

Home divided, home reconstructed – children in rural-urban migration in contemporary  
China

Nana Zhang  
Department of Sociology  
University of Warwick

The article is centred on the impact of migration on the construction of home and negotiations of belonging among children who are involved in rural-urban migration in contemporary China.

While China's 140 million rural migrants have been used to produce 'China's miracle' toiling in the 'world's factory' with limited social assistance and protection, their children, exceeding 78 million (NBSC, 2008), are also enduring social and cultural marginalization, discrimination and exclusion from the education, health care and social welfare systems in the cities as well as in the countryside (Zai, et al., 2008). Many, for example, are denied access to free primary education in the host cities. Their migration experience is as significant as, and very similar to, that of undocumented immigrants and second generation immigrants in developed countries. Drawing on data from a qualitative study conducted with rural migrant children in north China between 2010-2011, the author explores how rural-urban migration impacts the structure of rural and migrant households and how rural children, either directly or indirectly involved in migration, actively construct their sense of home and negotiate their belongs in the migration process.