chinese society are important, but there is another very important context one has to keep in mind one tries to interpret the Chinese perspectives on the effects of children being tutored by grandparents, namely the dramatic events that took place in China in connection with the Cultural Revolution and with Deng's reforms. The people who are grandparents today are people who experienced these events in ways that must have affected their knowledge and attitudes in ways that their children may think make them unsuited in stimulating their children's education.

### **4.3 The legacy of Mao and Deng**

Mao's State was built on a very different foundation from the traditional Confucian ideology of empire. It was largely constructed on the western ideas of Marxism, socialism, one party state, industrialization and military power. An element in Mao's strategy of undermining the Confucian ideology that legitimized the old regime was to destroy the patriarchal family that was so important in reproducing Confucian ethics.

However, while Mao's break with the past was an important factor giving new directions to cultural development, this development was dramatically accelerated with Deng Xiao Ping's economic reforms from the late 1970s. In contrast to Mao, the post-Mao Government endorsed Confucius as a symbol of China's new nationalism. This nationalism included an element that Mao strongly rejected: commercialism. This commercialism has far-reaching consequences for consumption patterns and child rearing.

Deng's one child policy combined with his commercialization had far-reaching effects on the family level, and further undermining the Confucian based patriarchal ideology. In the

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traditional family structure children were brought up to respect the elders and to orient their attention to the parents' example. Today, this has changed, now it is the parents who orient their attention to the wishes of the new little emperors/empresses – the children. Their wishes increasingly determine parents' allocation of time and resources. Now the values children internalize are to a less extent the values of the parents. Instead through children peer group pressures, it is the values communicated in TV series and advertisements that influence their thoughts.

The culture of modernity is shown in widely shared belief in progress, particularly in its technological dimensions. This belief is also spreading to rural areas and it is affecting people's decisions to migrate as well as their worries about their children's education. This is reflected in Chinese perspectives on the education of left-behind children.

#### **4.4 Modern Chinese perspectives of left behind children**

On the one hand, China has benefited a lot from these big floating population groups. On the other hand, there are also some social problems coming after this trend. The one that I am concerned about is left-behind children in rural areas. Some migrant workers bring their children into the cities but most of the children are left in their home villages, who are left-behind children. The left-behind children, as a special group, are the result of the social transition in China. This is a challenge for the government as well as for the education management. On the one hand, the migrant workers contribute to the development of the cities as well as the development of the rural areas. On the other hand, to a great extent, migrant workers have changed the family structure, which have great impact on the left-behind children. According to recent survey, the left-behind children's education problem becomes very grave. The present education condition of rural left-behind children is in China considered serious by some scholars, because they believe that to some extent left-behind children are "handicapped" in their socialization compared both to children who follow migrants to towns and get formal education there, and to children who stay with their parents in the rural areas.

Many Chinese scholars assume that this unbalanced situation will have a great impact on their social-economic status in the future, which will broaden the gap between the poor and the rich, the peasants and the urban residents, moreover, which will make social order threatened. According to a recent survey, Zhang Helong (2004), these left-behind children,

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more or less, have psychological problems.

Because family education does not prepare the left-behind children to life in the modern world, they are facing serious problems. Currently the psychology and educational problems of left-behind children are in China considered become increasingly prominent, and has become an important issue in today's society. (Fan Fang, 2005; Ye Jinzhong et al, 2005; The Research Institute of China, 2004; Wu Ni, 2004)

This argument is probably based on the assumption that grandparents are much older than parents and that they therefore must be 'ignorant' and suffering from "feudal superstitions" (Wu Ni, 2004). Consequently, children who grow up with grandparents are assumed to be exposed to a less stimulating environment than children who grow up with parents whether they are in rural areas or in towns (Fan Xianzuo, 2005). This may be true or it may not be true. Thus, I am going to explore it and prove it is true or not.

I expect there may be differences in socialization processes between growing up under different family situations and in different environments. The extent to which there are such differences is one problem; the other one is what consequences in life careers follow from such differences.

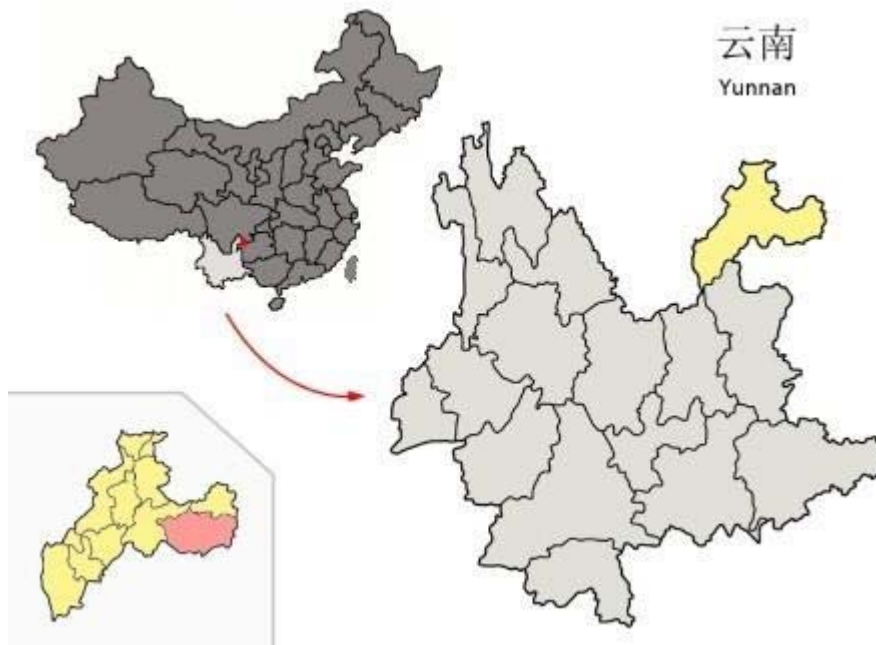
Both the systemic socio-cultural features and the recent revolutionary political events constitute important contexts for my case study of a rural community in a poor region in north eastern Yunnan.

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## 5. Some aspects of the geographical and educational setting of the study



**Figure 5.1** The location of Zhenxiong County in China. [Source: the Internet<sup>26</sup>]

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26 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhenxiong\\_County](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhenxiong_County)



**Figure 5.2 The location of Linkou Township, Zhenxiang County.**  
 [Source: the Internet.<sup>27</sup>]

## 5.1 Ganqiu village

I did my field study in a community in Zhenxiang County which has a population of 1.41 million, including 0.6722 million farmers, there are 0.4 million surplus farmers. Zhenxiang County has 1.26 million mu farmlands. (1 mu =666.67 square meters). According to official statistics, there were 0.34 million farmers who have migrated to cities to seek job opportunities; there were 0.22 million left-behind children in 2007, constituting 45.7% of primary school students and 35.66% of middle school students.<sup>28</sup>

I am interested in the rural left-behind children’s education issue and have consulted the relevant material produced by scholars who have done research on the left-behind children, in Henan province, Sichuan, Guizhou, Hunan, Anhui, etc. But there are few researches on

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<http://image.baidu.com/i?ct=503316480&z=0&tn=baiduimagedetail&word=%D4%C6%C4%CF%D5%F2%D0%DB+%B5%D8%CD%BC&in=24752&cl=2&cm=1&sc=0&lm=-1&pn=3&rn=1&di=2712395823&ln=151&fr=&ic=0&s=0&se=1>

<sup>28</sup> [http://news.yninfo.com/yn/shxw/200907/t20090706\\_835709.htm](http://news.yninfo.com/yn/shxw/200907/t20090706_835709.htm)

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the left-behind children in Yunnan province, which is poor and located in the southwest of China. Therefore, I have read some related books and materials, and selected the most representative Zhenxiong County as sample. I have chosen one minority region—Ganqiu village as my field site. The inhabitants mainly are Han, Yi and Miao people, among them Yi and Miao people are officially regarded as minority groups or so-called nationalities (*shao shu min zu*) in China. There are ten villages (*zi ran cun/she*) in Ganqiu village, which is located mountainous areas.

The average per capita income is around 890 Yuan (per year). Here I am going to the shed light on village and village group, village (*xing zheng cun*) in rural area is equivalent to Street in the urban area, while the village group (*zi ran cun*) is equivalent to Community in the urban area. Generally speaking, there are 30-100 households in a village group, while there are more than 5 village groups in a village. There are 956 households in Ganqiu Village, among them 939 households are registered as agricultural households. The total population is 3689, among them 3533 people are registered as agricultural households. There are about 1400 farmers going to cities to be migrant workers.<sup>29</sup>

The local people are mainly farmers, and they plant potatoes and corns, most of the farmlands are infertile. They raise pigs, cattle and so on. It is very cold during the winter time, in 2008, there was a snowstorm hit on Ganqiu village and many cattle and pigs were frozen to death and many potatoes, which were stored in the house, were destroyed and rotten. Due to the cold weather, many crops cannot grow up and most farmers underemployed during winter. Until at the end of last century, the farmers in my field site had to struggle to wrest a living from the infertile soil. But since the end of last century, many farmers have begun to pour into the cities and to be migrant workers (*nong min gong*). There are coal mines in this area, some farmers (have *guan xi*) can get opportunities to work in the mines and get some off-farm income, such as getting opportunities to work in the local police station or in the local government. To be a soldier is good way to get off-farm income, but also need *guan xi* (connections) and money.

Family education (parental education) is very significant in the process of a child's socialization, such as forming personal character, internalizing moralities and values,

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<sup>29</sup> The statistics was from the local government.

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shaping conception of life career etc. Under the current institution it is hard for them to take their children along to big cities because the hukou system requires that people should receive elementary and middle level education where their hukou is registered. As a result, their children are left in the home villages where they stay with grandparents or one of the parents.

This may vary with regard to whether both parents migrate or whether only one parent migrates, and may vary with whom the child stays if one parent migrates. If both parents migrate and the child is left in the rural village the question is with whom is the child left? According to left-behind children's guardians, most scholars divided the left-behind children into three types. In Ganqiu village, according to left-behind children's guardians, there are 4 types of left-behind children. I shall explore the differences of them. Moreover, I am going to explore how each type of them is socialized and how the values are internalized differently. In order to do an exact survey, I need to clarify the frequencies of different kinds of left-behind children's residence.

I had several questions in mind during my research: Does it have any serious consequences if they stay with relatives instead of their parents for shorter or longer periods (the length of periods of parents absence may be important)?

How does interaction between grandparents and children differ from the interaction between parents and children?

In order to find answers to these questions I got close to families and observed their daily interaction, and compared children growing up with grandparents with children growing up with parents (parent). In this thesis, I shall try to find the answers of such questions: is there anything that differs in terms of knowledge transmitted and in values internalized? Is there any difference with regard to performance in the formal education system?



Figure 5.3 The two left-behind children are making popcorn by themselves. Taken by Hongmei He, August, 2009.



Figure 5.4 The poster for the government advocating one child policy .Taken by Hongmei He, September, 2009.

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In Ganqiu village, many people prefer male kids to female kids. In order to give birth to as many male kids as possible, these local people go against the National Family Plan Policy. Some farmers join the labour force of migrant workers not because they want to earn money, but for giving birth to more children, in order to avoid being fined by the local government, they migrate to the cities. In my field site, because the local government stipulates that women who have already given birth to 2 children are supposed to have physical examinations to prove that they are not pregnant, or they will be fined. Therefore in order to avoid the physical examinations, some villagers migrate to the cities, in there they may make some fake certifications and send back to home villages. The local government has taken initiatives to control the birth rate, but the population is still increasing.

## 5.2 About Ganqiu Primary School



**Figure 5.5 Ganqiu Primary School. Taken by Hongmei He**

*In Ganqiu village, there are two primary schools, which are Ganqiu Primary school and Yanjing Primary school. I am going to focus on the Ganqiu Primary school, which was built in 1953. At the very beginning, there were just 3 teachers in Ganqiu village. But now there are 8 teachers in Ganqiu primary school, among them, there are only 6 formal teachers and*

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the other 2 are just being a teacher temporarily. At present, there are 410 pupils in the Ganqiu primary school. In 1990, the local government put forward rebuilding and improving the school's facilities and equipment. In 1996, the original school was expanded and improved the facilities and equipment as well, spending 150 thousand RMB. But due to the low wages and poor equipments, many a teachers are not willing to stay there. Through investigation, I knew that most of outstanding teachers were away, some of them switching to other undertakings, the others transferred to other better schools. In order to fill the vacancy, the head teacher of the school had to employ some local farmers with very low salary (300-400 RMB per month), who had had the middle school educational level. I was told that those temporary teachers are not qualified enough to teach. My colleagues told me that payment was never proportional to the amount of work done. According to law, the teachers' proportion to the pupils should be 1:25, but in Ganqiu village, the teachers' proportion to the pupils was 1:51 (which means that one teacher should be responsible for at least 51 pupils on average.). The teachers have to work from 8:00 a.m. till 5:00 p.m., and then they have to preparing for the classes and check the pupils' assignment after work hours. Obviously, in Ganqiu Primary School, is short of teachers and equipments.



**Figure 5.6 I was a volunteer teacher in Ganqiu Primary School. Taken by my colleague, October, 2009.**



**Figure 5.7 The Pupils and the headteacher of the Ganqiu Primary School. Taken by Hongmei He, September, 2009.**

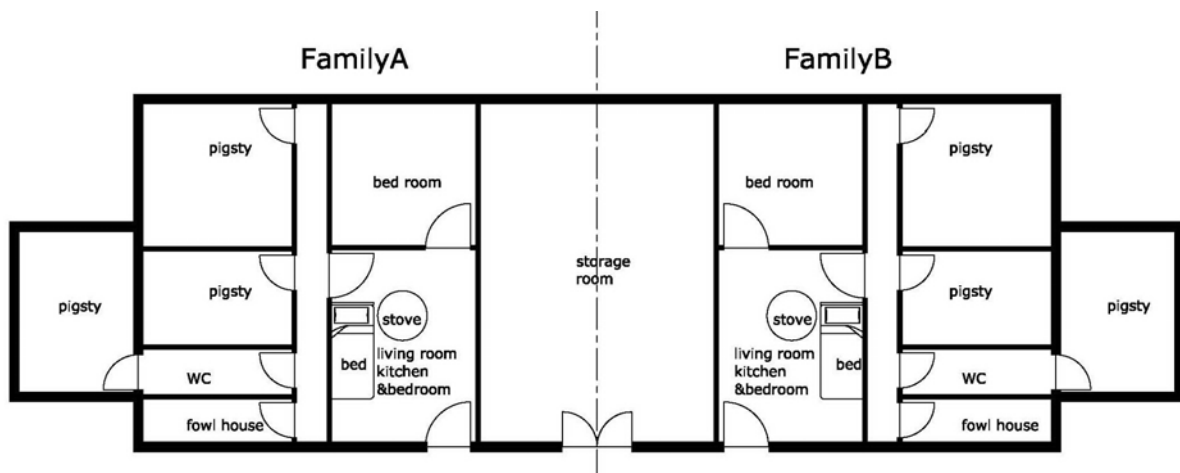


**Figure 5.8 My colleague's dormitory. Taken by Hongmei He, September, 2009.**



## 6. The Situation of the Left-behind Children in Ganqiu Village

Scholars generally seem to be of the opinion that the living conditions are supposed to have great impact on the children's education and development. They found that almost all the left-behind children's living conditions were better than the others. My materials from Ganqiu village indicate that living conditions have great impact on the children's education and development, but I found that not all of the left-behind children's living conditions were better than non-left behind children's. According to my survey of left-behind children's family conditions, I found that 95% of their annual income was under 4000 Yuan, and 69.6% of their annual income was under 3000 Yuan. Through observation, I found that 76.7% migrant workers poured into cities to find jobs for surviving, 20.5% for children's education, the small part of them are for their better development. I think that the good living condition and good living environment may have a positive impact on the children's study and rest. But I paid some visits in Ganqiu village and found that most of the left-behind children's living condition was poor. Most of them lived in the thatched shacks. These houses were very wet, narrow and dark especially in Ganqiu village, because Ganqiu village located in the mountainous area, which is very cold almost all around the year. Their houses were very small and have no windows, and the living room was also kitchen and bedroom. The house structure of their house in Ganqiu village as follows:



**Figure 6.1 The Map of House Structure in Ganqiu Village. Drawn by Hongmei He**



**Figure 6.2 A left-behind child is having lunch. Taken by Hongmei He, September, 2009.**

Left-behind children's living condition was quite poor in the Ganqiu village and I took one of the village groups---Wanchang She (*village group*) as an example: there are 35 households, among them, there are 30 left-behind children' households and 5 non-left-behind households and the other type of family (*wu bao hu*<sup>30</sup>). Moreover, there are 68 children (under the age of 14), among them, there are 56 left-behind children and 12 non-left-behind children. The annual income of left-behind children's family was 2250 Yuan, and the annual income of non-left-behind children's family was 4125 Yuan. Moreover, 37% of left-behind children's households had electric applications, such as washing machine, TV, electric rice cooker, recorder and so on. For these non-left-behind's families, 69% of them had electric applications. Here I have to mention one point: according to my investigations, some non-left-behind children's parents were also migrant workers 5 or 6 years ago, but during these years, there are more and more migrant workers in the cities, part of them could not find job

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<sup>30</sup> household enjoying the five guarantees (childless and infirm old persons who are guaranteed food, clothing, medical care, housing and burial expenses from the local government)

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at all. Moreover, in the cities the level of consumption is higher and higher day by day; it is very difficult to afford such a high consumption level. In my field site, most migrant workers remit money less than before or are not able to remit at all. As I mentioned before, during the past 3 years, because of the economic crisis, most factories and companies suffered a lot, some of them went bankrupt and others had to cut staff and lay off employees and many migrant workers become unemployed.

In the past, only migrant workers (*nong min gong*) were willing to take the “dirty”(zang), dangerous(wei xian), and low –wage(di gong zi )jobs. But now, because of high rate of unemployment and many graduate students have to engage in such work, to some extent, which have affected the employment of migrant workers. To some extent, this has made it more and more difficult for *nong min gong* to find a job in the cities.

Left-behind children’s grandparents told me that, in order to earn their livings and support their big families, the left-behind children’s parents or one part of parent have no choice but pour into the big cities and find some jobs with low salaries, such as, to be baby-sitters, construction workers, cleaners and so on. The local people told me, that many small companies in Shanghai and Guangdong had been bankrupted since 2008, and many migrant labourers lost their jobs. One estimates show that there were 20 million migrant workers unemployed.<sup>31</sup> Although, some of them could not find jobs in a short period, they were not willing to come back to their hometown. Because they think they have to go back to hometown after earning enough money in Chinese “*yi jin huan xiang*”: return to one's old home town in full glory or they will lose face “*diulian*”<sup>32</sup>. Under such circumstances, the left-behind children’s family’s living condition became worse. I guess such kind of embarrassing condition could not be improved in a short period.

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<sup>31</sup> <http://news.163.com/09/1119/17/5OGGBQOA00013U8R.html>

<sup>32</sup> In China, *mianzi* is very important for Chinese, because almost all the Chinese people really care about what others think of them. There is an old saying that: *ren huo yi zhang lian, shu huo yi zhang pi*, which means people live for a face, tree live for a bark.



**Figure 6.3 Grandfather, left-behind child and their house .Taken by Hongmei He, October, 2009.**

## **6.1 Left-behind children ----in the eyes of villagers**

To get some perspective on the way villagers perceive children I recorded comments made in the village about some left behind children.

*Xiao Wang, four years old. His mom and dad were in Guangdong, who return home once each year. Villagers told me Wang was the “small shadow” of the grandfather. He followed his grandfather’s feet each day. Wherever his grandfather goes, he is always with him. After the grandfather’s big footprints, people can see the Wang’s small footprints*

*Xiao Ling, 3 years old. The first word she spoke was ‘da’, which means thrash/whip. Her grandfather feared that other kids would bully her, thus he taught Xiao Ling say ‘da’ in order to threaten other kids. The villager told me that Xiao Ling’s grandmother was bad-tempered, and often thrashed her. Even then, Xiao Ling was not willing to go with her parents to go to Shanghai.*

*Xiao Zhao, 11 years old. Her father was away to find jobs in Shanghai. She is very polite and obedient. She is a good student in the school and a good daughter in the family. Each day, she can cook breakfast for her self and her siblings. She usually, finishes her homework*

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*at school. After school, she goes home and does housework for her mom, just like cooking, feeding pigs, cleaning, taking care of her siblings.*

These comments do not allow me to draw any conclusion except that left-behind children vary greatly with regard to how they react to their position.

## **6.2 Voices from the left-behind children**

When I was a volunteer teacher in the Ganqiu primary school, I taught the pupils of grade four and grade six, I asked left-behind children to write down some sentences to their parents. Here I translate their sentences into English as follow:

*.I miss you so much, when I dream about you in my dreams, I feel very glad.*

*.Papa, mama, take care of yourselves, do not work too hard; papa, mama, do not worry about my study, I study very hard. Papa, mama, I hope you can come back early, I miss you so much.*

*.when I feel lonely, I miss my parents. Sometimes, I can not help crying. I wish you were with me. But I know that you do everything for me and for my brothers. I hope you can come back early.*

*.Mom, I miss you so much, when I am lonely, I was always missing you. If you know that I miss you a lot, can you pick me up when the spring festival is coming. I just want to share every moment with you.*

*.Dad, you did everything for us, I know you work outside in order to support the whole family. Last week, I got 100 (A) in the test and my teacher Mr. Wang who praised me and I know if you were at home, you would praise me as well.*

*.Dear dad, how are doing? Is everything ok for you? I know you must suffer a lot. Did anyone bully you?*

*Dear dad, I can not help missing you and mom. I can still recall the happy moment with you.*

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*Dad, mom, you are not home, I miss you pretty much. When you are away, I do not have appetite, and my school performance become worse. Moreover, why you have to earn money outside? My grandmother got ill, why do not you come back?*

*Mom, I miss you so much. Mom, do you know that, your absence really has affected my study, Dad never care about my study, and thus, I hope you can be back as soon as possible. I heard that if I want to improve my study, I have to get the love from you.*

*Dear papa, mom, how are you doing? I am really worried about your health.*

*Dear papa, mama, how are you doing? I miss you so much, I hope you can be with me as soon as possible. If you are back, my living condition will be better, my scores will be improved. At present, my study is so bad. When I sit in the classroom, I am always picturing you and missing you. I am always worried about your health and work. I hope you can be with me as soon as possible.*

*Dear papa, I am already old enough to take care of my self now. I want to say that do not worry about me. Mom told me that if I am obedient, you will back soon. Dad, I am obedient boy, and I hope you can be with me soon.*

*Dear papa, how are you doing? I know in order to support the whole family and affording my schooling, you have to find money outside. Dad, please take care of yourself, and keep warm. Mama told me that it is very cold in your work place, and much colder than here. Dad, not to work too hard and you do not need to worry about us. My study gets better than before, and my brother also has improved in his study and become obedient. Dad, please take care of yourself. I will wait for you coming back during the spring festival. Dad, do you know that, mom is always painful in her chest, I am worried about her. And dad, I will study harder than before and I won't let you down.*

*.Father, you were laborious. Do not worry about me, my study gets better than before . I will study harder than before, and I won't waste the money you earned by sweat.*

All those are left-behind children, but different children have different attitudes towards their parents' absence. After observation, I got to know something about how some left behind children expressed their concerns and feelings about the absence of the parents. Variations in

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left-behind children's expressions of their concerns about the absence of parents may be related to variations in their circumstances.

Firstly, who is absent? Generally speaking, the children where both parents are absent are more likely to experience negative aspects, such as loneliness, worries, and isolation. The children, whose mothers are absent, are more likely to suffer irresponsibility from their fathers; the children, whose fathers are absent, are more likely to worry about their mothers condition, and hope that their fathers can come back to help them.

Secondly, how long have their parents been away? I divided the letters into several categories. I found that a). The left-behind children who had mentioned that their study got worse, that their health condition had got worse, and that hoped that parents could stay with them, were those whose parents had been away for at least 2 years. b).The left-behind children who did not get proper care from their guardians are hoping that their parents can be with them soon. c). I found that the situation of pre-school left-behind children and senior pupils in the elementary school are more worrisome. On the one hand, pre-school left-behind children are too young to express their ideas. On the other hand, senior pupils in the primary school are more sensitive to the parents' absences. d). Other features, such as gender, the male left-behind children can express themselves well, but the female left-behind children just keep their feelings at the bottom of the heart.

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## 7. Migration

### 7.1 Reasons for migrating

The driving forces of rural –to-urban migration are commonly described in terms of push and pull factors. A surplus rural labour force is often regarded as the main push factor. Todaro (1969) and Harris and Todaro (1970) point out that the wage gap between the rural areas and urban areas operates as the pull factor. Lu Feng and Xu Jianhua (2004) point out that migration is not only driven by the huge rural-urban income gap, but also by the regional development gap. Besides examining push and pull factors, economists have also analyzed the effects of other personal characteristics, such as gender, age, education level, and family size and so forth. <sup>33</sup>

### 7.2 Voices from the migrants

To get some idea of how the migrants perceived the conditions that affected their decision to search urban employment I asked them about their opinions on this.

#### a) I have to go out

Wang, ( Xiao Yan's mom), *“I have to go out to find job. I have to earn money to support the family and pay the debt as well. My children will grow up soon, when they go to school, I must pay the fee for their schooling.”*<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>[http://rcewcc.ecnu.edu.cn/CenterPublish/WorkingPapers/2004Vol1/Vol1\\_7.pdf](http://rcewcc.ecnu.edu.cn/CenterPublish/WorkingPapers/2004Vol1/Vol1_7.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> Note: Nowadays, the government promulgates the laws that children (from the primary school to middle school) no need to pay the tuition fee in the hukou registered areas. In fact, many schools impose other fees (zafei), instead of tuition fees.

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**b) I have no choice**

*Zhao (Xiao Qiang's father), "I have no choice but working outside. I have 5 kids, and my mother and father live with me. I have 6 sisters, all of them have been married, I am the only son in the family. I have to take the responsibility to take care of my parents, who are in a bad health condition. From time to time, they have to go to clinic to buy some medicines, for we do not have money to go to hospital to see the doctor. In the past, we lived on potatoes and corns and eat potatoes and corns each day. I can not bear such kind of life any longer. I want to change it. I need to rebuild my house as well, it almost collapses. In a word, I need to go out to find some job. But I cannot bring my kids with me. Firstly, I cannot afford the expensive consumption in Shanghai. Secondly, I am always worried about encountering unemployment one day. Thirdly, I can not afford the tuition fees in the cities."*

**c) I want to provide better life chances for my children**

*Li: Ten years ago, because my parents could not afford my schooling, I had to quit from senior high school. At that time, I dreamt I would go to university and change my life and change my family condition. But actually, it will never happen. I know that, for rural children, the only way to change one's fate is to go to universities or to be a soldier. But I could not be a soldier, for one thing, I am short; for another thing, my family was so poor and did not had any guan xi. At last, I became a farmer again, maybe it was my destiny. Now, I have already got married and have 3 children. I have made up my mind that I will earn enough money to support my family and make my children have a better future. I hope one day, all of my children could go to college.*

Through interviews, in my field site, I found there were some reasons for migration, a) most of them are due to the pressure or burden from the family. In Ganqiu village, like other rural places in China, the extended families are very common. In the past, rural people did not have any Government supported social security. At present, the Chinese government has made some improvement but still the gulf between the rural people and urbanites are widening day by day. Thus, to be middle generations, they have to take care of children's schooling as well as supporting the old generation. b) Due to the cold weather, many crops cannot grow up in the cold winter, thus many farmers were under-employed in the winter. c) Some of them seeking employment for their children's better life chances in the future, as well as improve the whole family's socioeconomic status. Moreover, they do not have guan

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xi in the local areas, and cannot get off-farm income. Therefore villagers have to go to cities to find some job opportunities.

### **7.3 Who migrates?**

They migrant workers are still mainly man because most migrant workers earn livings requiring physical strength. In the Chinese society, women were supposed to play "lubricating function", such as taking care of children, taking care of the old. Traditional Chinese society held that “nan zhu wai, nü zhu nei”, which means men's duty was to earn bread and support the whole family, while women's duty was to do housework, take care of the family members and doing domestic work. Fourthly, in China, especially in the vast rural areas, many families cannot afford all the children's schooling, then many parents would rather support male children schooling than female children schooling, which lead to rural women generally have low education level. Nowadays, in Chinese society, women have gained more power than before, but they still suffer from employment discrimination. It is common that husbands go out to find jobs first, and when they establish some social relations (guan xi) in the destination areas, they will manage to find jobs for their wives.

In my field site, 10 years ago, farmers who migrated were knowledgeable, brave and rich. Some of them had some guan xi (some relatives or some friends) in the cities; some of them were rich in the local areas. At that time, they mainly did some business, just liking running a shop or a restaurant and so on. When they became rich, they took their children and wife with them. They bought houses in the cities and became city dwellers. After that, many villagers, who did not have off-farm income, began to follow suit. They dreamt that one day, they could become city dwellers. They went to cities, but because they were poor, they had to engage in unstable, dangerous and low paid work. The money they earned they used for rebuilding their house in the rural home area. Once they had money, they could establish some guan xi with the local boss of coalmines, or with other rich people. Thus, with money it is not so difficult to get an off-farm income from local areas. During the recent years, more and more people follow suit, but due to the economic crisis and overflow of migrant workers, most of them cannot earn money as before. Moreover, the consumption costs of cities are becoming higher each day. Especially, since 2008, many migrant workers become unemployed in China. Now they are put in a great quandary: their family condition is still poor; if they give up the chance to get urban employment, they have to face the poverty in

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the village again, and even risk losing face (mianzi). Therefore, most of them stay on in the cities in search of work.

#### **7.4 Why do not migrants bring their children along to cities?**

In my field site, I know that most left-behind children's parents just had primary or middle school's education levels. I found that most of them worked as the construction workers, road mender, baby-sitters, waiters, waitresses, stall-keepers and so forth. In China, these kinds of jobs are very hard and transient with poor salaries. Through interviews, I found that most migrant workers worried about their work and they feared they would be unemployed. When I asked them whether they wished to bring their children with them, most of them told me that they wished their children to be with them. They told me that they had no choice because they don't have a stable job. Due to the household registration system, if these left-behind children study in the cities, they have to pay extra fees, which is quite expensive for a migrant worker. Even if the government stipulated that schools could not impose such kind of fees, schools still had ways of imposing them. Moreover, the schools in the urban areas are not willing to receive migrant children, because of different backgrounds from the urban children, which may affect the quality of the whole school. Due to the discrimination from the urban residents, as well as they cannot adjust to the urban lifestyle which is totally different from the rural life. Therefore, it is inevitable to put more pressure on the migrant children. (Fan Xianzuo, 2005). Moreover, due to unstable and long-hours work, many migrant workers could not take care of the children very well.

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## 8. The Consequences of migration on left-behind children

Migrating parents may decide, whether by choice (pull) or due to be forced (push), to leave their children in their home villages. The decision of one or both parents to migrate, and have to leave children behind, may be the hope of improvement of family members' living standard, or the result of making good use of each family member, especially the labour force for the development of the family. (Funkhouser 1995; Stark1995)

According the China's most famous anthropologist Fei Xiaotong, he says that family is the most basic unit of the society, which plays the functions of economy and reproduction as well as culture transmission. In the Chinese rural family, usually there are three generations: older generations, middle generations, and younger generations. Among the three generations, the middle generations plays the most important role, taking care of their own children and their parents, as well as performing economic activities and earning bread to support the family. At the same time, they have to shoulder the responsibility to become the major agents for the children's primary socialization, including internalization of importance cultural values. As we know, both family education and school education play essential roles for the children's socialization. In my field site, there is no preschool education; therefore family education becomes more important. In order to improve the economic condition and living standard, they have to leave their home village to earn money to support the whole extended family but they have to leave their children behind, which causes loss of the parents' role in education. Thus, grandparents have to act as "parents" in that situation, one part of parents have to act the roles of both father and mother.

As I mentioned before, my field site was in the one of poorest place in China. Through observation, I found that the living condition of left-behind children was worse than the non-left-behind children. Moreover, I think it is very difficult to change this situation in a short period. First of all, the poor living condition have bad consequences for their study. As we know, the good living condition, especially the good housing conditions can provide for children's a quite and bright place to study. But most of the left-behind children in Ganqiu village lived in the thatched cottages, which were dark and cold in the winter, hot and smelly in the summer. I found most the left-behind children did not have their own bedrooms; they have to share bedrooms with the siblings or with their other family members. Secondly, the

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poor living condition may harmful for left-children's health. Most left-behind children eating potato, corn and tofu almost each day. Some people may argue that: potatoes, corns and tofu are good for health. But one can just imagine that they eat them each day, no meat at all (they eat meat during the festivals). More than that, when I asked the left-behind children: were they satisfied with their meals? 90% of them said "no". After investigation, I found few of them had breakfast, no body made breakfast for them; sometimes they eat some orts, which were left by last night. Due to poverty, the parent(s) have to go to cities to seek jobs, with the hope of improvement of living conditions but receive the adverse effect on the whole family left-behind particularly education of the children.(Muhammad Farooqu and Zahoor Hussain Javed,2009)

## **8.1 Absent parents and the situation of left-behind children**

I assume that left-behind children's family condition and situation will have an influence on the left-behind children's family education. (Li Qingfeng, 2002). I made a survey among the 60 left-behind children, I found that 40% of them did not know their parents' job category. In Ganqiu Primary School, I made a survey among the 73 students in Grade four, 43 of them were left-behind children. But there were more than 80% of left-behind children did not know their parents' work places.

I did a survey of 60 left-behind children. 68.3% of them belong to the type that both parents worked in the cities; 30% of them, their fathers worked in the cities; and 1.7% of left-behind children's mothers worked in the cities. Through survey, I found that most left-behind children's parents were away.

According to the survey, I found that parents' absence from their rural home normally lasted 1 year and they just could come back home once per year. Almost all of them come back home for celebrating the Spring Festival (Chinese Lunar New Year). But some of them (30%) could not go back to home because their hometowns were quite remote and the traffic fees were quite expensive during the Spring Festival holiday. 40% of migrant workers preferred to remit money rather than to go back home. I was told that actually, they also wished to have reunion with their families but they had no choice because, on average, each them had to spend about 2000 RMB for travelling. If they stayed at their work place, they could remit some money to their children.

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## 8.2 The duration of parents' absence

According to my survey, in Ganqiu village, 50.3% of migrant workers come back home once per year, 28% of migrant workers come back home once per 2 or 3 years. Small parts of migrant workers come home twice per year. Through observation, I found that most of migrant workers could not communicate with their children very well because they were away in the most time of the year. Due to the lack of communication in the daily life, some left-behind children regarded their parents as strangers for them. Therefore, even if when they were back to home, children were not willing to communicate with them. Most parents went back home at Chinese New Year or if something urgent happened. In Chinese society, the Spring Festival is the happiest time for children. Both children and parents are busy with entertainment, and most parents cannot cherish this opportunity to communicate with their children or tutor their children's assignments. Some parents told me because they were not able to come back home often, they missed their children pretty much, and felt sorry for their children. Thus, during the Spring Festival, most parents gave children enough money and gifts to 'compensate' with their children. In the January of 2008(during the spring festival ), it was my first time to be there, I found that most left-behind children's parents did little care their children, they choose gambling as their entertaining way. I saw many left-behind children sitting around the table and gambling.

## 8.3 The Main Types of Guardianship

An important reason for the difference between China and other countries concerning the educational position of left-behind children may be related to the knowledge that are transmitted to the children by their guardians. Give the dramatic changes during the cultural revolution when those who are now grandparents suffered greatly in terms of education, it is reasonable that the type of guardianship of left-behind children may be a relevant factor. The left-behind children's guardians refer to those who are in the charge of taking care of the left-behind children. Since it is difficult for migrants to bring their children with them to the destination, they have to find some people to attend their children while they are away. According to Li there are three types of guardianship: (1) Grandparental custody; (2) Parental custody; (3) Peer Custody. (Li Qingfeng, 2002.) But in my

field site, there are several children have no custody and take care by themselves or by elder siblings.

**Table 8.1 Types of the Guardianship and the figure of the left-behind children in Ganqiu village <sup>35</sup>**

<b>The type of guardianship</b>	<b>The number of left-behind children</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
One-part of parent	30	23.3
Grandparents	78	60.5
Other relatives	17	13.2
Other(brother/sister/themselves)	3	2.3
Total	128	99.3
Aberration <sup>32</sup>	1	0.7
Total	129	100.0

The table 8.1 shows different types of the guardianship. In Ganqiu village, 23.3% of left-behind children are taken care of by one-part of parent, mostly by mothers; 60.5% of left-behind children are taken care of by grandparents; 13.2% of left-behind children are attended by other relatives. Surprisingly, 2.3% of left-behind children has no guardians and are taken care of by their siblings or themselves. The data shows that most left-behind children are attended by their grandparents and one-part of parent.

#### **a) Single-parental Custody**

Over the decades, many scholars have done researches, which were solely on the left-behind children whose both parents were away, while ignoring those where only mothers or fathers migrated. In Ganqiu village, there are 23.3% of left-behind children are attended only by

<sup>35</sup> Source: from my interivews and survey



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mothers. While their fathers are away, their mothers become the only guardians and have to take all responsibilities to take care of the children who are left behind, taking care of the aged and doing the farming and housework as well, which increases their burdens. Under such circumstances, the left-behind children have to take more responsibilities to share some burdens with their mothers, such as do some farming work, some housework, and attended their younger brothers and sisters, which have reduced their study time as well as play time. Like other children, most left-behind children are at the stage of growth, they suffer many puzzles, like the changes of physical situations, the pressure from study etc, for which they want to find some answers from their parents. However, given a single parent's many daily tasks they have little energy and time to educate their children. Some scholars find that the children without fathers' care are more coward and less confident than other children; while the children without mothers' care are easy to develop bad habits both in daily life as well as in study. (Fan Fang, 2005 ; Huang Xiaona et al,2005.)

#### **b) Intergenerational Custody**

Intergenerational Custody refers to those both of children's parents are away to find jobs in the cities and cannot bring children with them to their destination areas, thus they have to entrust their children to the old (grandparents) to attend the children.

In Ganqiu village, there are 60.5% of left-behind children are attended by grandparents. Firstly, many scholars claim that grandparents have the tendency to spoil the children; they instruct few moralities and values to the children, which will have very impact on these children's future. (Lin Hong, 2003; Gong Jianping,2004; He Yimin,2004) .I argue that not all the grandparents spoil their grandchildren, for in Ganqiu village, some left-behind children are often punished by those grandparents and some of them instruct moralities and values as their parents do. Secondly, it is true that they have to take all those responsibilities to all the farming and housework as well as those left-behind for these grandparents these children's security, health, eating and clothing. The old are always worried about their grandchildren's health and security. Thirdly, there are big age-gap (45-70 years) between the left-behind children and their grandparents, and it is more difficult to communicate between them. In Ganqiu village, most left-behind children find that it is very difficult to communicate with their grandparents. Fourthly, most of those grandparents are illiterate, thus they cannot tutor these left-behind children's homework at all. (Wu Ni, 2004) In my

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field site, the old could not tutor and monitor the left-behind children in their study, but some of them still could instruct values and moralities to the left-behind children, while most of them were always worrying about the children's security and health problems.

### **c) Relatives Custody**

Relatives custody refers those while those migrant workers are away, but cannot bring their children into the cities, thus they entrust other relatives (like children's uncles, aunties,) to take care of the left-behind children. In Ganqiu village, 13.2% of left-behind children belong to this category. Although, most relatives also can attend to the left-behind children well, but they mainly care about the children's daily life, such as eating and clothing, and few of them can care about the left-behind children's morality and values and emotional difficulties. They say that if they involve their nephews'/ nieces' moralities and values matters, which are easy to destroy their relationships, most of them say they only want to care about the left-behind children's daily life but they do not evolved too much. I was told that most of them were not willing to take care of these left-behind children. Due to the 'mianzi' issue,<sup>36</sup> they have to take care of the children for their absent relatives. In my field site, they told me it was very difficult to say 'no', when these children's parents asked them to do so. Due to the lack of parents' guidance, these children have suffered a lot during the process of socialization.

### **d ) Peers Custody**

Some migrant workers told me that: "sometimes, it is very difficult to find a suitable guardian for children." In Ganqiu village, 2.3% of left-behind children have no guardians and they have to be attended by themselves or by their siblings.

## **8.4 Parental absences, remittances and educational attainment**

Parent(s)' absences not only, have negative impact on the left-behind children's development, but also often makes them to bear the heavy domestic and agricultural work, which greatly shorten their study time, even have to quit school. ( Amuedo-Dorantes and Pozo, 2006; Kandeland Kao, 2001). Many researches indicate that migrant remittances

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<sup>36</sup> Chinese are more shy and do not know how to say 'no', and they also care what others' comment about oneself. 'ren huo yi zhang lian , shu huo yi zhang pi', people are living for 'face

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can make left-behind children get more education opportunities, and significantly reduced left-behind children dropout rates and the time they participate in the domestic and agricultural work. In addition, the remittance effectively improved the left-behind children's living conditions and health condition etc, which could generate a positive impact on the left-behind children' school performance.( Borraz, 2005; Bryant, 2005; Cox Edwards and Ureta,2003; Kandeland Kao, 2001; Yang, 2004).

In China, there are many researches on how migration has negative impact on the left-behind children. ( Lin Hong, 2003; Li Xiuying,2004; Li Qingfeng,2002;Fan Xianzuo,2005;Ye, Jingzhong, et al,2006a ). They concluded that parental absences significantly increased left-behind children's burden to do housework as well as agricultural work, moreover, guardians of rural left-behind children could not provide effective tutoring, which were detrimental to the children's education.

As for the impact of migration and remittances on the educational attainment, the underlying hypothesis is that remittances increase educational opportunities. (Acosta, 2006). Bryant (2005) argues that in the Philippines remittances were used to send children to private schools, which were considered better than public schools. He suggests that left-behind children have more chances to attend private schools, and in that case, on average they did better school performances than non-migrant children.

But in my field site, the absent parent(s) could not send many remittances back to home, as I mentioned before, because the economic crisis, the unemployment, unstable job, low salaries etc, which caused them send limited remittances or even could not send remittances back to home. In this aspect, in my field site, the parental absence could not relax the household's budget constraint or increase the educational investment of the children. Moreover, the parental absences lead the older children to help in supporting the household, and make it more likely to become dropouts. (Hanson and Woodruff 2003, Acosta 2006)

In my field site, I found that parental absences disrupt the family life and have a negative impact on the children's schooling. Due to the remoteness, the parents can not visit their children from time to time. Moreover, the lack of communication with parents, the left-behind children could not get immediate guidance and advice from their parent(s), to great extent, which leads to the poor school performances of the left-behind children. Due to the economic conditions, the number of children in a family also has negative impact on the left-

behind children's education. In China, many people, especially the rural people still believe that 'duo zi duo fu: more sons, more happiness', 'yang er fang lao: bring up sons for the purpose of being looked after in old age.' In my field site, I was told that if a woman could not give birth to a son, she would be looked down upon. I think that there are more children in the family, the less investment on each child. After investigation, I found that the number of children in the left-behind children's families were more than non-left-behind children'. Therefore in my field site, on average, each left-behind child gets less support in education than non-left-behind child.

**Table 8.2 The Second Graders' Scores in Ganqiu Primary School in the Spring Semester<sup>37</sup>**

Rank	Name	Chinese	Math	Total score	Average score
1	Zeng Yanmei★	79	80	159	79.5
2	Wu Xiongfeng	74	66	140	70
3	Shu Lang	57	78	135	67.5
4	Tu Zelang★	60	65	125	62.5
5	Li Xiulan	77	47	124	62
6	Deng Tingting	68	54	122	61
7	Wu HuaXian★	43	75	118	59
8	Shu Xueqin★	74	44	118	59
9	Shu Yulin	69	47	116	58
10	Luo Qinhu★	76.5	37	113.5	56.75
11	Zhang Cuifang	67	39	106	53
12	Wu Jianguo★	64	38	102	51
13	Wu Huaqiong	60.5	37	97.5	48.75
14	Huang Zhen	62.5	32	94.5	47.25
15	Tao Mengjuan	52.5	39	91.5	45.75

<sup>37</sup> The table was the final exam results, which was provided by the headmaster of the Ganqiu primary school. I distinguished left-behind children from non-left-behind children with ★

16	Shu Shuai	57	34	91	45.5
17	Wang Jian★	43.5	47	90.5	45.25
18	Shu Zechao	56.5	32	88.5	44.25
19	Shu Jie	63.5	24	87.5	43.75
20	Shu Yinyue	36.5	45	81.5	40.75
21	Wang Qiaoying★	47.5	33	80.5	40.25
22	Gu Xuemei	51	26	77	38.5
23	Wu Xiaosong	26.5	50	76.5	38.25
24	Wang Xingfeng	36.5	37	73.5	36.75
25	Gu Zhengchao	39	32	71	35.5
26	Wu Qiong	54	17	71	35.5
27	Shu Luanlin★	47.5	23	70.5	35.25
28	Wu Xue★	44	26	70	35
29	Shu Zeming★	57	12	69	34.5
30	Shu Juxian	42	27	69	34.5
31	Wu Maoyun★	38	31	69	34.5
32	Wei Xulin	46.5	19	65.5	32.75
33	huang Zhen	22.5	40	62.5	31.25
34	Yu Shunyan	25.5	35	60.5	30.25
35	Wang Zhen	36.5	23	59.5	29.75
36	Zeng Donghuai	25.5	33	58.5	29.25
37	liu Jiao	32.5	25	57.5	28.75
38	Shu Rong	47	10	57	28.5
39	Zeng Tao	25.5	31	56.5	28.25
40	Wang Yaojun	34	22	56	28
41	Wang Guofei	21	35	56	28
42	Wu Yancui	37	18	55	27.5
43	Li xudong	20.5	33	53.5	26.75
44	Ji Hong★	27	24	51	25.5

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45	Wu Bing	24.5	26	50.5	25.25
46	Zeng Qin★	13	37	50	25
47	Li Peng	33.5	16	49.5	24.75
48	Shu Qiao	31	18	49	24.5
49	Li Yulan★	26.5	21	47.5	23.75
50	Wang Yaoxing★	25.5	21	46.5	23.25
51	Luo Ping★	12.5	34	46.5	23.25
52	Wu Lei★	33	13	46	23
53	Luo Cong	29	17	46	23
54	ChuangGuoshu★	27.5	18	45.5	22.75
55	Shu Yanmei★	36.5	9	45.5	22.75
56	Shu Zeqiao★	18.5	26	44.5	22.25
57	Zhang Baixue★	28.5	15	43.5	21.75
58	Luo Chao	15.5	27	42.5	21.25
59	Wu Fang★	25	15	40	20
60	Liu Donghui	29	9	38	19
61	Shu Xiao★	20.5	17	37.5	18.75
62	Wu Lang★	16	21	37	18.5
63	Shu Kelin	21.5	14	35.5	17.75
64	Luo Yanfei	11.5	18	29.5	14.75
65	Shu Kan★	13.5	14	27.5	13.75
66	Liu Lang	12	15	27	13.5
67	Shu Jiang★	14	10	24	12
68	Shu Li	17	3	20	10
69	Liu Can	16	4	20	10
70	Shu Yumei	12	7	19	9.5
71	Wei Xuefei	10	8	18	9
72	Shu Yalan★	11	7	18	9

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73	Wei Jianguo★	8.5	9	17.5	8.75
74	Wu Cui★	5.5	12	17.5	8.75
75	Wu Guihai	6.5	5	11.5	8.75
76	Luo Xiuting★	7	3	10	5
77	Wei Yanping★	6.5	3	9.5	4.75
78	Wu Chunhua★	6	2	8	4
79	Luo Qian★	2	4	6	3

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I got the table from the headmaster of ganqiu primary school. In this table, I marked left-behind children with ‘★’.

#### 8.4.1 Results and Discussion of second graders score

There are 34 left-behind children in the Second Grade in Ganqiu Primary school. Many researchers in China found that left-behind children did bad performances in the school, but I found that not all of left-behind children did bad performances in the school. As the table 8.2 shows that among the top ten students (*you deng sheng*), five of them are left-behind children. Through further observation, among these five left-behind children, I found that four of them are from mother-absent family, one of them are from father-absent families. The last 35 students got poor grades (*cha Sheng*), most of them were left-behind children, among them, I found that most of them were from both parents-absent families. Besides *you deng sheng* and *cha Sheng*, the others are *zhong deng sheng*, among the *zhong deng sheng*, most of them are non-left-behind children, and some left-behind children (most of them are from father-absent families). Therefore, I argue that fathers’ absence may have greater impact on the children’s school performance. Since in most families fathers are more knowledgeable compare to the mothers, most of them can tutor their children’s homework. From physical perspective, generally speaking, men are more strong and energetic than women, therefore, even if after they finish their work (farming and domestic work), they may still have energy to tutor their children. Nowadays, watching TV shortens many children’s study time, which is true in my field site. I interviewed 30 children (both left-behind children and non-left-behind children) and they admitted that watching TV occupied a lot of time and shortened their study time. They said that 28 of them stopped watching TV, after their parents were back home, and among them, 20 of them stopped watching TV, after

fathers were back, and 8 of them stopped watching TV no matter fathers or mothers were back home. I conclude that both fathers' absences and mothers' absences have great impact on the left-behind children's study, but fathers' absences have greater negative impact on the children's study.

**Table 8.3 The Fifth Graders' Scores in Ganqiu Primary School in the Spring Semester<sup>38</sup>.**

Student Number	Name	Chinese	Math
1	Li Li★	71	14
2	Li Lei	64	24
3	Li Xingfeng	82	73
4	Shu Zengqin	71	33
5	Shu Zeling	78	36
6	Wang Heng★	62	9
7	Ji Yumei★	72	29
8	Wu Jianying★	57	23
9	Wu Hao★	56	29
10	Wu Yinxue★	58	32
11	Lang Yin	70	32
12	Wu Zhao★	46	22
13	Wu Zhaojing★	55	13
14	Wu Yadong	59	40
15	Shu Zesheng★	43	19
16	Luo Yun	72	44
17	Li Yuqin★	26	5
18	Wang shan	68	53

<sup>38</sup> The table was the final exam results, which was provided by the headmaster of the Ganqiu primary school. I distinguished left-behind children from non-left-behind children with ★



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19	Gu Xiao	45	26
20	Wang Yue★	73	11
21	Wang Runhong	71	62
22	Wang Rui★	47	28
23	Luo Langwen★	39	11
24	Luo Shuai	55	30
25	Qu Yuqin	77	49
26	Luo Huiju★	62	23
27	Luo Fang★	53	28
28	Luo Jianhua★	48	19
29	Song Huaiguo★	56	25
30	Zeng Xudong	66	29
31	Zeng Xingjiao	53	39
32	Tao Chunxu★	50	14
33	Li Meng★	54	8
34	Wang Rao	59	36
35	Cheng Yanmei	69	21
36	Zeng Xingsong★	61	13
37	Zeng Li	60	22
38	Li Wenfeng★	74	13
39	Wei Yanfang	68	33
40	Wei Hai	75	51
41	Wei Jianping★	56	15
42	Deng Longquan★	55	24
43	Wu Zenghong	56	38
44	Wu Yu	66	44
45	Hu Bin	70	58

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46	Liu Ting★	36	7
47	Liu Chunlian	78	70
48	Zeng Xingling	78	75
49	Zeng Xingguo★	65	8
50	Li Xue	77	57
51	Wang Liqin★	60	29
52	Hu Jie	69	41
53	Jin Jiaqun★	69	27

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#### 8.4.2 Results and discussion of the fifth graders score

There are 27 left-behind children in the Fifth Grade in Ganqiu Primary school. I found that in the senior graders were more affected by the parents' (parent) absence. In my field site, most of left-behind children were taken cared by the old and by the mothers. As the table 8.2 shows that not all of left-behind children did poor performance at school, and among the top 10 students (*yong deng sheng*), 50% of them are left-behind children. But the table 8.3 shows that the left-behind children from the fifth grade get lower scores than the non-left-behind children. At the same time, I found that most left-behind children in grade five are poor at math, but good at Chinese. Through further observation, I found that those left behind children were able to write good compositions and diaries. After interviewing, I was told most of left-behind children were accustomed to writing diaries and letters (although these letters never send to their parents, because most of the migrant workers do not have stable job and address, moreover, some left-behind children even do not know the name of the city). As for the math, due to the high illiterate rate of the old and women in the western rural China, I guess that most of them may not tutor the left-behind children. In order to shed light on it, I did an investigation on the educational level of the left-behind children's guardians, mainly focusing on women (mothers) and the old (grandparents).

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**Table 8.4 Left-behind Children’s Mothers Educational Level<sup>39</sup>**

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Education-al level	illiterate	Primary school level	Junior high school	Senior high school
Frequency	6	11	3	0

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### 8.4.3 Results and discussion of consequences of mothers’ educational level

In my field site, I interviewed 20 left-behind children’s mothers and I found that their educational level were very lower. As the table 8.4 shows, 6 interviewees are illiterate, 11 interviewees having primary school level, only 3 interviewees have Junior high school level. I was told that even those who had Junior high school level were difficult to tutor their children, especially in Math. One told me: ‘before my husband is away, he can tutor the children from time to time. But now he is away, only thing I can do is to take care of my children, such as clothing, eating, safety and health .....’ It implies that mothers’ low educational level has great impact on the left-behind children’s study: firstly, they have difficulties in tutoring children’s homework; secondly some of them cannot realize the importance of tutoring children in their study.

**Table 8.5 Left-behind Children’s Grandparents’ Educational Level<sup>40</sup>**

Education-al level	illiterate	Primary school level	Junior high school	Senior high school
Frequency	15	5	0	0

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### 8.4.3. Results and Discussion of grandparents’ educational level

I interviewed 20 left-behind children’s grandparents, and I found that 15 of them were illiterate (*wen mang* : character blind) and many of them even could not write their own names neither simple figures. Moreover, only 5 of them had primary school level and none of them had Junior high school and senior high school levels. (Table 8.5 shows). It indicates that the lower educational level of the old led to they cannot tutor the left-behind children in

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<sup>39</sup> Source: From my interviews

<sup>40</sup> Source: from my interviews

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assignments. Through further investigation, I found that most of the old even did not realize the importance of tutoring grandchildren's homework. While some of them have realized the importance of it, but they are not able to tutor them in homework.

In my field site, I found the left-behind children (some live with the grandparents, some with the mother /father; or other relatives ;even by themselves), so after schooling they had to do a lot of housework , such as , cooking, cleaning, did some farming work and so on. In western China, most rural children have to do some housework for the family. But through my observation and survey, it was obvious that left-behind children had to do more housework than non-left-behind children, because their parents (parent) were away they had to take part of responsibility for the housework and farming activities. Many pupils told me, most of them did not have time to do homework at all. Moreover, during my internship in Ganqiu primary school, I found that most left-behind children were not able to attend class on time because they could not get up in the morning. Moreover, I found left-behind children could not finish the homework on time. Left-behind children told me, one the one hand, because they did not have enough time to do homework, as I mentioned before they had to do housework al lot. On the other hand, their grandparents or one part of parent, were not able to help them doing homework for most of grandparents and parents are illiterate.

## **8.5 Comparison between the left-behind children and non-left-behind children's attitude and interest**

As for the study attitude, for the lack of the help and monitoring, it is possible that the left-behind children gradually lost their interest on study and lacked in stimulating study attitude. Some the left-behind children cannot attend class on time and skip the classes from time to time. In most times, some left-behind children cannot finish their homework and cannot submit homework on time. But for the non-left-behind children, most of them can finish their homework on time because they get help, monitoring and encouragement from their parents.

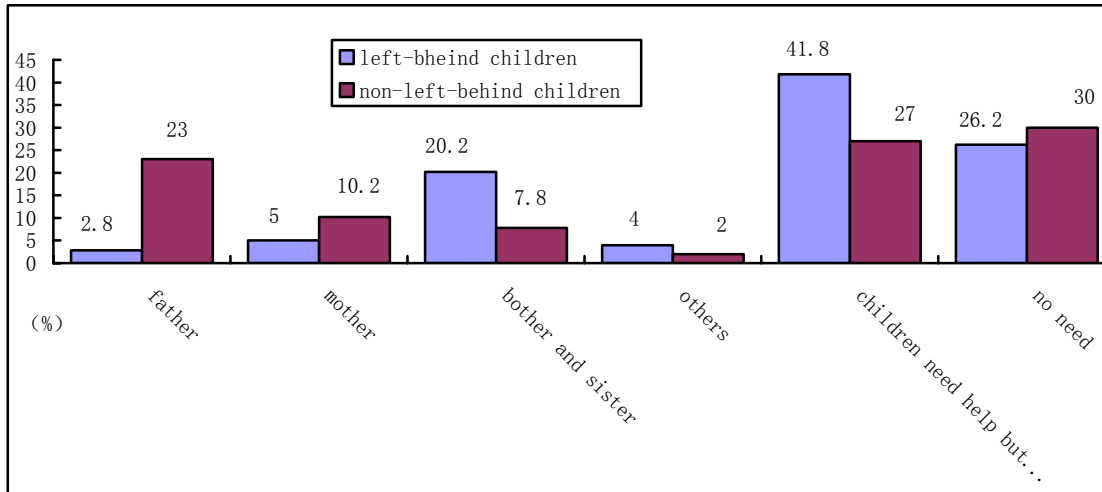
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## **8.6 Comparison between the left-behind children and non-left-behind children's study time**

Study time means that time which spends on the reading and doing homework. The left-behind children cannot arrange their agenda properly. For the lack of the monitoring and help from parents, most grandparents believe that children can enrich their knowledge and broaden their horizon by watching TV. But the left-behind children they cannot make balance between the study and playing and watching TV, thus they spend a lot time on watching TV, which greatly reduces the left-behind children's study time, then affect their study.

As for the non-left-behind children, their parents have time and energy to help and monitor the children's study. Moreover, in the most families, fathers are more knowledgeable and authoritative than mothers, especial in rural China. Therefore, children usually spend much less time on watching TV when their fathers are at home.

As rural children, they often have to undertake some housework and farming work for their family. In the left-behind children's families, because their parents or one part of parent are away, the other family members have to do much more work than before. Thus, the children also have to share more housework or more farming work than before, which shorten the study time of the left-behind children as well.



**Figure 8.1 The help and supervision from their guardians<sup>41</sup>**

## 8.7 Left-behind Children’s Need for Assistance

I did a survey among the students from the grade 4 and grade 6 in Ganqiu Primary school .When the left-behind children encounter problems,(especially on study ), they usually ask for help from other classmates, which occupy the 43%. 27% of them ask for help from their teachers. But only 13% of left-behind children are willing to ask for help from their guardians. Moreover, when the left-behind children encountered problems in the daily life, 35% of left-behind children confided their troubles to their friends. While as 35% of them keep silent when they encountered troubles, or keep diary (16%). When they encountered troubles, only 4%, 4%, 3% of left-behind children confided to their teachers, parents, and guardians. It is safe to say that left-behind children’s parents, teachers and guardians hardly can understand the inward feelings of left-behind children.

**Table 8.6 Left-behind children’s appeal for help in study and daily life<sup>42</sup>**

Items	The way to deal with troubles	Percentage (%)
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<sup>41</sup> Source: from my questionnaires

<sup>42</sup> Source: from my questionnaire

	Classmates	43%
Appeal help on study	Teachers	27%
	Guardians	13%
	Confiding to friends	38
	Keeping diary	16
Appeal help on daily life	Confiding to teachers	4
	Confiding to parents	4
	Confiding to guardians	3

### “An 11-year-old girl’s diary”

*I never ask for help from my grandparents, because both of them are illiterate. They even can not write their own names. When I encountered difficulties on my study, sometimes I ask for help from my teacher. But I think it is shameful to ask for help from teachers from time to time because my teacher can deal with the homework which I thought difficult, in a short time. Thus, sometimes I believe I am an idiot. But when I have troubles in daily life, I never ask for help from my teacher, because I think the teachers’ main duty was teaching knowledge and dealing with stuff on study. When I was in blue, I never confided to my grandparents, because they could not understand me. Mom, I miss you pretty much. I want to have long talk with you, but you are in Shanghai. I know Shanghai is very far away from our home.....*

Parents’ absence leads to broaden the gap with the left-behind children, most left-behind children are not willing to communicate with their parents. As for other guardians, they do not have the time and energy to communicate with the children. Moreover, due to the shortage of the teachers, those teachers have to teach multiple courses and have no time and energy to communicate with the left-behind children.

## 8.8 The left-behind children and their future life career

Under the system of Confucian values, education has always meant empowerment, not only for one’s self, but for the full family member as well. Formal education has been, and generally still is, the path to certain employment in the civil service (become cadres: ganbu).

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This, in turn, leads to financial security and high honour for entire family (*guang zong yao zu*: glorify the whole family). Thus, a strong sense of belonging to a family and to a community most certainly increases ethnic students' desire to succeed in school. (See Waley 1956 for a translation of *The Analects of Confucius*)

As I mentioned before, in Ganqiu village, there were Yi and Miao and Han people, and Yi and Miao are ethnic groups in China. In China, for historic reasons, members of minority groups tend to be concentrated in the lower economic and occupational classes. Moreover, generally speaking, the educational achievement of minority parents lags behind that of Han parents. But in my field site, most left-behind children are Yi and Han people, the Yi people are Hanized: assimilated by Han people (*bei han hua*), who are just registered as Yi in hukou. In my field site, Yi people speak Han language, they do not celebrate the Yi's ceremonies, they do not have their own costumes, they do not think they are Yi people. In my field site, they do not regard themselves as members of ethnic group, in their minds, the members of ethnic group are stupid and poor. They believe that Miao People are ethnic group and they are poor and illiterate. They often look down upon the Miao people in my field site, because the Miao speak Miao language and wear Miao costumes, having their own festivals. After investigation, I found that there are few Miao students in Ganqiu primary school. In Ganqiu village, the Miao people seldom go to school and most of them do not speak Han language, therefore it is very difficult for them to find job opportunities in the cities.

In China, there are three kind of occupation composed tiered identity system, from top to bottom, of cadres (*gan bu*), workers (*gong ren*) and peasants (*nong min*). But for the historic reasons, members of China's ethnic minorities are concentrated in the worker and peasant groups, primarily the latter. Nowadays, the surplus peasants, who have no hukou in the urban areas, and in order to improve their living standard and find good job opportunities flowing into the cities.

As a result, those families are likely to be short on 'cultural capital'. 'Cultural capital' is a form of knowledge that legitimates the maintenance of power by dominant groups (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). 'Cultural capital' is what gives the children of more educated parents an edge over the children of less educated parents. 'Cultural capital' works this way. On the one hand, education has close relationship with parents' attitude. Parents who are themselves



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educated are more likely to pay more attention to their children's education. It is possible that the support and interest of educated parents encourages their children to remain in the school. On the other hand, education makes the parents have the abilities to tutor their children. Educated parents are able to act as children's tutors, help with their assignments that lead to academic achievements. Parents' occupation has great impact on a child's educational opportunities because it determines the residential areas as well as the quality of the school. (Jalia Kwong, 1983)93-108. In my field site, left-behind children's parents are "nong min gong", who work in the cities while their identities are still farmers. The left-behind children still have to stay in the rural areas with no good facilities and qualified teachers, which have negative impact on their education. "In turn, a person's occupation is decided by his education" (Jalia Kwong, 1983:p.101). Therefore, left-behind children's poor academic achievements will affect their future life career.

Through investigation, I found that after migrating, they see 'the other world' and most migrant workers realized they are at the lowest position in the whole society. Some of them told me that they were not able to change their social positions, but they have to push their children to study hard and attending college to improve the social-economic status. They manage to overcome educational and economic limitations and help their children construct achievement-oriented selves. In order to afford children's schooling and improve their living standard, they have to leave their children behind and find jobs in cities. Thus, they cannot offer help and supervision on the children's study, which have negative impact on the children's academic achievements. A pupil wrote in his diary, as follows. I just quoted some of it and translated it into English.

*Papa and mama are away to find jobs in the cities, I do not know the name of the city, but my grandfather told me that it was a big city which was very far away from home. Papa and mamma told me that I have to study hard because they work very hard in the cities, and they did everything for me and my siblings. I know they are too laborious and they did everything for the family. I will study hard and reciprocate when I grow up. At present, I live with my grandparents, before their departure, they told me that I have to be obedient and study hard they would be back soon. Dad, mom, I am obedient and I study very hard, I got 100 in the test of math. I dream one day that I can go to Beijing University.....*

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The other migrant workers told me that it was very difficult for a graduate student to find a stable job. They told me that study/knowledge was useless, but money talks, if one has money, he/she is 'grandfather', otherwise 'grandson'—which means money is everything. They have instilled such kind of values to the children, therefore the children gradually form the concept 'knowledge is useless', and they are eager to drop out of school to find job opportunities like their parents. In my field diary, I wrote,

*One day, one of villager invited me to have dinner with their family. There are 10 children in that family. I was astonished at the very beginning. The hostess were just 45 years old, she gave birth to 10 children, among them 2 of them were boys, the others are girls. The eldest daughter was 25 years old and the youngest one was a boy, just 4 years old. The hostess told me that if she could not gave birth to female children, and the villager would look down upon her. Among the all female children (8), just two of them still at school, other girls had dropped out from the schools and find jobs in the Shanghai and Guangdong. The hostess said it was useless to have too much schooling, because those girls would get married one day, moreover, nowadays, even the graduates students could not find stable job, the government no longer get job allocation from the government. She said that the boys would become bread earner in the future, it was better for boys to acquire some knowledge at school. The host was also a migrant worker, he worked in a construction company in Shanghai, and he had not been back for three years. She sighed.....*

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## **9. The effect of migration on the left-behind children's future life career**

In a classic study of American education, James S. Coleman (1996) suggests that parents' income, occupation, and education are highly correlated with their children's chances of receiving higher education. Similarly in China, the family exerts a profound influence on educational attainment, which will have an impact on the children's future life career.

### **9.1 Left-behind children's education, migration, life career**

In Ganqiu village, many migrant workers, more or less, have suffered from the discrimination from the urbanites; most of them believe that 'money is everything'. Compared to the other pupils, left-behind children are more sensitive to money. After migration, some migrant workers see 'the other world', and tell the left-behind children their experiences of the colourful cities. Some left-behind children are impressed by their parents' account of the "bright lights" of the cities, and make their mind to study hard and find a good job in the future; while other left-behind children believe that study/learning/knowledge is useless (*du shu wu yong lun*), and make up their mind to find a job in the cities like their parents had.

**Table 9.1 The Comparison between the left-behind children and non-left-behind children on the motivations of study<sup>43</sup>**

Motivation of study	Left-behind children		Non-left-behind children	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
The demands from parents	8	6.2	16	10.3
To Lessen the burden of parents	30	23.3	20	12.9
Earn high honor for parents	28	21.7	45	29.0
Finding good jobs	31	24.0	15	9.7
Attending college	25	19.4	48	31.0
Not sure	4	3.1	9	5.8
Others	3	2.3	2	1.3

## Results and Discussion

With the motivation of study, 23.3 % of left-behind children aim at lessening the burden of parents, while only 12.9% of non-left-behind children have the same aim as left-behind children; 24% of left-behind children aim at finding a good job in the future, while only 9.7% of non left-behind children have the same aim. The above statistics, suggest that many left-behind children know the hardship which their migrant parents have suffered and are eager to lessen the burden of parents. Moreover, they have begun to realize the importance of finding good urban jobs. Compared to 31% of non-left-behind children, 19.5 % of left-behind children aim at attending college in the future, which implies that the popular ‘*du shu wu yong lun*’ has impact on both of them, but left-behind children are much more affected. Compared to 10.3 % of non-left-behind children, 6.2% of left-behind children aim at meeting parents’ requests, which suggests that non-left-behind children have more expectation from their parents.

<sup>43</sup> Source: from my fieldwork data

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## 9.2 Most Dropouts are Left-behind Children

As for the left-behind children's primary stage enrolment rate, it can reach about 99%, but only 88% are attending school (Duan Chengrong, Zhou Fulin, 2005 ). Left-behind children's dropout rate is higher than non-left-behind children. Because the parents and guardians of left-behind children failed to contact the school in time, and because left-behind children are lacking in supervision, it is assumed that left-behind children have little interest in studying. Through interviews and observation, I found that quite a number of left-behind children could not attend class on time and some could not submit the assignment on time. This affects left-behind children's academic achievements. Moreover, after migrant workers go to cities, they find that urban life is totally different from the rural life. When I did field work in Ganqiu Village, I met many left-behind children fiddling around, most of them were only 12 or 13 years old. I was told that most of them were dropouts. Some of them did gambling, but most of them did farming and housework. After interviews, I was told that because they were too young to find job in the cities, they had to stay at home and look after their younger brothers and sisters and take some domestic work as well as farming work for the family. In my field site, most people still prefer male children to female children.(Zhong nan qing nü). Most families would support boys' education rather school than girls education. The dropout rate of female left-behind children is higher than male left-behind children's.

At present, the Chinese government no longer gives job allocation for graduate students, more and more graduate students have to find jobs by themselves and become da gong de (can not have a stable job). Nowadays, in the China's society, more and more farmers (especially the migrant workers, they encountered different values, views, life-styles and they know the high unemployment of graduate students. Moreover, in China, at present, many the newly graduate students can only earn low salaries as the nong min gong, because at the age of 22-23, the nong min gong have more work experiences than the graduate students. But the migrant workers have not realized that maybe 2-3 years later the graduate students can earn double or more salaries.). They believe 'knowledge is useless' 'receiving school education is useless' ( du shu wu yong lun: which is just like the thought appeared in the Cultural Revolution Period).

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## 9.3 Comments on Left-behind children

Since I assume that guardians' interaction with left-behind children was affected by how they perceived the relations to the children in their custody I made a few interviews.

### 9.3.1 Comments from guardians

Time: 07/2009—11/2009

Place: Ganqiu village

The basic situation of interviewees

1. Wang (male, 52, Han, the head of Wanchang she)
2. Yu (male, 56, Yi, villager from Jizidong she)
3. Jin (female, 60, Yi, villager from Yanjing She)
4. Shu (male, 45, Han, villager from Ganqiuwan she)

The content of interviews

#### **I: Can you talk about the situation of left-behind children?**

*Wang: I have four children and two of them have been married and also have kids. All of my children have gone to the cities to find money. I have to take care of my two grandsons and a granddaughter. My elder grandson is 11 years old, and my younger grandson is only 4 years old. My granddaughter is 6 years old.*

*Yu: I have four sons and all of them dagong in Shanghai, they have gone for four years. I have to take care of my granddaughters. The oldest one is 13 years old and she is very obedient and she did good performance in the school, the two others are still very young, one is 4 years old, the other is 6 years old.*

*Jin: Once I had 3 sons and two daughters, but 2 years ago my elder son and youngest son suffered traffic accidents in Guandong. Last year, my second son died in a construction company in Shanghai. Now, I only have one son, my two daughters got married. I have to*

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take care of all of my 6 grandchildren. Three of them are in the Ganqiu Primary school and the others are dropouts.

*Shu: I have 3 children. Both my younger brother and his wife have gone to Zhejiang to find jobs. They have four children, three of them are in the Linkou middle school, the youngest one is in the Ganqiu primary school, and lives with us, the others are living in the school and come to my place once a week to ask for money (my brother remit each month).*

**I: Are you willing to taking care of the left-behind children?**

*Wang: I am willing to take care of my grandchildren in daily life. But when they get sick I am not willing to take care of them, because I fear that if my grandchildren got sick severely, I can not face their parents after returning home. In the past, several children died of serious illnesses when their parents were migrating.*

*Yu: I am willing to take care of my grandchildren because they are very obedient.*

*Jin: I have no choice but taking care of them, because if I do not care of them, no body will care about them.*

*Shu: I have no choice but take care of my brother' children because their family is very poor and they even can not make ends meet. They have to dagong in the cities. But they were not able to bring their children along. I am his elder brother and I have to take care of children for them.*

**I: Can you tutor children in their homework?**

*Wang: I simply finished my primary school in my time. It is very difficult for me to tutor my grandson's assignment, especially in math. I could read some Chinese characters but my grandson told me that he could not understand me because I read with a very strong accent.*

*Yu: I am character blind, and can not read and write. Thus, I can not help my grandchild in her homework. But I tell my grandchildren stories and teach them how can be a good person, just like, honest, kind, loving and so on.*

*Jin: I am character blind, I cannot write my own name, and I do not have any time and energy to help them in their study because my husband is always drinking. So I have to take*

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most of responsibilities of housework and farming, as well as, taking care of the whole family.

*Shu: I finished my middle school in my time, but I do not have time and energy to tutor them, for one thing, I have to tutor my own children. For another thing, they seldom ask me to tutor them in their homework. I think my main responsibility is to make them feel safety and healthy.*

**I: As for taking care of them, what is your most concern about?**

*Wang: I am always worried about their health and safety. If they can be safe and sound each day, then I will be happy.*

*Yu: my grandchildren are too young; I am always worried about their health and safety. Last winter, during the spring festival, both of my two little grandkids got a fever and I had to take them to the clinic which is 10 kilometres away from here. Due to the big snow, there was no transportation, my wife and I had to take them to hospital on foot. When we arrived there, it was midnight. I knocked the doctor's bed- room again and again, but at the very beginning, there was no answer. At that time, I thought if my grandkids got severely sick, I did not know how to face my children. But I knew I could not give up, so I kept knocking at the door. One hour later,-the doctor got up and answered me.....*

*Jin: I am always worried about their health and safety. I hope they can group up healthy and safe.*

*Shu: I am always worried about their safety because there are many 'bad students' in the Lin kou middle school, who are mainly chasing after girls or doing violent things. There are some rogues around the school. Last year, there was a scuffle in the school and a student from my village was hurt seriously. If they have any problems, I would not know how to face my brother.*

**I: Is there any difference between left-behind children and non-left-behind children?**

*Wang : I think there are many differences. If the children are taken care of by their own parents, they will communicate with the school teachers, and will ask about their children's performances, their personalities and their interactions with their classmates and so on. Last year, my eldest grandson went to Guangdong with his parents, but they locked him up*



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*in the daytime because they had to work in the daytime and no body took care of him. After that, he did not want to go to Guangdong again. But I know he also misses his parents very much.*

*Yu: My eldest granddaughter is very outstanding. She is a six grader in Ganqiu primary school and is always performing very well in school but I know she misses her parents very much. I think the left-behind children are not as happy as non-left-behind children. I think no body, except their parents can take care of them very well, others (grandparents, other relatives) can only cares about their eating and health and safety.*

*Jin: because my husband drinks a lot, he even can not take care of himself, I have to shoulder the whole family and take care of them. Others say God is equal to everyone, but I think it is not equal. Why do I have to suffer so much.. I always feel angry and sad. Thus when my grandchildren are disobedient, I punish them a lot. But after punishment, I found that my grandchildren cried at the corner of the bedroom, and I felt very guilty. I think they are too poor. Maybe, this is my destiny.*

*Shu: I think there are many differences between left-behind children and non-left-behind children. Due to parental absence, many left-behind children are dirty and impolite and making troubles around. I think the children need communication with their own parents. Just like my nieces and nephews, they are very introverted and not willing to communicate with me. Especially, my niece, each time, when she needs money, she writes a note to me: 'uncle, I need 10 Yuan '. But they are also very independent, and they can wash cloth and cook for themselves.*

### **9.3.2 Teachers' Comments on the Left-behind Children**

Time: 07/2009—11/2009

Place: Ganqiu Primary School and Linkou Middle School.

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The basic situation of interviewees

- a. Deng (male, 35, the head teacher of Ganqiu Primary school)
- b. Wang (Male,55,a math teacher of Ganqiu Primary school )
- c. Zhao (Male,30, a middle school teacher in Linkou Middle School )

1. the content of interview

**I: Is there any difference between left-behind children and non-left-behind children?**

*Deng: To be honest, we do not have the exact statistics of left-behind children in my school. But as far as I know, almost 40% of pupils are left-behind children. I think there are differences between them.*

*Wang: left-behind children give me deep impression; some of them are very obedient. Generally speaking, due to lack of parental education, their performances in the school are not so good.*

*Zhao: there are many left-behind children in Linkou Middle school. I find that it is very difficult to teach them, and most school dropouts are left-behind children. I am not saying that all of left-behind children are bad, but most of them perform poorly in the school especially, the male left-behind children. Compared to them, non-left-behind children are much better, because the parents can give them some guidance and help when they encounter problems.*

**I: Can you talk more about the left-behind children's study?**

*Deng: as for study, many left-behind children's parents have been away since they were of preschool age. In Ganqiu village, there is no kindergarten, so the family education becomes more important than urban areas. I think the preschool education is very important. But while the left-behind children's parent(s) are away, they can not give children (qi meng jiao yu ), formative education, which will impact on one's life. Just like a Chinese saying that: 'san sui kan lao', which means that the child is the father of the man. Unfortunately, most left-behind children are deprived of formative education, and lagged behind in the class at the very beginning.*

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*Wang: some left-behind children live with grandparents, some live with one part of parent, some live with their relatives, even a few of them live by themselves. In rural areas, the farmers have to do a lot of farming work. When some family members (mainly wage laborers) go to cities, both farming work and housework are transferred to the left-behind family members, which increase the burden of the guardians. Moreover, most guardians are illiterate. Thus, the guardians can not care about the children's study.*

**I: Can students' parents contact teachers on their own initiative?**

*Deng: left-behind children's parents' seldom contact school teachers, while non-left-behind children's parents can contact with school teachers more frequent. Thus, I pay more attention to left-behind children, and I offer help as possible as I can. But, as you see, the school condition is poor, and we do not have enough teachers, money and equipment. As a school principal, I have to do a lot of things except teaching. Actually, I am more like a babysitter (laugh).*

*Wang: I have worked in this school for 6 years, I have encountered many students' parents. Some of them contact teacher and have good cooperation with them, and some of them think that the school should take all responsibility for children's education. Some of them have never contacted with school teachers. But compared to left-behind children's parents, non-left-behind children's can communicate with school teachers more frequently and are more involved in the school activities.*

*Zhao: Some parents contact school teachers frequently, while others have never contacted school teachers. In Linkou Middle school, many students become dropouts. At present, central government put great emphasis on the students' compulsory education (nine-year: 6-year of primary school and 3-year middle school). Thus, the local government pushes school teachers to control the rate of dropout. Thus, almost all school teachers have to pay visits to students' family from time to time. Thus, even if the students' parents' do not contact school teachers, the school teachers often contact them.*

**I: Why do left-behind children encounter so many problems?**

*Deng: I think the left-behind children are lacking tutoring from guardians' tutoring, and they spend a lot of time on watching TV.*

Wang: Ganqiu village is very poor, and the local government do not attach enough importance to the education. Many left-behind children are attended by the grandparents and they easily spoil the children. Moreover, the left-behind children have to do housework which shortens the study time. Due to the remoteness, some students have to walk 2 hours to go to school and return home. It is possible that some teachers scolded the ‘bad students’, which is harmful to the left-behind children’s personal development.

Zhao: As they grow up day by day, most students in this period inevitable have some rebellious inclinations. Therefore, parental guidance becomes more important in this period. When left-behind children’s parents are away,-they do not get proper guidance from their guardians or teachers and the situation will become worse.

I followed up the work on teachers views by doing interviews among the teachers in other schools in Linkou township (Linkou middle school, Ganqiu primary school, Yanjin Primary school, Fengyan Primary school.) 62% of the teachers believed that parents’ migration had great impact on the left-behind children and most left-behind children are pretty poor. 50.5% teachers believed that left-behind children school performances became worse after parents’ migration. 42% teachers held that after parents’ migration, the children’s morality became worse.

**Table 9.2 Teachers’ Comments on the Left-behind Children<sup>44</sup>**

Item	Disagree (%)	Not sure (%)	Agree (%)
1. Left-behind children’s performance become worse after parents’ migration	15.5	34	50.5
2. Left-behind children’s moral behaviors become worse	19	45	42

<sup>44</sup> Source: from my interviews

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3. Most left-behind children are very poor	25	13	42
4. Left-behind children have more problems when they have interactions with others	21	50	29
5. Parents' migration has no impact on the left-behind children	31	29	30

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## Results and Discussion

Due to parents' absence, the left-behind children's family education has been affected. The normal family structure has been changed; most of children and guardians cannot adjust to it. As we know, family education is quite important during the process of children's socialization. But in the left-behind children's families, family education can not play its proper role.

### 9.4 Poor rural school education have negative impact on the left-behind children's future life chances

I paid several visits to Linkou Middle School, which located 10 kilometres away from Ganqiu village. After interviews and investigation, I found that there was a poor study atmosphere. I got to know that few of the pupils were able to pass the examination to further their study in the Junior high school. At present, 'su zhi jiao yu'<sup>45</sup>—quality education (education for all-around development) have been advocated all around China, because more and more people realize that "du shu" does not just mean 'reading' and 'scores'. But in my field site, schools put great emphasis on the children's scores, but ignored the 'su zhi jiao yu'. Teachers over-emphasized examinations in the children's education, which hardly stimulate students' interest in quality education. It is difficult for parents' to judge the children's study capability and interest because they just see the scores, and hardly understand The Government's idea of quality education. If these children do not get

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<sup>45</sup> Su zhi jiao yu: the education on people's moral quality, intelligence quality, physical and aesthetic quality, labor skills, etc. Quality education is contrary to traditional 'ying shi jiao yu' and aims to develop the basic quality people for the fundamental purpose, to respect people's subjectivity and initiative, pay attention to stimulate students' potential qualities.

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satisfying scores, their parents will think that it is wise to discontinue their study and join in the labour forces. (*Jin cheng da gong*).

Objectively speaking, left-behind children cannot learn practical skills for making a living from the existing schools and education system. If they cannot pass the entrance examination for Junior high school, they have no choice but to become dropouts. Due to lack of parents' care and love, in my field site, many left-behind children are more likely to be lonely, depressed and anxious. They need proper guidance and help from the school teachers and parents. But their parent(s) are away or have no energy or time to give them proper guidance. So the teachers become more important for the left-behind children. But due to the limitation of facilities, funds, faculties, the school teachers pay more attention to the students' scores, and ignored the development of left-behind children's possible psychological problems, and ignore the children's security, and morality etc. Education (*jiao yu*) means *jiao shu yu ren*, which suggest the teachers' duty is teaching technical knowledge and moral knowledge. In Ganqiu Primary School, there were just two courses: Math and Chinese. Other courses of quality education such as Music, Drawing, Moral education, Basics of Law, P.E. English, Computer, etc, are replaced by Math and Chinese, which are required to be tested in the final examinations. As a volunteer teacher, I taught Math and Chinese for Grade Four and Grade Six students. Once, I asked some left-behind children and some non-left-behind children to sing a song for the whole class, but few of them could sing a song completely. I also found that most left-behind children are much more shy than the others. At present in China, more and more children in the urban areas not only have high scores in study, but also are able to master other skills, such as, computer, English, drawing, playing the piano, the violin, play football, basketball, and ping pang and so on. But in my field site, the poor rural children, have never seen those things. There are no equal accesses to national public resources, and this causes the disparities between rural left-behind children and urban children. In Ganqiu primary school, there are eight teachers, among them, only three of them have got college education, four of them have received high school level. One of them just had junior middle school level. According to the national standard, primary school teachers should have university degrees, with major in relevant educational subjects. But in my field site, all of those teachers were far away from the national primary school teachers' standard. I was told that all of these rural teachers wanted to teach in the cities, on the one hand, because in the urban areas, the salary was higher, and the urban teachers can have social welfare systems.

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## 10. Conclusion

In the thesis I have tried to present some observations I made on left-behind children in a small community in Yunnan province. These observations indicated that left-behind children performed less satisfactory than non-left behind children. This was different from what had been argued in studies of left behind children in other countries, but it was largely consistent with findings from other Chinese studies. In my attempts to understand left behind children's learning situation I have been drawing on various conceptual approaches in my search for empirical conditions that might create differences in the learning situation among children. Differences in transmission of knowledge I assumed would be critical here. Here I mainly tried to draw on perspectives from Bourdieu's concept of capital forms. Knowledge from his perspective we can look at as cultural capital.

Bourdieu argues that Capital in general takes different forms (different claims on reified or living labour):

**a)** Economic capital – means of material production, commodities, money. Problems relations of production not separated from other relations of production. Fully economic capital is found with institutions of private property and state to guaranty the rights. This form of capital is accumulated in exchange establishing claims on others labour or the products of their labour. When a peasant migrates to town he sells his labour in order to earn an income he can convert into other forms of economic capital like consumption goods, investment in land, or from my perspective investment in other capital forms.

**b)** Cultural capital. This form of capital exists as embodied knowledge no matter how acquired as long as it can be converted to other forms of capital, e.g. in daily life we learn skills that we use in productive work. It also exists as institutionalized knowledge, i.e. knowledge that we acquire in formal educational institutions and that is certified in an exam paper. The Government invests in educational institutions, but individual may also try to invest economic capital in their own or in their children's education. In my material the most important point has been the embodied knowledge acquired in children's daily interaction with family members. I think in this field there is a big difference between children who live with grandparents and those who live with parents, because in China there is a big



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generational difference in accumulated knowledge between those who were young (the grandparents of children at school today) during the Cultural Revolution and those who were young (the parents of today's children) in the post-Mao area. I think this is a factor that in rural China may serve to create differences in the stimuli children get –stimuli that also may be made relevant in the guardians tutoring of pupils in their school work. My material indicates that this affects children's interests in school work. Some see school performance as wasted because they are up against so many constraints in converting whatever institutionalized knowledge they get in school they may not be able to convert it into economic capital of any significance. Others however are stimulated by their parents experiences and understanding of possibilities of gainful employment that good exam marks may lead to.

c) Social capital. Although institutionalized cultural capital may be a necessary condition for good employment, it may not be sufficient unless one can draw on social capital to facilitate such employment. Investment in networks of social relations that can be used for influencing decisions favourable for such employment is of fundamental importance. In China such networks are generally called *guanxi* and maintenance of such networks requires substantial economic investments in the forms of gifts. When such networks are established they involve important aspects of trust and moral duties. Without good *guanxi*, good employment is very difficult indeed.

d) Symbolic capital – prestige attached to a family, name or in social classification. It may be accumulated in symbolic investments (ritual, aid, lifestyle) serving to impose a legitimate vision of the world and who in this vision has monopoly of legitimate prestigious positions – claims to accumulated labor. It implies claims to be treated in special ways by others. In China one might argue that the official classification of people in different categories such as *nongmin* (peasants) and *jumin* (urban residents) organize distribution of symbolic capital because it is not only associated with different access to social services, but also because it is associated with differently ranked personal attributes (backward versus modern).

The important thing I want to draw attention to is that these capital forms are interrelated and the interesting thing is to explore how they can be converted into each other. In China there is a deeply rooted understanding of the relations between these capital forms.

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According to Confucianism, "among all, only study comes first" (wan ban jie xia pin, wei you du shu gao), which has had profound influence on the Chinese since ancient China. "Knowledge can change one's destiny."(zhi shi gai bian ming yun) .They hope their children can jump from the gate of 'nong men' (the gate of being a farmer),once one jumps the gate, he/she can get rid of the 'stigma' of being a farmer ,according to Confucianism, peasants are in the lowest position in the society, because they are lao li zhe suggest that they are stupid (yu) and poor(qiong).

In modern China, the social capital (guan xi) and economic capital are very important, especially for seeking employment. There is Chinese old saying that (yi ren de dao, ji quan sheng tian-if a man get the position in the society, then the dogs and chickens of him will ascend to the heaven, meaning that if a man gets the power or gets rich, all his/her family, relatives and friends of him/her will get benefits too – a saying which clearly shows the importance of guan xi. In my field site, however most farmers have little social capital; therefore it is very difficult for them to find an off-farm income in the local area. If they have little economic capital it is difficult to establish guan xi with rich or powerful people, such as the boss of local coalmine or with the local government officials, because for this one has to give gifts or money to them. Because most peasants have few opportunities to accumulate economic capital in my field site, most left-behind children discontinue their studies after they graduate from their junior middle school<sup>46</sup> For farmers, the cost and the risk of education investment are too high, the especially higher education is always charging very expensive fees and ordinary farmers can not afford such kind of tuition fees. Due to the lack of economic capital and social capital, the local farmers have no choice but to find possible job opportunities in the big cities and engage in "dirty"(zang), dangerous(wei xian) and low-paid (di gong zi)work, which the urban residents are not willing to do; or they may contact the villagers who have established some migration network (guan xi) in the destinations and seek job opportunities through them. Unfortunately, since 2008, due to the economic crisis and high rate of unemployment in the big cities, most migrant workers lost their jobs and could not get the economic capital they had expected. But many migrant workers still remained in the big cities and waited for the possible job opportunities, because they know

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<sup>46</sup> the 'nine-year compulsory education'-6 years for primary school and 3 years for junior middle school

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that if they go back to the home villages, they still won't have social capital (guan xi) to get an off-farm income there.

Economic capital and social capital thus have closely connected with accumulation of cultural capital. The migrant workers cannot improve their socioeconomic position as they expected, which may have a great impact on the children's academic achievement as well as future life career. Due to the high rate of unemployment of graduate students, plus at present the Chinese government no longer allocate stable jobs for them, they have to find jobs by themselves in the labour market. Therefore, for the graduate students the social capital (guan xi) becomes significant in the process of seeking employment. The migrant workers know that the most important way to improve the socioeconomic positions for their children is to attend universities. Thus, on the one hand, some migrant workers encourage their children to study hard (hao hao du shu); on the other hand, some migrant workers were worried that the lack of social capital (guan xi) would affect their children's future life careers, therefore they believe 'du shu wu yong lun': receiving school education is useless, which may be detrimental to the children's attitudes and interests towards study and education attainment greatly.

In my field site, I found that most dropouts are left-behind children and most of them discontinue their schooling after having finished nine-year compulsory education, which definitely have negative impact on their future life career. Since most left-behind children cannot attend college and get a graduate degree, they are disadvantaged in their future life career.

An interesting aspect of migrants' remittances is that most of them invest in television in the left-behind children's families. This may play an important role in the left-behind children's socialization. According to my research, I found that the left-behind children's guardians seldom controlled the time the left-behind children spending on watching TV. Moreover, they allowed the children to watch whatever happens on TV. Due to parental absence, and the guardians' relaxed guidance of the children, they spend too much time watching TV. This greatly reduces the time they spend on study. It also greatly reduces the time left for playing with others and learning social skills.

My observations indicate that parents' migration has great impact on left-behind children particularly when both parents are away, because most of grandparents are

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illiterate(character blind), and therefore not able to help the children's study. Secondly, as for the one-parent' absence the left-behind parent has to take all the responsibilities for the whole agricultural work and housework as well, they do not have time and energy to help the children's study. The left-behind parent usually has lower educational level than the absent one. Even though, they want to help children's study, they are incapable to do it. Thirdly, most left-behind children have been separated from their parents for long time, from several months to several years. Due to a lack of communication, the children can not get immediate help and guidance from the parents, which may have negative impact on the children's educational attainment.

According to the survey, I found where most of the migrant workers wanted that their children could be with them. Due to the household registration system, children have difficulties to find a suitable school. First, the compulsory education—nine-year compulsory education (jiu nian yi wu jiao yu) is only available in the areas where their children's hukou are registered. If these rural children want to study in the cities, they have to pay extra fees, (jie du fei/zan zhu fei etc.), etc. Secondly, the fear of the left-behind children having a negative impact on the average scores of the whole class in the cities (in China, most schools give great pressure on the school teachers: score is everything, if the students' average scores are lower than the standard line, then the teacher have to face the possibility of being punished through reduce their salaries or subsidies or even to be fired), so both the schools as well as the school teachers are not willing to receive these children of migrant workers. As I mentioned before, in China, the children from the rural areas could not have the equal resources as the children from the urban areas, especially the education resources. In rural areas, the schools are much smaller, the teachers are much fewer, the equipments are much worse than the urban schools, thus most rural children cannot get high scores as the urban children.

I found that guardians' educational level had a positive impact on the left-behind children. However, I found that there was no difference between the two kinds of guardians: who had primary educational level and who were illiterate or semiliterate. Those with higher educational level (junior high school and above) could tutor the left-behind children, which played important role in the children's educational achievements. Meanwhile, absent parent(s)'s education level also have impact on the left-behind children. I found that the absent parent(s) with higher educational level (junior high school and above) were more

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likely to generate positive influences on the children's education. Contrary to some researches (Kandel,1999), I found that the parental absences did not reduce the children's domestic and agricultural work, but increased the burden of the left-behind children, which reduced their study time and had negative impact on their school performances. Moreover, the number of left-behind children will have adverse impact on the children's schooling, especially for female children, because the increasing of the number of children will decrease the investment on the each child. Moreover, due to the traditional views, many people (especially rural people in China) believe male children are more important, the parents invest more educational resources on boys. I also found that migrant parents' absences may lead to their health problems and stress among the aged. Moreover, the intergenerational gaps between left-behind grandparents and children have negative impact on the left-behind children.

The rural-urban dual structure and hukou system not only curb the mobility of the population but also result in the emergence of the left-behind children. On the one hand, the local governments not only need to eliminate the link between the hukou and other social welfare, such as education, employment, housing etc, but also need to allocate educational resources properly. On the other hand, we also need to strengthen the construction of rural boarding schools, let the left-behind children get more care and love from the school.

To recap, the issue of left-behind children has been caused by many intertwined factors and phenomena, and in order to crack this hard nut, which needs the efforts from the government, children's parents, the children themselves and the school and community etc, to cooperate with each other. I hope one day, the left-behind children could enjoy their childhood and have a better future. However, this does depend on changes in the present dualistic economic structure that maintains rural – urban differentiation and the consequences this have for rural children improving their life chances through education.

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# Appendix 1

## A Survey about left-behind children in Ganqiu village

### (Question List for the Pupils)

Gender: 1 Male      2 Female      Age-----      Grade----

The work place of your parents (or one part of parent)

1. in Zhenxiong County      2 in Yunnan Province      3. in other Provinces      4.  
not sure

1. Why your parents are away?
2. Who are your caregivers?
3. When you have argument with your guardians, how did you deal with?
4. How often do your parent(s) be back home?
5. When your parents called, what did they say?
6. Do you think your parents have to find money in the cities?
7. Do you think that your parents' migration can improve the living standard of the family?
8. What do you want to do after graduating from elementary school?
9. What do you think the most important factors in a happy family?
10. Are you satisfied with your parents?
11. Can you recall the happiest moment?
12. In your daily life, what makes you sad?
13. Who are you confiding when you encounter difficulties?

- 
14. Do you worry about your parents' safety and health?
  15. Do you think the absence of your parents have an impact on your study?
  16. Do you think the absence of your parents have an impact on your personalities?
  17. Do you have any difficulties when communicate with your parents?
  18. If you have any choices, do you want to stay with your parents?
  19. Do you be bullied by other students in the school?
  20. Who do you prefer to ask help when you encounter difficulties in the study?
  21. Have you ever been to your parents' work place?
  22. What are your strengths?
  23. What are your shortcomings?
  24. Do you stand domestic responsibilities and agricultural work?
  25. What's the motivation of the study?
  26. What do you think about your teachers?
  27. What do you do in your spare time?
  28. Do you have any wishes or dreams? If you have what are they?
  29. Do your teachers like you? Why?
  30. Do you know why your parents are away?
  31. Can you say some words to your parents?

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## Appendix 2

### The question list for the migrant workers

1. How long have you been migrating?
2. Is your husband (wife) a migrant worker?
3. How many children do you have? How many of them are boys (girls)?
4. Do you think that male kids are more important than female kids?
5. How often do you visit your children?
6. Can you tell me average annual income?
7. Do you have TV, and washing machine and others household appliances in your family?
8. Can you tell me the main sources of children's schooling fees?
9. Why do you choice to be a migrant worker?
10. Why do you leave your children behind in the hometown?
11. If you have any choice do you want to take your children with you?
12. If you do not have the economic limitations, do you want to afford your children attending college? Why or why not?
13. What do your most concern for your children?
14. Are you satisfied with the present school of your children?
15. Do you think that your absence have impact on the children's study? If so, please make some examples?
16. What your attitude towards your children's study/education?

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## Appendix 3

### Question list for the guardians

1. Do you do the whole agricultural work by yourselves? Do you ask some others to help harvest?
2. How is your health condition?
3. If you get ill, how to deal with?
4. How often do the left-behind children's parents be back home?
5. If the kids are disobedient, do you punish them?
6. Do you know the age, the grades, the teachers of the left-behind children?
7. What if the children got sick?
8. Is it difficult for you to take care of the children?
9. Do you think your behaviour will have impact on the children?

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## Glossary

Liu shou er tong 留守儿童 left-behind children

Nong min gong (min gong) 农民工 migrant worker

Liu dong ren kou 流动人口 floating population

Ren, Yi, Li, Zhi, Xin 仁义礼智信 Ren (benevolence), Yi (righteousness), Li (propriety), Zhi (intelligence), Xin (honesty)

You jiao wu lei 有教无类 Providing education for all people without discrimination

Yin cai shi jiao 因材施教 teaching according to the student's ability

Fen shu ken ru 焚书坑儒 Qin Shihuang carried out burning books and burying of scholars(fen shu ken ru)

Si ge xian dai hua 四个现代化 Four Modernizations: Modernization in agriculture, industry, National Defense, Science and Technology

Fei chu bai jia, du zun ru shu 废除百家 独尊儒术suppression of the hundred of schools , and the exclusive recognition of Confucianism

Zhan guo shi qi 战国时期 the warring states

Ru Jia 儒家 Confucianism

Lao xin zhe zhi ren, lao li zhe zhi yu ren 劳心者治人 劳力者治于人 people who engaged in the mental work are supposed to become rulers, while people who engaged in the physical work are supposed to be ruled.

Yu 愚 stupidity

Wen mang 文盲 character blind/ illiterate

Qiong 穷 poverty

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Zang 脏 dirty

Wei xian 危险 dangerous

Di gong zi 底工资 low-paid job

Guanxi (guan xi) 关系 personal networks of social relations

Renqing 人情 understanding others' emotional situation, and to moral norms for how on the basis of such understanding to respond to them (morality of empathy)

Mianzi: 面子 face

Hukou 户口 household registration

hukou suo zai di 户口所在地 the place of hukou registration: local and non-local hukou)

hukou lei bie 户口类别 the types of hukou

nong ye hukou 农业户口 agricultural hukou

fei nong ye hukou 非农业户口 non-agricultural hukou

ju min hu kou 居民户口 resident hukou

Wei le ren min qun zhong de li yi 为了人民群众的利益 for the people's benefits

Zan zhu fei /jie du fei /za fei 杂费 miscellaneous charges

Min gong zi di xue xiao 民工子弟学校 the school for the children of migrant workers

Jian yi xue xiao 简易学校 simple school

huan tang bu huan yao 换汤不换药 a change in form but not in content or essence.

Er yuan ji qing 二元经济 dual economy

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Shao shu min zu 少数民族 minority ethnic groups

Xing zheng cun 行政村 it is equivalent to Street in the urban area,

Zi ran cun 自然村 (*zi ran cun*) it is equivalent to Community in the urban area

Yi jin huan xiang 衣锦还乡 return to one's home town in full glory

Diu lian 丢脸 losing face

Nan zhu wai, nü zhu nei 男主外，女主内 women's duty is to do housework, take care of the family members, while men's duty is to earn bread and support the whole family

You deng sheng 优等生 good student (judged by the scores)

Zhong deng sheng 中等生 ordinary student (judged by the scores)

Cha sheng 差生 poor students (judged by the scores)

Gan bu: 干部 cadre

gong ren 工人 worker

nongmin 农民 peasant

Guan zong yao zu 光宗耀祖 to glorify the whole family

Bei han hua 被汉化 assimilated by the Han people

Du shu wu yong lun: 读书无用论 education/ schooling is useless

Zhong nan qing nü 重男轻女 view sons are more important than daughters

Da gong de 打工的 have employment with an unstable work

Jin cheng da gong 进城打工 go to cities to seek employment

Su zhi jiao yu 素质教育 quality education



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Du shu 读书 schooling

hao hao du shu 好好读书 study hard

Jiao yu 教育 education

Jiao shu yu ren 教书育人 impart not only book knowledge but also moralities and values

Jiu nian yi wu jiao yu 九年义务教育 nine-year compulsory education

Wan ban jie xia pin, wei you du shu gao 万般皆下品惟有读书高 among all, only study comes first

Zhi shi gai bian ming yun 知识能改变命运 book knowledge can change one's destiny

Nong men 农门 the gate between the farmers to non-farmers

Yi ren de dao, ji quan sheng tian 一人得道鸡犬升天 if a man gets a position in the society, the dogs and chickens of him will ascend to the heaven: means that if a man gets the power or gets rich, all the families, relatives and friends of him will get benefits from him