Continuity and change in the transition from the first to the second generation of migrants in China: Insights from a survey in Fujian

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Abstract: Based on a representative survey of migrants in Fujian Province, a major migrant destination in China, this paper provides a more accurate and objective picture of the new generation migrants and their differences from and similarities to the first generation migrants. While the paper confirms some common understanding of the differences between the first and the second generations of migrants in the literature in terms of their individual characteristics and personal attitudes, it demonstrates that the differences between the two generations are often exaggerated by some popular perceptions of their socioeconomic status and their readiness for integration into the destination cities, and that there are still some remarkable similarities between the two generations in these aspects. The results of statistical modeling also suggest that the generational change per se plays insignificant roles in determining migrants' situation in the cities. The paper argues that two structural factors, namely the existence of rural-urban disparity and the dominance of labour-intensive industries in the economy, constrain more fundamental changes in the generational transition of migrants in China, and that the above understanding of the new generation migrants has important policy implications.

Keywords: China; migrants; first generation; second generation; transition; continuity; change

Introduction

In recent years, an important development in China's migration research has been the growing attention devoted to a sub-group of the migrant population, namely the 'new generation migrants' or 'the second generation migrants', who are commonly defined in both academic literature and policy discussion as those rural-urban migrants born since the 1980s (e.g. Wang, 2001; Liu and Cheng, 2008; Liu, Li and Breitung, 2012). Starting from 2001 when this term was first proposed by Chunguang Wang (Wang, 2001), a growing body of literature has emerged to identify their major characteristics, differentiate them from the first generation migrants, examine various issues they have been confronting in their migration process, and explore policy solutions to these issues (e.g., Wang and Qin, 2002; Chen, 2003; Luo and Wang, 2003; Liu and Cheng, 2008; Wang, 2008; Liu, Li, and Breitung, 2012). The new generation migrants have also become a major topic in the media, and attracted great attention of the government at various levels.

The new generation of migrants deserves such attention in many ways. Recent data from the State Population and Family Planning Commission show that the new generation migrants accounted for 45.6 per cent of the total number of migrants in China at the end of 2009 (Zhang, 2010), suggesting that they now occupy an increasingly important position in the general migrant population. They are not only younger, but migrated directly to the cities upon their graduation from schools, and therefore are not familiar with work and life in rural areas which they originated from. Their employment and life after adulthood are closely related to the cities; however most of them cannot fully integrate into the cities, as with the first generation migrants. Thus as members of China's 'floating population', the new generation migrants are in a more 'floating' and uncertain situation, compared with the first generation migrants, and therefore need more and special attention in academic research and policy making. This paper represents an effort in this regard.

Two generations of migrants: Current understanding and ensuing issues

Before the emergence of the term 'the new generation migrants' and in the process of the development of related literature in China, a large body of literature concerning migrant distinctive characteristics and their mobility patterns has mushroomed in both Chinese and international literature, and this has laid down an important basis for research on the new generation migrants. Many studies have revealed some salient socioeconomic features of China's migrant population and their mobility patterns, including their younger age and higher educational attainment compared to the general population (Zhu, 2003: 492; Fan, 2008:60), their disadvantaged working and living conditions and socioeconomic status in the places of destination (Chan, 1996; Solinger, 1999; Fan, 2002; Shen, 2002; Wang, 2005), their unstable and segmented nature of employment at the lower end of the occupational strata (Fan, 2002; Guo and Iredale, 2004; Yang, 2005), and their unsettled nature and temporary mode of migration (Liang, 2001; Liang and Ma, 2004; Zhu, 2007; Zhu and Chen, 2010). Based on these findings, one can conclude that there is a clear distinction between China's migrant population and the local residents in migrants' places of destination, and that there is a low desire for the majority of migrants to identify themselves with and settle down in the destination cities (Zhu, 2007; Zhu and Chen, 2010; Fan et al., 2011).

Studies on the new generation migrants are a further step towards a more accurate and detailed understanding of migrants' characteristics and their socioeconomic status in China. Instead of making distinction between the migrant population and the local residents in migrant destination cities, literature on the new generation migrants is often focused on comparing, in many cases dichotomizing the two generations of migrants (e.g., Liu and Xu, 2007; Liu, 2010). According to most of the literature generated so far, the new generation migrants have higher educational attainment, higher occupational status and employment expectation, higher consumption and social security levels, compared to the first generation migrants. The new generation of migrants are also often labeled as being not as tough as the first generation migrants in their employment, having little emotional ties with their rural places of

origin, strongly identifying themselves with the destination cities，and having strong desire to stay in the destination cities (Wang, 2001; Luo and Wang, 2003; Liu and Cheng, 2008; Liu, 2010; Wang, 2010; Liu, Li, and Breitung, 2012). In a way, the socioeconomic features of China's migrant population and their mobility patterns identified in the previous research represent something in the past, only applying to the first generation migrants; and the new generation migrants have become increasingly similar to the local residents of their age in migrants' places of destination, and the differences between the first and new generations of migrants indicate a fundamental transition in migrants' situation in the cities (Liu and Xu, 2007; Liu and Chen, 2008; Chen, 2009; Wang, 2010; Liu, 2010).

The above efforts to distinguish between the two generations of migrants certainly contribute to our understanding of China's migrants; however, much still needs to be done to reach a consensus. In fact, some recent studies have challenged the above mentioned popular understanding regarding the new generation migrants, suggesting that the contrast between the two generations of migrants has been exaggerated, and that the dichotomous approach in comparing the two generations of migrants is not adequate and too simplistic (e.g., Yang, 2010, Zhu, 2010, Zhang, 2011). As Zhu (2010) points out, there have been two important inadequacies of relevant research so far. First, many common understandings or perceptions on the new generation migrants have been based on case studies of individual migrant destination cities, whose data were often not collected through a probability sampling procedure and therefore whose results cannot be generalized to the migrant population in general. Second, relating to the first inadequacy, the comparisons between the two generations of migrants have been often one-sided, mainly based on their individual characteristics and personal attitudes, without adequate understanding of structural factors in shaping the differences between the two generations of migrants. Such inaccurate and superficial understanding of the new generation migrants runs the risk of taking a simplistic approach in dealing with their issues, leading to the failure of relevant policies.

By using a data set obtained from a recent representative questionnaire survey in Fujian Province, a major migrant destination in China, this paper attempts to address the above inadequacies. While effort will be made to reveal changes in the transition from the first to the second generation of migrants, more attention will be given to examine the continuities between them, and to explore factors underlying both the continuities and changes. We believe that such an approach will produce a more accurate and objective understanding of the new generation migrants, and contribute to better policy making for them.

Data and methodology

The data set mentioned above was collected through a questionnaire survey jointly conducted by Center for Population and Development Research at Fujian Normal University and Fujian Provincial Population and Family Planning Commission in December 2009. The database for all members of the floating population in Fujian Province, which was established and managed by Fujian Provincial Population and Family Planning Commission and considered to be the most complete migrant database in the Province, was used as the sampling frame, and the potential respondents were those migrants who were 15 to 64 years old, employed as labourers or doing business, migrated out of the boundaries of their original county-level administrative units, and had lived in the current places of destination for more than one month. As the original purpose of the survey was to collect data for a project with emphasis on women migrants, the sample sizes of female and male migrants were determined to be 2000 and 1000 respectively. Then, a four stage PPS sampling procedure was used to randomly select the county-level, township-level, and village-level administrative units, and then randomly select 10 female migrants and 5 male migrants in each of the selected villages. As a result of the above procedure, a total of 3011 respondents were interviewed, including 1994 responses from female migrants and 1017 responses from male migrants. As the proportions of female and

male migrants in the total migrant population were close to 50 per cent in the sampling frame, we randomly selected half of the responses (1016) from those of women respondents and combined them with those of men respondents to form a new data set for the analysis of this paper below. We identified 22 invalid responses in the process of data entry and cleaning from the responses, and obtained a data set with 2011 valid responses, including 997 responses from female migrants and 1014 responses from male migrants.

As the respondents were randomly selected from the most complete migrant database, the survey results are well representative of the migrant population in Fujian Province as a whole, especially those economically active migrants. Furthermore, our previous studies suggest that the general characteristics of migrants in Fujian are fairly consistent with those in the coastal areas of China (Zhu, 2007; Zhu and Chen, 2010), and therefore the analyses in this paper are of certain reference value for understanding the new generation migrants in China's coastal areas. In fact, the number of the new generation migrants accounted for 46.3 per cent of the total migrant population in our sample, and this is rather consistent with the recent data from the State Population and Family Planning Commission mentioned earlier.

In the following we will compare the new and first generations of migrants in terms of their individual characteristics, socioeconomic status and migration intention in the migration process. We will then conduct statistical modeling to reveal the roles of the generational change in determining migrants' socioeconomic status and migration intention. On the basis of the above analysis, we will identify differences and similarities between the two groups, explore the factors behind these differences and similarities, and draw policy implications of these analyses.

Changes from the first to the second generation of migrants and their major differences

As can be seen from Table 1, consistent with the existing literature mentioned earlier, our survey results do confirm that there are indeed some significant differences between the first and second generation migrants.

First, by definition the second generation migrants are younger than their first generation counterparts. The mean ages of the first and second generation migrants were 38.19 years and 23.38 years respectively, with the latter 14.81 years younger than the former. Corresponding to their age difference, the marital status of the two generations of migrants is also significantly different: While almost all first generation migrants (96.7 per cent) covered by the survey were married, the corresponding proportion of the second generation migrants were only 38.3 per cent.

Second, our survey results also confirm that there are significant differences in educational attainment between the two generations of migrants. Some 50.9% of the first generation migrants from our survey were illiterate or semi-illiterate, or had only received primary school education. In contrast, 85.3% of the new generation migrants had received education higher than junior secondary school. The average years of schooling for the first and second generation were 6.73 years and 9.44 years respectively, with a 2.72 year difference between the two generations.

Table 1 Some demographic characteristics of the first and second generations of migrants

Demographic characteristics		The first generation	The second generation	Total	$\chi2$ /F
Mean age (Years)		38.19	23.38	31.33	4416.486****
Marital status (%)	Married	96.7	38.3	69.7	
	Unmarried	3.3	61.7	30.3	816.794****
	Total	100	100	100	
Educational attainment (%)	Illiterate	19.1	2.2	11.3	
	Semi-illiterate	0.5	0.1	0.3	343.770****
	Primary school	31.3	12.5	22.6	

Junior secondary school	36.4	54.7	44.9
Senior secondary school	7.0	9.6	8.2
Vocational school	3.5	11.3	7.1
Junior college and above	2.2	9.6	5.6
Total	100	100	100

Source: 2009 survey of migrants in Fujian.

Note: **** p＜0.001.

Third, our survey results show that while working as a farmer was the most common occupation before migration for the first generation migrants, accounting for 57.8 per cent of their total responses in this regard, most new generation migrants (65.3 per cent) were attending schools before migration, with little experience in agricultural employment. In terms of occupations in the migration process, as Table 2 demonstrates, the proportion of the new generation migrants who were employed as administrative and technical workers, sales and service workers, and clerical workers were higher than that of the first generation migrants, while the proportion of them engaged in running individual business, petty trade and casual works was lower than those of the first generation migrants. This suggests that more new generation migrants have moved to the higher levels of the occupational strata in the migration process, compared to their first generation counterparts.

Table 2 Occupational structures of the first and current employment of the two generations of migrants in their migration process（%）

Occupation	First employment			Current employment		
	The first generation	The second generation	Total	The first generation	The second generation	Total
Administrative and technical workers	7.7	12.3	9.8	10.4	13.8	12.1
Sales and service workers and clerical workers	11.2	22.9	16.6	10.5	23.4	16.4
Production and transport workers	58.4	55.9	57.3	49.9	49.8	49.9

Individual business owners, petty traders and casual workers	22.7	8.9	16.3	29.3	13.0	21.6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
x^2		143.387****			156.580****	

Source：2009 survey of migrants in Fujian.

Note: **** $p < 0.001$.

Fourth, as can be seen from Table 3, for the first generation migrants, the main reasons for migration were 'to earn money for family livelihood' and 'to earn money to help brothers/sisters/children to go to schools', which accounted for 53.4 per cent of their total responses; however, these two reasons only accounted for 36.9 per cent of the relevant responses given by the new generation migrants. In contrast, 'going out to see the world and seek opportunities' was a much more important reason of migration for the new generation migrants, compared to the first generation ones. This suggests that the migration of the new generation migrants is more oriented towards personal development, while that of the first generation is more economically driven and family oriented.

Table 3 Motivations of the two generations of migrants for migration* (%)

Migration motivations	The first generation	The second generation	Total
To earn money for family livelihood	42.8	31.7	37.7
To join the family	3.9	2.4	3.2
To earn money to help brothers/sisters/ children to go to schools	10.6	5.2	8.1
To follow the trend	7.4	10.9	9.0
Lack of employment and personal development opportunities in hometowns	16.5	17.3	16.9
Going out to see the world and seek opportunities	16.4	29.5	22.4
Do not like the lifestyle and customs in hometowns	1.6	2.4	2.0
Government support to migration	0.7	0.6	0.7
Others	0.1	0.1	0.1
Total	100	100	100

*To answer the question for this table, each respondent could choose three answers and rank

them as the first, second, and third choice respectively, and each figure in this table is the weighted average of the three proportions of the respondents choosing an answer as the first, second, and third choice, with the weights of 0.5, 0.3, and 0.2 respectively. No statistical test can be conducted based on the weighted average figures in the table.

Source：2009 survey of migrants in Fujian.

In summary, our survey results do confirm that there are some significant differences between the two generations of migrants in terms of their individual characteristics and migration motivation. Compared to the first generation migrants, the new generation migrants are younger, better educated with little experience in agricultural employment, and most of them are still not married; they are more personal-development-oriented in their migration processes, and some of them have indeed secured better occupations in the destination cities. Given these characteristics, it is not surprising that in both academic research and public discussion, most attention has been paid to their differences from the first generation migrants, with an implicit expectation that they can be more readily integrated into the destination cities if 'right policies' are in place (e.g., Liu, 2010).

Continuity between the first and the second generations of migrants and their lingering similarities

However, the differences between the two generations of migrants examined above reflect only one side of the coin. Our survey results indicate that there are still several lingering similarities between the two generations of migrants. Furthermore, although our survey results confirm changes from the first to the second generation of migrants, such changes are gradual, and the continuity between the two generations should not be neglected. These observations are confirmed by our survey results in the following aspects.

Income and consumption

As mentioned earlier, one common perception of the new generation migrants is that they have higher material and spiritual demands in their life, and a higher consumption level (Zhang, 2011). On the face value, this seems to be confirmed too by our survey results, which show that the average amounts of monthly consumption expenses for the first and second generations of migrants were 757.8 Yuan and 834.3 Yuan. However, it is important to note that contrary to the common perception, the average monthly income of the new generation migrants was only 1723.7 Yuan, lower than that of the first generation migrants (1810.6 Yuan). This suggests that the higher consumption level of the new generation migrants was not established on a solid financial basis. A closer look at the consumption structure of the two generations of migrants (Table 4) further shows that the higher consumption level of the new generation migrants was mainly manifested in their expenses for clothing and cosmetics, and cultural and recreational activities, with significant differences between the two generations in this regard at the level of 0.001 based on F-test. In terms of other essential consumption needs, the expenses of the new generation migrants were very close to those of the first generation, reflected in the F-test results of the corresponding differences either insignificant or significant at very low levels. In fact, in most cases the new generation migrants' expenses in essential consumption needs were even lower than those of the first generation.

Table 4 Monthly consumption expenditure of the two generations of migrants (Yuan)

Expenditure items		The first generation	The second generation	Total	F
Survival consumption	Accommodation	117.6	114.6	116.2	0.146
	Food	358.2	341.9	350.7	2.950^{*}
Daily consumption	Transportation	38.6	37.4	38.1	0.239
	Clothing and cosmetic	90.2	154.2	119.8	123.618^{****}
	Communication	59.4	63.6	61.4	2.894^{*}
Other consumption	Entertainment and gifts	43.5	42.3	42.9	0.039
	Cultural and recreational activities	24.5	57.5	39.8	54.288^{****}
	Others	25.9	22.7	24.4	0.862

Housing and social insurance

The continuity between the first and second generations of migrants is further enhanced by the fact that the changes between the two generations in terms of their access to various social insurance programs and housing benefits were small (Table 5). In fact, the Pearson Chi-Square tests suggest that the differences between the two generations are either insignificant, or significant at lower levels than those exhibited in the previous section concerning major changes between the two generations. It is particularly worth noting that both generations of migrants are in a disadvantaged housing situation. The average *per capita* usable area of housing for the first and second generations of migrants were 10.56 square meters and 9.97 square meters respectively, which were less than one third of the *per capita* usable area of local residents' housing in Fujian's three major cities (Lin and Zhu, 2008). Furthermore, only 4.7 per cent of the first generation migrants and 2.3 per cent of the second generation migrants had owner-occupied housing, in contrast to the fact that 64 per cent of local urban residents in Fujian had owner-occupied housing. Given the current very high housing price and migrants' very little access to housing benefits in Chinese cities, securing decent housing is still an insurmountable barrier for both generations of migrants in their efforts to establish themselves in the cities.

Table 5 Coverage of the two generations of migrants by various social insurance programs and housing benefits（%）

Social insurance programs and housing benefits	The first generation	The second generation	Total	χ^2
Old age insurance	13	15.4	14.1	2.414
Medical insurance	14.8	20	17.2	9.383***
Insurance against work-related injuries	9.5	11.9	10.6	4.263**

Unemployment insurance	18.2	21.9	19.9	3.011[*]
Childbearing insurance	8.5	10.7	9.5	2.877[*]
Public reserve fund for housing	0.3	1.3	0.7	6.908[***]
Rental subsidy	5.8	6.2	6.0	0.140

Source：2009 survey of migrants in Fujian

Note: *** p＜0.01; ** p＜0.05; * p＜0.1.

Employment and occupation mobility

We mentioned earlier that the new generation migrants are more successful in their up-ward mobility to the higher levels of the occupational strata, compared to their first generation counterparts. However, more detailed analysis suggests that such a success does not represent a fundamental change. As can be seen in Table 2, the differences in the occupational structure between the two generations are mainly caused by the higher proportion of the new generation migrants employed as sales and service workers and clerical workers, and the lower proportion of them engaged in running individual business, petty trade and casual works, compared to their first generation counterparts. Such a difference, although evident, does not constitute significant upward mobility of the new generation in the occupational strata. Furthermore, although the proportion of the new generation migrants who were employed as administrative and technical workers was indeed higher than that of the first generation migrants, this is not the main component of the occupational differences between the two generations. In fact, production and transport workers were still the dominant occupations for both generations of migrants. In addition, the employment of both the first and second generations of migrants were unstable, reflected in the fact that only 55.4 per cent of the first generation migrants and 56.0 per cent of the new generation migrants signed contracts with their employers, with insignificant difference between the two generations according to the Pearson Chi-Square-test; and these contracts were mostly short-term ones, with those shorter than 3 years accounting for 92.6 per cent of the total for the first generation and 96.3 per cent of

the total for the new generation. These figures suggest that despite the differences in employment structure between the two generations of migrants, the fundamental fact that both generations of migrants are concentrated in the labour intensive, secondary sectors of the dual labour market with low-paid and unstable jobs (Zhu, 2007) has not changed.

Given the similar position of the two generations of migrants in the labour market, there seems no reason to believe that the new generation migrants have the luxury of not being tough in their employment, as commonly believed. As our survey results show, the average length of work per day was 10.13 hours and 9.83 hours respectively for the first generation and second generation of migrants, and the F-test of the difference between them is insignificant; In average, they took only 1.97 days and 2.56 days off per month respectively, and the F-test of the difference was significant only at the level of 0.05. These suggest that although some differences between the two generations in their length of work do exist, such differences are nevertheless either insignificant or small.

Identification with the places of origin and destination and settlement intention in the cities

Perhaps among the common perceptions of the new generation migrants, one of the most important is the assertion that the new generation migrants have little emotional ties with their rural places of origin, and strongly identify themselves with the destination cities. Some observers even go as far as to claim that if they die, the new generation migrants would choose to die in the cities (e.g., Xu, 2006). Based on such an assertion, it is commonly believed that the new generation migrants have strong settlement intention in the cities (e.g., Liu, 2010; Wang, 2010).

However, our survey results cast doubt on such a wishful assertion. First, as can be seen in Table 6, as with the first generation migrants, most new generation migrants

still identified themselves as rural residents, and only a very small proportion of them identified themselves as urbanites. There are indeed some statistically significant differences between the two generations in that the proportion of the new generation migrants who identified themselves as rural residents was lower than that of the first generation ones; however such a difference was small and the significance level was not high, and the difference was probably due to the fact that the proportion of the new generation migrants who found difficulty in identifying themselves was higher. Such self-identification of the new generation migrants is consistent with another result of the survey, which shows that the average amount of money sent back by the new generation migrants was 5950 Yuan, 140 Yuan more than that sent by the first generation migrants. This further suggests that ties between the new generation migrants to their hometowns are necessarily weaker than those between the first generation migrants and their hometowns.

Table 6 Self-identification of the two generations of migrants (%)

Self-identification	The first generation	The second generation	Total
Identifying oneself as an urbanite	5.5	5.7	5.6
Identifying oneself as a rural resident	61.4	55.4	58.6
Identifying oneself as both a rural and a urban resident	15.8	16.5	16.1
Felt difficult to identify themselves	17.3	22.4	19.7
Total	100	100	100

Source：2009 survey of migrants in Fujian.

Note: χ^2 =8.015, p<0.05.

Second, as can be seen in Table 7, consistent with the above findings, most new generation migrants from our survey still did not want to settle down in the cities, as with their first generation counterparts. Although there were some significant differences in the details of their migration intention between the two generations, on the whole the settlement intention in the current or another destination city for the new generation migrants was not higher than that for their first generation

counterparts. In fact, there was a triple-way diversification among both the first and the second generation of migrants in terms of their future migration flows: settling down in their current city or moving to another city; being undecided and continuing circulation between places of origin and destination; and returning to the hometown. This pattern of diverse migration flows largely applies to both generations of migrants, although the proportion of those who felt undecided regarding their final destination was higher among the new generation migrants. Such undecided status means they will keep 'floating' in their migration process, and will not as readily integrate into the destination cities as commonly believed.

Table 7 The settlement intention of the two generations of migrants (%)

The settlement intention	The first generation	The second generation	Total
Settling down in the current destination city	29.8	24.7	27.4
Continuing to work in the current destination city for a while and then moving to another city	5.4	13.0	8.9
Continuing to work in the current destination city for a while and then returning to the hometown	42.4	34.0	38.5
Continuing to circulate between places of origin and destination	1.9	2.4	2.2
Difficult to make a decision	20.5	25.9	23.0
Total	100	100	100

Source：2009 survey of migrants in Fujian.

Note: $\chi^2 = 45.950$, p<0.001.

These results, together with our previous findings regarding the new generation migrants' income and consumption, housing and social insurance, employment and occupational mobility, provide a picture which looks still quite similar to that of the first generation migrants we have seen before. Thus, although there are already some significant changes from the first generation migrants to the second generation ones in terms of their individual characteristics and personal attitude, their socioeconomic status and readiness to be integrated into the destination cities still remain rather

similar, and such lingering continuity between the two generations of migrants should be paid equal attention, as with change between them.

Modeling migrants' individual characteristics, socioeconomic status and migration intention: the role of the generational change

To further confirm the above understanding on the similarities and differences between the two generations of migrants, we conducted a series of regression modeling to identify the roles of the generational change in the formulation of migrants' individual characteristics, socioeconomic status and migration intention. The dependent variables include migrants' average years of schooling, occupation (coded 1 if employed as administrative, technical workers, sales and service workers, and clerical workers, and 0 if not), migration motivation (coded 1 if the main reasons for migration is 'to earn money for family livelihood' and 'to earn money to help brothers/sisters/children to go to schools', and 0 if not), labor contract status (coded 1 if having signed a contract and 0 if not), monthly income (Yuan), medical insurance (coded 1 if covered and 0 if not), self-identification (1 if identifying oneself as an urbanite and 0 if not), and the settlement intention in the destination city (coded 1 if intending to settle down in the current destination city and 0 if not). These variables cover most of the dimensions of the similarities and differences between the two generations of migrants examined earlier, with only a few not included in the statistical modeling due to the limit of space of the paper. We include the generational change (first versus the second generation) as an explanatory variable, and various socioeconomic and migration indicators, which may affect migrants' individual characteristics, socioeconomic status and migration intention respectively, as control variables. These include migrants' educational attainment, *hukou* status, gender, places of origin, economic status before migration, duration of migration, occupation, places of destination, and monthly income. Details of the variables can be seen in Table 8.

As can be seen in Table 8, the generational change does affect migrants' average years of schooling, their possibility of being employed at the higher occupational strata, and the possibility of their migration being economically driven and family oriented, even when other confounding factors are controlled. This indirectly confirms our previous conclusion that there are indeed significant changes between the two generations of migrants in terms of their individual characteristics and their migration motivation. However, the regression results suggest that the generational change does not have significant effects on migrants' labor contract status, their monthly income, their medical insurance, their self-identification, and their settlement intention in the destination city, when other confounding factors are controlled. This supports our early conclusion that there are no fundamental differences between the two generations of migrants in terms of most aspects of their socioeconomic status and their readiness to be integrated into the destination cities. Clearly, the transition from the first to the second generation alone does not constitute a driving force for migrants to settle down and live a better life in the cities, and other constraining factors need to be explored.

Table 8 Regression results on migrants' individual characteristics, socioeconomic status and migration intention

Dependent Variables / Independent variables	Regression coefficient							
	The average years of schooling	Occupation	Migration motivation	Labor contract status	Monthly income	Medical insurance	Self-identification	The settlement intention in the destination city
Generational difference (the first generation)								
The second generation	2.465****	0.449***	-1.021****	-0.176	4.231	-0.306	0.018	-0.127
Educational attainment (Junior college and above)								
Primary school and bellow		-3.680****	0.906****	-1.697****	-578.141****	-2.236****	0.019	-0.235
Junior secondary school		-2.901****	0.393*	-1.231****	-548.279****	-2.017****	-0.616	-0.318
Senior secondary school or vocational school		-2.034****	0.196	-0.948****	-414.238****	-1.299****	-0.478	0.024
Hukou status (Nonagricultural *Hukou*)								
Agricultural *hukou*	-2.480****	-0.494**	0.256	-0.055	-183.536**	-0.277	-1.549****	-0.01
Place of hukou registration(urban)								
Rural	-0.793****	-0.398**	0.275*	-0.069	11.112	-0.490**	-1.462****	-0.001
Gender(female)								
Male	1.137****	0.049	0.312***	-0.082	341.686****	-0.081	-0.057	-0.147
Places of origin (within Fujian Province)								
Eastern provinces	-0.880****	-0.31	0.239	-0.223	195.248***	-0.27	-0.08	-0.943****
Central provinces	-0.599****	-0.365**	-0.024	0.172	-52.093	-0.063	-0.005	-0.688****
Western provinces	-0.870****	-0.24	0.077	0.112	-107.731**	-0.212	-0.124	-0.798****
Economic status before migration(low level)								
Upper and upper-middle level	1.397****	-0.248	-0.984****	0.404	1046.309****	-0.02	1.468***	0.234
Middle level	0.721****	0.152	-0.480****	0.134	243.927****	0.014	0.826**	0.086
Lower-middle level	0.721****	0.171	-0.206	0.054	188.230****	-0.084	0.233	0.184
Duration of migration		0.025**		-0.009	23.915****	-0.019	0.027	0.052****
Occupation (others)								
Administrative and technical workers				2.958****	139.435*	2.357****	-0.141	-0.054
Sales and service workers				1.880****	-472.771****	1.494****	0.143	0.112

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Manufacturing workers				2.562****	-426.413****	2.585****	-0.473	-0.680****
Places of destination (inland municipalities)								
Fuzhou		0.421*		-0.148	250.608***	0.164	-0.728*	0.139
Xiamen		-0.042		0.013	265.111****	2.288****	-0.029	0.485**
Quanzhou		-0.151		-0.082	340.448****	-0.768**	-0.65	-0.482**
Less developed coastal municipalities		0.362*		0.846****	142.301	-0.772	-0.087	-0.06
Monthly income						2.510E-04***	-9.16E-06	2.44E-05
Constant	9.066****	2.132****	0.489*	-1.002**	1883.957****	-1.849****	-0.66	-0.545
F/Model Chi-Square	98.513****	440.531****	256.005****	580.842****	29.000****	679.196****	214.923****	273.730****
Adjusted R^2/ Nagelkerke R^2	0.327	0.282	0.167	0.337	0.226	0.476	0.287	0.184

Note: ① Those in the brackets are reference categories of respective variables; ②*, * *, * * *, and * * * * indicate levels of significance at 0.1, 0.05, 0.01, 0.001 respectively.

Exploring factors constraining changes from the first to the second generation of migrants: A structural perspective

The lingering similarities between the two generations revealed earlier may be surprising to many observers. A question may be raised as to why there are still so many similarities between the two generations, despite of many differences between them at the individual level, and reasonable answers to this question are of great importance in understanding issues relating to the new generation migrants.

To answer this question, it has to be realized first that the socioeconomic status of the new generation migrants, including that of their human capital, is still significantly lower than that of local residents of their places of destination. The educational attainment and the occupational structure of the new generation migrants are two cases in point. As demonstrated earlier, the educational attainment of the new generation migrants has indeed improved, compared to that of the first generation migrants, and this has indeed affected their socioeconomic status in the destination cities, as can be seen in the regression results in Table 8. However, if compared with local residents of the destination cities, the educational attainment of the new generation migrants is still low. According to the results of the second national economic census conducted on 31 December 2008, 51.5 per cent of employees in the second and tertiary industries of Fujian Province had completed senior high school education[1]. This is much higher than the corresponding proportion of the new generation migrants in our sample, which stood at 30.5 per cent.

In the case of the occupational structure, although the proportion of the new generation migrants employed as administrative and technical workers, clerical workers, and sales and service workers reached 37.20 per cent, significantly higher than that of the first generation migrants (20.9 per cent) as confirmed by the above

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[1] Migrant workers were included in the above mentioned employees. If they were excluded, the educational attainment of local employees would be even higher.

statistical analysis, it is still much lower than that of urban local residents in Fujian Province, which reached 48.5 per cent in 2005[2], according to the 2005 1 per cent population sample survey. Besides, the average monthly income of the new generation migrants was 1723.72 Yuan, significantly lower than the average monthly income of urban employees in Fujian Province, which stood at 2389 Yuan in 2009. If the social benefits and social insurance enjoyed by urban local residents are considered, the real income gap between them and migrants is even bigger.

Clearly, there is still a long way to go for the new generation migrants to achieve the socioeconomic status enjoyed by local urban residents. The long-term nature and the gradualness of the transition between the first and second generations of migrants can be more easily understood, and the similarities between the two generations of migrants should be examined, in such a context.

In addition to this factor at the individual level of migrants per se, it is important to point out that much of our understanding about the new generation migrants so far seems to follow the logic of a human capital approach: since the new generation migrants are young and energetic, better educated and more skillful, they should occupy better positions in both the labour market and the urban society, and therefore should be fundamentally different from the first generation migrants. However, few have realized that the full operation of such logic is still prevented by two important structural constraints.

The first of such constraints is related to the existence of rural-urban disparity in China, and its long-lasting effects on socioeconomic progression of rural-urban migrants. Under China' *hukou* system and related institutional arrangements, the resource distribution in many socioeconomic aspects favors urban areas and leave rural areas disadvantaged. Such an urban biased approach is one of the root causes for the slow socioeconomic progression of rural-urban migrants. The new generation

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[2] Again if migrants were excluded, this proportion would be higher.

migrants are particularly affected by the unequal distribution of educational resources and opportunities, which leaves them on unequal footing when they arrive in the destination cities, compared to local residents, and delay their upward socioeconomic mobility in the cities. Similarly, the exclusion of rural-urban migrants from the urban based social benefit and security system creates further difficulties in their transition from the conventional migrant status. In these aspects, both the first and second generation migrants face the same constraints, and this is an important structural factor responsible for the lingering similarities between the two generations of migrants.

The second, and perhaps even more important structural constraint is related to the fact that labour intensive industries have played key roles in China's fast economic development in the last more than thirty years, and rural-urban migrants have served as the main source to supply cheap labour for such development. While China has benefitted greatly from such a development strategy, its labour intensive nature has significantly restricted the scope of occupational diversification and upward mobility provided by such development to rural-urban migrants. This is evidenced by the fact that 71.7 per cent of the labour demand in China in 2010 was concentrated in manufacturing, construction, wholesales and retail sales, and restaurant and catering industries, leaving only less than 30 per cent of the labour demand in the upper strata of the employment structure, according to a projection in Cai and Gu (2006). Given the typical position of migrants in the segmented urban labour market (Piore, 1979; Zhu, 2007), they would be even more concentrated in the lower strata of the employment structure, and have less chance of obtaining opportunities in the upper ones, compared with the general population. Thus the limited capability of China's labour intensive industries to accommodate occupational diversification and upward mobility is another important structural factor constraining the transition of the new generation migrants from the conventional status of their first generation counterparts. Given the above two structural constraints, it is not surprising that there are still some lingering similarities between the two generation migrants, as these constraints apply

equally to both generations.

Conclusions and policy implications

Based on a representative survey of migrants in Fujian Province, a major migrant destination in China, this paper confirms some common understanding of the differences between the first and the second generations of migrants in the literature in terms of their individual characteristics and their migration motivations, but demonstrates that the differences between the two generations are exaggerated by some popular perceptions on their socioeconomic status and their readiness for integration into the destination cities, suggesting that there are still some remarkable similarities between the two generations. The paper argues that two structural factors, namely the existence of rural-urban disparity and urban biased approach in socioeconomic development, and the strategy of China's economic development dominated by labour intensive industries, create more difficulties for, or limit the scope of, the transition of the new generation migrants from the conventional status of the first generation migrants.

The above understanding of the new generation migrants has important implications for understanding their future changes and for relevant policy making. Two interrelated points arise from such understanding. First, the transition of the new generation migrants from the conventional status of their previous generation is a long and complex process, and this should not be underestimated in relevant policy making. In relation to this, differences between the two generations of migrants should not be exaggerated, and attention still needs to be paid to common issues of the general migrant population as a whole, and to addressing the socioeconomic disparities between migrants and local residents of their destination cities. Second, in policy making regarding the new generation migrants, attention should be paid not only to how their changing characteristics affect their work and life in their migration process, but more importantly, to the structural constraints affecting the effects of such

characteristics. At present, rural-urban disparity and the mode of economic growth dominated by labour intensive industries are two key constraints of this kind. Policy measures addressing the first constraint should be taken to provide equal opportunities between rural and urban areas, especially in terms of education, so that migrants would be on equal footing in human capital when they come to the cities, and to promote the development of rural-urban integrated social welfare and social protection system, so that migrants would not be disadvantaged or even left unprotected because of their geographical mobility. Policies addressing the later constraint should be taken to diversify and upgrade the structure of China's economy to provide a broader basis for the upward mobility of new generation migrants in the destination cities. To achieve this purpose, China needs to reduce the importance of labour intensive industries in its future development, and to find an alternative to replace the roles of labour intensive industries in providing employment opportunities and driving economic growth. There have been already some encouraging indications in the both aspects of policy making in recent years; however, more details still need to be worked out, so that these policies can be smoothly implemented, and the status of the new generation migrants can be fundamentally changed.

Acknowledgements

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