

Migrant Workers' Community in China: Relationships among Social Networks, Life Satisfaction and Political Participation*

Comunidad de Trabajadores Emigrantes en China: Relaciones entre Redes Sociales, Satisfacción Vital y Participación Política

Qingwen Xu¹ and Neal A. Palmer²

¹ Tulane University, USA

² Vanderbilt University, USA

Abstract. The millions of persons migrating from China's rural areas to urban spaces have contributed greatly to the country's decades-long economic growth, and the influx of migrants has changed the fabric of China's urban social and economic life. These internal migrants, similar to many international immigrants, depend heavily on their social networks, which are often developed in their rural villages, for jobs, housing, financial assistance, and social support both during and after migration. Consequently, migrants' networks function distinctly in well-being and behavior. Using data from the 2006 China General Social Survey, this article seeks to 1) investigate the existence of migrant sub-groups in China, 2) understand the characteristics of social networks among sub-groups, and 3) explore the relationships social networks hold to life satisfaction and political participation among China's migrant population. This article asserts that China's migrant population includes several sub-groups emerging on the basis of gender, education, age, and marital status, which in turn produce different patterns of ties and social interactions among their social networks. While this article finds very different employment patterns among migrant sub-groups, migrant networks do not appear to strongly influence perceptions and behaviors, such as life satisfaction and political participation. This article also argues that individual networks could facilitate the development of migrant communities in cities.

Keywords: chinese internal migration, cluster analysis, hukou, migrant workers, network analysis, rural-to-urban migration.

Resumen. Durante décadas, millones de personas han emigrado desde las áreas rurales de China hacia las ciudades, y realizado una importante contribución al desarrollo económico del país, cambiando el tejido social y económico de las ciudades. Estos emigrantes internos, al igual que los inmigrantes internacionales, dependen en gran medida de sus redes sociales para encontrar trabajo, vivienda, asistencia financiera, y apoyo social tanto durante como después de la migración, contribuyendo significativamente a su bienestar. A partir de los datos del Encuesta Social General de China del 2006, este artículo 1) describe los diferentes subgrupos de inmigración en China, 2) analiza las características de sus redes sociales, y 3) explora la contribución de éstas a su participación política y satisfacción vital. Este artículo propone clasificar la población emigrante china en subgrupos por razón de género, educación, edad y estado civil, los cuales producen diferentes patrones de conexiones e interacciones entre sus redes sociales. El presente estudio revela patrones de empleo muy diferenciados entre los distintos subgrupos de emigrantes, en cambio sus redes no parecen tener una importante contribución en sus percepciones y conductas, tales como su satisfacción vital y participación política. Este artículo también plantea que las redes personales podrían facilitar el desarrollo de las comunidades de emigrantes en las ciudades.

Palabras clave: análisis de cluster, análisis de red, emigración interna china, hukou, migración del campo a la ciudad, trabajadores emigrantes.

China's economic reforms, begun in 1978, have successfully transformed the country's economic system from a state-planned to a market-oriented economy. The infusion of foreign capital into China after its decision to

open its doors to overseas investment and a large store of cheap labor resulted in a surge of rural-to-urban migration in the early 1980s. This, in turn, stimulated an enormous growth in and transformation of the urban economy, greatly expanding the manufacturing sector and further increasing the need for cheap labor. These pull factors also occurred as increasing surpluses of agricultural labor and growing income gaps between urban factory and rural farm workers further disincentivised remaining in rural areas (Fan, 2001; Meng 2000).

Correspondence: Qingwen Xu . Tulane School of Social Work. 6823 St. Charles Ave., Building 9. New Orleans. LA 70118 800-631-8234. E-mail: qxu2@tulane.edu

* Versión en castellano disponible en [Spanish version available at]: www.psychosocial-intervention.org

These economic transformations led to the central government's issuing of Ten Policies for Rural Economic Development in the early 1980s, which loosened its decades-long control over population movement through its household registration (*hukou*) system. Since this time, people with rural residence (i.e., rural *hukou*) have been permitted to work and stay in China's growing towns and cities with "temporary residence permits." This labor force liberalization plan paid off. In 1978, about 28.27 million rural-to-urban migrants found work in Chinese cities; three decades later, at the end of 2008, the number had grown nearly eightfold, to 225 million (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2009).

China's rural-to-urban migrants, similar to many international immigrants, depend heavily on their social networks, which are often developed in their rural villages, for jobs, housing, financial assistance, and social support both during and after their migration (Zhao, 2003). Consequently, migrant networks function distinctly in well-being and behavior. The extent to which network-based human interactions lead to a readily defined migrant community (or communities) must be questioned, however. Historically, the concept of "community" in China is best understood as a kinship network in which extended family members live within a geographic area and care for each other, particularly in times of need. Under the socialist regime, however, from the early 1950s to the late 1980s, the employment units (*dan wei*) functioned as urban people's communities (Ruf, 1998). China's far-reaching social and economic reforms, massive migration, and rapid urban transformation have blurred the traditional urban-rural division, however, and profoundly changed the composition of both rural and urban communities. Even though socio-geographic-bounded migrant communities appear to exist in China's cities (Qian & Chen, 2003; Tang & Feng, 2000), a lack of empirical research leaves an unclear picture of the urban migrant community's characteristics and functions. Meanwhile, large-scale urbanization and aggressive commercial housing projects during the last two decades have gradually pushed these socio-geographic bounded migrant communities out of people's sight (Li, 2002).

This study, in response, seeks to investigate the existence of migrant sub-groups in China, and understand the characteristics of social networks among sub-groups. Furthermore, because these networks are thought to be important to community functioning, this study examines their role in migrants' life satisfaction and political participation, as higher life satisfaction and political participation are associated with greater community belongingness and shared identity.

Literature Review

Migrant networks, life satisfaction and political participation. Studies of international migration and

immigrants help situate the role of social networks in China's internal migration and its rural-to-urban migrants. Social networks, one commonly identified component of social capital (e.g., Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1993), refer to the cognitive and structural bonds that people have with other individuals and groups, which can be employed for increased access to information and other resources, theoretically helping some people overcome disadvantages in human and financial capital. Among immigrants, social networks function in a number of ways. Networks have been found to increase the likelihood and facilitate the process of migration by providing migrants with temporary housing and financial assistance, access to credit in entrepreneurship, and help in locating jobs (Aguilera, 2003; Bashi, 2007; Palloni et al., 2001; Portes, 1998). On the other hand, these networks can be fragmented or maladaptive if they constrict and trap immigrants in marginal sectors of the economy and hinder immigrants' efforts of establishing new ties in the destination community (Aguilera, 2003; Li, 2004; Menjivar, 2000; Portes, 1998; Portes & Landolt, 1996; Waldinger, 1997).

Besides facilitating migration itself and serving as conduits for valuable resources, immigrant networks shape collective life perceptions and behavior. In theory, as social connections and interactions appear to be more available to immigrants within their immigrant communities than in broader society (Breton, 2003), migrant networks provide a familiar environment within which to construct ethnic, cultural, and class identities. Ethnic migrant communities provide common obligations and more understanding support, and members' similar experiences in relation to a host culture help create common understandings of their group and each other (Fennema & Tillie, 2001) that aid in identity formation (Bankston & Zhou, 1995). These contexts, in turn, influence how immigrants perceive their new lives, as well as the behaviors in which they engage in their new settings.

Empirical studies indicate that over time relationships in the host society can alleviate immigrants' feelings of isolation and improve their life satisfaction (Ullman & Tatar, 2001), even though traditional social networks may only be partially reconstructed in the destination (McMichael & Manderson, 2004). The value of social networks on immigrants' life satisfaction appears to be dependent on particular network characteristics and the specific immigrant group in question. For example, network size may be unrelated to life satisfaction among Latino immigrants with mental illness (Ribas & Lam, 2010), and network composition (i.e., network diversity) may be unrelated to older immigrants' life satisfaction in the U.S. and Israel (Diwan, 2008; Litwin & Leshem, 2008). On the other hand, support network size has been shown to contribute to Korean immigrants' life satisfaction (Kim, 1999); and among Chinese immigrants in the U.S., friend support

in particular has been shown to be positively associated with life satisfaction (Ying, 1992). These results point to a lack of consensus on the relative value of networks with different forms, quantities, and sources of support, as well as the importance of context and origin, suggesting need for the current study.

Social networks also affect immigrant behavior, facilitating participation in local organizations and associations as well in more general civic arenas (Putnam, 1993). Well-connected networks may foster more participation, as networks help create and reinforce norms and solidarity (Breton, 2003), encourage the development of ethnic or regional identities, and engage members in collective action (Bolzman & Fibbi, 1991; Fennema & Tillie, 2001). Again, the value of social networks on immigrants' participation behaviors depends on networks' characteristics; the existence of social ties does not necessarily lead to increased participation, whether formal or informal. For political participation, the literature suggests that the size of the network rather than network locations (an aspect of network diversity) may be more relevant (Guarnizo, Portes & Haller, 2003); Gidengil and Stolle (2009) found that bridging ties (i.e., with people beyond one's own ethnic/social-economic-status group) did not significantly affect immigrant women's political participation, and Tillie and Slijper (2007) found out that connections *within* ethnic organizations and accompanying social networks were essential to immigrant formal political participation, i.e. voting. Meanwhile, some researchers have failed to find the effects of immigrant networks on broader political participation and suggest that macro-level factors (e.g. social structures and political environments) may be more influential than individual social networks (Teixeira & Albuquerque, 2005).

Variations within immigrant groups and networks. Recent literature has challenged the monolithic ways many immigrant groups and their networks have been understood. Breton (1964) noted early the potential for sub-groups among immigrant communities and that their formation depended on individual characteristics, such as age, education, class and reason for migration; the particulars of the immigrant community; as well as the host context and institutional constraints. Likewise, immigrant networks often include distinct yet interconnected sub-networks. When immigrants connect strongly to their traditional sub-network, the network established due to a common place of origin, they also build and extend their new sub-networks once resettled through going to church; interacting with neighbors; making new friends outside of their immigrant/ethnic community, such as with classmates and workmates; volunteering; and, participating in service programs (Garcia, 2005).

Thus, different immigrant sub-groups may develop different social networks. Female and male immigrants, for instance, occupy different social spheres

and have different social contracts thrust upon them; the vastly different qualities of their work, such as their location in or outside the home, greatly determine the networks to which they are exposed and the utility of these networks (Hagan, 1998). Women routinely incorporate fewer non-kin and fewer persons overall in their networks (Lin, 2000). Men, meanwhile, have been found to maintain much more expansive and heterogeneous networks that are more instrumentally valuable (Hagan, 1998). Although immigrant sub-group networks are comprised of varying social arrangements, the literature suggests that they maintain a similar function across sub-groups, e.g. to gain access to information and/or services (Garcia, 2005).

It is also noted that the different networks immigrant sub-groups construct lead to different behavioral outcomes. For example, based on individual characteristics such as age, time of migration, work histories, living situation, and language capabilities, Liu (2003) identified four typologies for elderly Chinese immigrants to the U.S. based on their different patterns of service utilization and participation: old age recent immigrants, old age long-time immigrants, retired professional families, and middle-age non-professional immigrants. Multiple forces change the size, strength, and density of the immigrant community and produce different groups of immigrants within what is often understood as a larger migrant block (Al-Ali et al., 2001; Fijac & Sonn, 2004; Wang & Lo, 2003). A formerly cohesive immigrant group may fragment as earlier generations of immigrants are succeeded by reunified family members and varying needs emerge (Veronis, 2010). Thus, the ability of immigrants to maintain ties to origin communities and/or become active in the host community, as well as network histories, determine the appearance of perception and behaviors like life satisfaction and political participation.

Migrant networks in the Chinese context. Strong networks exist in the Chinese context. The Mandarin term *guanxi* denotes interpersonal connections and has been described along three dimensions: the web of extended familial obligations, relationships that extend beyond familial relationships to ensure favor exchanges, and asymmetric transactions (i.e., resource flows from giver to receiver in such a way that the giver gains only by being recognized as authoritative or resourceful) (Bian, 2001). Given China's unique adoption of capitalist influences and resulting social changes, *guanxi*, as a repertoire of cultural patterns and resources, is continuously transformed in its adaptation to, as well as shaping of, new social interactions, institutions and structures (Yang, 2002). Among China's migrants, much literature focuses on migrants' support networks, which facilitate exchanges or transactions of physical, informational, financial, emotional, and other types of supports (Li & Wang, 2001; Wang & Tong, 2004). Migrant networks have been described as small (compared to both rural and urban residents' net-

works), strong (compared to urban residents' networks), and homogeneous (Li, Yang, & Jin, 2007), being predominately based on kin and places of origin (Li, 2002; Wang, 1997; Xiang, 2000). While it has been noted that migrants restructure and diversify their social networks after migration (Shan, 2007), kin and persons from their places of origin remain key elements in migrants' networks and continue to affect decisions regarding migration and economic activities, such as finding a job or starting a small business (Knight & Yueh, 2004; Zhao, 2003).

In general, relationships between social networks and outcomes, such as life satisfaction and political participation, have been observed in the Chinese context. In a sample of urban Chinese adults, which mostly excluded rural-to-urban migrants, Appleton and Song (2008) found social relations (*guanxi*) with others to be positively predictive of life satisfaction. Among China's migrants, limited research indicates that kin or family-based networks are associated with life satisfaction (Li, et al, 2007), and that migrants' newly established social networks in cities are associated with job satisfaction (Lin, Zhang & Lin, 2009). In addition, social support networks (from which migrants can receive help and support) and structural networks (i.e., organizational memberships) have been found to aid in local political participation (Sun, 2010).

Importantly, studies concerning China's migrants often take a one-group perspective or sample from only one sub-group (e.g., studies of migrants in Beijing that only include migrants from Zhejiang province, Qian & Chen, 2003; Xiang, 2000). Although spatial residential patterns have emerged in cities due to differences in place of origin (e.g., Qian & Chen, 2003), the literature suggests that other factors influence social arrangements as well: generational sub-groups have emerged due to differences in age, marital status, and education (Wang & Qin, 2002); and gender is remarkably influential in determining one's sector of employment (Fan, 2001; 2004). These individual characteristics not only affect the likelihood of migration, employment in the city, and wellbeing after migration; but also have implications for the social networks migrants transfer from their villages of origin and form in cities of resettlement. Characteristics of the migrant population, networks of migration, and motivations for becoming urban residents have all significantly changed since the early 1980s (Wang, 2001) in China, suggesting the potential of migrant sub-groups in the present context. Therefore, studies that generalize based on a one-group approach likely overlook potential sub-group differences and contradictions.

Method

Given the limited body of literature about China's rural-to-urban migrants and their social networks, as

well as the particular roles they serve in migrants' lives, this study examines the characteristics of migrant networks and their relationships to such outcomes as life satisfaction and political participation. Thus, this paper seeks to 1) investigate the existence of migrant sub-groups in China, 2) understand the characteristics of social networks among sub-groups, and 3) explore the relationships social networks (including network size and diversity) hold to life satisfaction and political participation among China's migrant population. We hypothesize that:

1. Migrant sub-groups in China vary by age, gender, marital status and education. Whereas place of origin is a common criterion for examining migrant sub-groups, we seek to understand the effect of individual characteristics beyond place of origin in shaping migrant sub-groups or communities.
2. Migrants in different sub-groups display different patterns of social networks. If migrants' individual characteristics provide different social and economic opportunities in cities, migrants likely maintain different patterns of social networks that vary by sub-group.
3. Social networks are associated with migrants' life satisfaction and political participation. That is, larger and more diverse social networks are positively associated with life satisfaction and political participation among China's rural-to-urban migrants.

Sources of data. This study uses data from the 2006 Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS), an annual, representative sample survey of China's urban and rural households, which aims to systematically monitor the changing relationships between social structure and quality of life in urban and rural China. The survey was administrated by People's University in China and Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. CGSS uses a four-stage stratified sampling scheme with unequal probabilities (Hong Kong University of Science of Technology Survey Research Center, 2004) based on the following process: (1) 125 urban districts (including suburban districts) and rural counties (including county-level municipalities) are selected; (2) Four townships, town seats and city sub-districts are selected; (3) Two urban neighborhood committees and rural villager committees are selected; and (4) Ten households are selected, with one eligible member from each household selected to respond.

"Migrants" in China, as used in this paper, refer to people living and working in urban cities at the time of the survey but who possessed a rural residency permit, according to guidelines in China's *hukou* household registration system. These criteria generated a sample of 1,051 respondents; twenty-eight participants were excluded, as they were either students or serving in the military at the time of survey. Thus, the final sample included 1,023 rural-to-urban migrants. Among these migrants, 684 (66.86%) were working at the time of

survey. Interestingly, only 400 (39.1%) *self-identified* as outsiders working and doing business in cities (i.e., as migrant workers). Whereas the sample includes a variety of people living in cities for different life opportunities, respondents all possess one common factor: their urban residency is classified as temporary, based on their rural *hukou*.

Measures. The definition of migrant networks in this study emphasizes human connections and interactions and includes two dimensions: the size of an individual's network, and the diversity of that network. The social network is constructed here using an individual's *Bainian* network. *Bainian* is a Mandarin term denoting a variety of activities during the Chinese New Year—visiting family members, seniors, relatives and friends; sending New Year cards with personal notes and well wishes; and making phone calls and sending text messages to extend New Year greetings. Previous studies have demonstrated the validity and reliability of using of the *Bainian* network to assess individual social networks in the Chinese socio-cultural context (Sun, 2010; Wang, 2009).

The size of social networks was measured by the absolute number of persons in the respondent's *Bainian* network, as prompted by the question, "How many *Bainian* did you make during the Chinese New Year to kin, friends and other people?" This question also measures three different social sub-networks: a family network, a friend network, and an acquaintance network, which includes ties to all other people; a higher value on each indicates a larger network.

Network diversity was measured by asking participants to describe the people to whom they offered *Bainian*. The first diversity indicator, *Network Job Diversity*, was based on a list of 20 job categories (including doctors, nurses, professors, researchers, teachers, business owners, peasants, migrant workers, nannies, industry workers, service workers, government officers, party leaders, etc.); participants were asked to answer yes/no to each category to describe the people to whom the migrant paid *Bainian*; answers were summed to form the Network Job Diversity measure, which ranges in value from 0 to 20. The diversity in job types is accompanied by a range of socioeconomic status and political power. Higher Network Job Diversity scores indicate more diversity in networks, and, given the fact that China's peasants traditionally lie at the bottom of social/economic power scales, potentially greater access to power.

The second diversity indicator, *Network Organizational Diversity*, is based on a list of seven types of organizations in which network members were employed (including: governments and the Community Party, state-owned enterprises, governmental organizations, collective enterprises and organizations, small business, private enterprise, and joint venture enterprises). Tallies were generated for the number of types of organizations (range = 0-7) represented in a

migrant's network, with higher values indicating more diverse networks. Because these seven types of organizations are concentrated in urban areas, this indicator approximates the size and the diversity of social networks that migrants have developed in cities.

Life Satisfaction in this study is measured by a seven-item index constructed by combining 4-point Likert-type questions measuring satisfaction with the following life components: family economic situation, family relations, personal relations, personal health, housing situation, neighborhood, and job (Cronbach's $\alpha = .706$). **Political Participation** was measured by asking yes/no questions about people's activities in the previous local political election, including voting, nominating candidates, encouraging others to vote, and participating in the local NPC (National People's Congress) meetings; these items were left separate for analysis.

Statistical methods. We use a person approach to identify migrant sub-groups in the present study (Bergman, Magnusson & El-Khoury, 2003). A person approach describes characteristic patterns of variables that distinguish individuals from one another; individuals are grouped into categories on the basis of similarities, such that each category has a particular set of properties that differentiates it from other categories (Bergman, et al, 2003). In this study, we use a cluster analysis to identify different migrant groups on the basis of selected demographic characteristics. The preceding literature review suggests the importance of gender, age, education, and marital status in determining opportunity structures, thus they are included in the cluster analysis here (Wang & Qin, 2002). In addition, although the use of network variables (such as size, density, and diversity) to define profiles is more common than the use of demographic characteristics, previous research has indicated the potential utility of linking social network and demographic characteristics in order to better understand the migration experience for different demographic groups (Martínez, García-Ramírez, & Maya, 2001). All of these variables were coded as dummy variables; a cutoff of 50 was used to dichotomize age, as 50 is the official retirement age in China for female workers, and a cutoff of 9 years was used for education, since this marks the completion of compulsory education in China. First, agglomerative hierarchical cluster analysis was conducted to establish the number of clusters in the sample. Then, *k*-means cluster analysis procedures were used to group individuals. For the hierarchical procedures, solutions for two-clusters through seven-clusters were tested using Ward's method with squared Euclidean distances, as proposed by Milligan and Sokol (1980). An examination of the agglomeration schedule, dendrogram, and percentages of individuals in each cluster for each solution indicated that a five-cluster solution provided the most interpretable pattern and maximized both the homogeneity of individuals

within clusters and the heterogeneity of individuals between clusters. Using the five-cluster solution, a *k*-means cluster analysis was computed to reassign observations on the basis of the minimization of distances between each observation and cluster centers. Descriptive statistics were then used to understand the demography and representativeness of each cluster.

ANOVA with post hoc statistics, *t*-tests, and chi-square statistics are used to describe the different patterns of life satisfaction and political participation across clusters. Regression models are used to test the hypothesis that social networks (including both size and diversity) are positively associated with migrants' life satisfaction and political participation behavior across clusters; sub-group analyses are used to describe differences among clusters.

Results

The five clusters produced through the cluster analysis describe five very different *migrant profiles*, as detailed in Table 1: a *traditional generation* profile (including 31.8% of the total sample), a *new generation* profile (14.4%), an *older migrant* profile (17.8%), a *wife* profile (29.5%) and a *young female* profile (6.5%). Demographic information for each migrant profile is indicated in Table 2, including employment status, income, and self identity as a migrant worker.

The *traditional generation* profile is the most frequently occurring profile, consisting of 325 migrants. The term *generation* used here is not intended to distinguish between generational subgroups; rather, migrants with this profile reflect the traditional stereotype of China's rural-urban migrant workers — young male (single or married) and female (predominately single) migrants with low educational attainment. This profile also includes 55 (16.9% of the cluster) single male migrants who had completed China's compulsory/voluntary education (of 9 years) or beyond. Almost all of the migrants with this profile were working or looking for jobs at the time of survey, and nearly 56% self-identified as outsiders working or doing business in the city (i.e., as migrant workers).

The *new generation* profile includes 147 young male and female migrants who were married. In contrast to the *traditional generation* profile, this profile

challenges the traditional image of migrant workers, as members of this group of migrants report higher levels of education (i.e., having completed China's compulsory/voluntary education of 9 years or beyond) and are married. Compared to those with the traditional generation profile, migrants with this profile were less likely to be working (or looking for jobs); a significant number (26.4%) of female migrants with this profile (young, well educated and married) were not working or no longer seeking work, suggesting that their move to urban areas was prompted more by family considerations than specific individual motives. Alternatively, those who did work were more likely to have *full-time* employment than their peers with the traditional generation profile; in addition, a slightly lower percentage of migrants in this cluster (42.7%) self-identified as migrant workers, suggesting that many imagine themselves with higher status than is typically afforded to traditional migrant workers. As has been reported in the media, migrants in this emerging group move to urban areas with families with the intention to stay there permanently. They are thus highly motivated to strive for better working conditions and wages, as they hope to occupy more central positions in the urban locale (Pomfret & Soh, July 5, 2010; Asia Foundation, September 29, 2010).

The *wife* profile is the second most frequently-occurring profile and includes 302 married migrants, all of whom have low educational attainment. Married females are traditionally less likely to migrate due to the gendered division of labor within households resulting from traditional Chinese values (Liu, 2008), as Chinese women continue to carry more responsibility for work in the home, including caring for children and aged parents. Almost 40% migrants with this profile were not working or seeking work; only 33.2% of them claimed to be migrant workers, which indicates that their purpose of migration and residence in cities was not related to working or doing business, but rather served family reasons. In contrast, the *young female* (*n* = 67) profile describes single, young females with high levels of education; almost all were working or looking for jobs at the time of survey. They also had the highest percentage (70.1%) of identifying themselves as migrant workers, suggesting a gendered perception of migration or the temporary nature of their migration.

Table 1. Cluster Analysis and Profiles (N = 1,023)

Percentage	Cluster 1 n = 325	Cluster 2 n = 147	Cluster 3 n = 302	Cluster 4 n = 67	Cluster 5 n = 182
Working age (< 50)	100	100	100	100	0
Gender (male)	84.6	40.8	0	0	40.1
Marital Status (being married)	48.9	100	100	0	89.6
Education (up to 9 year education)	83.1	0	100	0	95.1
Profile	Traditional Generation	New Generation	Wife	Young Female	Older Migrants

Table 2. Descriptive Characteristics of Each Migrant Profile

	All Migrants	Traditional Generation	New Generation	Wife	Young Female	Older Migrants
Employment (%)**						
Employed (full time %)	66.9 (78.7)	88.3 (79.2)	74.8 (87.3)	55.3 (76)	83.6 (88.5)	35.2 (69.2)
Looking for jobs	5.3	8.0	5.4	3.6	11.9	0.5
Stay home	19.2	0.6	14.3	34.4	0	37.9
No longer work	6	1.2	3.4	4.6	0	20.9
Others	2.7	1.8	2.0	2.0	4.5	5.5
Personal Annual Income** (in Chinese Yuan: mean/sd)	12055/28188	15758/18945	16258/22196	7001/17208	28704/28188	5425/8747
SES (%)** ¹						
High	0	0	0	0	0	0
Upper Middle	1.7	2.5	2.7	0.7	1.5	1.1
Middle	22.4	21.8	25.9	20.5	34.3	19.2
Lower Middle	29.3	31.7	36.7	23.2	38.8	25.8
Low	41.5	38.2	29.9	50.3	23.9	48.9
Self-Identity as Migrant Workers (%)**	39.1	55.9	42.7	33.2	70.1	8.6

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ ¹ Total is not 100% as some participants refused to answer this question.

The *older migrant* profile represented 182 migrants who were more than 50 years old. Fifty is the mandatory retirement age for female workers in cities, according to China's labor policy, and rural people older than 50 thus have less opportunity to find a job in cities. The existence of this profile is surprising, suggesting that current knowledge about migrants in China's cities is indeed limited. Understandably, older

migrants are less likely to be employed and work full time; their relatively low personal income is similar to migrants with the wife profile. Only a few migrants (8.6%) with this profile claimed to be migrant workers, perhaps because of their non (officially)-employable age and non-working status.

Migrants with different profiles show significant differences in the size and diversity of their networks.

Table 3. Network Size and Diversity, Life Satisfaction and Participation of Each Profile (Mean/SD)

	All Migrants	Traditional Generation	New Generation	Wife	Young Female	Older Migrants
Network Size*	54.9/77.9	57.5/80.9	57.4/71.7	55.4/79.9	74.3/95.4	40.2/63.8
Family Network*	22.1/26.9	23.0/28.1	22.4/27.2	22.3/26.7	28.6/32.8	17.5/21.3
Friend Network	15.6/27.4	16.4/27.6	15.2/24.7	16.0/28.2	21.4/32.7	11.7/25.3
Acquaintance Network*	17.2/31.4	18.0/31.7	19.8/33.5	17.1/31.6	24.2/37.5	11.0/24.7
Network Diversity						
Job Diversity**	4.1/2.6	4.1/2.4	4.6/2.9	3.9/2.3	5.1/3.5	3.9/2.5
Organizational Diversity*	2.1/1.4	2.0/1.4	2.3/1.5	1.9/1.3	2.5/1.5	2.1/1.5
Networks at Rural vs. Urban						
Bainian to Peasants (%)	78.9	76.8	73.8	82.3	71.4	83.6
Bainian to Migrants (%)**	52.9	59.4	42.3	55.4	44.6	49.1
No Urban Network (%) ¹	8.1	6.9	6.2	9.2	7.1	10.1
Life Satisfaction	16.0/2.8	16.1/2.8	15.5/2.6	16.2/2.8	15.7/2.7	16.1/3.1
Local Political Participation Behavior (Yes %)						
Vote	16.1	14.8	17.7	16.9	9.0	18.7
Nominate Candidate	3.1	3.1	2.7	3.0	3.0	3.8
Community Organizing	2.1	1.5	1.4	2.6	4.5	1.6
Serve the Local Government	1	0.6	2.0	0.7	1.5	1.1

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

In terms of network size, migrants in the *young female* group have the largest social networks, and migrants in the *older migrant* group have the smallest networks; migrants with *traditional*, *new generation*, and *wife* profiles depict similar sizes and patterns of personal networks (see Table 3 and Figure 1). For all migrants, family members constitute the largest portion of their social networks. With regard to network diversity, migrants' education appears to play a significant role in expanding access to different types of people (see Table 3); migrants with high levels of education (i.e., migrants with the *new generation* and *young female* profiles) have significantly more diverse networks than migrants with low levels of education (i.e., migrants with *traditional generation* and *wife* profiles). That is, education beyond the 9-year minimum has enabled migrants to extend their social networks in urban China across a range of people with different social economic statuses and with different types of institutional and organizational affiliations. Meanwhile, migrants with low levels of education (i.e., migrants with *traditional generation* and *wife* profiles) maintained significantly more contact with other migrant workers (55%) than did migrants with higher levels of education (i.e., *new generation* and *young female* profiles) (43%).

Migrants across profiles do not show significant differences in their overall life satisfaction or political participation (see Table 3), despite the apparent lower voting behavior exhibited by migrants with the *young female* profile. Results from regression models indicate that, overall, the size and the diversity of social

networks do not heavily influence migrants' voting behavior or life satisfaction (see Tables 4 and 5). Although the size and diversity of social networks did not demonstrate zero-order correlations with the outcome variables across all sub-groups, they are nonetheless included in the models on account of their theoretical relevance.

Based on the sample at hand, social network characteristics are related to political participation (i.e., voting) only for migrants with the *older migrant* profile. For older migrants, the size of the acquaintance network (i.e., beyond family and friends) was positively associated with voting behavior; in addition, both network diversity indicators are associated with older migrants' voting behavior, though it remains unclear why the relationships between voting and the two network diversity indicators proceed in opposite directions. Such results indicate that broader social ties beyond peasants' more familiar family and friend networks, which are often formed after migration, are particularly influential for older migrants. In addition, family network size was positively associated with political participation for migrants with the *wife* profile, suggesting the strong role in political participation played by family members among less educated women. On the other hand, this serves as a reminder of the limited capacity of urban migrants to participate politically, particularly when they are bound by gender, employment, and other life constraints.

As for life satisfaction, family network size and network job diversity were negatively associated with life satisfaction for migrants with *older migrant* and tradi-

Figure 1. Composition of Networks for each Migrant Profile based on Family, Friend and Other Sources

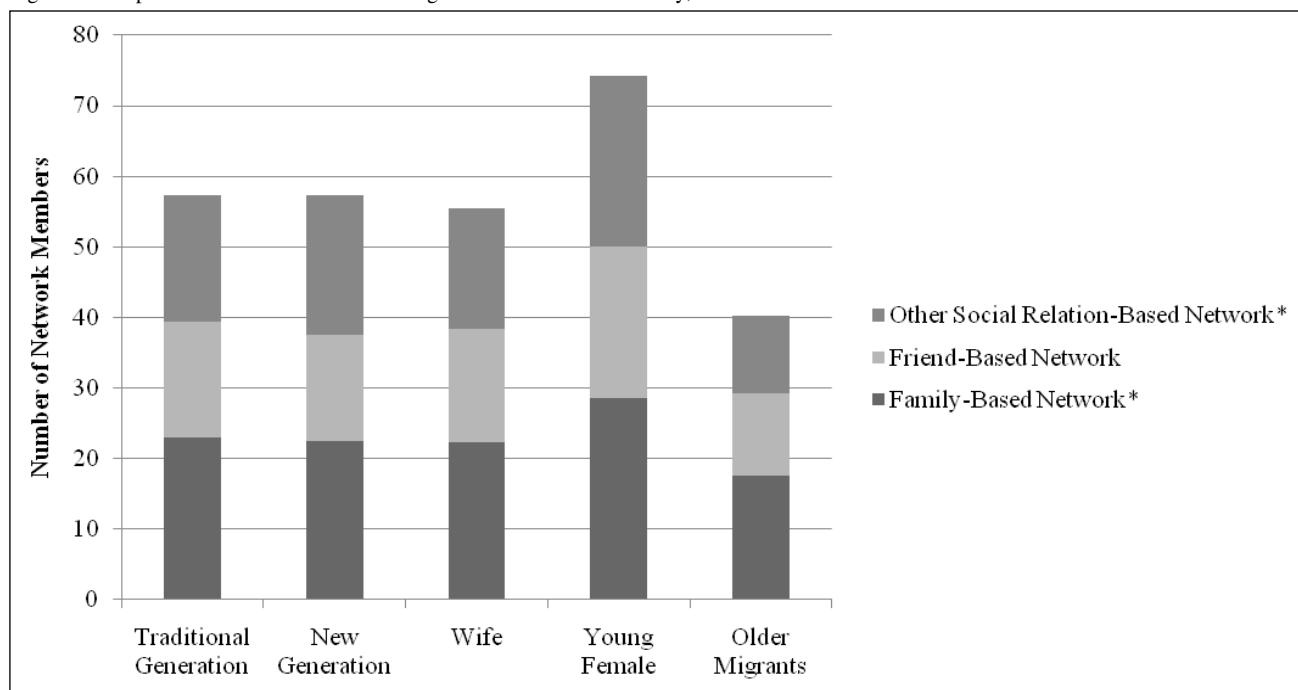


Table 4. Odds Ratios (and 95% Confidence Intervals) from Logistic Regression Analysis Predicting *Political Participation* (Voting), by Cluster

	All Migrants	Traditional Generation	New Generation	Wife	Young Female	Older Migrants
Network Size						
Family	1.02 (1.01-1.03)**	1.1 (.99-1.03)	1.02 (.99-1.05)	1.04 (1.02-1.06)**	1.03 (.94-1.11)	1.02 (.99-1.06)
Friend	1.00 (.98-1.01)	.98 (.94-1.02)	1.00 (.97-1.04)	1.02 (.99-1.04)	.94 (.75-1.19)	.98 (.94-1.01)
Acquaintances	1.01 (1.00-1.02)*	1.01 (.100-1.03)	1.01 (.99-1.02)	1.00 (.98-1.02)	.94 (.82-1.09)	1.04 (1.01-1.08)*
Network Diversity						
Job Diversity	1.08 (.98-1.19)	1.22 (.99-1.51)	.81 (.62-1.06)	1.14 (.94-1.39)	1.05 (.61-1.80)	1.51 (1.13-2.02)**
Organizational Diversity	.87 (.72-1.05)	.82 (.57-1.17)	1.04 (.68-1.58)	.98 (.68-1.41)	.78 (.28-2.16)	.48 (.28-.82)**
X ²	8.33	14.6	8.70	6.13	5.16	10.5

* p < .05 ** p < .01

Table 5. Beta from Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting *Life Satisfaction*, by Cluster

	All Migrants	Traditional Generation	New Generation	Wife	Young Female	Older Migrants
Network Size						
Family Network	-.03	.01	.08	-.08	.02	-.23**
Friend Network	-.07	-.11	-.05	-.15	.05	.02
Acquaintances Network	-.07	-.07	-.16	-.02	.03	-.09
Network Diversity						
Job Diversity	-.10	-.20*	.10	-.02	-.24	-.20
Organizational Diversity	-.05	.08	-.10	-.05	-.22	-.06
R ²	.04**	.06*	.04	.04	.15	.15*

* p < .05 ** p < .01

tional generation profiles, respectively. The former result might depend partially on the reasons older migrants moved from their familiar villages, while the latter might imply that the strong identity generated by connections with people of similar status might elevate life satisfaction among less educated migrant workers.

Discussion

Clearly, the *traditional generation* profile alone is no longer adequate to describe today's migrant population in China; more and more "new" urban residents (though they still possess rural *hukou*) have moved to and are living in cities for a variety of reasons. While research and public media still use "rural-to-urban migrant workers" to refer to the group of rural residents living in urban spaces, the use of this terminology ignores variations in the present reality. Gender, particularly in the form of family responsibilities, and education are two essential factors that affect rural people's decisions regarding migration and employ-

ment. Migrants are not necessarily "workers"; as seen here, their ages and family responsibilities may limit their motivations and opportunities for becoming employed in cities. Further, migrants do not always fit the description of traditional "workers" (i.e., blue collar workers), as some gain employment in positions that require advanced skills and education. Migrants might not even be "migrants" as commonly understood, for they could be the children of migrants, have lived in cities for their whole lives, and thus never have engaged the rural identities expected from their technical *hukou* designations. These emerging and growing migrant subgroups and their characteristics are consistent with the statistics reported by China's National Population and Family Planning Commission (2010). Similar to our results, the report indicates that approximately one fourth of female migrants are not working, suggesting that the additional responsibilities of family in the patriarchal society contribute to different patterns of migration and employment. The report also recognizes the existence of older migrants (i.e., more than 50 years old) in cities and many migrants with rel-

atively high levels of education (i.e., with more than nine years of formal education). While no existing study has adopted our approach to identify China's migrant sub-groups, available literature has suggested the existence of sub-groups similar to the *new generation* (Wang, 2010), *wife* (Ye, Ge & Ye, 2005), and *older migrant* (Zhou, 2002) profiles observed here.

Different patterns of social networks across the five migrant groups also suggest the different factors at work in migrants' networks. Comparing the *wife* and *young female* profiles indicates that education and work opportunities have benefited certain migrants (i.e., migrants with the *young female* profile) and helped them build new and diverse social connections in urban China. These results also imply that while kin and family networks continue to assist in migration and in offering support, education may help overcome certain migration barriers and ease some difficulties resulting from the transition to urban life. In addition, migrants' social networks must be understood as produced by the gendered social interactions of neighborhood, work and family contexts. Networks for migrants with the *wife* profile are similar in size to those of the *traditional* and *new generation* profiles, even though almost half of migrants with this profile do not work and thus lack an important outlet for networking. Thus, female migrants' (such as those with the *wife profile*) capacity to develop networks may depend largely on connections with people with similar demographic profiles (i.e., peasants and migrants).

Sub-divisions in immigrant communities in Western societies have been observed to develop over time (such as the Asian immigrant community's "bi-modal distribution," Ong, 2004, and the Latino immigrant community's divisions based on social class and nationality, Pessar, 1995), and after almost three decades of internal migration, China's migrant population is demonstrating sub-divisions as well. Because the sub-divisions defined here occur along gender, marital, and education lines rather than along income, socio-economic status or social class (as average family income in this study is similar across sub-groups), and thus do not challenge fundamental value systems or psychological/identity orientations, it is not surprising to observe similar rates of life satisfaction and political participation across the sub-groups. The move to urban areas has been found to increase satisfaction with life generally due to improved financial conditions (Xu, 2010), and international immigration studies often indicate an inverse relationship between social isolation and life satisfaction (Neto, 2001; Ying, 1996). These reasons may partially explain the failure to find differences in life satisfaction here. In addition, as life satisfaction is essentially a psychological concept, the approach used in this study, identifying migrant sub-groups depending on gender, age, education and marital status, might not be able to capture intra-group differences appropriately, if they exist. Similarly, this

approach might not be able to fully describe differences in migrants' local political participation, which is associated with both structural and individual factors (Palmer, Perkins & Xu, 2011).

Except for a few factors for certain migrant sub-groups, this study fails to find effects of migrant social networks on life satisfaction and political participation. One possible explanation is the construction of social networks used in this study. Unlike some social support network measures (e.g., network reciprocity, or the extent to which members of the networks can expect to give and receive help and support from each other when needed), *Bainian* (Chinese New Year greetings) networks do not necessarily encompass the meaning of reciprocity, as they have traditionally been a practice observed by and used to respect older people. Further, *Bainian* have been challenged as products of rural society; thus, they may not be compatible with social, economic and political activities in modernized cities (Sun, 2010), and thus play only a minor role in urban people's life. Meanwhile, as a common practice, a large percentage of migrants spend the Chinese New Year with their parents in their home villages; in such instances, the *Bainian* network likely masks the profusion of new networks established in cities. Together, these indicate that the specific construction of networks, and the contexts in which they are constructed, may greatly alter the relationships between social networks and outcomes. Nonetheless, *Bainian* networks are a particularly Chinese phenomenon and are commonly used to assess social networks in China; thus, concerns about the measure may be somewhat overstated.

Finally, it should be clear that migrants' perceptions and behaviors are formed via the negotiation of differences between origin and host cultures and spaces (Fennema & Tillie, 2001; Veronis, 2010). Life satisfaction and local political participation depend on previous experience, as well as the degree to which it can be transferred to or is permitted in the urban context. Large cultural differences in the value of collectivity or individuality, as well as increased wealth/income disparity and the sharp contrast between naturalism and materialism in cities, may affect aspirations for cohesion and participation, as well as perceptions towards urban life. China's migrant population remains marginalized in the urban space, regardless of the extent to which their networks incorporate people beyond kin and from the place of origin (e.g., Lu, 2007). Although education may have encouraged many migrants' trajectories to cities, *hukou* still pose a structural limitation, as persons with rural residences are limited in their ability to access healthcare and other public services, obtain equal pay and benefits, and be employed in certain positions or sectors. Together, these barriers illustrate why migrant networks may not yet have begun to progress beyond satisfying day-to-day needs and function in the broader

ways we traditionally expect, such as serving as buffers in hostile, new environments and reinforcing collective identity and recognition, as have been found in Western societies (e.g., Jasinskaja-Lahti, et al., 2006; Lin, Cook, & Burt, 2001).

Limitations. The generalizability of the relationships observed here is unknown. While the CGSS is considered nationally representative, the method of sample construction for this study (i.e., using urban residency and rural *hukou* to identify migrants) might ignore the complicated process of China's urbanization. Certain local governments have granted urban *hukou* for villagers after appropriating their land for city planning and development, for instance, indicating just one example of how the residency/*hukou* requirement may mask important variations. In addition, the study is cross sectional, which prevents causal explanations of the relationships between social networks and perception and behavior outcomes. It also focuses on short-term (or even one-time) perceptions and behaviors, neglecting changes in demographic characteristics and networks over time.

Social networks can both strengthen and weaken over time, change differentially for different segments of the migrant community, and therefore have varying effects on life satisfaction and political participation. Further, although the validity and reliability of CGSS measures of social networks (*Bainian* network here) have largely been validated in the Chinese context, the *Bainian* network measure is exclusively based on "Chinese New Year greetings" and incompletely differentiates the networks migrants have in their villages of origin from the networks they form and develop in cities; this raises doubts as to the construct validity of the measure as well as its link to life satisfaction and political participation. Though this measure is expected to be relevant to new social networks developed in cities, it likely misses portions of networks based exclusively in urban spaces.

We also acknowledge that using age, gender, marital status and education as the basis for a cluster analysis potentially misses the effects that other factors (e.g., duration of residence in the city, geographic/location issues, and generation) might have on migrant sub-groups and their social networks. For example, migrants represented in this study within a single sub-group might have been further differentiated had duration of urban residence been included as a variable in the cluster analysis. Unfortunately, due to the limitations of CGSS data, such variables are unavailable for the current study. In addition, the assessment of political participation is limited to voting behavior, which could be influenced by many factors (e.g. structural and organizational forces) beyond personal networks given the current political context of China.

The greatest strength of this study is likely the opportunity it affords to examine migrant sub-groups and assess differential social networks across sub-

groups, using nationally representative data. Studying migrants and social networks in an important but difficult to reach population in the world's most populous country, and comparing them to both general and migrant populations in other parts of the world, is useful for examining the effects of place on network structure and function. In China, given the size of internal migration and its profound effects, any insights prompted by the present data are valuable.

Conclusion

In this study, we have identified the sub-groups emerging from China's hundreds of millions of migrants, described their social networks, and analyzed the relationship between migrants' networks and life perception and political participation. As China continues its unprecedented urbanization process and urban-rural tensions ease, more and more rural people, including those who do not fit the traditional migrant profile, may choose to live and/or work in cities. The structural orientation of migration in China and emerging generational differences have contributed to a sub-division of the migrant population. But while the sub-groups appear to produce networks of different sizes and characteristics based on gender, age, and education, the sub-groups may not change the fundamental social-political-economic status of the migrant population; migrants, in general, continue to occupy the lower rungs of Chinese society, and their networks are also predominately composed of people lacking substantial power.

We observe that migrants across all sub-groups still situate a lot of their social interactions with other migrants and/or peasants. Though we lack sufficient information about migrants' locality, organized activities, and unique culture and language associated with their places of origin, the sub-group variations in networks presented here lead us to conclude that it is incorrect to speak of a single "migrant community" in China's cities. However, despite differences in demographic factors and network characteristics across migrant sub-groups, migrants in this study demonstrate a consistency in their perception of life and political participation. While perception and behavior are two complicated psychological concepts that are complexly associated with social networks, we find here potential evidence of solidarity among migrants, or what one might think of as a diasporic migrant community that bonds across geographic distance and even in places of relative isolation.

This is a bold conclusion, considering our task of uncovering sub-variations among China's migrants. In much of the social science literature on international immigrant communities and ethnic enclaves in Western countries, community solidarity among immigrants is assumed rather than substantiated. Migrants are portrayed as constituting their own communities

with organic solidarity even in a time of growing individualism, social dislocation, and moral and cultural diversification. Whereas overgeneralizations ignore the dynamics among immigrant populations, our observations might indicate that the struggle to survive may initiate the collective identity and power that would not normally be generated with such group divisions and in such hostile environments. Recent labor strikes conducted by migrants across several Chinese cities and in a variety of industries attest to migrant community solidarity. Going forward, studies that seek to better understand variations in migrant networks, communities, perceptions and behavior, will allow us to better comprehend migrant experiences across contexts. These understandings will in turn shed light on the potential for, as well as barriers to, the types of collective action that might make for more inclusive environments for migrants, their families, and urban residents in the future.

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