

Resource Delivery in Rural Families Involving *Peidu*—A Case Study Based on *Peidu*

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Abstract: *Peidu* (accompanying a child for study) is one of the outcomes of current unbalanced educational development in China. A field survey and a series of semi-structured interviews indicated that the resource delivery in rural families involving *peidu* mainly sources from four aspects: the spatial mobility of class pressure, the needs for the integration of family resources, the continuous increases in living costs, and the flexible feedback of educational expectations. The channel of resource delivery in rural families, namely *peidu*, displays characteristics including families' choice of conformity behavior and the singleness of estimate standard; the lack of professional support, and the inadequacy of family-school interactions; the conflicts of behaviors and habits, and poor intergenerational interactions. Restricted by the choice of delivery channel and family circumstances, *peidu* in rural families shows the Matthew effect, which increases disparities within the rural class, and thus exerts a three-level influence. At the individual level, it has a positive influence upon individuals' fulfilling their absolute mobility, but their relative mobility still faces various difficulties. Moreover, it means the relative deprivation of certain family members' benefits to a certain extent; at the family level, disadvantaged families are exposed to the risk of further marginalization; and at the social level, the "theater effect" from *peidu* exacerbates the inequality between classes.

Keywords: *peidu*, channels of delivery, intraclass stratification

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Research Background

With the rapid development of the economy, *peidu* (for one or more close family members, usually the mother, to stay at home to tend a child during the period of school years) is no longer exclusively the advantage of urban families, and more and more rural parents have begun to adjust the production and life patterns of the whole family by means of *peidu*, trying their best to provide better educational resources for their children, attempting to realize upward intergenerational mobility. For this purpose, *peidu* has become an effective form for intergenerational resource delivery although it displays somewhat different characteristics from one stratum to another. Compared with higher-income classes, the middle- and lower-classes consume more family resources when they invest in their children's upward social mobility. For rural families, *peidu* is both an educational investment that they make to improve their social status, and a reluctant choice under the pressures of their social reality. A saying goes that "man struggles upwards; water flows downwards." Most individuals in society look forward to the upward movement, and rural families thirst for it.

The forty years of development since the launch of China's reform and opening up has greatly improved the living conditions of many rural families, who are eager to deliver family resources in a reasonably efficient way to provide better educational resources for their children and realize upward social mobility. One of these ways is *peidu*. As research has pointed out, families of higher social classes with higher educational attainment can more easily realize upward social mobility for their children, and such upward movement is used primarily for seeking better educational opportunities (Wu, 2017). *Peidu* is also a willy-nilly choice when rural families face reality. In recent years, the policy for "school closures and mergers", which has been adopted in rural areas, has situated some elementary and secondary schools far from remote villages and small-size towns. This causes difficulties to families there, which have no choice but to board or choose *peidu*. The rapid urbanization has turned some rural families into urban residents on the spot; in order to make a living while taking care of children, most parents choose to accompany their children by living in rented houses near schools. So, *peidu* has become a kind of educational investment that rural families make to realize social mobility, whether such investments can help rural families successfully realize the delivery of family resources and what characteristics and influences such delivery channels have are questions worth examination.

Literature Review

The present academic research on *peidu* is mainly along two lines, one of which is class distinction and reproduction. Scholars interested in this major line interpret *peidu* from the perspective of social class reproduction. According to these scholars, *peidu* is a means for middle- and upper-level social groups to fulfill their social class reproduction, but instead of being able to follow the successful path of the elite stratum through *peidu*, lower-class social groups face serious difficulties in receiving

anticipated rewards in the human resources market due to the continuously saturated higher education venues, thus reducing the return on their investment. As some scholars have pointed out, the policy of extended higher educational enrollment has more salience to the effect of elite education upon social mobility (Wang, 2012), for *peidu* not only becomes a channel for the elite stratum to conduct legitimized reproduction of social classes (Lei, 2018; Wang, 2011), but also leaves an unbridgeable gap for middle- and lower-classes, and thus increases disparities between different strata (Putnam, 2017, p. 82). For the middle- and lower-classes, *peidu* is a kind of passive activity (Wang, 2012; Lei, 2018; Chen & Liang, 2015), which increases the cost of investment by families in impoverished areas when they take part in social mobility rather than creates more opportunities for their upward mobility (Lei, 2018). Moreover, from the perspective of the cultural capital of families, *peidu* has been thought of as a manner of family upbringing and varies from one stratum to another. Such differences impact the development of children (Lareau, 2018, pp. 3-300).

Another line is the research on *peidu* around both the integration of family resources and the altered roles of family members. Some scholars have re-defined the function of *peidu*, think of it as a kind of family investment, or a kind of delivery of family resources between family members. These scholars have gradually shifted their focus from individual students to the interactions between the members of families involved in *peidu* (Feng, 2017; Chen & Liang, 2015), re-interpreting the function of *peidu* from the angle of resource integration brought about by family members' fitting in through residentialization. In addition, because most parents directly involved in *peidu* are mothers, some researchers take the angle of motherhood identity to study the increasingly gendered and marketized childcare system (Cai, 2018). This section of the literature looks at the females' role and studies the changes in the division of labor and their position both in families and society during the process of accompanying their children, highlighting the roles that mothers play during the integration of social and family resources. These studies do not simplistically focus on the impact of *peidu* upon the gaining of educational resources for related children, but pay more attention to the changes that resource integration brought by *peidu* has caused to family members' life, and to the dynamic process of the changing socioeconomic positions.

Existing literature has covered both the in-depth social transformations behind the *peidu* phenomenon and the class distinctions in *peidu*, but lays an emphasis on the latter while neglecting the thus caused intraclass disparities. From the angle of educational investments, *peidu* is interpreted as the risk investment in family education, which lays more stress on subsequent stratum inequality. From the point of view of gender, it researches the thinking about self-esteem and the leisurely life of females brought about by *peidu*. At present, *peidu* has evolved through three stages; the early overseas accompanied study in elite strata, the *peidu* of ordinary urban families, and the *peidu* of rural families in cities. With the rapid development of urbanization, a large number of rural families are seeking easier ways to join urban life. Therefore, this essay is inclined to see *peidu* as a dynamic process for families to realize their resource delivery, paying particular attention to the social causes, processes and consequences of *peidu*.

Research Subject and Method

In order to probe the concrete reasons why rural parents have chosen *peidu* and its impact upon students from rural families, this research selects County X in Weinan City, Shaanxi Province as its survey spot. This county, with a large enrolment base in the Weinan area, has four high schools within its territory. In particular, one of the four senior high schools is a provincial key secondary school, and the proportion of its students who passed the college entrance examination is more than 70% of the total number; two ordinary high schools at the county seat have 15-20% of graduates taking the college entrance examination on average each year, with a mere 10% of students becoming college students; and one high school in a small-sized town has fewer than ten students enrolled by colleges every year. This essay chose the students at the four high schools in County X and their families as its research subjects for two reasons. One is that these four high schools represent the distribution of educational resources at different levels in this county and the students at these schools and their families represent the types of financial strata of the families in the community, which can help do in-depth research on the impact of *peidu* regarding the discrepancies in the different types of rural families; the other is the availability of data. We visited the four high schools during the period from December 2018 to February 2019 and issued 100 copies of questionnaires about *peidu*. On the basis of these questionnaires, we chose ten families for in-depth interviews.

Table 1 *Peidu* Information on Interviewed Students

Number	Companion to the Student	School Type	Educational Attainment of the Companion	Self-feelings	Family Conditions
F1	Mother	Ordinary	High school degree and below	No obvious effect	Father employed, mother not
F2	Mother	Ordinary	High school degree and below	Adverse effect	Both parents are farmers
F3	Mother	Ordinary	High school degree and below	Little effect	Both parents are farmers
F4	Father	Key	High school degree and below	With effect	Both parents are farmers
F5	Uncle	Key	Vocational college graduate	With effect	Both parents are farmers
F6	Mother	Key	High school degree and below	With effect	Father employed, mother not
M7	Uncle	Key	Bachelor's degree	With high effect	Both parents are farmers
M8	Mother	Ordinary	High school degree and below	With little effect	Father employed, mother not
M9	Father	Ordinary	High school degree and below	With little effect	Both parents employed in the town
M10	Mother	Ordinary	High school degree and below	With little effect	Both parents employed in the town

The Causes, Characteristics and Influences of *Peidu*

The Causes of *Peidu*: A New Channel for Resource Delivery to Rural Families

The rapid development of Chinese society has impacted rural families with pressures from inside and outside their own class while enabling them to enjoy improved living conditions. Rural families have

realized the necessity to establish a new channel in coping with the pressures of their downward social mobility to keep pace with the rapid social changes, and *peidu* is one of their choices. Some scholars divide *peidu* by rural families into three types: The first is *peidu* through the whole family's immigration, in which the parents settle down in cities on their own to make a living; the second is forced *peidu* due to the adjusted distribution of schools; and the third is the aspiring type seeking higher quality of education for their children (Wang, 2011). These choices have revealed the attitudes of rural families in the face of unbalanced urban-rural education to utilize quality education resources in cities for upward social mobility under the pressure both from inside and outside their strata.

Spatial mobility caused by class pressure.

The phenomenon of *peidu* by rural families emerged in 2006, and was closely related to the fact that the rural youth joined the rapidly developing economy (Wang, 2012). With the wide popularization of the mobile internet, the rural youth born in the 1970s and 1980s became better informed of the material world outside their own daily life, and this provided the initial motive for their choosing to leave home and seek urban life styles. Rural youth have to face not only the interclass pressure in the process of social development, but also the intraclass embarrassment of either upward or downward mobility, and this forces them to take account of a multicomponent pattern of resource configuration. Rural family members with certain skills obtain more urban resources by means of going out for off-farm employment as a mode of spatial mobility but face the problem of unsustainable development. After they enter cities, they have to face not only the new survival pressures in cities, but also the problem of childhood education due to the gap in urban-rural education. In addition, parents in rural families attribute their fate of going out for off-farm employment to insufficient education and are thus more inclined to treat better education for their children as an opportunity to realize their own dreams. Therefore, they anticipate increasing the investment in their children by means of *peidu*, employing family resources as a lever to acquire quality education resources, helping their children to obtain "leverage" and remedying the inferior educational resources in rural areas. This is a common response to both the intraclass and interclass pressures.

Case 1: In Family F1, the father does carpenter jobs in the county seat, while the mother mainly engages in housework and *peidu* at home. This family has two children, and lives in a set of rooms of their own in the county seat. The mother says, "We were planning to improve our living conditions when we came to town at that time. It is impoverished in the place around our old home, and the kids' dad could not make enough money with his handicraft, so we came to town for jobs. We happened to encounter a good economic situation a few years ago, and thus earned some money, we wanted to improve our living conditions, and thus bought a set of rooms. The economy has gone worse these days, both the kids' dad and I found fewer and fewer jobs and have more and more leisure accordingly. So, we both thought it over, reckoning that it would be a pity to let the good educational resources at the county seat go like that, and that we would rather give our two kids some better education, sending them to a better school, so that we two could be less burdened in future. From then on, I began to stay home and engage in *peidu* for our two kids. Now the elder one has been enrolled at a high school, but it's not ideal for the school he goes to is an ordinary one with low probability to enter a college. He is boarding at the school now. The younger one is

still good at his academic tasks, so we are putting more focus on this one.”

In this case one can find that the *peidu* phenomenon among rural families is essentially caused by the inequality in educational resources between urban and rural areas and such inequality mainly rests in the fact that the educational investment by the government has left schools in rural areas far behind those in urban areas, whether in terms of facilities or staff qualities. *Peidu* through the whole family's immigration in this case is an outcome of the gaps in educational qualities between urban and rural areas.

The requirement for family resource integration.

Marriage and education are two major approaches to resource integration for rural families. Many studies have shown that early marriage affects educational attainment, vocational training, and upward social mobility of family members (Wang & Wu, 2013). Through the questionnaire survey in the early period, we found that most *peidu* companions' educational attainment is at or below a high school degree, and that the majority are not in stable employment. This means that the children can hardly obtain continuously adequate economic support or educational guidance from their parents. Such a family moved to the town and thus settled down there either thanks to the limited financial support (a set of rooms in the county seat financed by the parents of both sides) in the early stage of the marriage, or to a certain vocational skill of one spouse after the wedding. Therefore, in the face of the educational problem of their children, they need to re-integrate their family resources, and the choice of *peidu* is one step of a family's resource integration. On the one hand, *peidu* happened to serve as an approach to the upgrading of resource allocations within the family; on the other hand, *peidu* can also be viewed as an alternative kind of “risk investment.”

Case 2: In our interviews with families F5 and F6, we found that both couples married early, and had children early, too. Couples like these usually chose to get married immediately after they began to work and have children soon after they are married. Both F5 and M7 have family members participating in *peidu*, and M7's uncle is the only person in our interviews who has a bachelor's degree. F5 was in the same grade as the child of his oldest uncle. This uncle ran a small-sized business after his retirement from a state-owned enterprise and began to engage in *peidu* when his own child was in grade three of primary school. F5 was sent to the county seat when he was in grade five to study together with his cousin. According to F5's father, “The kid's uncle, my elder brother, who has more knowledge and experience is able to communicate well with teachers, so I sent my kid to the town, to his uncle. Then, his uncle took care of two kids at the same time. After the kid went to the town, the teachers said he had been poorly educated, so his uncle sent him to a cram school, to say, remedial work classes, for math and English, and gradually the kid's academic performance got better. But after he had to lodge at the journal middle school, the opportunities for family education become fewer, and his learning achievements thus went down.” F6's family is greatly different from F5's, for the former has no helpful relatives. But as F6's mother told us, “My husband does off-farm jobs in Xi'an, going home once every half year, so I rented out our lands. Now I am at leisure, I began to simply accompany our kid and watch him the whole day long, expecting him to have a great potential. Afterwards, I found his uncle quite adventurous, and they had arranged for their child to learn this and that all the time, so we will follow his uncle's advice as long as we can afford it.”

In rural areas, the investment in children's fosterage and education is a core problem for family

development after family resources are integrated and temporarily improved through early marriage. Therefore, for long-term family development, a rural family has to choose their children's education as a breakthrough, and *peidu* is the optimum choice it requires after a comprehensive consideration. Through *peidu*, a rural elementary family not only enables its children to obtain better quality education resources, but also receives resource support from the extended family.

The continuous increases in living costs.

Some scholars hold that *peidu* means the choice of increased investment in children for rural families to better prevent risks and realize upward social mobility (Lei, 2018). But in our interviews, we found that most rural families believe that *peidu* is a necessary kind of consumption after their material life is improved. This renders *peidu* to have the functions of investing in the children's future and preventing risks, but also the "consumption" function of obtaining a correspondingly higher stratum position. *Peidu* is a new lifestyle choice after the material life is improved and also an effective means for rural families to realize sufficient resource delivery after their social status is promoted. Rural families, especially cross-regional "new-town" families, are still confronted with embarrassment when joining urban life even after their improved material life has brought about changes to their life styles. The "consumption" function of *peidu* can help to resolve this problem as well. On the one hand, *peidu* can help such families to join the "circles" of urban life; on the other hand, the parents in such families can heighten their own sense of integration into a certain stratum through *peidu*.

Case 3: M9's mother told us, "Most of our fellow villagers in the town stay together, now that all have lived relatively better these years, just like townspeople, we have begun to think much about our children's study. Several fellow villagers in the neighborhood initiated *peidu*, we should not fall behind. Thus we followed their steps to do the same. Then, we found out the huge gaps between our kids and those from the town. All were anxious, but the kids' schoolwork is so difficult nowadays that I had no way to tutor my child. I could offer no help but cooking or something like that, and being desperate, we had to take remedial classes outside. But the expenses were considerable, while the effects were poor and we did not like to waste our money that way, which we earned so painstakingly, so we considered a better cram school. We used to be too busy to attend the kid's parent-teacher meetings. Later, we went there for once, and chatted a little with the head teacher in charge of their class. The teacher kindly recommended a couple of remedial classes, and we thus persisted in letting our kid attend that cram school. Gradually the kid's academic achievements became better."

Despite the forty-year rapid economic development in rural areas since the beginning of reform and opening up, the unbalance of educational resources between urban and rural areas has not been alleviated, but has left people with anxiety instead, worrying about the education of their children. Such sense of anxiety is embodied not only through various cram schools in cities and towns, but also by rural families' *peidu* in towns. These *peidu* families in cities and towns are examples for rural people to follow.

The flexible feedback of educational expectations.

Some researchers of school segmentation and educational expectations point out that educational expectations and learning achievements have already shown a significant positive correlation in the basic

education stage, and that the schools in higher strata on average will have higher learning expectations for students (Wu & Huang, 2017). In the counties where educational resources are relatively scarce, the segmentation of basic education displays relatively more obvious hierarchical divisions. Take the county that this interview research involves as an example. *Peidu* by the rural families there shows a situation like this: *Peidu* is more common in the stage of elementary and middle schools and less in the stage of high schools and afterwards. This is more common for students in key secondary schools and less common for those in ordinary secondary schools. For rural families, the changes in children's learning cannot directly catch parental attention and rural families often decide whether it is necessary to choose *peidu* in reference to the gap between their children's learning performance and parental expectations. When the children's academic achievement reaches, or even surpasses parental expectations the parents would likely increase the expenditures of family resources and choose *peidu*, whereas *peidu* would come to an end when the children's academic performance was below expectations. Parents' expectations for their children's learning achievement show some flexibility which mainly rests in whether the children can enter a school with comparative advantages or whether they have been affirmed by some authoritative educational institution.

Case 4: Families F2 and F4 are similar, and both relatively impoverished. Parents from both families said, "We would like to support him at any cost if he had academic capability, but not if he doesn't." The *peidu* for F2 started when he was in middle school. F2's parents had been doing off-farm jobs outside before this and afterwards the kid was enrolled at a better middle school in the county seat, the mother thus returned home for *peidu*, and moved to a rented house near the school. F2's mother remarked, "At the beginning of *peidu*, the kid was concerned, too, and we even took a remedial class. His school records got better soon, and he even received praises from the school. Later, the kid began to lodge at the school, and we disciplined him less. But when we found he was degrading his school records, it is no use taking extra classes." The *peidu* for F4 went through a tortuous process. As the father told us, "Our kid has been timid, not good at communicating with people. After he entered the middle school, we asked him if he needed any help but he didn't say anything. Later, we thought that as the kid had been enrolled in a nice middle school, it would be a pity if he could not go to college, so I told his mother to return home and accompany him. Although he had gone to a better middle school, he had poor school records before, and always fell behind in his class. At the beginning when he went to remedial classes, he was diligent and earnest, but after several exams, his performance did not become much better, and the point was that he always lagged behind in the list of academic performance. So, the kid gradually lost confidence in himself. Then, he went to lodge at the school on his own. Now I think it would have been better if we had tried hard to hold on at that time."

The feedback from the educational expectations of rural families is relatively slow, and the families cannot realize the necessity to begin or continue educational investments before they receive some positive signals. Their investment in their children is limited, too, and *peidu* has occupied most of the resources of many rural families. Such a flexible mode is a kind of compromise when they face the scarceness of resources.

The Characteristics of *Peidu*

Choice of conformity behavior and the single appraisalment standard.

For rural families, *peidu* means breaking with the former educational manner of natural growth and demands altering the lifestyle of the family and the learning styles of the children. Such an “unnatural” change makes *peidu* a strongly goal-directed behavior, that is, expecting the children to make something of themselves and thus bring honor to the family. The positive outcomes of *peidu* by rural families can easily produce a halo effect, becoming examples for surrounding people to imitate. *Peidu* by rural families lacks long-term plans and only focuses on a single target, i.e. the academic achievements. Compared with urban families which focus on the cultivation of children’s extracurricular interests, rural families take academic achievement as the major standard more often than not. The subsequent support for *peidu* also rests mainly on whether academic performance has been improved. Other aspects, such as the children’s mental health and their adaptation to the circumstances at the school, are given little attention.

Case 5: M10’s mother told us, “Our family is in poor condition, so we didn’t think of coming here for *peidu* at first. It was just that my husband came to the county seat for jobs, so my child and I came over together. I simply prepared meals for my kid in the beginning, doing some logistic work. Afterwards, the kid made some progress in his learning, so we thought of living a more frugal life and thus offering him a better education. But we took a wrong path because we knew little about his study. We even sent him to a remedial class at that time, and frequently communicated with his teachers, and did other things like that, but the kid did not show great improvement in his academic achievement. The more attention we paid to him, the more fiercely he resisted. So, he did a bad job in the entrance exam for the high school afterwards and then he went to a farther place, and does not want our company anymore.”

The choice of conformity behavior and the singleness of an estimated standard in *peidu* by rural families are mainly embodied in two aspects: on the one hand, the changes in the life style and family education modes caused by *peidu* sharpen the feeling of estrangement between parents and children. *Peidu* by rural families has a strong instrumental purpose, and the parents are badly in need of the improved educational attainment of their children to alleviate their own anxiety during the urbanization. This is transmitted to the children and increases their academic pressure. On the other hand, due to the singleness of the estimated standard, the parents would invest more only when their children have gained better academic achievement, whereas the children’s failure to reach the parents’ expectations will worsen the parent’s anxiety or even break *peidu*.

The lack of professional support and inadequate family-school interactions.

The lack of communications between rural families and authoritative educational institutions (schools and training organizations) has left the families unable to receive effective support from the schools (Lareau, 2018). Children can obtain more family resources through *peidu*, but it is difficult for parents to recognize the changes in their children and they need the explicit expressions of authoritative educational institutions before they can make suitable adjustments to resource deliveries. This characteristic is epitomized in two aspects: The first is the lack of pertinent authoritative instruction. Parents in rural families are thirsty for

changing their children's lives through education, but in order to utilize family resources more efficiently, they prefer for the family to simply take the part of logistics guarantee and the school to play the role of educator with no effective interactions or interlocks between family and school. The other is the lack of continuous pertinent interactions. Pertinent support depends upon long-term effective interactions with authoritative institutions, so that parents are able to adjust and offer their corresponding resource support in time, but *peidu* by rural families is an “unnatural” thing, and the interactions of children from rural families with both their parents and schools are thus inadequate.

Case 6: M8's mother told us, “We and the several accompanying families from other places usually stay together, going for groceries together and chatting. Some parents are relatively well-educated, and from them we can learn more about education. We often chat about schools and children. I didn't receive much education, but I wish the school could give more attention to my kid. It is said that the second year of middle school is crucial, so I was much concerned when my kid was grade two, fearing that he might lag behind, and thus waste all our efforts before. Therefore, I urged my kid desperately that year, but because of our low level of education, we do not know how to help him. Sometimes the kid feels impatient with us, reluctant to live at home.”

Peidu by rural families is often the embodiment of unilateral parental will, and in many cases the feelings of the children are not considered. Moreover, *peidu* means a process of spatial mobility for family members, and such spatial mobility brings about challenges in two aspects: first, the social relations that *peidu* companions have established over time need to be re-organized or adjusted. For example, for a couple to live apart, one spouse has to interrupt his or her relations with previous residence, society and acquaintances. Second, children who must adapt themselves to the new surroundings with their parents. Whether in the name of a student who joins a class in the middle of the course, or of a guest student, the label “rural kids” may affect their interactions with urban children.

The conflicts of behaviors and habits and the poor interactions between generations.

Most scholars apply Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction when they research the impact of the educational modes of different classes upon children's performance at school. This theory consists of such concepts as cultural capital, field and habitus (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2002, pp. 85, 131-132 and 100-101). In particular, habitus is the order and mode of field itself. For rural families, the interference by *peidu* inevitably impacts upon the previous family life and habits. These families attach much importance to the education at school but neglect the substantial influence of family habitus as an important social force upon children. Personal experience and external information have made the parents of current rural families aware of the importance of education for the future of their children, and they wish to influence their children's educational attainment through the changes of family life. However, the behaviors and habits of rural families can hardly show a fundamental change within a short period, and often conflict with the urban life. Due to the need for *peidu*, family members often have to live apart; being in lack of full intergenerational interactions, they cannot make sufficient early preparations for the children as rich urban families can, supporting the children in study, life and society, and developing good family education into the growth of children in all aspects. *Peidu* forces a rural family to spend more on the

education of the children, but within the family, members lack intergenerational interactions because most rural parents only focus on their children's academic achievements, paying little attention to the children's other interests and daily problems. Such cognitive bias may exert a negative influence upon children.

Case 7: Family F3 is a standard rural family engaging in farming with the father as the major breadwinner who is usually away from home earning a living and returns to do farm work when necessary. He is seldom at home or takes little or no part in family education. F3's mother told us, "The kid's father and I used to work away from home and were seldom concerned with family affairs. As the kid gradually grew up, I returned home for *peidu*. Now that his father is always absent, I leave all things up to my kid, for he has read many books, and is thus better informed than I."

Family habitus not only means the change of lifestyles, but is more embodied through the relations in terms of family members' coordination and division of work. For rural families, *peidu* is often at the cost of one spouse giving up his or her human capital, offering a simplistic logistic guarantee for the children. With the lack of effective interactions with authoritative institutions and between generations, such *peidu* can hardly realize the effective integration and delivery of family resources. *Peidu* further clarifies the division of labor in the family, namely the male-breadwinner model, which in most families imposes the heavy burden of interaction with, and education of, the children on the mother. However, the mothers in rural families are often poorly educated, marry early, and have children early, which may easily lead to reversed interactions between children and parents. With the growth of children and the improved level of their education, the dominant positions in rural families gradually shift from mothers to children, especially in the communication with authoritative institutions, including schools, children often have more priority and discourse power.

The Social Influence of *Peidu*

Peidu has changed the life styles of many rural families expecting to establish a new channel for resource delivery and expecting their children to acquire the anticipated educational attainment through the urban resources of quality education, and even realize upward social mobility. But because of the afore-mentioned various reasons, most rural families have failed to fulfill their expectations. Despite such failures, *peidu* has objectively become a preparation for rural families to join urban life, and has affected individuals, families, and society.

The individual level.

Rural families resort to *peidu* to build new channels for resource delivery, realize spatial mobility, and reconstruct family-social relations. Despite disparities between the new and old life styles, each family can collect more resources in the process of delivery and use them for their children's study, helping them to obtain more material guarantees for their participation in school activities and examinations, and their enrolment by schools of higher quality, and helping them develop their future goals. As this survey shows, about 53.4% of respondents believe that the choice of *peidu* can bring about a better life quality in the future. With respect to the final outcomes, however, the chances for the children of most rural families involved in *peidu* to receive higher education are still slim, and most of them still have to enter vocational

schools and ordinary colleges. Compared with their parents' levels of education, the children involved in *peidu* have realized absolute mobility, but it requires long-term tracking surveys to know whether they have realized relative mobility.

Peidu exerts a huge influence on other family members, too. When rural families gradually increase their investment in *peidu* for their children, it means a kind of relative deprivation for other family members. *Peidu* not only disrupts previous family expenditure plans and occupies other consumption resources, but also changes the trajectories of family lives to a certain extent. *Peidu* for most rural families is more like a kind of cross-class "consumption," requiring more adequate resource support to guarantee that their previous living standards will not be affected. As this survey shows, 53.08% of *peidu* parents work to earn incomes while offering their company, expecting their children to benefit from better education while maintaining their current living standards.

The family level.

The widening of gaps between different families, caused by *peidu*, will further worsen the marginalization of deprived rural families. *Peidu* as a family's important investment in education does not always produce positive returns, and this intensifies intraclass stratification. Under the double pressure of people's general anxiety about education and the unbalanced education between urban and rural areas, many rural families, whether in good or poor financial status, are drawn into the *peidu* crowds. But for the relatively poor rural families, the supply of their financial resources is unsustainable, and the flexible educational expectations render more and more rural families at or close to the poverty level to directly cease their *peidu* investment when they encounter problems. Due to the division of work in a *peidu* family, the financial burden in a family with fewer resources often falls on the shoulders of only one person. As such, starting or continuing *peidu*, dependent on an unhealthy division of work cannot justify the expenditures but increases the burden on the family instead. This renders some rural families to be further marginalized.

Peidu not only brings about different educational experiences for the children in rural families, but also intensifies the stratification between *peidu* families. Financially, some *peidu* families have bought houses in the county seat after years of efforts, but others still live in rented ones. In terms of employment, some *peidu* families can find stable jobs in the county seat, successfully living there while others still have to do odd jobs or live on previous savings. With respect to the adaptation to urban life, some are able to quickly fit in and stay there even after the accompanying tasks come to an end, but others drift along the edge of city and rural areas and return to their homes in the countryside after *peidu*. *Peidu* is a significant event and changes the course of the lives of each member of each involved rural family.

The social level.

From elite families' accompanying students overseas to rural families' *peidu* in cities or towns, *peidu* has resulted in a "theater effect" in the educational sphere. The so-called theater effect is like this: Suppose people are watching a theatrical performance, everyone will be able to watch the performance if they all sit in their seats, but suddenly someone in the audience stands up, maybe to see it more clearly, or because of being short. People around tell him to sit down, but he turns a deaf ear to them. The audience

ask the theater administrator for help, but he is not at his post. In order to appreciate the performance, the people surrounding him have to stand up to watch, then all the audience must stand to watch. Due to the theater effect of *peidu*, families in various strata increase their investment in their children's education in succession and the consequence is: *peidu* leaves the families in the lower strata in a dilemma. Education is a path for upward social mobility, the theater effect forces low-stratum families to consume more family resources, so they have to endure not only financial pressure, but also heavy social and psychological pressures.

The *peidu* phenomenon spreads from cities and towns to rural areas, further worsening the inequality between urban and rural areas, and leading to stratum solidification. The theater effect has forced families in all strata to plunge themselves into *peidu*, and inflicted emulation in school choice in the face of limited quality educational resources, leaving the expenditures on *peidu* in a tiered distribution. The more eminent a school is, the higher costs (house rents and school selection fee) *peidu* will incur, but most ordinary *peidu* families have no choice but to pick the schools consistent with their stratum. As our survey indicates, most children from rural *peidu* families enter higher vocational schools or private universities (In China, most private universities cannot rival public ones). This also indicates that *peidu* leads to the continuous differentiation of current educational systems, further worsening the social stratification.

Conclusion and Discussion

In the present situation educational resources are allocated disproportionately and educational opportunities have become increasingly unequal. *Peidu*, however, has gradually become an important option for rural families to intervene in their children's education. Rural families choose *peidu* for multiple reasons, the major ones of which are the wish for children to carry on the glory of parents and maintain their upward social mobility, and the need to increase educational consumption after the rise of living standards. In this process, it is necessary to integrate family resources to achieve the educational expectations of *peidu* families. But in practice, the resource delivery of these rural *peidu* families displays conformity behaviors, a single estimate standard, scarce professional support, insufficient family-school interactions, conflicts between urban and rural habits, and the lack of good intergenerational interactions. Therefore, in order to guarantee smooth *peidu*, rural *peidu* families must constantly be adjusted in the process of resource delivery in accordance with the changes in the children's academic achievement and external circumstances.

The resource delivery channel that rural families have established through *peidu* has its duality. From a positive perspective, it is a new kind of channel for the intergenerational delivery of family resources, which offers relatively better educational resources for children, creates opportunities for them to receive higher education, and accumulates certain advantages for their future development, guaranteeing them "not to lose at the start line" in terms of the obtainment of an educational investment. Meanwhile, however, what deserves more attention is the negative influence of such behaviors: First, at the individual level, *peidu* can produce positive effects only if both sides involved in *peidu* can quickly fit into their study and

living environments; or if the other way round, both sides will possibly face a lose-lose consequence. At the family level, *peidu* causes the differentiation of staying in towns and returning to homes in the countryside among rural *peidu* families, worsening intraclass inequality. At the social level, the spread of *peidu* brings about the theater effect among all social classes with respect to a family's investment in education, aggravating stratum solidification and inequality. Therefore, it is advisable not only to pay attention to the unbalanced educational quality between urban and rural areas, but also to guarantee students from rural areas a chance to enjoy quality educational resources and fair opportunities for higher education. More importantly, it is necessary to reasonably guide rural family education, not allowing family education to become a boundary for class stratification in the rural areas.

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