

Migrant Workers' Integration in Urban China: Experiences in Employment, Social Adaptation, and Self-Identity

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Abstract: The concept of integration is central for understanding the experiences of groups in marginalized positions in contemporary urban societies. Research on integration has primarily focused on international migrants, especially immigrants. Yet internal migrants like rural-urban migrant workers in China also face formidable institutional, economic, cultural, and social barriers in the host society. Informed by integration theory, and drawing on a questionnaire survey of 1,100 migrants conducted in Wuhan, this research effort examines how institutional barriers intersect with economic, social/cultural, and identity integration to explain the experiences of rural migrant workers in Chinese cities. The authors' analysis, based on OLS and logit regressions, shows that the *hukou* system is a persistent barrier to migrant workers, despite improvement over time of their economic, social/cultural, and identity integration into urban society. Their findings also indicate that human capital is important for migrants' economic and identity integration. Moreover, migrant workers who are socially and culturally adapted, speak the dialect of the host society, and have the financial resources to be self-employed (or buy an apartment in the city) are more likely to develop a sense of belonging in the city than other migrants. *Journal of Economic Literature*, Classification Numbers: I000, J610, O150, R230. 1 figure, 5 tables, 64 references. Key words: China, rural-urban migration, integration, social adaptation, institutional factors, hukou.

INTRODUCTION

In his first public speech as General Secretary on November 15, 2012, Mr. Xi Jinping—whose ascension to the Communist Party's leadership was formalized in the recently concluded 18th Party Congress—pledged to improve Chinese citizens' lives by offering “better schooling, more stable jobs, more satisfying incomes, more reliable social security, higher levels of health care, more comfortable housing conditions, and a more beautiful environment” (Johnson, 2012). However, these are elusive goals for the hundreds of millions of rural migrants in Chinese cities who do not have access to stable jobs, social welfare and health care, proper housing, and quality education for their children. The series of suicides and riots that have plagued the Foxconn electronics company from early 2010 to September 2012 are a testimony to the sense of rejection and hopelessness among migrant workers, despite the

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fact that many have lived and worked in cities for years and decades (Greene, 2012). Their integration into the urban society remains difficult.

Given the ever-increasing size of the floating population,² estimated to be in the range of 230 million (NPFPC, 2012)—of whom rural-urban migrants constitute the bulk—and the sustained population flows over the past three decades, it is surprising that relatively few English-language studies have systematically examined migrants' integration in cities. Among recent studies is Zhang and Meng's (2007) paper, which highlights the difficulty of assimilation due to labor market discrimination toward migrant workers. Also, Gui et al. analyze (2012) migrants' acculturation strategies from a psychological perspective, and, Zhang and Wang (2010) highlight the role of *hukou* and the accompanying eligibility and entitlement which undermines migrants' integration.

In this paper, we draw upon a questionnaire survey conducted in the city of Wuhan in late 2008 to analyze rural migrants' economic, social and cultural, and identity integration into the city. In the following, we first review briefly integration theory and its alternative frameworks, focusing on the Western literature and the case of immigration. We then discuss the barriers to integration that confront rural migrants in China. After describing the Wuhan survey, we highlight the most salient results of the empirical analysis based on descriptive statistics and modeling.

INTEGRATION THEORY

The concept of integration has been key to describing and explaining immigrants' experiences in the host society and changes across generations (Alba and Nee, 1997). Park and Burgess (1969 [1921], p. 735) gave one of the earliest and most popular definitions of integration, namely, "a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitude of other persons and groups and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life." Gordon (1964) conceptualized integration as a multi-dimensional process and identified different forms of assimilation: cultural, structural, and marital. Race relations are central to integration theory, and are traditionally framed in the assimilationist view—relations that advance through stages including contact, competition, accommodation, and eventual assimilation that give rise to a true melting pot (Park, 1939). Generational change is often considered as a primary engine of integration (Gans, 1992). Alba and Nee (1997) expect that with time, immigrants will become assimilated into the host society economically, socially, and culturally.

The classical integration framework, as summarized above, has been extended and reconceptualized in response to a changing and increasingly diversified composition of contemporary international migration. While a traditional integration framework is still highly valuable for studying immigrant adaptation (Alba, 1995; Alba and Nee, 1997; Brubaker, 2001), scholars have advanced two alternative frameworks. First, the segmented integration framework highlights varied experiences of immigrants. Gans (1992) sketched out several distinct trajectories that new immigrants in the United States may follow, including downward as well as upward mobility among the possible outcomes. Portes and Zhou proposed the theory of segmented integration, arguing that there are multiple "segments" of society into which immigrants assimilate rather than just one, and that some immigrant groups may actually fare worse over time and across generations (Portes and Zhou, 1993; Portes, 1995; Zhou, 1997). The classical and segmented integration frameworks are not mutually exclusive; they

²The "floating population" refers to persons not living in their place of registration.

share a number of features and have both contributed to advancing the theory of integration (Wildsmith, 2004).

In contrast, the second alternative framework—multiculturalism—questions the inevitability of assimilation and instead highlights minority groups, including immigrants, who maintain their ethnic identities through successive generations (Glazer and Moynihan, 1964; Lambert and Taylor, 1990). In this view, ethnic/racial identities are not necessarily converging, and new identities and cultures are constantly being constructed, contested, and reformed (Omi, 1993). Rather than predicting a melting pot, the multiculturalism framework anticipates a cultural mosaic that embraces differences among groups and different cultural heritages.

Regardless of which of the classical, segmented, or multicultural frameworks one adopts, research on immigration has identified three forms of integration: economic, social and cultural, and identity. Economic integration refers to immigrants achieving an average or above-average economic standing compared to natives in the host society who are of similar backgrounds. It is often measured by indicators such as education, occupation, and income (Neidert and Farley, 1985). In general, economic integration is low among immigrants who cluster at the low-skilled rungs of the economic ladder and high for immigrants of higher socioeconomic status. As a key dimension of integration, economic integration is of paramount significance for the reason that entry into the economic mainstream creates the social conditions conducive to other forms of integration (Alba and Nee, 1997). Economic convergence appears to be the most important step in the process of integration and is the “key to the achievement of both cultural and structural integration” (Arias, 2001, p. 528).

Social/cultural integration refers to the extent to which immigrants adopt customs, social norms, social relations, and practices indistinguishable in aggregate from those of the mainstream. Social integration results in a decline in social distance between groups and more homogenous social values and practices in society. The most common indicators of social/cultural integration include social contacts, language, and intermarriage (Vigdor, 2008).

Finally, identity integration refers to not only behavior, practice, and achievement but also a sense of one’s self in relation to others. In the classical integration framework, Gordon (1964, p. 71) defined identity integration as the development of a sense of peoplehood based exclusively on the host society. In this view, identity integration is achieved when over time and across generations minority groups lose their own cultural/ethnic identity and instead accept the identity of the dominant group in the host society. In the multicultural framework, however, identity formation is not necessarily due to losing one’s original identity while acquiring a new one. Rather, new identities are created as immigrants and their children find their niches in the host society and build new social and political alliances across origins and heritages, as seen in the birth of pan-ethnic identities such as Asian Americans and Hispanics in the U.S.

RURAL MIGRANTS’ INTEGRATION INTO CHINESE CITIES

Research on integration has primarily focused on the experiences of immigrants, who have likely crossed international borders and dealt with significant geographic, institutional, and cultural barriers. International migrants may also be of a different race and ethnicity and speak different languages than the mainstream population of the host society. Their experiences—and the integration theory that draws on such experiences—may not be directly relevant to internal migrants within countries. Nevertheless, in most societies, institutional barriers exist, in different forms and scales, to the inclusion of certain groups of people with

respect to resources and opportunities on the basis of their ethnicity, gender, age, religion, and culture (Zhang, 2007). In China, the institutional and other barriers that confront rural migrants in cities have rendered them persistently in marginalized economic and social positions, making their integration process very difficult and to a certain extent resembling those experienced by international migrants. In that light, our analysis in this paper is aptly informed by integration theory, although the pertinent literature is based primarily on international migration and empirical cases in Western societies.

The *hukou* system, in particular, has erected formidable barriers to rural migrants' integration into cities. Given the large volume of research on the *hukou* system (e.g., Solinger, 1999; Wu and Treiman, 2004; Wang, 2005; Chan, 2009), we shall focus on its impacts on rural migrants' integration rather than its details. Since its implementation in the late 1950s, the *hukou* system has functioned as a socio-economic institution that stratifies the Chinese population along an urban-rural divide (Solinger, 1999; Tian, 2003). Without urban *hukou*, rural migrants in cities are not eligible for most state-provided opportunities and state or employer-subsidized benefits, and their access to jobs, housing, education, and health care is severely constrained. Even though the Chinese government has since the late 1990s introduced employment-based social insurance programs to migrant workers such as basic health-care and elderly pensions, the participation rates have remained low due to institutional and structural constraints (Zhang and Wang, 2010; Xu et al., 2011). Therefore, despite many migrants' working in cities for years, if not decades, they tend to consider urban work as primarily a means to augment household income rather than a permanent source of livelihood, and most plan to eventually return to the countryside where they have the social basis and farmland for long-term security (Zhu, 2007; Fan and Wang, 2008; Fan, 2009, 2011; Zhu and Chen, 2010). In addition, because the majority of rural migrants in cities are employed in the informal sector, their job security is low and their job turnover is high. They tend to move frequently between jobs, within or across cities. Such job and geographic mobility further undermines their ability to integrate into urban society.

The Chinese government has pledged repeatedly to speed up *hukou* reforms and implement measures to better accommodate migrant workers in cities (Sun and Fan, 2009).³ Despite the multitude of *hukou* reforms since the mid-1980s, the threshold for obtaining urban *hukou* remains extremely high for most migrants.⁴ Only a small fraction of very successful migrants have managed to attain urban *hukou* by, for example, investing and purchasing apartments in the city (Zhang and Wang, 2010).⁵

Evidence from other countries—notably in Africa and Latin America—on rural-urban migrants suggests that, over time, urban ties will grow stronger than rural ties and temporary migrants will eventually settle permanently in urban destinations (reviewed by Goldstein et al., 1991). While it is still too early to conclude whether China's rural-urban migrants will

³For example, these issues were addressed in the 12th Five-Year Plan for China's economic and social development (2011–2015) and the keynote report at the 18th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in November 2012.

⁴The specifics and extent of the reforms vary greatly from one place to another, but the most common objectives of such reforms are to attract the most desirable elements of the migrant population in order to boost the city's economy and human resources, and to make it easier for urban residents' immediate family—spouse, parents, and children—to obtain urban *hukou* (Fan, 2008, pp. 49–52; Sun and Fan, 2009). Despite the reforms, it is still extremely difficult for rural Chinese to obtain urban *hukou* (Chan, 2009; Zhang, 2012).

⁵In this study, we include migrants who have successfully obtained urban *hukou*, even though they account for only a minute proportion of the migrant population, in order to better understand the impact of *hukou* on migrants' integration into cities.

replicate this process,⁶ the fact that many have lived and worked in cities for a long time, and many have now been joined by second- and even third-generation migrants (Fan and Chen, 2012), makes it both urgent and compelling to better understand how migrants adjust to and integrate themselves into the urban society.

In the following, we discuss briefly the impacts of the *hukou* system on rural migrants' economic, social/cultural, and identity integration. Migrant workers in China tend to concentrate in jobs that demand physical labor, with low pay, long work hours, low stability, and little chance for promotion, such as construction, manufacturing, and low-end services (Zhang, 2007). Only a small proportion of migrant workers are in non-manual categories (Solinger, 1999). Their concentration in manual jobs is in part due to their poor human capital, but also to the restrictions imposed by receiving cities on the range of employment in which migrants are allowed to engage (Fulong Wu, 2004). In general, migrants who do not have local *hukou* have very limited access to jobs in the formal sector⁷ (Cai, 2000; Guang, 2001; Guo and Iredale, 2004; Zhang, 2007), other than those rejected by local residents, such as waste collection, cleaning, and construction. In contrast, many jobs in the informal sector do not have the *hukou* requirement. In fact, some informal-sector jobs, such as service workers, street vendors, and construction subcontractors, favor migrants because they are known and expected to be willing to endure harsh working conditions, long hours, low pay, and poor work-based benefits.

Even though recent welfare reforms have extended the coverage of certain basic, employment-based social insurance programs to rural migrant workers, both employers and migrants are less than enthusiastic to participate in those programs (Cai, 2011; Xu et al., 2011; Chan, 2012). It appears that once again structural barriers have undermined these programs' effectiveness. For example, most healthcare and elderly pension benefits are place-based, and are not portable or are costly to be transferred (Li, 2007; Zhang and Wang, 2010; Wang, 2011). Private employers are often reluctant to comply with migrant workers' social security entitlements that are normally provided to urban residents (Wang, 2011). Employment contracts, likewise, are not a common practice for migrant jobs, thus leaving them in a vulnerable position with respect to labor rights and disputes. In short, the institutional barriers rooted in the *hukou* system have disadvantaged rural migrant workers in job placement and opportunities, compensation and benefits, and have therefore hindered the process of their economic integration into cities.

The social adaptation and integration of rural migrants in Chinese cities is, once again, undermined by the *hukou* system. First, holding rural *hukou* signifies inferior social positions in cities and accordingly permits various forms of social exclusion and marginalization (Solinger, 1999; Zhang and Wang, 2010). For example, rural women have long been marginalized in the urban marriage market. Until the late 1990s, children born from a rural mother and an urban father were not allowed to inherit the father's *hukou*. Even after approval (by the State Council in 1998) of guidelines allowing children to inherit either parent's *hukou*, rural migrants still face considerable social barriers in finding urban spouses (Yu, 2002, p. 38). In addition, due to limited access to low-cost housing, most migrants stay in crowded dorms provided by the employer or dense and poorly maintained rental units in urban villages

⁶A small but growing body of work that focuses on migrants' settlement intention finds that although migrants' desire to settle permanently in cities has increased, very few have the income, job security, and housing accommodation that enables them to leave the countryside once and for all (Zhu, 2007; Zhu and Chen, 2010; Fan, 2011).

⁷The formal sector generally includes government organizations, state-owned enterprises, collective enterprises, joint-venture or shareholding enterprises, etc. (Guo and Iredale, 2004).

(*chengzhongcun*) (Zheng et al., 2011). Physical isolation from local urban residents, not surprisingly, reduces opportunities for social contact, interaction, and integration with the host society.

Finally, identity integration for rural migrants in Chinese cities entails a process by which they take on the identity of urban residents. Many migrants have lived and worked in cities for years but bear a rather vague urban identity due to their rural status and lack of urban *hukou* (Zhang and Wang, 2010). Among second-generation migrants, many have had little or no farming experience but instead have engaged in urban migrant work immediately upon finishing school (Fan and Chen, 2012). Despite the above migrants' long-term physical presence in cities, they still may identify themselves as rural residents rather than urban residents, reflecting both the persistent role of *hukou* as well as the lack of economic and social/cultural integration as described earlier. On the other hand, there is some evidence that the role of *hukou* has declined and that economically successful and independent migrants are taking on an urban identity despite their not having urban *hukou* (Wang, 2001; Liu and Cheng, 2008).

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

Our empirical analysis employs data from a survey in Wuhan conducted in November and December 2008, as part of a collaborative project with the Institute of Economics at Wuhan University. With a population of over nine million, Wuhan is the most populous city in central China. It is also the capital of Hubei province and a major transportation hub, with dozens of railways and expressways passing through it and connecting the north with the south and the east with the west. The size of Wuhan, as well as its geographical location, makes it a popular destination for rural migrant workers, especially those from central China.

The survey was carried out in the six inner-city districts of Wuhan, using the mixed clustered sampling method based on industry sectors. Specifically, we used the Second Agricultural Survey in Wuhan (Wuhan Statistical Bureau, 2006) to construct the sampling frame, focusing on the major sectors that hire migrant workers—manufacturing, construction, transportation, warehouse and postal services, wholesale and retail trade, accommodation and catering, and other services. Taking into consideration the spatial distribution of industry sectors in the city, we used two types of sampling methods, one for manufacturing and construction and another for other sectors. First, because manufacturing and construction, which employ a large number of migrants, concentrate in certain parts of the city, a random selection of survey sites would result in the under-sampling of these two sectors. Instead, based on the list of factories and construction sites in the six inner-city districts, we constructed a sampling pool consisting of the 50 factories and 50 construction sites that have the highest proportions of migrant workers. From the sampling pool, we randomly selected 15 factories and 18 construction sites. One factory rejected our request, and as a result our sample consists of 14 factories and 18 construction sites. At each factory or site, we randomly selected no more than 20 migrant workers to participate in the survey.

Second, for sectors other than manufacturing and construction (primarily in services), we sampled between 16 and 41 work sites within each inner-city district based on the population/street density and the sectoral distribution of migrant workers in that district. Just as in the sampling for manufacturing and construction, at each site we randomly selected no more than 20 migrants from the roster provided by the employers. The total number of valid responses from the questionnaire survey is 1,100. The sectoral distribution of the sample is similar to

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Migrant Workers in the Wuhan Survey by Gender

Characteristic	Description	Men	Women
Age (year)	Average	35.5	32.0
Age cohort (pct. of total)	≤20	6.3	14.9
	21–30	27.2	34.6
	31–40	29.6	24.0
	41–50	25.7	22.6
	>50	11.3	3.9
Education (years)	Average	8.7	8.3
Marital status (pct.)	Married/cohabitation	75.2	68.7
Migration duration (years)	Average	9.0	5.4
Sector (pct.)	Manufacturing	29.2	20.5
	Construction	37.7	8.1
	Services ^a	31.4	69.9
	Other	1.8	1.5
Origin province (pct.)	Hubei	72.8	73.8
<i>N</i>		839	259

^aServices include wholesale and retail trade, accommodation and catering, transportation, warehouse and postal services, and other services.

the sampling frame, except that manufacturing and construction are slightly over-sampled. To address the over-sampling, we applied weights throughout the data analysis.

Table 1 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the sampled migrants. The average age is 36 for men and 32 for women. Female migrants have a younger age structure, with 49.5 percent aged 30 and younger versus 33.5 percent for male migrants. The sample's age structure is somewhat older than that of Wuhan's migrant population, in part because employers who hire under-aged migrants might have made it difficult for younger workers to participate in the survey, thus resulting in under-sampling of young migrants. Also, the sampling is skewed toward male migrants, who account for 76.4 percent of the sample. Female migrants are under-sampled probably because some of the work places highly represented by women—beauty salons, restaurants, karaoke bars, urban residents' homes, etc.—were difficult to access. We decided against using weights to adjust the sample's age structure and sex ratio, because there is insufficient information to infer from the sample the degree of under- and over-sampling.

For both male and female migrants, the average educational attainment is under nine years. In terms of marital status, 75.2 percent of male migrants are either married or cohabitating, compared to 68.7 percent among female migrants. These percentages may be higher than that in the overall migrant population, due to the under-sampling of young migrants as discussed earlier. The average duration of migration—the number of years since the beginning of migrant work—is 9.0 years for men and 5.4 years for women, again likely to be longer than that of the general migrant population because the sample is older. The balance between intraprovincial and interprovincial migrants is similar for men and women—72.8 percent of male migrants and 73.8 percent of female migrants are from within Hubei province. In the

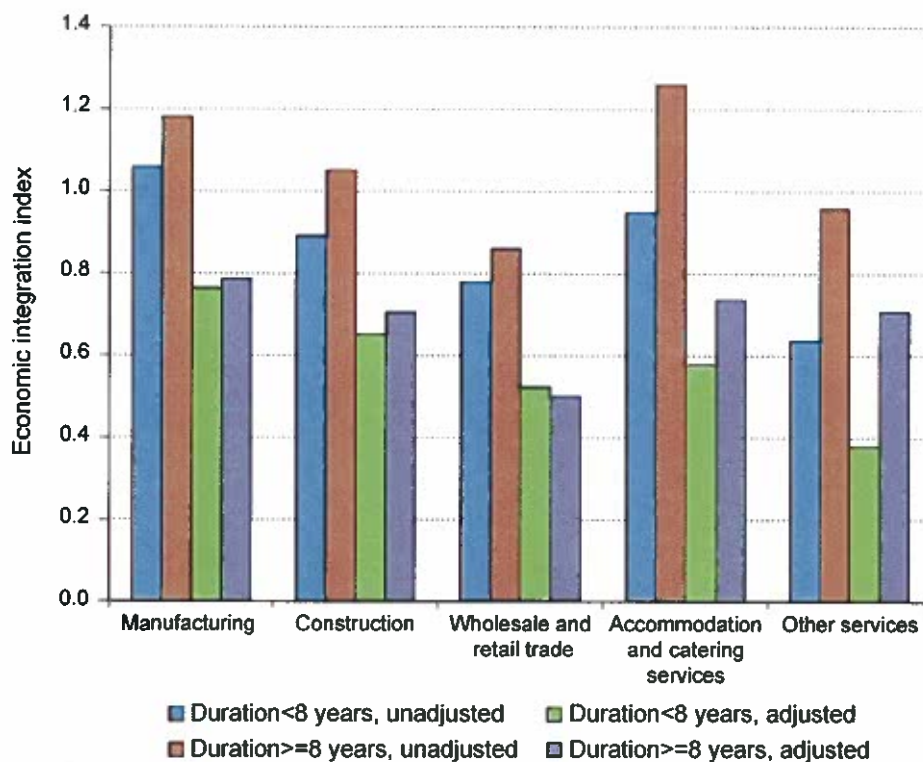


Fig. 1. Economic integration index (ratio of migrants' income to urban employees' income) by migration duration and sector. *Note:* Other services here includes also transportation and warehouse and postal services. *Source:* Wuhan Statistical Bureau (2008) and Wuhan Survey (2008).

following, we use both descriptive statistics and modeling to examine the factors of economic, social/cultural, and identity integration.

EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

Economic Integration

In order to assess migrants' economic integration, we examine the disparity between migrants' income based on the survey and urban employees' income based on the Wuhan Statistical Yearbook (Wuhan Statistical Bureau, 2008). We computed the economic integration index as a ratio of migrants' income to urban employees' income. An index value close to or above one indicates that migrants have achieved a high degree of economic integration. Because migrants usually work long hours and as a result total monthly income does not accurately reflect their hourly wage, we computed also their income adjusted for a standard 40-hour week.

Figure 1 shows the economic integration index based on the adjusted and unadjusted income of two groups of migrants delineated by an average migration duration of eight years. For unadjusted income and across all sectors, migrants with duration of eight years or more have higher economic integration indices than those with a shorter duration, suggesting that

economic integration has increased over time. In fact, the index for migrants with duration of eight years or more in manufacturing, construction, and accommodation and catering services is above one, namely, their income is higher than that of urban employees in the same sectors. However, unadjusted income is a function of work hours. Both the level of and improvement in economic integration may merely reflect the fact that migrants work longer hours than urban employees.

Indeed, adjusted income tells a somewhat different story. The economic integration indices based on adjusted income are lower than those based on unadjusted income. In addition, improvement of the index computed for adjusted income between migrants with shorter duration and those with longer duration is generally smaller. For wholesale and retail trade, in fact, migrants with shorter duration have a higher index than those with longer duration. This may be due to younger migrants' energy and sensitivity to the market, both advantages for wholesale and retail trade. Only in accommodation and catering services and other services is there a noticeable improvement among migrants with longer duration. What the above suggests is that despite having engaged in urban work for many years, migrants remain in low-paying and low-skilled jobs and have few opportunities to move up the career ladder. The degree of economic integration of migrants is small, and their income increase is achieved through working long hours rather than an increased hourly wage. Economic integration appears more successful in services, probably due to the fact that most service jobs are in the informal economy, where institutional barriers are less strongly felt. Our data do not lend themselves to disaggregation by occupation, but the migrants-urban employees disparity and its persistence as illustrated in Figure 1 is consistent with studies on migrants' occupational segmentation (e.g., Huang, 2001; Fan, 2008, pp. 100–104).

To identify and assess the determinants of migrants' earnings, we employ an OLS regression to estimate the log of migrants' adjusted monthly income using four sets of explanatory variables, as shown in Table 2. Demographic variables include age, gender, and marital status. Age-squared is expected to reveal possible non-linearity in the effect of age on income. Human capital factors include education, occupational training, and migration duration. Employment factors include industry and ownership. For industry, we collapse wholesale and retail trade, accommodation and catering services, and other services into one category and use that as the reference group. Manufacturing and construction therefore constitute the two industry dummy variables. Ownership is defined by the reference state-owned enterprises and the three non-state-owned dummy variables: private industry, small private business (*getihu*), and construction subcontractor (*baogongdui*). In the context of this study, possession of Wuhan *hukou* (including rural *hukou* in nearby counties) represents the institutional factor. It is expected that Wuhan *hukou* helps to increase a migrant's income.

Table 2 summarizes the regression results and parameter estimates. The effect of age is nonlinear. Income improves with increasing age but the increase declines as the migrant becomes older. This result reflects the labor market segmentation of rural migrants—even though in general work experience contributes to income improvement, many jobs for migrants demand physical labor and/or attention to detail and in these occupations employers tend to prefer young workers to older workers. As expected, male migrants earn more than female migrants. On average, men's adjusted monthly income is 9.1 percent higher than that of women. We tested the interaction terms between gender and industry sectors in order to ascertain whether such a difference is due to different types of occupations for men and women. However, the interaction terms are not significant and therefore not included in the model. Married or cohabiting migrants make 10.9 percent more than single migrants, which suggests that the former are under greater pressure to earn because of family responsibility.

Table 2. OLS Parameter Estimates for Adjusted Log Monthly Income

Variable	Description	Estimate	Standard Error	Pr > t
Intercept		5.6434	0.1815	<.0001
Demographics				
Age	Year	0.0216	0.010	0.0276
Age squared	Year ²	-0.0004	0.0001	0.0042
Gender	Female = 0, male = 1	0.0871	0.0401	0.0301
Marital status	Married/cohabitant = 1, otherwise = 0	0.1039	0.0456	0.0230
Human capital				
Education	Year	0.0251	0.0057	<.0001
Occupational training	Yes = 1, no = 0	0.0721	0.0234	0.002
Migration duration	Years	0.0115	0.0026	<.0001
Employment^a				
Sector				
Manufacturing	Yes = 1, no = 0	0.3444	0.0429	<.0001
Construction	Yes = 1, no = 0	0.3474	0.0468	<.0001
Ownership of the employer ^b				
Private industry	Yes=1, no=0	0.1496	0.0514	0.0037
Small private business	Yes=1, no=0	-0.1307	0.0606	0.0312
Construction subcontractor	Yes=1, no=0	0.1346	0.0514	0.0091
Institutional factor				
Wuhan <i>hukou</i>	Yes = 1, no = 0	0.0954	0.0398	0.0168
<i>R</i> ²	0.38		0.37 ^c	
<i>F</i> -value	37.80			

^aIndustry (base = services + others).

^bBase = state-owned enterprises.

^cAdjusted *R*²

The signs of the coefficients for all three human capital variables are as expected. One additional year at school translates into a 2.5 percent increase in monthly income. One extra year of migration experience increases migrants' income by only 1.2 percent, which reinforces our observation made earlier that migrants' economic mobility is low regardless of how long they have engaged in urban work. Migrants with occupational training receive 7.5 percent extra in payment than those without such training. Regarding employment, it appears that compared to people working in the service sector, migrants in manufacturing and construction have higher monthly wages, approximately 41.1 percent and 41.5 percent more, respectively. Compared to those who work in state-owned enterprises, migrants earn 16.1 percent more per month if employed by private employers and 14.4 percent more if they work for a construction subcontractor; however, they make 12.3 percent less if they work for a small private business. *Hukou* is also important. Wuhan *hukou* (both urban and rural) increases a migrant's income by 10.0 percent.

Table 3. Employment Conditions and Benefits for Migrant Workers

Condition	Description	
Weekly working hours (hours)	Average	62.6
	Manufacturing	61.7
	Construction	60.3
	Services	67.7
	Other	62.7
Work contract (percent)	No contract	47.0
	Verbal contract	36.5
	Signed paper contract	16.6
Social insurance (percent)	Pension plan	3.4
	Unemployment insurance	1.1
	Accident/injury insurance	1.6
	Medical insurance	16.1

Table 3 summarizes the employment conditions and benefits of the sampled migrants. Their average number of working hours per week exceeds 62 hours, and is nearly 68 hours among those in services (accommodation and catering services and other services). To make things worse, their protection in the urban labor market is minimal. Less than 17 percent of migrant workers are offered a paper contract—a standard procedure for most urban employees—by their employers. In other words, most migrant workers are not protected in terms of wage and employment security. The vast majority do not have access to any type of social insurance. Sixteen percent are covered by medical insurance, but only 3.4 percent, 1.1 percent, and 1.6 percent, respectively, have a pension plan, unemployment insurance, and accident/injury insurance. Such low levels of coverage are a function of both supply and demand factors. On the supply side, employers reduce costs by denying migrants insurance, knowing that these workers do not have permanent urban residence and are not likely in a position to pursue legal means against them. On the demand side, migrants may not be motivated to participate in those programs even if offered, because of cost and because the benefits are often not transferable to other places.

In summary, despite the apparent increase in migrants' income over time and improved parity with urban employees, such changes are achieved through long working hours and exclusion from employment protection. Most migrants still are segmented into low-paying and low-skilled jobs and lack upward occupational mobility. It is encouraging that education, occupational training, and working for privately owned industries (except small private businesses) all contribute to raising migrants' income. However, the persistent negative effect of (not having the right) *hukou* and the nonlinear effect of age underscore the fact that migrants remain inferior in the urban labor market, which is far from open.

Social/Cultural Integration

Rural migrants in Chinese cities are confronted with not only barriers in the labor market but also challenges of adaptation to the urban society. Coming from a rural environment

Table 4. Social/Cultural Adaptation

		All	Duration <8 years	Duration ≥8 years
Adaptation to city life at first migration	Very well	4.6	3.9	5.8
	Well	51.3	53.4	47.9
	Poor	34.5	33.8	35.5
	Very poor	5.1	5.8	4.0
Adaptation to city life currently	Very well	27.3	23.7	32.9
	Well	59.5	62.8	54.2
	Poor	8.6	10.1	6.0
	Very poor	1.0	0.6	1.6
How well do you get along with your Wuhanese co-worker?	Very well	30.8	26.5	37.5
	Well	35.1	37.2	31.9
	Just so so	32.0	33.9	29.0
	Badly	2.1	2.4	1.6
Do you interact with local people after work?	Yes	43.4	40.5	48.0
	No	56.5	59.4	52.0
Have you ever visited a local person's home as a guest?	Yes	29.4	27.3	32.8
	No	70.6	72.7	67.2
Do you understand the local people's dialect?	Yes, completely	66.2	62.1	72.6
	Yes, with some difficulty	32.5	36.1	26.7
	No	1.4	1.8	0.7
Would you consider marrying a local person? ^a	Yes	42.0	39.1	46.7
	No	15.2	17.3	11.9
	Don't know	42.5	43.3	41.2

^aFor married people, would you like your children to consider marrying a local person?

where life is relatively simple, migrants in cities must adjust to a more complex and sophisticated urban life style and familiarize themselves with new social norms, values, and customs. In addition, they face cultural barriers such as different dialects, which is a common problem in a country like China, where more than 400 dialects are spoken. It is reasonable to expect that over time migrants' adaptation would improve and they would be socially and culturally more acceptable to urban residents. With that in mind, we compare in Table 4 the social and cultural adaptation between migrants with shorter migration duration with those with longer duration, again using eight years as the dividing benchmark.

Just under 56 percent of migrants responded that they adapted well or very well to city life at their first migration. A higher proportion of migrants with shorter duration (57.3 percent)

than those with longer duration (53.7 percent) adapted well or very well. This discrepancy, though not large, points to a generational effect: at the onset of migration, the newer generation of migrants are more capable of adapting to the city than the older generation of migrants (Fan and Chen, 2012). Regarding adaptation to city life currently, compared to migrants with shorter duration (86.5 percent), those with longer duration have a slightly higher percentage (87.1 percent) adapting well or very well. Apparently, a longer time in the city helps to overcome the initial difficulty of adaptation among the older generation of migrants.

The effect of time is further underscored by the three questions on interaction between migrants and local people. To “how well do you get along with your Wuhanese co-workers,” 69.4 percent of migrants with longer duration responded well or very well, compared to 63.7 percent for migrants with shorter duration. To “Do you interact with local people after work,” 48.0 percent of migrants with longer duration answered yes, compared to 40.5 percent among migrants with shorter duration. Only 32.8 percent of migrants with longer duration and only 27.3 percent of migrants with shorter duration have ever visited a local person’s home as a guest.

We use two additional measures to assess migrants’ possible deeper integration into the host urban society, namely language and intermarriage. The many dialects spoken in China are different such that persons of different provincial origins, and even those from within the same province, may not understand one another. The difficulty in understanding the local dialect or being understood by local residents is a barrier to not only finding jobs but also social integration. To the question “Do you understand the local dialect,” only 66.2 percent responded “yes, completely,” even though 73.1 percent of the sampled migrants are from the same province (Hubei) as Wuhan. Migrants with longer duration are 10.5 percentage points more likely than those with shorter duration to answer “yes, completely,” suggesting that language adaptation improves with time.

Intermarriage is often used to measure cultural integration (South and Messner, 1986; Vigdor, 2008). To the question “Would you consider marrying a local person?” (for married migrants, “would you like your children to consider marrying a local person?”), 42.0 percent of respondents answered yes. Migrants with longer duration are 7.6 percentage points more likely than those with shorter duration to answer “yes.” Again, this suggests that cultural integration increases with time. It is important to note, however, that intermarriage between rural migrants and urban residents connotes not only cultural and social integration but also the overcoming of institutional barriers. Rural migrants’ marriage market is constrained by their *hukou*, namely, they are in general not as competitive as urban citizens, which may explain the large proportion—42.5 percent—who responded “don’t know.” In the case of marriage, “don’t know” may in fact mean “difficult.”

Identity Integration

Rural migrants in Chinese cities tend to consider themselves and are considered by urban residents as outsiders (Fan, 2002). In that light, these internal migrants face similar issues concerning their identity as many international migrants. Migrants who have stayed in the city for an extended period of time may still feel as though they do not belong to the city. This in part reflects their official classification as rural by the *hukou* system but may also be due to other factors. To identify and assess factors of identity integration, we estimate a logit regression model (Table 5). The response variable in the model is whether the migrant identifies himself/herself as an urban resident, and the answer “no” is used as the reference group. Explanatory variables include demographic factors, human capital factors, economic factors, institutional factors, and social adaptation factors.

Table 5. Estimated Parameters and Odds Ratios for Migrants' Self-Identity^a

Parameter	Description	Estimate	Standard error	Pr > ChiSq	Odds ratio
Intercept		-10.4131	2.2805	<.0001	
Demographic					
Age	Year	-0.0017	0.0143	0.9054	0.998
Gender	Male = 1, female = 0	0.0404	0.2646	0.8787	1.041
Marital status	Married/cohabitating = 1, otherwise = 0	-0.5206	0.3097	0.0928	0.594
Human capital					
Education	Year	0.1342	0.0432	0.0019	1.144
Migration duration	Length of migration	-0.0187	0.0226	0.4090	0.982
Job duration	Length of current job	0.0529	0.0212	0.0125	1.054
Language	Understand well = 1, some difficulty to difficulty = 0	0.6980	0.2838	0.0139	2.010
Economic					
Monthly income	Yuan	0.0002	0.0001	0.0779	1.000
Self-employment	Yes = 1, no = 0	1.0826	0.2452	<.0001	2.952
Owning an apartment in Wuhan	Yes = 1, no = 0	1.3578	0.5039	0.0070	3.887
Institutional					
Wuhan urban hukou	Yes = 1, No = 0	0.9064	0.4804	0.0592	2.475
Social adaptation					
Adaptation to city life	Adapted well or very well = 1, poorly or very poorly = 0	2.6000	1.0895	0.0170	13.464
Chi-square for likelihood ratio		102.81		<.0001	

^aResponse variable: self-identified as an urban resident = 1, other = 0.

Neither age nor gender is significantly related to identity. Marital status is the only demographic variable that has a marginally significant relationship with identity. Single migrants are 1.7 times more likely than married or cohabiting migrants to identify themselves as urban residents. This result suggests that married migrants have greater attachment to their place of origin, which is consistent with the observation that migrants frequently pursue a split-household strategy, whereby the spouse and/or children are left behind in the home village (Fan, 2008, pp. 88–92; 2009, 2011; Fan and Wang, 2008; Fan et al., 2011).

Three of the four human capital variables are significant in predicting migrants' identity integration: education, job duration, and language. One additional year of schooling increases

the likelihood of migrants' identifying themselves as urban residents by 14.4 percent. Interestingly enough, migration duration is not statistically related to urban identity and has a negative coefficient, whereas the length of current job is significant and positively related to urban identity. One additional year at the current job increases the odds of identity integration by 5.4 percent. Because many migrants move frequently from one city to another to find work, their accumulated duration of migration may reflect their desire to chase after higher wages rather than attachment to cities. Migrants who have had the same job for an extended period of time, however, have lived in the same city for quite some time and have had sustained exposure to the local urban culture, which helps shape their identity in the direction of the urban residents'. Finally, understanding Wuhan's local dialect doubles a migrant's odds of achieving identity integration. In that regard, migrants from areas near Wuhan are advantaged. This result is consistent with Zhu's (2007) finding that migrants from within the province have a stronger intention to settle down in destination cities than those from other provinces.

Among economic factors, monthly income is marginally significant and does not affect a migrant's odds in identity integration. Self-employed migrants, however, are almost three times more likely than employed migrants to achieve identity integration. This result is consistent with the finding in the immigration literature that self-employment is an important tool of cultural and economic integration and an important stepping stone toward upward social and economic mobility (Cummings, 1980; Lofstrom, 2002). Owning an apartment in Wuhan increases a migrant's odds of identity integration by a factor of 3.9. Under the *hukou* system, migrants are largely excluded from the mainstream housing-distribution system in the city and are not eligible for urban low-cost, state-subsidized or state-sponsored public housing. Commodity housing, the only property sector that rural migrants are eligible to own, is sold at market price and is beyond reach for most migrants. In other words, urban housing is unattainable for most rural migrants in terms of eligibility and affordability (Weiping Wu, 2004; Zhang, et al. 2003; Wang, 2000). The very few rural migrants who manage to own homes in the city are typically those who are very successful financially (Wu, 2002). Thus, the relationship between self-employment and home ownership on one hand and identity integration on the other suggests that migrants' capital accumulation is conducive to their identifying themselves as urban residents.

The institutional status of having a Wuhan urban *hukou*, not surprisingly, is an important factor of urban identity. Less than 4 percent of the migrants in the sample have Wuhan urban *hukou*. Those fortunate few are two and a half times more likely to identify themselves as urban residents than those who do not possess Wuhan urban *hukou*. Social adaptation is also an important factor. Migrants who have adapted well or very well currently to urban life have odds of 13 to 1 of identifying themselves as urban residents.

CONCLUSIONS

The concept of integration is central for understanding the experiences of diverse groups—especially those in marginalized positions—in contemporary societies. Applications of integration theory, along with its various reconstructions that have given rise to different frameworks, overwhelmingly focus on international migration. Yet, internal migrants, such as rural-urban migrants in China, share similar experiences with those who have crossed international borders and face institutional, economic, cultural, and social barriers in the host society. Against the backdrop of a body of literature that focuses heavily on immigration in Western societies, this study has sought to fill an empirical gap in the research on adaptation and integration by highlighting the experiences of internal migrants in a developing and

transitional economy. This research is informed by integration theory and seeks to extend the theory to considering how institutional barriers—in particular the *hukou* system in the Chinese case—intersect with social/cultural and identity dimensions of integration to explain the experiences of rural-urban migrants.

Our analysis lends support to the notion that institutional factors have played a key role in migrants' integration into urban society. Rural migrants who do not have urban *hukou* are segregated into low-skilled and low-pay jobs in cities; most are excluded from urban welfare and social security coverage. Not possessing a permanent urban residency also undermines migrants' social integration and imposes a persistent rural and inferior identity on them. On the other hand, having urban *hukou* plays a positive role in migrants' integration. Our results indicate that local Wuhan *hukou* elevates a migrant's income by 10 percent and increases the odds of a migrant's identity integration by a factor of 2.5.

Also influencing migrants' adaptation and integration are migration duration and the duration of their current job. Just like immigrants in many other parts of the world, the degree of economic, social/cultural, and identity integration of China's rural-urban migrants increases over time. Our findings also reveal that human capital is important for migrants' economic and identity integration. Migrants who are socially and culturally adapted, who speak the dialect of the host society, and who have the financial resources to buy an apartment in the city or pursue self-employment are more likely than other migrants to develop a sense of belonging in the city.

Migrants' integration into cities has important implications for China's society and economic development. Their successful integration reduces social tension and conflicts in urban society, enables them to develop long-term plans in the city, and motivates their urban consumption, which benefits the domestic market. At the just-concluded 18th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, the Chinese government once again pledged to expedite *hukou* reforms and the integration of rural migrant workers in cities. Effective implementation of the above would no doubt be conducive to narrowing urban-rural disparities and would help the new General Secretary Xi Jinping to expand his goal of improving Chinese citizens' lives to including also rural migrants.

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