



Types of integration and depressive symptoms: A latent class analysis on the resettled population for the Three Gorges dam project, China



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ABSTRACT

Focusing on China's Three Gorges Project (TGP)-Induced Resettlement, the largest scale resettlement induced by a single development project, this study aims to investigate different types of integration patterns among the TGP re-settlers and how modes of integration associate with depressive symptoms. Using Latent Class Analysis, we analyzed survey data on 407 TGP re-settlers. We detected three integration patterns among these re-settlers: the fully integrated (68%), the culturally and economically integrated (21%) and the unintegrated (11%). We found that different integration types were linked to different levels of depressive symptoms. Unless fully integrated and experienced a warm feeling toward new community, re-settlers were vulnerable to elevated depressive symptoms. Our findings that culturally and economically integrated re-settlers had similar levels of depressive symptoms as the unintegrated re-settlers highlighted the importance of subjective dimension of integration and resettlement. We also found that rural re-settlers and those who move with the whole village were more likely to fall into the unintegrated category. Policy implications were discussed.

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1. Introduction

In today's world, millions of refugees are forced to relocate due to wars, social conflicts, natural disasters, etc. Although not having drawn much attention of the global society, a large number of people are displaced by developmental projects such as dams, urban infrastructure projects, irrigation systems, mines, and urban renewal projects. A recent estimate indicates that about 15 million people around the world are displaced each year to make way for developmental projects (Oliver-Smith, 2009). Although factors that trigger their relocation are different, project-induced relocatees face the same challenges as resettled refugees face when they strive to establish themselves in the new community.

In what circumstance can a resettlement be considered as successful? Derived from the experiences of voluntary immigrants, assimilation and integration theories suggest that a resettlement can be considered as successful when an immigrant is fully integrated into the host society. Researchers argue that getting familiar with host society's extrinsic culture such as language and food is usually the first step of integration (Alba and Nee, 1997; Gordon, 1964). They then strive to achieve social and economic parity

with the natives in job markets and educational systems (Alba and Nee, 1997). Diminished social distance, emotional attachment and sense of belonging are indicators for the last step of integration (Alba and Foner, 2014; Amit, 2011). Researchers have emphasized the subjective dimension of integration such as emotional attachment as it may not be the by-product of economic integration (Amit, 2011). Even if immigrants are comfortable with the local culture and have reached social economic parity with natives, they may not develop an emotional attachment to the host society (Amit, 2011). In this case, a successful re-settlement is not reached.

Informed by the assimilation and integration theories, in this study we focus on China's Three Gorges Project (TGP)-induced resettlement, the largest scale resettlement induced by a single development project. This study has two main goals. First, we aim to investigate different types of integration patterns among the TGP re-settlers and how modes of integration associate with the mental health of the re-settlers. Second, we examine if there exists vulnerable groups that are at the lowest level of integration. If there are such groups, what are the characteristics of members in these groups? As such, this study would contribute to the immigration literature by examining mental health implication of types of integration. It would also contribute to project-induced resettlement literature by identifying vulnerable groups so that resettlement policy can be better tailored to different subpopulations and

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resources can be allocated to the most in need.

2. The Three Gorges Project (TGP)

Among developing countries, China has experienced a stunning rapid development during the past few decades. In 1994, China began the construction of the Three-Gorges Project, the world's largest hydroelectric project located in the mid-section of China's Yangtze River. The stated purposes of the TGP is to control for recurring floods in one of China's most populated regions, to generate hydro power for economic expansion, and to facilitate development in China's interior by means of improved navigation. When completed in 2009, the TGP generated a reservoir about the size of Lake Superior in a mountainous area. Between 1992 and 2008, 1.27 million people who lived in the Three Gorges area at an altitude of 175 m or lower have been relocated (SCGPCCEO, 2009). Among the relocated, about 40% were rural residents. Due to limited amount of farmland, one third of rural residents were relocated out of the Three Gorges areas to places planting different crops and speaking different dialects (SCGPCCEO, 2009). Most rural re-settlers move to a destination arranged by the government, while some selected their own destination to be closer to their family, relatives or friends. Although most far-moving re-settlers moved with their co-villagers, they were often scattered in larger human ecological units in the receiving region because of limitation of farmland and logistic concern (Guo and Wang, 2010; Hwang et al., 2007). The reservoir totally or partially submerged 12 cities and 114 townships. By 2009, all their effected residents (i.e. urban re-settlers who accounted for 60% of the total displaced population) have moved to corresponding new cities and towns constructed at higher altitudes near the old sites (SCGPCCEO, 2009).

Learning from the past failure in resettlement practices, the Chinese government adopted a new development-oriented relocation policy to ensure economic development of the resettled (State Council, 2001). For example, the State Council has earmarked 40 billion-Yuan (\$4.8billion) investment for resettlement, which accounts for about 45% of the total cost for the whole project (Wang, 2002). Resettlement areas were allowed to "share benefits" of the dam project by receiving a portion of the profits from power generation as development funds (State Council, 2001; Cernea, 2009). The TGP resettlement policy was praised by the World Bank as a model for other developing countries (Bartolome et al., 2000). Planners of the TGP confidently asserted that the resettlement was a development opportunity for the relocated (Heggelund, 2004; Jing, 2000; Wang, 2002). Empirical studies have found that re-settlers reported better housing and an increase in their earnings, although the amount of increase was not as large as that of the unmoved residents in their old communities whose houses were above the water line (Hwang et al., 2011). Furthermore, economic conditions of TGP re-settlers were uneven with some enjoying an improvement in their income, housing, and standard of living and others reporting a deterioration of their standard of living (McDonald et al., 2008; Heggelund, 2004; Li and Rees, 2000). However, with almost all the attention being paid to economic aspect of resettlement, not many studies have examined the subjective feeling re-settlers have towards their new communities and different patterns in their integration into the host society.

3. Social integration of re-settlers

In what circumstance can a project-induced resettlement be considered as successful? The literature on the integration of voluntary migrants into the host society can inform us in answering this question. Derived from the experiences of European immigrants entering the US around the turn of the 20th century, classical

assimilation theory suggests that new comers first pick up language, food and other customs as part of their "culture assimilation" process. However, full assimilation only occurs when the social distance between new comers and the main stream diminishes as immigrants are accepted into primary groups of the host society's main stream, the so called "structural assimilation" (Gordon, 1964). Further development in assimilation theory includes economic assimilation, including such topics as earnings and education. In other words, integration happens when immigrants have the same life chances as the host society members and their social economic attainment is not affected by their immigrant or ethnic status (Alba and Nee, 1997). As suggested by Gordon (1964), cultural assimilation is inevitable, but structural assimilation is not. Even though immigrants have adopted the culture of their host society and economically assimilated into the main stream, some might never experience a diminished social distance and enter primary groups of members of the host society.

Classical assimilation theory was criticized because it assumes a one directional assimilation in that new comers or ethnic minorities always have to assimilate into the dominant group (Alba and Nee, 1997). The concept of integration does not maintain this assumption and the assimilation can be reciprocal between the new comers and the local community. However, integration theory still maintains that there are different dimensions of integration such as cultural integration, social-economic integration, and subjective aspects of integration. The latter usually involves sense of identity, emotional attachment, and sense of belonging to the new community (Alba and Foner, 2014). As argued by some researchers, even if immigrants obtain social economic parity with natives, they may not develop an emotional attachment to the host society (Looker, 2014; Renshon, 2008). In this case, a successful resettlement is not reached.

The integration theories derived from voluntary migrants contain some informative points that we can use to understand integration patterns of Three Gorges re-settlers. Integration is not unidimensional and re-settlers who have integrated into their host community in one dimension might not have integrated in other dimensions. As such, there can be different patterns/types of integration. We suspect that TGP re-settlers do not form a homogenous group with respect to their types of integration into the host society. Some may have integrated culturally. Some may also have integrated into the local job market and reached economic parity with host community members. Others may have reached the deepest level of integration, that is to say have developed an emotional attachment to the host society. We want to know whether or not there exist different clusters of re-settlers according to their types of integration. Is there a group of re-settlers that have reached the deepest level of integration by building some emotional attachment to their new community? Is there a group of re-settlers that are in a vulnerable position because they have not integrated culturally and/or economically?

4. Mental health

There is a consensus that a project-induced re-settlement is stressful. However, different researchers have different views on where the stress comes from. There are researchers who maintain that displacement itself does not necessarily lead to mental distress; rather, distress results from changes in life circumstances such as changes in employment, source of income, social network, quality of farm lands, and access to services (Desjarlais et al., 1995). As a result, once the income source, social network and other life circumstances of personal significance are restored, distress would disappear. In other words, once social economic integration is reached, re-settlers should not suffer from depressive symptoms

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