

The Phenomenon of China's "Aging Migration" (Lao Piao): The Nexus of Modernization, the Nuclear and the Extended Family

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Abstract: "Aging Migration"(Lao Piao) is a phenomenon where grandparents leave their hometown in their old age and move to where their children stay to take care of their grandchildren. It is a heated problem now in China but there has been little research done on it. My research focuses on the relationship between China's modernization and the role of extended family under the existing "Aging Migration" phenomenon. The role of extended family, although weakened somewhat, still strongly ties in with people's daily modern urban lives and has not disappeared due to a combination of practical considerations as well as cultural imperative. I sent out a survey to 95 high school students in certain schools to find out how frequent "Aging Migration" is among middle class families, and I interviewed elderly people in my community so that I can find out how grandparents view their lives in new cities. My survey and interview results show that both functional and cultural needs play a role in the "Aging Migration" (Lao Piao). My research will help address this issue that has not been sufficiently studied in the academic world yet.

Keywords: Migration Trends, Aging Migration, China's Modernization Pattern

Introduction and Research Question

My grandmother moved from her hometown to a new city in order to help raise me up. She woke up at half past six, cooked breakfast, washed the dishes, went to the market, swept the floor, took care of me and cooked dinner every day for those six years. She struggled to adapt to her new life in a new city because of difficulties in oral communication, uncomfortable weather, and the busy city life. Our family really thought that she was happier in the countryside, but we really needed her help to support our daily lives. Therefore, we tried to cooperate with one another during those six years. Some other grandmothers living in our community faced the same problem as mine and their family experienced the same situation as our family. I suspect that other families in the city had similar experiences; therefore, I want to find out what actually happens and why this phenomenon happens in cities like Guangzhou.

Nowadays, the phenomenon of "Aging Migration" (Lao Piao)---grandparents going to other cities to help raise up their grandchildren--- happens more often than before, even though such a

process contradicts what should happen during China's modernization: the gradual disappearance of extended families. Therefore, I wish to find out the exact relationship between China's urbanization and the role of extended family, seen through the lens of the "Aging Migration".

My research question is as follows: as China gradually modernizes and urbanizes, why do we still see grandparents coming to new cities to take care of their grandchildren? I believe that this is because the role of the extended family, although weakened somewhat, still strongly ties in with people's daily modern urban lives and has not disappeared due to a combination of practical considerations as well as a cultural imperative.

Background and thesis

As defined by Su Xingzi in her essay published in *Qingnian Yu Shehui* (Xia, 2015) "Aging Migration" refers a specific group of the elderly who leave their hometown after retired, come to where their children stay in and take care of their grandchildren. According to Yang, the number of migrating elderly is now up to 18 million and among them, 43 percent of them are "Aging Migration" (Yang L.L., 2018, May 14th). Most of the "Aging Migration" have a hard time adapting to their new lives and new roles. They used to live their own lives while now they have the burden of caring for grandchildren for free; therefore, they begin to be a special group of people lost in busy cities¹.

For example: according to *Xing News*, Ms. Wang came to Beijing to take care of her granddaughter while giving up the chance to take care of her own eighty-year-old mother or live her own life (*Xing News*, 2018, August 4th). Every day, she sweeps the floor, cooking meals, playing with grandchildren, washing dishes, and so on. For Ms. Sun, based on the report by *westca.com*, her life focus in her elderly age is on her grandchildren, even she could no longer enjoy her own life travelling with her husband (*westca.com*, 2018, January 31st). According to *ChinaDaily.com*, Ms. Zhang and Ms. Ling also gave up their own lives with their husbands to try to get used to city life (*China Daily*, 2018, February 6th). For parents who migrated outside China, some grandparents choose to lend a hand in unfamiliar countries. Reporters from *St. Louis Chinese American News* found out that even though

¹ There are many people reporting "Aging Migration" phenomenon on the internet. For example see: "Laopiao zu tianlunzhile nali zhao [Where People Can Find a Place Where the Elderly Enjoy Their Old Ages]". *Shanxi Wanbao*. (2018, June 20th). Retrieved from http://www.sxrb.com/sxwb/aban_0/19/7504522.shtml.

See also Yang, L.L. "Laopiao zu Zhuancheng Zhaogu Wanbei Youren shi Qiwei 'Fuxing' [43 Percent of the Elderly Come to New Cities to Care For Grandchildren on purpose]". *Hualong Xiang*. (2018, May 14th). Retrieved from <http://appshare.hualongxiang.com/wap/thread/view-thread/tid/14113202>.

grandparents outside China experience hardship in communication, live styles, and loneliness, they insist on helping their younger families, even though these grandparents sometimes have a hard time in new cities or countries (St. Louis Chinese American News, 2015, November 4th). Therefore, this phenomenon is now becoming much more popular than before.

These examples of the “Aging Migration” show how the extended family reappears in the most crucial time for a new nuclear family. However, there are no academic studies in English deeply discussing this “Aging Migration” phenomenon. In my opinion, the first reason for such a phenomenon is that the new nuclear family needs the help from the older generations to obtain normal family lives when society does not provide enough good and credible social service agencies with babysitters. The old generation plays the role of free social workers for the nuclear family--taking care of children and even sometimes even doing housework.

Extended families show how “structural functionalism” works in reality. According to Talcott Parsons, any society is a network connecting parts, so each part functions to maintain the system as a whole. He holds that “any aspect of social life which does not contribute to a society’s stability or survival—if it does not serve some identifiable useful function or promote value consensus among members of a society---it will not be passed on from one generation to the next.” (Schaefer, 2012, p. 13) Therefore, “Aging Migration” is a rational, or functional, choice for nuclear families because the grandparents are needed by the nuclear families in cities and their existence helps the society to function well. In the past, the society needed the traditional family structure where a large number of family members live together. Now, this has transformed into rational ones, where only the nuclear family is largely needed. As China modernizes, extended families actually become more important for childcare; therefore, people need the elderly for help.

Another reason is that traditional Chinese family culture---Confucian thinking styles --- encourages families to help each other solve any problems. I acknowledge that defining a traditional family is extremely complicated. According to Xuwen Sheng (2004), in “traditional Chinese society” the ideal is still to have a large family, even though the family is getting smaller (pp. 99 – 101). Sheng writes that Chinese families gradually transformed over the years from a big extended family as a patriarchal clan, where a set of feudal orders and ethical codes based on Confucian doctrines exist among kin, into small three-person nuclear families. Still, he mentions that even when nowadays small-population families are preferred in cities, the idea of extended family still has roots in people’s minds. Besides, the essay by Zeng Yi and Zhenglian Wang(2003 fall), suggests, but never explicitly states, that the

traditional Chinese family is the three-generation family (三代同堂), which meant that the elderly grandparents lived with the parents and children (pp. 96 – 97). A “modern” family structure is a two-generation family, where the parents live with the children in a nuclear family. They also suggest that the increase in the proportion of extended families in 2000 compared to years before does not mean that China is returning back to the past; it is actually due to the demographic impacts of a largely decreasing fertility rate.

Based on these essays, I define Chinese traditional family culture as the idea that three-generations-under-a-roof is a naturally good thing throughout history and families follow Confucian doctrines to help and support one another. With traditional Chinese family culture, the elderly care about their younger generations and their children’s future development. Traditional Chinese culture exists on top of seeming modernity, perhaps even helping the process of urbanization. China’s current social phenomenon rejects the old theory of modernization---the loss of extended family---because traditions also help the process of modernization.

In summary, the phenomenon of “Aging Migration” (Lao Piao) shows how the role of the extended family is preserved. As China progresses in rapid modernization, China is also gradually urbanizing. Therefore, there are more people moving into the cities to meet the need of society’s modernization. The number of nuclear family increases in cities because cities need more small families to fulfill their need for production and progression. The need from the nuclear family is also aggravated because of a lack of good social service providers like babysitters. Based on cultural reasons, more extended families come to cities in order to help nuclear families. In this case, largely because of the need for inexpensive credible social service and partly because of traditional culture, the role of the extended family does not die out during the modernization of China. Traditional Chinese family culture and functional needs actually help one another because they both help the nuclear family to better get used to new fast-developing lives in cities.

Literature Review

Giovanni E. Reyes (2001) describes four theories in sociology: modernization, dependency, world-system, and globalization. The writer points out the differences between the classical theory of modernization and its current status. The classical theory stresses three feature of modern society: “differentiation of political structure; secularization of political culture with equality; enhance the capacity of political system”. Countries all follow a homogenizing and irreversible process of Europeanization or

Americanization. However, the current belief insists that the modernization process that the world has experienced might be one kind of system that different nations may experience in different ways. My essay will touch only on the modernization theory and its effects on the elderly instead of the rest of the theories.

Anqi Xu and Yan Xia (2014) first describe the debate among scholars about whether China's modernization follows the same pattern as western countries'. They offer answers from three perspectives: diverse social structure, collectivism versus individualism, and the role of marriages. For the first one, even though censuses show that people live in a more diverse form of family structure since official registration does not show where people actually live, Chinese people actually do not discard traditional living patterns. The extended family plays a role in taking care of the young and the elderly and exchanges financial and emotional support for the nuclear family. Besides, although career choices in cities weaken family ties, family members still rely on one another and their collective interest appears to be more important than individual interest. What's more, some people still insist on an idea that "once they get married, they live as a couple as till they die" even though individualism and autonomy are strengthening and divorce rates are increasing. In conclusion, the writers stress that Chinese families differ from western families during the transition period of modernization; family members still have a close relationship with one another; and marriage relations do not weaken. Therefore, they support the ideas of Giovanni E. Reyes about current beliefs about modernization.

Also agreeing with the current view of modernization, Settles et. al. (2009) compare the social roles of grandparents from different parts of the world. In Europe, grandparents interfere directly in the youth's education or live with the youth only when parents are disabled or have trouble in raising children. Most of the time, grandparents in Europe provide emotional ties instead of functional help. However, in China, grandparents substitute parents' roles in more than one case: "empty nest families", and "left behind children" in the countryside. In both these cases, grandparents take care of grandchildren since the parents do not have the time or enough financial support. Besides, they have greater enthusiasm toward their grandchildren and create closer relationships between generations because of culture and tradition. In America, however, with good social childcare, emergency, and chronic problem centers, grandparents are more likely to be rescuers, emergency helpers, or to take care of their adult child's problematic behavior toward grandchildren. In Africa, grandparents are the only people taking care of grandchildren after the parents die because of AIDS. In conclusion, the writers indicate that in the situation when resources are limited or parents are in need, grandparents

serve as helpers. They, at the same time, gain emotional comfort from taking care of the younger generation.

Similar to Settles et. al., Feinina Chen, et. al. (2011) argue that while industrialization seems to weaken kinship ties, the nuclear family is actually still a small proportion of all families in China. The phenomenon of grandparents providing care for children when the nuclear family needs help reflects Chinese traditional extended family structures. Filial piety changes a little bit, because grandparents take a role as care-givers with lower opportunity cost for the family in cities, or as primary educators for left behind children. Despite the increased amount of day-care centers, grandparents still play important roles in caring for grandchildren. Therefore, the historical hierarchical intergenerational relationship changes to emphasize care-exchange, meeting new challenges people face in the contemporary world.

Emiko Ochiai (2009) summarizes family care at a broad level. She focuses on care provision from different societies from the aspect of welfare sociology. The author compares the situation in China, Thailand, Singapore, Taiwan, Korea, and Japan. Compared to Japan where both children and social institutions play important roles in elderly care, China follows a traditional system of taking care of the elderly at home or in a community. In Thailand, daughters take greater responsibilities in taking care of the elderly while in Japan or Korean, the oldest sons do this job. The author introduces the “care diamond” to elaborate on the differences in welfare regimes between countries. The Chinese government supports the elderly less than the young, but the *shequ* (community) appears to take more responsibility as the elderly-care giver. Japanese and Korean old people are given care mostly by their families because of the lack of a market for social facilities. China transformed its emphasis from family to community because of its decline in fertility.

The information contained in the literature review presents background information about China and its modernization process. They firstly debate about whether China follows the common road of western modernization, which gradually weakens the idea of the extended family. Most of them agree that in the special case of China, nuclear families are unique in that many of them are not completely separated, but still connect to extended family to some extent. Although authors then found out the differences between Chinese social attitude towards the elderly and western countries' attitudes, they mostly focus on social welfare, “Left Behind Children” and “Empty Nest Family” while ignoring the increasingly important phenomenon of “Aging Migration” (Lao Piao). I will use my data and case studies in Guangzhou to test the ideas that nuclear families still play an important role in contemporary Chinese

society as free social servants to the nuclear family, due to a need for trustworthy social services and the influence of traditional Chinese culture.

Methodology, Case Studies, and Data Analysis

Methodology

As written earlier, based on fundamental stage of literary review, I believe that, largely because of needs for trustworthy and inexpensive social services and partly because of traditional culture, the extended family still plays a role during the progress of urbanization and modernization of China, supported by the phenomenon of “Aging Migration” (Lao Piao). The data below clearly supports my idea. As the data shows, since almost all parents had to go out to work, the grandparents came and took care of grandchildren in the daytime while at the same time doing housework. They function as helpers and babysitters for the nuclear family. Besides the need from the nuclear family, some of the elderly come because they wanted to engage in the process of raising their grandchildren. Their willingness reflects Chinese tradition: family members help and support each other at any time. By looking at the data about families without “Aging Migrants” help, I can also see that grandparents do not come because the nuclear family can deal with all problems on their own, or because grandparents are not able to do so. Therefore, I conclude that the phenomenon of “Aging Migration” in the middle-class statue of Guangzhou supports my idea of the role of the extended family in China now.

The survey was posted online on Wenjuanxing in Chinese. The subjects were students from 11 to 19 years old in Guangzhou. The aim of the survey is to find out how commonly grandparents left their hometowns to take care of their grandchildren, the reason for why “Aging Migration” happens, and what roles these old people play in families and China’s society. The number of effective replies to the survey is 95. I posted small red packets for students who took the survey as an incentive and I distributed all surveys through WeChat, a popular communication software in China. Students could get different amounts of money from a red packet (between 0.01 RMB to 10 RMB) by chance if they clicked on the red packet button as quickly as they can. In my survey, I divided the students into two categories: those whose grandparents traveled to look after them when they were young, and those whose grandparents did not. This comparison was to see if there were any unique characteristics of the “Lao Piao” respondents over the second group. It took only three minutes to take the survey for each student.

Almost three-fourths of the number of subjects in the survey were female. The three major parts of the responders are from the population of the age of 15 years old (30 percent), 16 years old (35 percent), and 17 years old (27 percent). The highest percentage of respondents was from Huafu International (HFI - The international department, the affiliated high school of South China Normal University, 69 percent) and the second largest percent comprised of students from Shengshi High School. Two-thirds of students had their grandparents around with them when they were young while the other one-third of them did not have their grandparents come to their cities to take care of them.

The case studies further support my point of "Aging Migration". I interviewed 4 grandmothers in my residential neighborhood. My neighborhood is in Baiyun District in Guangzhou, where people are mostly middle-class and about 95 percent of them work in the daytime. The community mainly consists of families of three. In general, my subjects in the community, who are grandmothers who used not to belong to the community before, are all older than sixty-five years old but younger than seventy-five. They are all female. They all spent more than five years in Guangzhou even they did not come from Guangzhou. I did interviews by taking a walk with them together. I started the conversation by telling them that I was doing an interview about their daily lives and my questions were easy to answer. I ended the conversation because both they and I finished walking and wanted to go back home.

Findings

The original data can be found in Appendix A. For subjects whose grandparents come to raise them, the percentages of the sides of grandparents (father's side or mother's side) are similar to each other, but the percentage of grandparents on the father's side is larger by about 12 percent than the percentage on the mother's side. Separating China's north from south by the Qinling mountain range and Huaihe River, the majority of the "Aging Migration" grandparents in my community come from southern China. Only 10 of 64 grandparents come from northern China, which are the provinces of Gansu, Shanxi, Henan, Liaoning, Shandong, Beijing, and Inner Mongolia. Among those who come from southern China (not including Guangdong), there is a similar number of grandparents who come from Sichuan, Hubei, and Jiangxi. The largest number in this population comes from Hunan while the smallest number comes from Zhejiang. Within Guangdong province, 6 of 17 are indigenous to Guangzhou. Nearly three-fourths of the number of grandparents are from urban areas while slightly more than one-fourth of grandparents come from rural areas.

Almost all grandparents who came to new cities to take care of their grandchildren came before the time when their grandchildren were six years old. Nearly fifty percent of all grandparents came and cared for their grandchildren as soon as their grandchildren were born. 14 percent of students had their grandparents with them since they were three years old, and another 14 percent of students since they were one year old. Exactly seventy-five percent of the elderly lived in new cities with their grandchildren for more than three years. What the elderly usually did when staying with their grandchildren were cooking meals, buying necessities, and doing housework (all roughly 30 percent). Even though it seems that grandparents would give all they have to their grandchildren and they may spoil their grandchildren, the actual situation is that more than seventy-five percent of grandparents would still punish their grandchildren if they did something bad.

In the families where grandparents came to help raise young grandchildren, almost all parents both work. Both fathers and mothers mainly left to work between 8 and 9 a.m. and came back home at the time between 5 and 6 pm. Therefore, they were absent from home for almost ten hours in the daytime when their children needed them. Asked how their lives would change if their grandparents did not come and care for them as they grow older, nearly a quarter of all students stated that one of their parents would stop working outside and raise them instead; nearly forty five percent of them indicated that they will be sent to kindergarten all day from the time their parents went to work to the time their parents came back; and the rest said something else like going to other relative's home in the daytime.

The major reasons why grandparents came to new cities to take care of their grandchildren can be divided into two. Parents not only could not spend too much time in the daytime to take care of the young child but also did not trust babysitters in society to take care of their young child. The children were too young to go to kindergarten and grandparents would like to come and live with young grandchildren.

For those whose grandparents did not come to help and take care of them when they were young, 70 percent had their parents both work outside in the daytime even though their child was too young. In the case that grandparents did not come to new cities to take care of their grandchildren, half of the work was given to babysitters. If babysitters or other people took care of the young child at home, half of the parents would worry about their babies' safety while the other half did not. More than seventy percent of students insisted that their parents could deal with problems on their own without help when they were young, so their parents did not ask their grandparents for help. Some other reasons might be: grandparents did not want to spend time taking on a burden; they had some health problem; or they did

not want to face the problem of getting used to new lives because of different language, living conditions, weather, and food.

Case studies

The first subject came from Xiamen in Fujian province. She came to Guangzhou when her grandson was in three years old because the grandparents from her grandson's mother's side were badly ill and could no longer take care of grandchildren. When her grandson was very young, she went to markets to buy food, made meals, did housework, and took a walk in the daytime, besides taking care of her grandson. She came to Guangzhou not only because she was needed by family---no one took care of the grandson because family members all went out to work--but also because she herself was worried about her grandson's safety with a babysitter. Her son and her daughter-in-law left home at eight in the morning and came back after eight in the evening to work, so she had to give up her own life in Xiamen where she could chat with villagers, play cards, watch TV, and even travel.

The second subject came from Jiangsu province. She came to Guangzhou after her granddaughter was born. Since her daughter is a stewardess on the airplane who has a messy schedule and could not take care of a young child, and her son-in-law works for twelve hours a day from eight in the morning, the subject came to stand in as a mother for the young baby. She did everything in a role of a mother, not only taking care of daily life activities but also caring about the studies of her granddaughter. She did not trust babysitters. She loves to be in the role of a mother both because she is proud of raising another child like her daughter and because she herself is highly educated and she would like this character and personality to be inherited. Even though her granddaughter is sixteen years old now, she still plays an important role in her family.

The third subject came from Huangshi in Hubei province. She has lived in Guangzhou for seven years to look after her granddaughter. In the daytime, she goes to the market to buy food, made meals, chatted with new friends, did housework, and took a walk in the daytime besides taking care of her granddaughter. Since her son and daughter-in-law all went out to work from eight a.m. to seven p.m., and she did not trust babysitters to look after a baby younger than three years old, she came to Guangzhou and stayed with the nuclear family came and took care of the new-born child. She sacrificed her time with old friends and familiar villagers in her hometown and came to Guangzhou, where she learned to use electronic devices and speak Mandarin.

The last subject came from Hunan province. She looked after her grandson for more than five years after her grandson was born. She spends her time in Guangzhou taking care of her grandson, cooking, doing housework, chatting with new friends, and watching TV. She came to Guangzhou because her daughter and son-in-law needed her for help in the daytime when they all go out to work for twelve hours since eight in the morning. Besides, this nuclear family had no idea how to employ a good babysitter at a lower price, so they called her for help. She gave up her life with her husband in her hometown to care for the baby.

Findings

Their cases support my main thesis that the extended family still plays an important role in fast-developing China. The data I collected from my survey and case studies support my idea. The elderly left their hometown to take care of their grandchildren largely because of functional needs from the nuclear family based on imperfect social services and partially because of cultural reasons where the Chinese family helps each other. Since the time schedule of their children and children-in-law prohibits them from taking care of young children on their own, and there is a lack of trustworthy babysitter roles in society, the grandparents are needed to support their family. These are very practical needs that grandparents are able to fulfill, thus allowing society to run smoothly. The roles of "Aging Migration" support the idea that extended family is still in need in aspect of structural functionalism even when China modernizes.

Although there are functional needs, traditional culture still matters, and even supports the functional needs. Regarding traditionalism, grandparents migrate to help their children, which supports the idea the extended family would like to help when the nuclear family needs them. Three among four grandmothers said that they felt it was their duty to come to the city to take care of their grandchildren. Parents can satisfy their functional need for childcare from other sources: hiring babysitters. However, the grandparents' cultural imperative means that they still want to actively raise their grandchildren, even though the parents could probably find their own solution to childcare. This earnest wish is a cultural imperative---that Chinese elders focus more their younger generations' developments---perhaps left over from the times of the Three-Generation Household structure.

My data shows that the "ghost" of the traditional household still lingers in China because although China seems to move toward the nuclear family, the extended family still plays a large role. This is due to this mixture of functional need and cultural imperatives that I have found.

Alternate hypotheses and limits of the research

One possible alternative reason for the elderly to come to new cities is that they came for better medical care. Bigger cities like Guangzhou can provide a comprehensive medical examination and better overall medical facilities, so the elderly may come to bigger cities to get better medical treatment. However, my survey shows that about two-thirds of the elderly among the population who come and stay in Guangzhou for a long time are also from big cities who can already get good medical care at a lower price in their hometown because of their local medical insurance. Even the other one-third of the elderly whose hometowns are in the countryside do not fit into the category of aiming for better health care. Even though the idea of medical care is an important idea for them, they are healthy enough if they can come to another city for a long time to take care of grandchildren. It is only by misfortune if they have severe health problems and need expensive medical care without the support of medical insurance during their stay in new cities. Besides, China is now improving its medical care for the elderly throughout the country. According to The World Bank, it “supports China’s ongoing health care reform and efforts in strengthening health services at grassroots levels to reduce the gap” (World Bank, 2013, April). The Rural Health Project is improving China’s rural health care. For example, in Chongqing, there are groups of volunteering doctors helping the elderly to check their health in the countryside or in deep mountains. Therefore, even in the poorest countryside, the elderly can get good medical care, not to mention those in developing cities.

Another possible explanation is that the phenomenon of the “Aging Migration” is completely due to cultural reasons. It is true that Chinese grandparents come and take care of their grandchildren because of Chinese tradition and culture. Chinese families largely follow tradition and emphasize the idea that family members should take care of the young and should help each other when anyone gets into trouble. The grandparents would like to help to raise grandchildren because of cultural reasons. However, “Aging Migration” happens also due to practical reasons in structural functionalism. The nuclear family in cities faces the problem of being too busy working to take care of children by themselves, or the problem of lacking trustworthy social organizations with enough good babysitters. In this case, when grandparents are free to be babysitters, the new parents would like them to help. Also, they are helping the nuclear family to function better. According to my data, about 90 percent of grandparents stayed in Guangzhou doing housework, buying necessities from markets, and cooking meals besides taking care of children. Therefore, there is also a practical reason for “Aging Migration”.

Finally, a third alternative argument is that “Aging Migration” is completely due to functional reasons: lacking good social services provided by government and community. New parents who are too busy to take care of their children could not find trustworthy babysitters to care for their child in the daytime; therefore they ask their grandparents for help to be free and trustworthy workers at home. According to my data, about 90 percent of grandparents stayed in Guangzhou doing housework, buying necessities from markets, and cooking meals besides taking care of children. However, traditional culture is also an important part of the phenomenon of “Aging Migration”. Chinese families share the same idea that families should help each other to overcome any difficulties and a family should do everything to provide the best environment for the next generation, so grandparents come to take care of grandchildren which present such Chinese tradition. In my survey and interviews, I found that many grandparents felt it their duty to come and help the family, which is not a functional reason. They themselves would like to help their children in need. For the group of students who did not have their grandparents take care of them, their parents also found other ways of coping which shows that there are at least some community services for parents to take care of children---this supports the point of view that sometimes it is grandparents themselves who care for grandchildren under their own willingness.

This research is not perfect in its data collection and explanations. The research data is based on a survey for teenagers who grew up in the middle class, and interviews with the elderly who stayed with middle class families to help take care of their grandchildren in Guangzhou, a well-developed city in China. Therefore, the evidence is limited and may not represent a common and typical social phenomenon. To improve the research and expand its impact, similar surveys and interviews can be held in second-tier or third-tier cities, like Shanxi or Xinjiang, or can be continued for people from different social statuses like the working classes or upper classes. By collecting data from other areas, the analysis can largely represent what exactly society is seeing in the aspect of “Aging Migration”. Besides, the scope of research is narrow because the database from the survey is taken place from students, aged from 11 to 19, who grew up in middle class families in Guangzhou.

To broaden the scope of research, a comparative study should be tried in the future. It is better to do a comparative study between different classes in Guangzhou, or between Guangzhou and other big cities. I also faced the problem of lacking a large enough sample size to do statistical analysis. If I had access to more survey subjects, I could do a much better analysis. Besides, without professional knowledge about how to do analysis, academic statistical training in analyzing data, or organized

comprehensive fieldwork, I am not able to do an analysis about the "Aging Migration" in more detail.

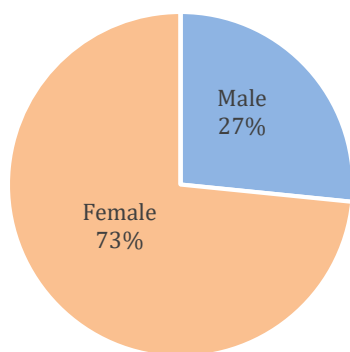
Conclusion

Even though China is modernizing and urbanizing drastically, and it seems like nuclear families are preferred and extended families are discarded, the traditional extended family role still plays an important part for social functions shown by the popular phenomenon of the "Aging Migration" (Lao Piao). The actions of the elderly show the equally important role of extended family within the nuclear family nowadays. The elderly take functional roles (as free trustworthy babysitters) and traditional roles (Chinese traditional culture persuades them to do so) to help the young.

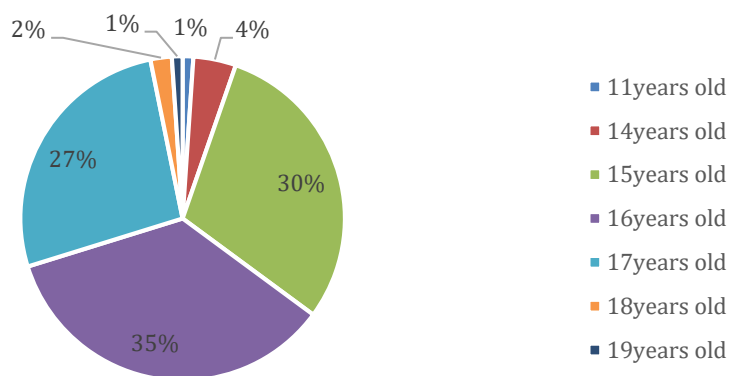
As my survey and interviews show, two-thirds of families asked the elderly for help when their children were young because there is a lack of credible babysitters in society, and also because parents lack time to care for children on their own in the daytime. Also, the elderly are willing to help mostly because of their worrying about the safety of grandchildren by hiring babysitters, and their love and care for grandchildren due to Chinese traditions. My research addresses the topic of the "Aging Migration" which should not be ignored when studying China's development; therefore, I hope that my research can help with such a topic within the academic world.

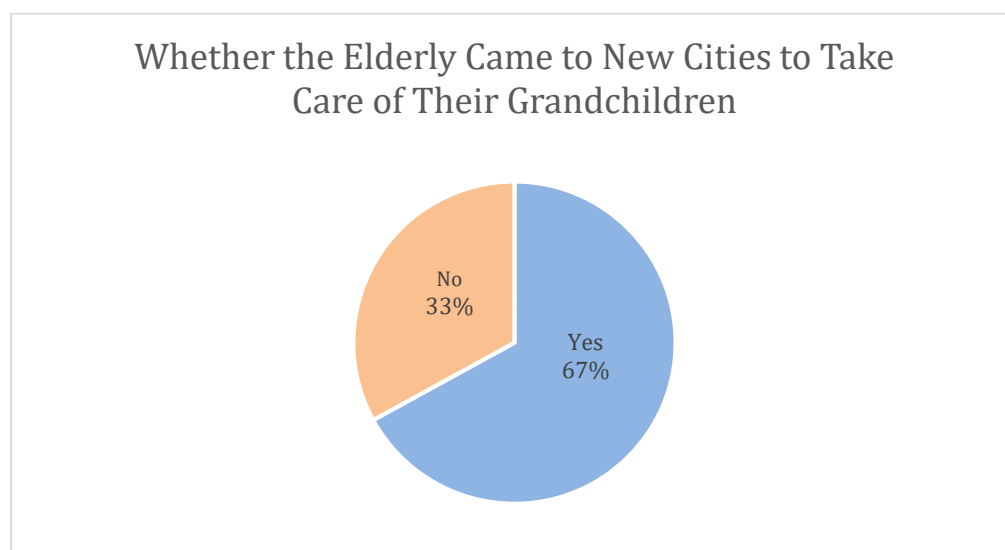
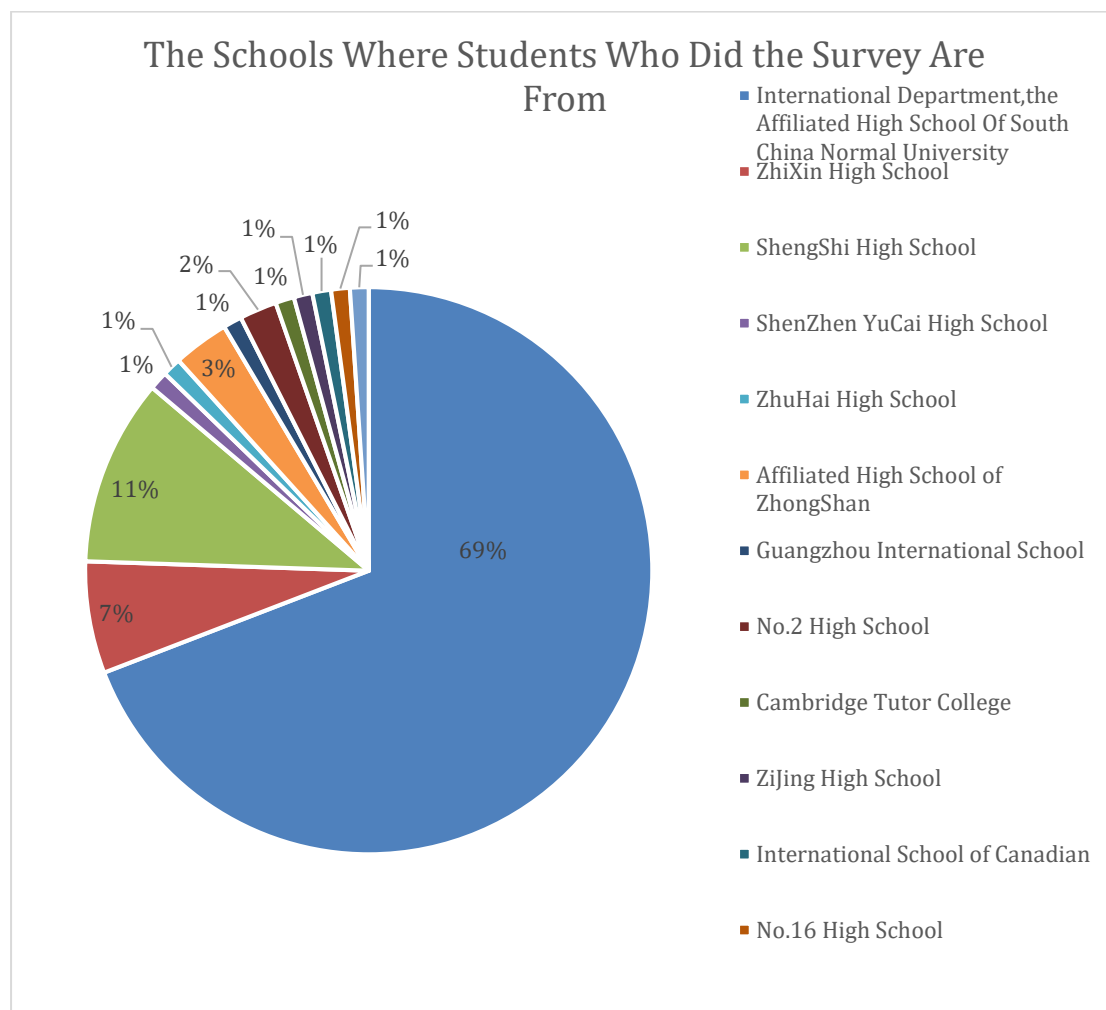
Appendix 1

The Gender of People Who Did the Survey



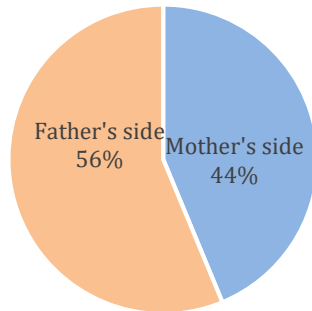
The Age of People Who Did the Survey



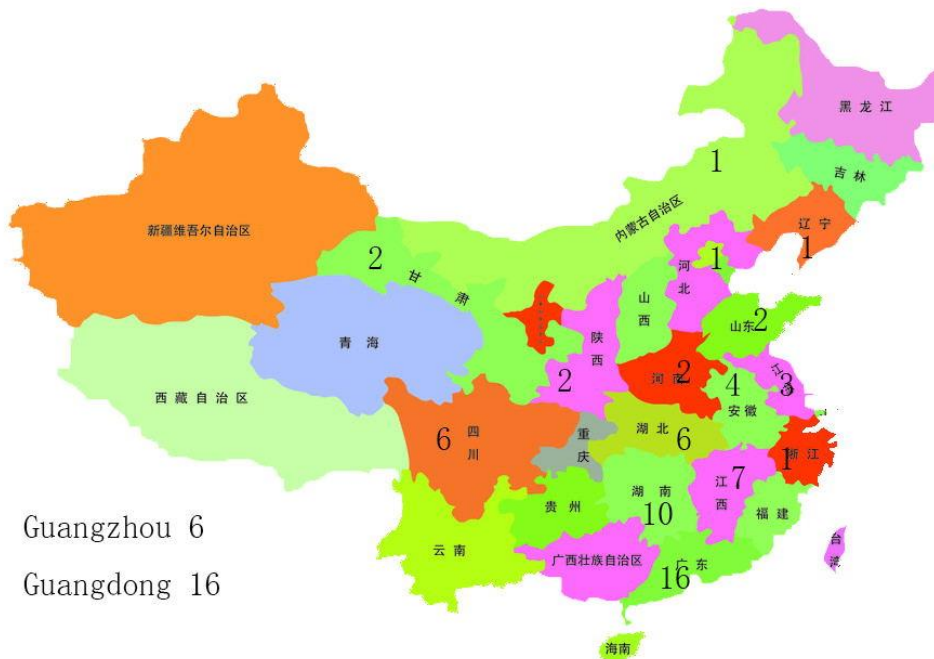


Part 1: Responses to questions for teenagers whose grandparents came and took care of them

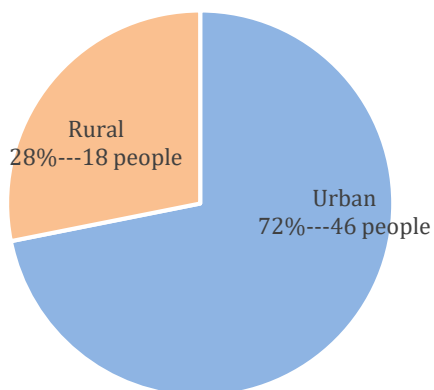
Whether the Grandparents Are From the Father's or Mother's Side



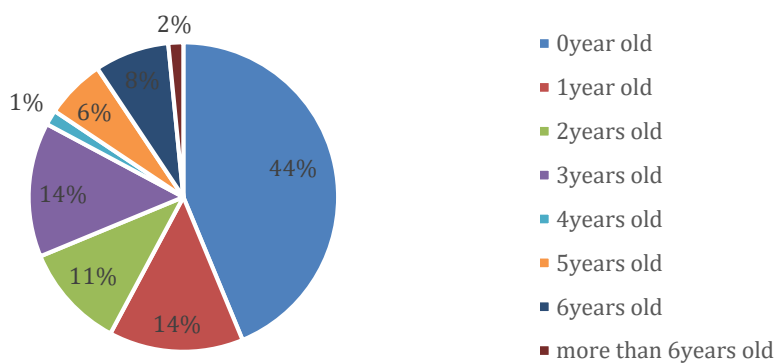
The areas where grandparents originally came from



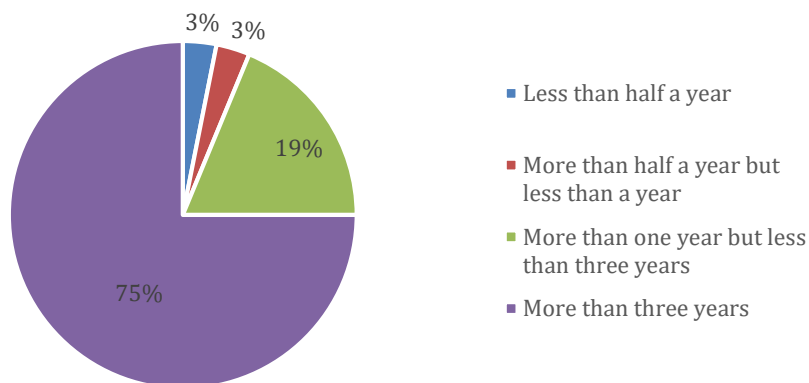
Where the Grandparents are from



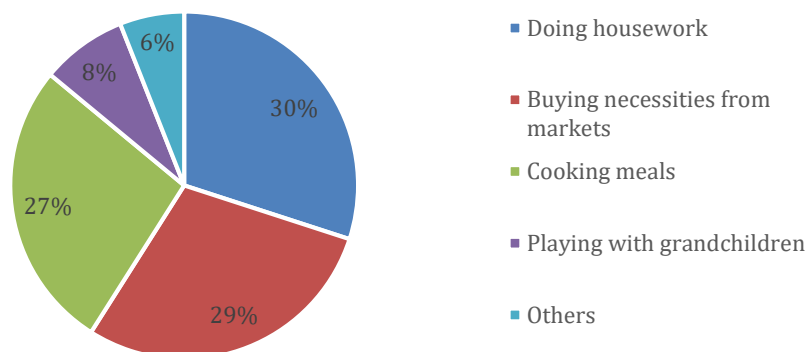
How Old People Who Did the Survey Were When Their Grandparents First Arrived to Care for Them



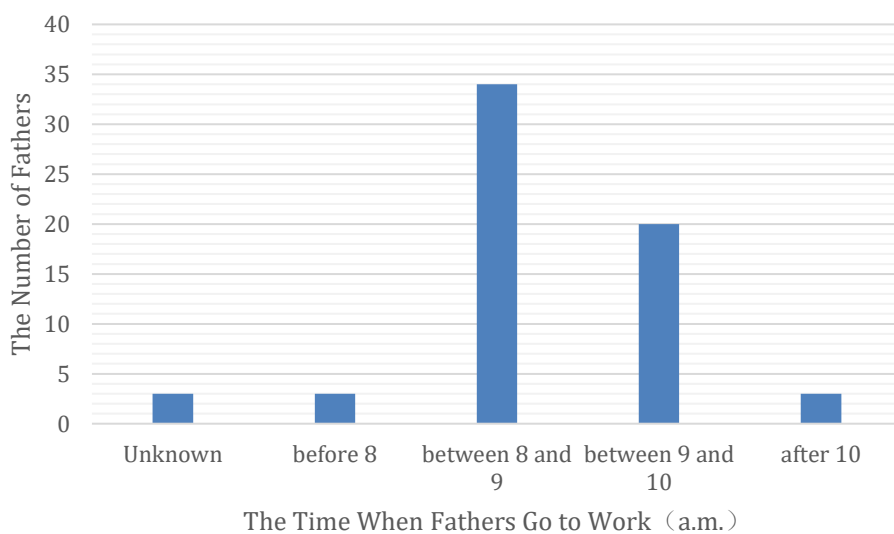
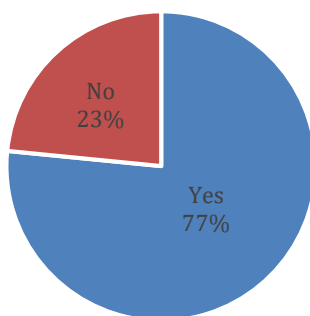
The Amount of Years When The Elderly Lived in New Cites

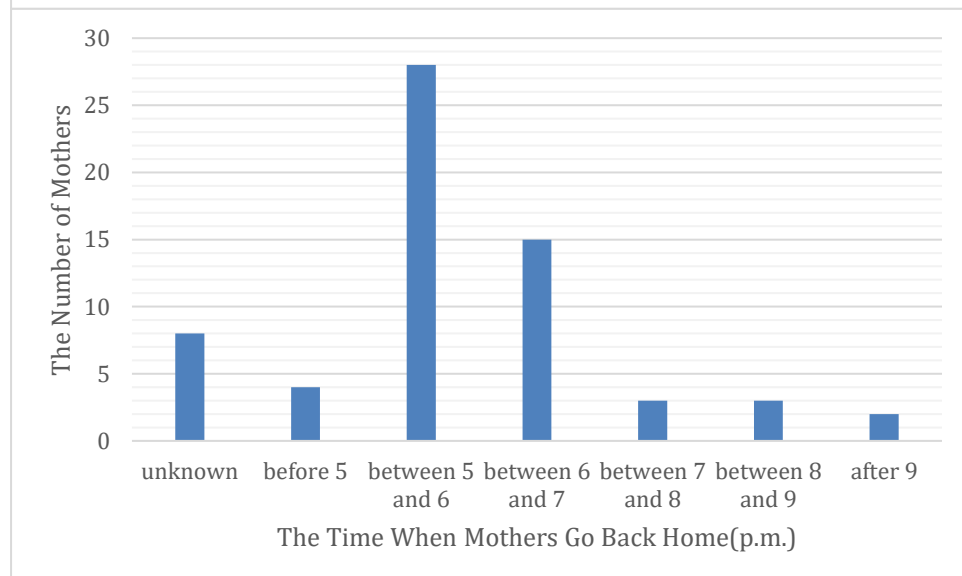
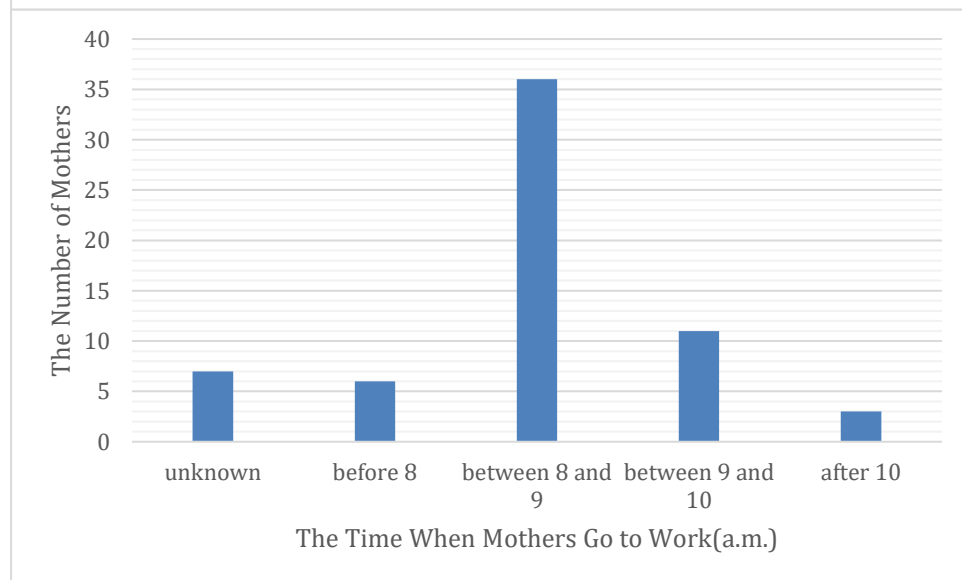
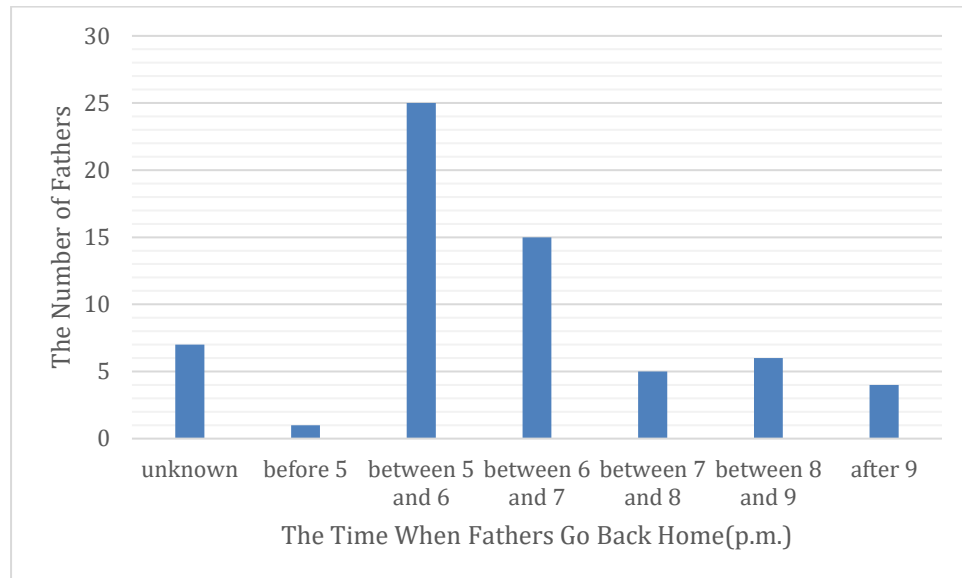


What Grandparents Did in New Cities In the Daytime

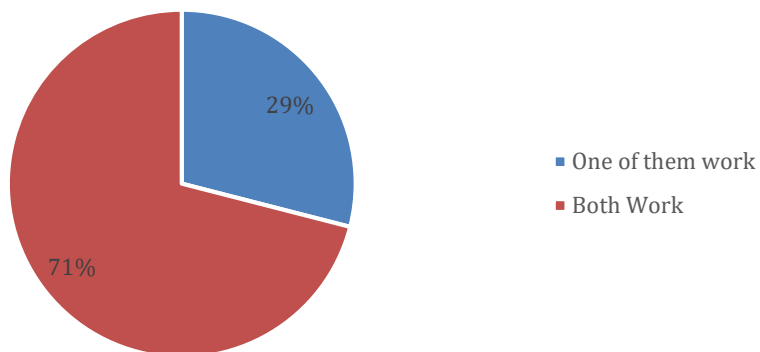


Whether Grandparents would Punish Grandchildren If Their Grandchildren Did Something Wrong

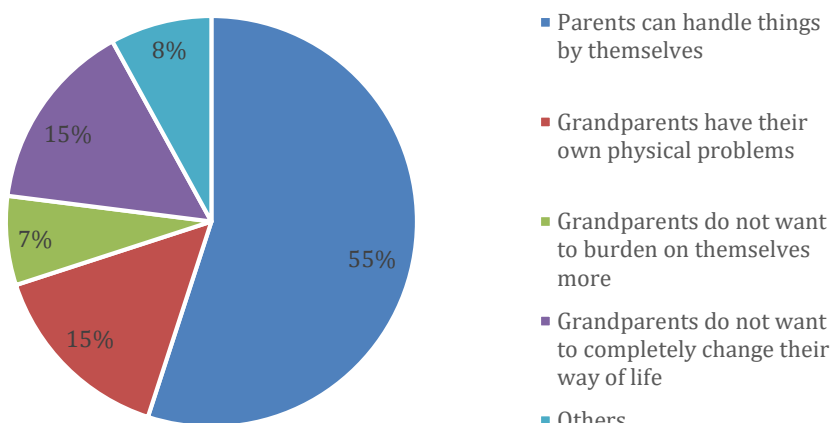




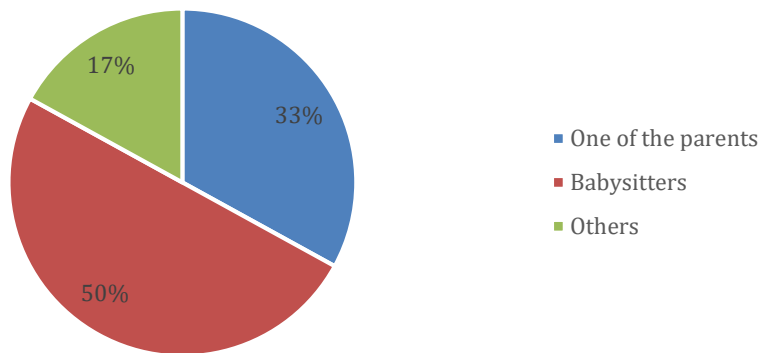
Parents' Working Situation When Grandparents Do Not Come to Help



Why Grandparents Do Not Help Raise Grandchildren



The Person Who Took Care of Children at Home



Appendix 2

1. Which city in China do you come from?
2. When did you come to Guangzhou to take care of your grandchildren?
3. What did you usually do during the day? Cooking? Sweeping the floor? Taking care of grandchildren?
4. Why did you come to Guangzhou? Besides taking care of children?
5. What did you usually do in your hometown?
6. If your grandchildren do not listen to what you say, do you discipline them?
7. Did both the parents of your grandchildren work outside, so that they did not have time to take care of the grandchildren and had to ask you for help?
8. When did parents of grandchildren leave home to work and when did they come back?

To look at the original data, follow through a link here.

https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?__biz=MzUyMzE2NTE2Mw==&mid=2247483735&idx=1&sn=0c30bcbb3769205113aa6c931cb3e60e&chksm=f9c18dd3ceb604c5a781145fbb7d3ddc628d0618048c0a1acc89e2efd a3dddc9bba90f337170&scene=0#rd

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