



Social integration of new-generation migrants in Shanghai China

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ABSTRACT

New-generation migrants, defined as migrants who were born in or after 1980 and whose household registration (hukou) status remains in their place of origin, are now the major migrant labour force in urban China. Most of them start migration immediately after full-time education and have a great desire of becoming urban citizens. While previous studies focus on inequalities experienced by migrants as a result of the hukou institution, migrants' social integration in the city is under-researched. Drawing on data from a questionnaire survey of new-generation migrants in Shanghai in 2012, this paper employs a structural equation model to examine the extent to which new-generation migrants are integrated into the urban society and the factors influencing their integration. The results show that both labour market outcomes and interaction with local urban residents are crucial for their social integration. These individual factors have deep roots in structural and institutional constraints which prevent migrants from getting access to opportunities and resources.

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1. Introduction

New-generation migrants have recently become a focus of policy concern in China due to their distinctive characteristics and significance to the Chinese economy (State Council, 2010). They are defined as migrants who were born in or after 1980 and whose household registration (hukou) status remains in their place of origin (ACFTU, 2010). This definition has been widely used in the Chinese literature, despite debates about the dividing year of 1980.¹ It differs from that of 'second generation migrants' in the Western literature which refers to migrants who were born in destination countries or moved to destination countries at a young age (Zhou, 1997; Portes, Fernandez-Kelly, & Haller, 2009). With a population of

more than 100 million, new-generation migrants have now become the major migrant labour force in urban China. Brought up in the reform era (post-1978) with rising living standards but a widening rural-urban divide, they differ from previous migrants in that they are more educated, materially better off, and more likely to work in cities for personal development rather than simply higher income (ACFTU, 2010). Most of them have little experience of, and/or interest in farming, and have a strong desire to settle in cities (Pun & Lu, 2010). However, without local urban hukou status, they are excluded from social benefits and services at destination, such as job-seekers' allowance, government-subsidised housing and minimum living allowance (Li, 2006; Chan, 2009). This tends to result in a gap between their expectations of becoming urban citizens and daily life experience of discrimination.

While previous studies have focused on the hukou institution and the inequalities experienced by migrants (e.g. Chan, 2009; Knight & Song, 2005), there are few studies on migrants' integration into the urban society with the exception of some recent ones (e.g. Wang & Fan, 2012). Even fewer studies focus on the social integration of new-generation migrants despite their increasing number and significance to the Chinese economy. Yet social integration is an important area for research because it provides economic and cultural benefits, and ensures social stability. It is particularly relevant to new-generation migrants given their strong aspirations of becoming urban citizens and daily experience of discrimination. This paper aims to fill the gap by examining the

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¹ Yue, Li, Feldman, and Du (2010) indicates that the dividing year of 1980 is arbitrary and then experimented with each of the years between 1970 and 1980 as a dividing line for the definition of new-generation migrants in their study examining migrants' intention to stay or leave the city. Fan and Chen (2014) discusses three definitions of new-generation migrants: those who were born in 1980 and later; those who started migration in the 1990s or later; and those whose parents are migrants. The authors indicate that the first definition is most widely used in government policy documents and previous studies. We therefore use the first definition in this article. Migrants who were born before 1980 are called previous- or old-generation migrants.

extent and determinants of new-generation migrants' social integration, using primary data from a questionnaire survey of 313 young migrants in Shanghai in 2012. The study does not aim to compare and contrast social integration of previous- and new-generations of migrants. Rather, it regards new-generation migrants as a heterogeneous group, and examines the variations in their social integration. The study is novel in that we use a structural equation model (SEM) to measure the complex concept of social integration using multiple indicators through a confirmatory factor analysis. The SEM further enables us to examine the influencing factors of social integration through its structural model. Thus, the study will enhance our understanding of the determinants of social integration, which is conducive to policy implications aimed at improving migrants' integration and reducing social tensions in Chinese cities. Moreover, as existing literature on second-generation migrants' integration in place of settlement focuses primarily on immigrants in developed countries, this study of new-generation migrants in the Chinese context would contribute to wider debates about migration and integration.

The remainder of the paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 reviews the literature on the concepts and theories of integration, and assesses their relevance to this study of migrants' social integration in a Chinese city. Section 3 provides the Chinese context by discussing previous studies on migrants and their integration in urban China. Section 4 introduces the structure equation model employed to analyse new-generation migrants' social integration. This is followed by the discussions of data in Section 5 and empirical results in Section 6. Section 7 concludes the paper with a brief summary and policy implications.

2. Concepts and theories of integration

Integration has been a key word in political discourse in many countries; it is regarded as a policy goal for projects aimed at facilitating the settlement of immigrants and refugees (European Commission, 2004; European Commission, 2007; Home Office, 2006). However, as claimed by Robinson (1998), 'integration is a chaotic concept: a word used by many but understood differently by most' (p.118), and the concept is 'individualized, contested and contextual' (p.122). This is supported by a variety of discussions which indicate the complex and contested nature of the concept (Castles, Korac, Vasta, & Vertovec, 2001). For example, integration is viewed as the extent to which 'immigrants are able to achieve their needs and fulfil their interests in the new country' (Anisef & Lanphier, 2003, p.5), or as the outcome that refugees 'are empowered to achieve their full potential' (Home Office, 2005, p.11). Both definitions are vague as individuals' needs and interests are understood differently in different contexts. In the studies of race relations, integration is used to describe 'the process of change that occurs when two cultures are forced to co-exist within one society' (Korac, 2003, p.52). Thus various studies have examined immigrants' identity, belonging and citizenship (Castles, Schierup, & Hansen, 2006). Integration is also described as 'a process whereby the differences between the ethnic/racial groups and the reference population gradually decline across a range of domains, including the job market, education, social and cultural differences, and racial 'othering' and exclusion' (Bolt, Ozuekren, & Phillips, 2010, p.173). This definition provides a framework for empirical analysis by comparing education, occupation, income and access to social services of immigrants and native residents (Goldlust & Richmond, 1974). Reduced difference in education and labour market outcomes is often referred to as functional integration (Ray, 2002). Functional integration is claimed to be correlated with social integration which refers to the inclusion of new members into the social structure of the receiving society (Alba & Nee, 1997). This is

because access to education and jobs provides opportunities of wide participation in the society.

Earlier literature regards integration as assimilation which is a term used frequently in the American literature. The assimilation theory, based on Park and Burgess (1921) and Gordon (1964)'s work on the integration of ethnic minorities into American life, identifies seven types of assimilation: cultural, structural, marital, identificational, attitude receptional, behavioural receptional and civic. As Park and Burgess asserted (1921, p.735), 'assimilation is a process of interpretation and fusion in which persons or groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons or groups, and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life'. Furthermore, the theory states that the differences between the majority group and ethnic minorities diminish over time in values, norms, behaviours and attitudes. Thus it argues that integration can be achieved with time, especially through succession of generations. For example, first-generation immigrants may undertake low-skilled work, but second- or third-generation migrants tend to participate in local education and gradually integrate into the receiving society. The theory is useful in that it provides a framework for research on persistent differences and emerging commonalities between minority and majority groups. However, it is subject to several critiques. Firstly, the important dimension of economic assimilation is missing. Secondly, it is argued that succession of generations will not necessarily lead to improvement in socio-economic status. In particular, the racial or ethnic disadvantage model contends that persistent institutional barriers, socio-cultural prejudice and discrimination prevent ethnic minorities from getting access to education and employment opportunities (Glazer & Moynihan, 1963). This hinders the process of integration, resulting in their marginalised status in the receiving society. The last and also most important critique is that the assimilation theory regards integration as a one-way adaptation process, i.e. ethnic minorities gradually adopt the socio-cultural characteristics of the majority and lose their cultural roots. Assimilation is perceived as a transformation process which turns socio-cultural differences into similarities by subjecting minority groups into a majority group (Hartmann & Gerteis, 2005). This is problematic. As Portes and Zhou (1993) rightly indicates that people can improve their socio-economic position while keeping their distinctive culture and customs. Adapting into the receiving society could go hand-in-hand with the preservation of original cultural traits. Therefore integration is argued to be a two-way process where migrants and the established community communicate with and adapt to each other (Phillips, 2010). This two-way process is supported by the European Commission; policies have been promoted in countries such as the Netherlands and the UK to improve the social inclusion of immigrants whilst maintaining cultural diversity (European Commission, 2007).

Based on the assimilation theory and the ethnic disadvantage model, Portes and Zhou (1993) develops the concept of segmented assimilation in their study of second generation migrants' adaptation process in the American society. They argue that different groups of migrants may follow different trajectory towards integration or exclusion, due to the individual nature of the integration process. Such trajectory could include upward mobility, downward mobility, and economic integration but lagged social integration. They further argue that integration into the local society will be influenced by individual factors including demographic and socio-economic characteristics, contextual and structural factors such as the policies of the host government and socio-cultural prejudice. The importance of individual and structural factors for social integration has been confirmed by various studies (Ray, 2002; Phillips, 2010). For example, Korac (2003) demonstrates that the welfare

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