

Who Married Whom? Rural-Urban Migration and Mate Selection in China

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ABSTRACT. Mate selection is important to understanding social stratification and social mobility. China is experiencing the largest urbanization in the history of mankind, and the resulting population movement has affected traditional marriage patterns. *Hukou*, the Chinese word for the household residence registration, is an indicator of social status. The study used the Dynamic Monitoring Data of the Floating Population collected in 2013 and quantitatively examined the potential impact of rural-urban migration on marriage selection in China. Results indicated that after migration 1) the chance to marry someone from different social strata indicated by *hukou* status increased; 2) the chance to marry someone with higher education levels increased; and 3) the chance to marry someone with large age gaps increased, specifically, the chance for older men with an urban *hukou* to marry a younger women with a rural *hukou* increased.

Keywords: Mate selection, migration, rural-urban, *hukou*, China

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China, the most populous country in the world, is experiencing the largest rural-urban internal migration in human history (Chan, 2013). In 2018 there were an estimated 288 million migrant workers in China, making up more than one-third of the entire working population (China Labour Bulletin, n. d.). Based on data collected in 2010, about half of them (42%), aged from 16 to 30 years old, are at the life stage where courtship and marriage take place.

According to the International Labour Organization, two characteristics are featured for internal migration in China. First, it is notable that most migrants leave their farmlands for urban areas for non-agricultural activities. Second, the labor flows geographically from the interior to coastal areas, or from central and western regions to eastern areas. It is obvious that people migrate from underdeveloped rural areas to developed urban areas in hope for better job opportunities and higher wages (International Labour Organization, n.d.).

By 2025, according to estimates by researchers at the McKinsey Global Institute, more than 68% of the newly added urban population in China will be migrants (Woetzel et al., 2009). China's extensive internal migration is changing the platform for young adults to select mates. Under such a historical background, it is intriguing to learn about patterns of marriage selection of Chinese people and to explore the question of "who is marrying whom" in hopes of understanding social stratification and social mobility in the new social structure.

Hukou, the Chinese word for household residence registration, is linked to Chinese people's access to many resources including educational, employment, health care, and other government-funded benefits and it shapes an individual's socioeconomic attainment and social mobility (Tian et al., 2018). Migrants without a city *hukou*, known as the "floating population" despite their physical residence in cities, do not have full benefits enjoyed by those with an urban *hukou* and are excluded from many welfare benefits and social services (Chan, 1994).

Social exchange theory states that there is give and take in all relationships including marital relationships (Nakonezny & Denton, 2008). The purpose of exchange is to achieve the most profit, rewards, and positive outcomes for themselves and, in this case, for their marriages. People either seek to date and marry those who are similar to them (homogamy) or opposite to them (heterogamy/intermarriage). Those who marry someone with primarily similar characteristics (e.g., race, age, SES) as themselves in homogamous marriages, while those who marry outside their group are in heterogamous marriages. According to Kalmijn (1991), "people choose which dimension of homogamy they consider most important" (497). The decision can be affected by the number of eligible candidates for a mate when it is limited by social structure (Regan, 2008).

Characteristics often taken into account include age, education level, race, socioeconomic status, religion and so on. Traditionally, ascribed status attributes (i.e., their fathers' occupations) and achieved status attributes (i.e., their own occupations and educational attainment) are important dimensions to consider for status comparison (Kalmijn, 1991). According to Kalmijn (1991), ascription match occurs when one's partner choice is

usually determined by social status, and when men and women with similar social status have greater opportunities for marriage. Achievement match refers to the type of mate selection for both men and women who tend to look for partners who are the same in terms of education, interests, and lifestyles (Kalmijn, 1991). Competition for socioeconomic resources on the marriage market leads to homogamy in status (Kalmijn, 1998). For example, people with high social status tend to marry someone similar to maintain or maximize their resources.

Marital resources, the attributes that lead to benefits for the partner and the relationship, reflect perceptions of one's attractiveness in the marriage market or one's ability to obtain and maintain marriage (Wang, 2006). Exchange match refers to the type of mate selection resulting in exchange of one's socio-economic resources with another's non-social economic resources. According to Social Exchange theory, the goal of exchange match is to maximize one's benefits and the resources of the marriage. The result of exchange match is heterogamy/intermarriage, where the upward mobility of the lower social class occurs, also known as "upward marriage."

Equity theory emphasizes the importance of perceived equity in relationships and the tendency of people to achieve equity in relationships (Walster et al., 1978). Premarital resources were evaluated in hopes of achieving equity in their contributions to the relationships (Zhang & Li, 2016). When heterogamy occurs in a marriage, the weights that people put on different resources for exchange are the same to perceive equity in contribution. In the Chinese context, where an urban *hukou* is regarded as a significant resource on the marriage market, preferences for the urban *hukou* may forgo a match in other attributes like age and health status. In this case, heterogamy became an intended outcome.

Research on mate selection in the current Chinese context is limited but emerging (e.g. Tian et al., 2018; Wang & Schwartz, 2018). The purpose of this study is to examine potential effects of migration on Chinese marriage selection and the traits of heterogamy if it happens. China's unique experience in internal migration combined with resource differences generated by *hukou* could enrich the existing literature on marriage selection.

Relevant Literature and Hypotheses

Hukou and Internal Migration in China

Prior to 1978, when reform and opening up (i.e., the revolutionary shift in China's economy towards a market economy open to foreign countries) took place, the Chinese government implemented a strict dual urban and rural household registration system. The policy assigned a rural or an urban *hukou* to people based on their residential status in 1958; *hukou* status was passed down from parents to children regardless of their residence after the initial assignment (Wang & Schwartz, 2018). Since the beginning, there has been a disparity in the benefits and resources that urban *hukou* holders and rural *hukou* holders receive from the government and communities. In addition to guaranteed employment and compulsory education, the government covers urban *hukou* holders' expenses related to birth, illness, and

death (Lu, 2003). However, the rural *hukou* has none of these benefits. *Hukou* divides Chinese society into two separate parts: urban and rural.

On January 1, 1984, the No. 1 Document entitled “Notice on Rural Work in 1984” issued by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China stated that farmers employed in manufacturing, business, and service industries are allowed to bring their own food and settle in cities. The document repealed the old policy that had divided urban and rural areas for more than 30 years, giving farmers the right to legally live in the cities. Subsequently, hundreds of millions of farmers went to the cities, which formed a spectacular “rural migrant workers boom” and created opportunities for young men and women from urban and rural areas to know one another. However, there are still institutional obstacles in employment and children's education for those who have a rural *hukou* but work in an urban area. Benefits from the urban system are much better than those from the rural one. If a person with a rural *hukou* works in a city, she or he cannot acquire benefits of the urban social security system (Chan, 1994).

According to the most recent annual survey of migrant workers conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), in 2017 there were an estimated 287 million migrant workers in China, making up more than one third of the entire working population (China Labor Bulletin, n. d.). There are short and long-distance migrants, with short-distance migrants usually working in a city close to their hometown, while long-distance migrants usually work in another city outside of the provinces where their household registrations apply (China Labor Bulletin, n.d.). NBS statistics for 2016 show that 56.7% of China's migrant workers were employed in eastern provinces. They also showed that the vast majority of rural migrant workers are still employed in low-paid jobs in manufacturing, construction and services, with working hours in excess of 44 hours per week.

With extensive working hours and long distances away from hometowns, many migrant parents must leave their children in the countryside for grandparents to care for. Based on the All-China Women's Federation Survey, an estimated 61 million children under 18 years old were left in the countryside by their migrant parents in 2010. Effects of parental migration that children of migrant workers (left-behind children) face, such as educational outcomes and physical wellbeing, have been outlined by reports and studies (i.e. Ren & Treiman, 2016). Another group of migrants leave their hometowns while being single. Compared to their counterparts, they have the chance to marry and start their families in destination areas. Over the years, marriage issues of the urban migrant population have attracted public attention. In this study, to detect the difference of marriage selection by migration, based on the sequence between migration and marriage, we divided the migrant population into two groups: those who get married first, then migrate and those who migrate first, then get married.

Marriage Selection Patterns in China

For thousands of years before 1949, prearranged marriage with selection by parents was the primary form of mate selection in China. A professional matchmaker, usually a

married elderly woman who has a broad network in the community, may be involved to help parents locate potential spouses for their children. They follow *men dang hu dui* (both families' socioeconomic statuses should be matched), the basic rule for matchmaking (Xia & Zhou, 2003). Under such circumstances, "love and marriage were not inextricably tied together" (Xia & Zhou, 2003, p. 233). In 1950 the *Marriage Law* was established, shifting the power over marital decision making from parents to individuals. It promoted equal rights for both sexes and encouraged women to join the labor force. Accordingly, "marriage was expected to be based on conjugal companionship rather than marriage exchange and calculations" (Song & Li, 2017, p. 75).

Followed by large-scale social and economic reforms since 1978, many young people escaped rural poverty through migrant work (Song & Li, 2017). "The increased mobility enabled the young people to make not only more money but also more friends" and "people became more respectful of individual choice and more lenient toward diverse behaviors concerning dating and marriage" (Xia & Zhou, 2003, p. 237). Mate selection criteria under this social background had emphasized on wealth, advanced academic degrees, and body height by Chinese women, as Chen (2002) stated. Chinese men were more attracted to beautiful, healthy, gentle, chaste, and youthful women (Xia & Zhou, 2003). From then until now, young people have had more freedom to express their affection and more choices to make selections of romantic partners. A true culture of dating has emerged in larger Chinese cities and romantic relationships and self-fulfillment have replaced family obligations and patrilineal reproduction as the primary rationales for marriage (Jankowiak, 2017). Therefore, we argue that migrants living in urban areas share the same dating culture, where self-fulfillment is emphasized and family background/status is less emphasized. Therefore, fewer ascription matched marriages were identified among migrants married after migration compared to those married before migration. Therefore, we propose:

Hypothesis 1: Migration decreases the chance of ascription matched marriage. In the past, the measurement of ascription match was based on the fathers' occupations of both spouses. If fathers' occupations were the same or similar, it was considered a marriage within a social status. This study used the household registration (*hukou*) as the proxy because a person's *hukou* status was likely to be passed down from the parents' generation. In one respect, since urban household registration had more developmental opportunities and benefits with more rights and values, urban household registration itself was a sign of socioeconomic status. At the same time, because of differences between urban and rural developments, a rural person marrying an urban person was regarded as upward social mobility. Therefore, if the homogeneity of the *hukou* of both spouses changed after the move, this might imply the effect of migration on mate selection.

Chang and colleagues (2011) compared modern Chinese (a sample collected in 2008) with Chinese studied a quarter of a century earlier (1980s) and found a dramatic decrease in the importance of virginity in mate preference. They also found an increase in the importance of good financial prospects for both men and women. Additionally, they found no change in gender differences in mate preferences where fertility (youth, physical attractiveness) were

valued by men and resources (good financial prospects, social status) were valued by women. A longitudinal study using data collected in 1988, 1995, 2002, and 2007 revealed that over the years there was an increase in educational homogamy among urban married couples and a decrease in intra-household earnings inequality but an increase in inter-household earnings inequality (Hu & Qian, 2015). Based on the evidence mentioned above, educational attainment is one major indicator for achievement attributes. Migrants who live in urban areas and married after they migrated share the same trends, where more achievement matched marriages were identified compared to those married before they migrated. Therefore, we propose:

Hypothesis 2: Migration increases the chance of achievement matched marriage.

In the past, most studies on achievement match were based on the occupational match between male and female (Qi & Niu, 2012; Li & Lu, 2008; Zhang, 2003). Prior to the move, farmers mainly worked in farming. Both men and women had the same occupation. After the migration, the occupations they undertook were mainly those of manual workers and service personnel. Although their occupations changed, the distinction of the occupational prestige was not significant. If occupation was used, it would reach the conclusion that jobs before and after the move are almost the same. Therefore, when the agricultural population accounts for the overwhelming majority of the floating population, using occupations to represent achieved dimension is inappropriate. However, the level of education is an important indicator that reflects consistency of cultures, tastes and interests between men and women. In this study, education is used to measure the achievement dimension.

Mate Selection from the Social Exchange and Equity Theory Perspective

Traditionally, Chinese culture values balance and harmony. To be “well-matched” means that potential marriage partners and their families should have similar social and economic status. However, in modern society, especially with urbanization and globalization, young adults are showing autonomy and diversity in mate selection/preference. Many kinds of marriage ended up not being “well-matched.” One of these types of intermarriage includes unions between urbanites and migrant workers in China. Because of significant resource differences generated, *hukou* itself becomes a significant status attribute in Chinese people’s mate selection (Sun, 2002). In this study, people without an urban *hukou* who seek a partner with an urban *hukou* are regarded as intended status heterogamy.

In the literature, some studies focus on national, ethnic and racial intermarriage (i.e., Chen & Takeuchi, 2011; Qian, Glick, & Batson, 2012), religious intermarriage (i.e., Bisin et al., 2004), and intermarriages based on socioeconomic status (i.e., Charles et al., 2013). Marriage between urbanites and migrant workers in China is a special type of status heterogamy that originated from *hukou*. Those without an urban *hukou* but who married urbanites are considered as “marrying up” in China, as more opportunities, convenience, and securities are introduced through marriage (Liang, 2015). Once a rural person has married an urbanite, her or his *hukou* status may be changed to an urban one and all benefits (including benefits for children) affiliated with *hukou* will be gained through the status change (Chan,

1994; Wang & Schwartz, 2018). As Wang and Schwartz stated (2018), “*hukou* is a key marker of status in contemporary China” (p. 28). They found that *hukou* intermarriage is common and has risen steadily since 1985, and that increasing urban-rural income inequality is associated with increasing *hukou* intermarriage, particularly between urban men and rural women. We propose:

Hypothesis 3: Migration increases the chance of intermarriages where *hukou* status was used as the indicator for exchanging other resources. Equity theory indicates that in order to decide what is fair, a person compares their give/take ratio (or the benefits/resources ratio). The theory presumes that people are the happiest in relationships where benefits they receive from each other is about equal, although the nature of the benefit could be different, according to Kalmijn (1991).

According to social exchange theory, the marital resources people use for trade in the marriage market can be from different dimensions. For example, Sprecher and colleagues (1994) found gender differences in mate selection preferences. More specifically, men were found to care more about youth and physical attractiveness than were women, while women cared more about potential partners’ earning potential. Similar results were reported in a replication study by Beth-Sorensen and Pollet (2016). Ahmed (1989) also found that for women in developing countries, the age of the targeted mate is far less important than the wealth he owns. Therefore, we propose:

Hypothesis 4: Migration increases the chance for a man with an urban *hukou* to marry a younger woman with a rural *hukou*. In this study, we use loglinear models to analyze the data from angles of pursuing either homogamy (ascription match or achievement match) or intended heterogamy to examine the weights people placed on different kinds of resources. Given the facts that exchange between *hukou* and age occurred frequently, the study also examines the age differences of males and females in a marriage to examine whether and how migration promotes upward social mobility.

Method

Sample and Research Design

Data used in this study were from the 2013 National Monitoring Survey on Floating Population collected by the National Health and Family Planning Commission. The annual floating population in 31 provinces (autonomous regions and municipalities) and Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (CYPC) were used as the sampling frame. Probability Proportionate to Size Sampling method was adopted by the research design, and stratified, multi-stage, and scale-proportional sampling were conducted for the study. While maintaining the representativeness of the whole country and provinces, this enhances the representativeness of major urban agglomerations and economic belts. The sampling frame is an inflow population living in the surveyed location one month prior to the survey, not having local *hukou* of the county or city, and aged 15-59 in May 2013. The total sample size of the survey was 198,795 individuals, who either migrated from township to city or from city to city. In this study, a total of 149,685 observations with spousal information were used after

excluding single, divorced, and widowed people. For more details on methodology, see National Health and Family Planning Commission (2013).

To explore the potential impact of population migration on marriage patterns, the sample was divided into two categories according to the initial migration time and marriage time of the respondents. One included those who got married first and then moved, the other included those who moved first and then got married. The former group was used as a reference to compare before and after migration to explore potential impacts of migration on marriage patterns. Descriptive analyses showed that 80,077 individuals first got married and then migrated, accounting for 53.5% of the sample. The number of those who migrated first and then got married was 69,608, accounting for 46.5% of the sample. The average age of the migration first sample was 24.66 years old; the average age of the marriage first sample was 22.83 years old, which showed that migration delayed the time of first marriage and increased the age of first marriage.

Data and Data Analyses

Data collected from both partners on variables including *Hukou Type*, Education Level, Gender, Age, Marital Status, and Age for Marriage were used for analyses. Data analyses in previous research on marriage selection can be categorized in two approaches. The first is contingency table analysis. Using contingency tables, the correlation between frequencies can be decomposed into two effects: the main effect reflecting frequency distribution of homogeneity between husband and wife and the interaction effect reflecting frequency distribution of the heterogeneity of husband and wife. Conventional contingency tables are two-dimensional, which usually only analyzes the relationship between two variables. However, the method cannot analyze relationships between three or more variables.

The second approach is the loglinear model analysis. The loglinear model is a statistical method for effectively processing information of high-dimensional contingency tables. It is a regression model established by using the group frequency as the dependent variable and classification of rows and columns as dummy variables.

This study used the following procedures: First, calculate the age difference, education difference, and *hukou* difference; Second, use the contingency table to compare the marriage first group and migration first group in terms of relevant indicators; Third, use the loglinear model to examine associations between migration and marriage related factors to test hypotheses on ascription match, achievement match, and exchange match. Specifically, models used in this study are in the following categories:

(1) Independent model:

$$\log(F_{ij}) = \mu + \mu_i^H + \mu_j^E + \mu_k^A$$

The independent model is a baseline model, assuming that in terms of marriage, education, *hukou* type, and age are not correlated. In the formula, H represents the

combination of husband's *hukou* and wife's *hukou*, E represents the educational difference between husband and wife, and A represents the age difference between husband and wife. H's subscript is i , $i = 1, 2 \dots I$, E's subscript is j , $j = 1, 2 \dots j$, i and j represent the *hukou* combination type and education difference; A's subscript, k , represents the age difference between husband and wife.

(2) Conditional independent model

$$\log(F_{ij}) = \mu + \mu_i^H + \mu_j^E + \mu_k^A + \mu_l^T + \mu_{il}^{HT} + \mu_{jl}^{ET} + \mu_{kl}^{AT}$$

The conditional independent model suggests not only that the floating population has the main effect but also that migration itself has significant effects on marriage selection, including effects on the *hukou* combination type, age difference, and education difference. T refers to a marriage before or after the move; H, E, A, respectively, are main effects of the *hukou* type, education difference, and age difference.

Results and Discussion

Bivariate Results

Hukou types. *Hukou* is a proxy for measuring ascribed attributes in mate selection. Figure 1 shows that the proportion of both husbands and wives having rural *hukou* in the marriage first group is 86.5% of the sample. However, this proportion in the migration first group is reduced to 78.8%, down by 8 percentage points. Migration makes couples with different *hukou* combinations increase from 4% to 9%. This shows that migration makes the ascription match decrease, prompting more people to overcome *hukou* differences to get married. At the same time, however, it should be noted that the proportion of both husbands and wives who have the same *hukou* type is still high, and the pattern of within-the-status marriage among migrants still prevails.

Education levels. Education level is a proxy indicator reflecting achieved attributes. Results in Table 1 show that the marriage first group is high in low-level education backgrounds. The proportion of both spouses having primary school education is 14.3% and the proportion of both spouses having junior high school education is 44.6%, compared to those in the migration first group that have 4.8% and 41.9%, or 9.5% and 2.7% higher, respectively. However, the migration-first group had more achievement matches among high school and college educated spouses than did the marriage-first group: specifically, 3.9% and 7.5% respectively, higher than the marriage-first group.

Thus, migration may promote matches among more educated persons. Migration may also promote women's upward education match in marriage. For example, among the marriage first group, 7.0% of women with junior high school educations married men with high school educations, while among the migration first group, this percentage increased to 9.0%. At the same time, proportions of women with high school educations marrying men with college educations increased from 1.4% in the marriage first group to 3.7% in the

migration first group. Therefore, migration provides opportunities for those with more education to meet and know each other and promotes achievement match among men and women with higher levels of education, and plays a positive role for women's upward mobility.

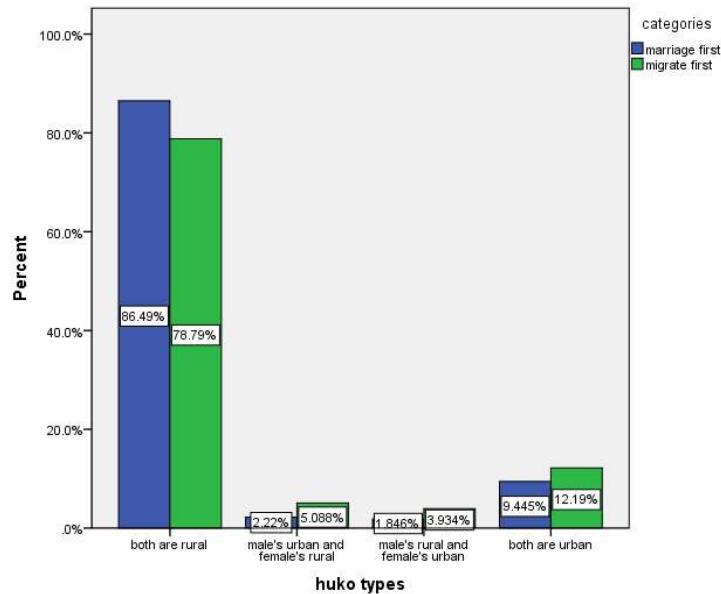


Figure 1
Hukou Combination Type By Migration-Marriage Type

Age differences. In terms of age differences, in the marriage first group, the average age of husbands is 1.77 years older than their wives. In the migration first group, the average age of husbands is 2.08 years older than their wives. In addition, the proportion of husbands who are 4 years older than their wives in the migration first group is significantly larger than that in the marriage first group. Thus, migration further widens the age difference between husbands and wives.

The possible explanation is that on the one hand, migration makes men increase their employment skills, accumulate certain amounts of wealth and social capital, and become more competitive in the marriage market based on equity theory, making it easier for them to marry younger women as an exchange. On the other hand, migration makes women prefer to look for men older than themselves, but who have certain amounts of wealth and social capital to avoid work and life instability risks resulting from their own mobility, again to maximize benefits through marriage. As a result, migration may lead to an increase in age differences between males and females in marriage.

Table 1

Education Match by Marriage-Migration Type (%)

	Male Education	Female Education				Total
		Elementary school or lower	Junior high school	High school	College or higher	
Marriage first	Elementary school or lower	14.3	3.3	0.4	0.1	18.1
	Junior high school	11.8	44.6	2.8	0.2	59.4
	High school	1.8	7.0	8.2	0.6	17.5
	College or higher	0.1	0.7	1.4	2.8	5.0
	Total	28.0	55.6	12.8	3.7	100.0
Migration first	Elementary school or lower	4.8	2.6	0.5	0.1	8.0
	Junior high school	5.8	41.9	4.6	0.6	52.9
	High school	1.0	9.0	12.1	1.6	23.7
	College or higher	0.1	1.4	3.7	10.3	15.4
	Total	11.8	54.8	20.8	12.6	100.0

Loglinear Model Results

The loglinear model results reflect interaction effects of multiple variables on marriage selection. As discussed before, the loglinear model is established to account for differences in age, education, *hukou* type, and migration type. In the model, the ratio of the logarithm of the odds of occurrence of a target event to the logarithm of the odds of occurrence of a reference event is called the log odds ratio. The results are as follows:

Migration makes the odds ratio of ascription match decline, supporting hypothesis 1. In this study, the *hukou* type is used to measure ascription match. Results in Table 2 show that, first, the log odds ratio of both spouses having rural *hukou* is 2.055, which is 2.055 times that of the reference group, both husband and wife having urban *hukou*, suggesting that the ascription match marriage is still the mainstream. Second, after adding the migration variable, the model of the second-order interaction term becomes a condition-independent model. Compared with the independent model, interaction terms have significant

positive effects. From the interaction between the migration type and the *hukou* type, the logarithm of both rural and urban residents increased 0.160 times. However, if the floating population is further divided into the marriage first group and migration first group and the marriage first group is used as a reference, we can see that migration has a more significant negative impact on the ascription match. The log odd ratio of both spouses having rural *hukou* decreased 0.348 times; that of husband with urban *hukou* and wife with rural *hukou* increased 0.578 times; that of husband with rural *hukou* and wife with urban *hukou* increased 0.502 times. In short, migration makes a significant decline in the ascription match, supporting hypothesis 1.

Migration makes achievement match increase, supporting hypothesis 2. In this study, education level is used as an indicator of achievement match. Results in Table 2 show that, first, judging from odd ratios of independent models, the majority of couples have the same level of education. Using the category in which male education is 3 levels higher than the female's as a reference, the log odds ratio of men and women having the same level of education is 5.945 times, that of men having one education level higher than women is 4.704 times, and that of women having one education level higher than men is 3.828 times.

Second, from the conditional independent model after introducing the migration variables, second-order interactions have significant effects. By using male education 3 levels higher than female's as a reference category, after introducing the migration variable, the log odds ratio of both spouses having the same educational level is 6.270 times the reference class and 0.325 times higher than the independent model. The log odds ratio of male education is one level higher than female's is 5.026 times of the reference class and 0.318 times higher than the independent model. The log odds ratio of male education 2 levels higher than female's is 2.906 times and 0.242 times higher than the independent model, while migration makes the log odds ratios of woman's education 1 or 2 level higher than man's decreased. Migration provides more opportunities for men and women with similar educational backgrounds to meet and know each other, and also provides women with more opportunities for upward mobility in marriage.

Table 2

Loglinear Poisson Model Results

Independent Model			Conditional Independent Model		
	OR	Sig.		OR	Sig.
Constant	.542	.000	Constant	-1.014	.000
Age M=F	.922	.000	Age M=F	1.489	.000
Age M>F 1-3	1.962	.000	Age M>F 1-3	2.486	.000
Age M>F 4 or more	1.495	.000	Age M>F 4 or more	1.852	.000

Age F>M 1-3	.970	.000	Age F>M 1-3	1.477	.000
Age F>M 4 or more	rc	.	Age F>M 4 or more	rc	.
MRFR	2.055	.000	MRFR	2.215	.000
MNFR	-1.115	.000	MNFR	-1.448	.000
MRFN	-1.358	.000	MRFN	-1.633	.000
MNFN	rc	.	MNFN	rc	.
Edu F>M 3	-.545	.000	Edu F>M 3	-.798	.000
Edu F>M 2	1.756	.000	Edu F>M 2	1.482	.000
Edu F>M 1	3.828	.000	Edu F>M 1	3.942	.000
Edu F=M	5.945	.000	Edu F=M	6.270	.000
Edu M>F 1	4.704	.000	Edu M>F 1	5.026	.000
Edu M>F 2	2.664	.000	Edu M>F 2	2.906	.000
Edu M>F 3	rc	.	Edu M>F 3	rc	.
			Mig1	-.122	.397
			Mar1	rc	.
			Mig1 age M=F	.131	.000
			Mar1 age M=F	rc	.
			Mig1 age M>F 1-3	.226	.000
			Mar1 age M>F 1-3	rc	.
			Mig1 age M>F 4 or more	.448	.000
			Mar1 age M>F 4 or more	rc	.
			Mig1 age F>M 1-3	.243	.000
			Mar1 age F>M 1-3	rc	.
			Mig1 age F>M 4 or more	rc	.
			Mar1 age F>M 4 or more	rc	.
			Mig1 MRFR	-.348	.000
			Mar1 MRFR	rc	.
			Mig1 MNFR	.575	.000
			Mar1 MNFR	rc	.
			Mig1 MRFN	.502	.000
			Mar1 MRFN	rc	.
			Mig1 MNFN	rc	.
			Mar1 MNFN	rc	.

			Mig1 edu F>M 3	.497	.032
			Mar1 edu F>M 3	rc	.
			Mig1 edu F>M 2	.591	.000
			Mar1 edu F>M 2	rc	.
			Mig1 edu F>M 1	.217	.124
			Mar1 edu F>M 1	rc	.
			Mig1 edu F=M	-.050	.723
			Mar1 edu F=M	rc	.
			Mig1 edu F<M 1	-.123	.380
			Mar1 edu F<M 1	rc	.
			Mig1 edu F<M 2	-.062	.667
			Mar1 edu F<M 2	rc	.
			Mig1 edu F<M 3	rc	.
			Mar1 edu F<M 3	rc	.
Likelihood Ratio	7682.805	.000	Likelihood Ratio	5718.988	.000

Notes: rc=reference category. Age M>F 1-3 means male is 1-3 older than female. MNFR means male with non-rural *hukou* and female with rural *hukou*. Edu F>M 3 means male's education is 3 levels higher than female. Mig 1 means migration first. Mar 1 means marriage first. OR=odds ratio.

Migration widens the age difference in marriage, supporting hypothesis 3. In this study, the age difference between men and women is used as a tradeoff factor to pursue status heterogamy in *hukou*. Results in Table 2 show that, in the independent model, the reference category is the female being 4 years older than the male. We see that in a marriage, males are 1-3 years older than females, the log odds ratio is 1.962 times of the reference category, male 4 years older than female is 1.495 times the reference.

Second, in the conditional independent model that introduced migration variables, male 1-3 years older than female is still the mainstream and has increased, which is 2.486 times the reference and 0.524 times more than the independent model. The males are 4 years older than females, which is 1.852 times of the reference and 0.357 times more than the independent model. If the floating population is divided into the marriage first group and migration first group, the ratio of male 1-3 years older than female in the migration first group is 0.226 times that of the marriage first group; the ratio of male 4 years old than female is 0.448 times, and the ratio of female 1-3 years older than male is 0.248 times of the reference. In sum, migration significantly widens age differences between men and women in marriages, supporting hypothesis 3.

Migration encourages more marriages between rural and urban residents, and the marriage in which men 4 years older than women is much higher than other types,

supporting hypothesis 4. The age difference is not enough to reflect the impact of migration on marriage. Next, we consider age differences in different *hukou* types to examine the potential impact of migration on the marriage gradient. Table 3 shows four match types based on urban-rural attributes of migrant couples, which are: both men and women are rural residents, men are urban residents and women are rural residents, men are rural residents and women are urban residents, and both men and women are urban residents. There are two modes of marriage-migration under each *hukou* type. The first is marriage first, then migration; the second is migration first, then marriage. We examine migration on age differences under different *hukou* types.

Results in Table 3 show that migration widens age difference between husband and wife, and the difference is strongly correlated with the *hukou* type. In the male urban *hukou* and women rural *hukou* type among the migration first group, the age difference is the largest. Marriages with males who are 4-6 years older than females accounted for 23.5%. Marriages with males who are 7-9 years older than females accounted for 9.0%. Marriages with males who are 10 or more years older than females accounted for 6.4% of the total sample: respectively, 8%, 4.8%, and 4% higher than those being rural residents and marriage first groups. At the same time, proportions of men and women with the same age and that of males who are 1-3 years older than females of this group are the lowest. Therefore, migration may make urban-rural marriage rates increase, among which, the age difference between husband and wife widens significantly, indicating that age-based intermarriage has a certain proportion in the floating population. The result is consistent with findings from previous studies (Ahmed, 1989; Beth-Sorensen & Pollet, 2016; and Sprecher et al., 1994).

Table 3

Age, *Hukou*, and Migration-Marriage Type (%)

Age M>F (year)	MRFR		MNFR		MRFN		MNFN	
	Marriage first	Migration first	Marriage first	Migration first	Marriage first	Migration first	Marriage first	Migration first
-10+	1.3	.7	2.6	.8	.6	.6	4.2	.2
-9—7	.3	.3	.3	.1	1.5	.4	.3	.2
-6—4	1.7	1.8	1.8	1.9	2.7	1.8	1.4	1.6
-3—1	15.8	15.2	13.0	12.8	17.0	19.3	13.4	14.8
.00	15.9	13.6	11.5	9.5	14.6	14.9	15.6	16.2
1-3	43.0	41.8	38.9	36.0	39.2	38.9	40.3	39.5
4-6	15.5	18.2	19.6	23.5	16.8	17.3	15.8	17.5
7-9	4.2	5.6	6.9	9.0	3.8	4.4	4.7	5.4
10+	2.5	2.8	5.6	6.4	2.9	2.2	4.3	3.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Notes. For example, MNFR means male with non-rural *hukou* and female with rural *hukou*.

In sum, from the age difference in the urban-rural marriage, *hukou* as a premarital condition in the marriage can be exchanged with age. A young woman with a rural *hukou* is willing to marry an older man with an urban *hukou*, which implies an exchange, that is, one side with the age advantage exchanges for the other party's ascribed attribute of *hukou*. Migration has created opportunities and conditions for such exchanges and promoted more exchanges. This study does not deny there are emotional factors in marriages between older men and younger women, but there is also some degree of exchange that is found in this study.

Conclusion

Mate selection for marriage is an important angle from which to observe mobility of social classes. Based on data collected by the National Commission on Health and Family Planning in 2013 and using contingent tables and loglinear models, this study explored the potential impact of population migration on patterns of marriage in the process of urbanization. We find that the tendency of ascription match declines and achievement match rises. China's particularity lies in the fact that while industrialization is taking place, China is also carrying out the largest urbanization in human history. Urbanization has brought about population migration. Population migration has not only improved social and economic welfare but has also changed marriage values and behaviors.

This study examined “who is marrying whom” with a sample of the floating population. On the one hand, the study verifies applicability of the traditional marriage theory in explaining the floating population in the process of urbanization. On the other hand, this study also finds that the marriage behavior of this sample has some unique features.

First, just as the dichotomy between urban and rural areas is caused by *hukou*, the household registration system in the socioeconomic aspects, it also plays the same segregation role in the marriage market in China. The household registration system has largely locked the floating population's position in the marriage market. The marriage between both spouses with rural *hukou* is still the mainstream.

Second, as urbanization progresses, the mating circle of migrants has been expanding. The modern lifestyle has changed people's attitudes toward marriage to a certain extent. Compared to those get married first, those who migrate before marriage have a higher proportion of which the husband has a city *hukou* and the wife has a rural *hukou*. At the same time, the proportion of couples in which the wife has an urban *hukou* and the husband has a rural *hukou* is also in a certain scale.

Third, China's urbanization is intertwined with marketization reform. The exchange law of the market economy has also entered the marriage market. The exchange of marriage markets reflects tradeoffs among economic, social, human, and image capitals. For migrants entering the marriage market, the age advantage as the image capital is also exchangeable. Compared with the marriage first group, the proportion of young women with rural *hukou* marrying older men with urban *hukou* is high. This reflects that the age factor (image capital/physical resource) plays a unique role of breaking through the *hukou* barrier.

Although this is an inequitable exchange in the traditional value of marriage in China, it seems gradually accepted and equitable as a woman's upward marriage in today's society.

Fourth, human capital has an impact on the pattern of marriage selection. A comparison of the educational attainment of men and women finds that the marriage first group has homogeneity in the low education level, while for the migration first group, migration makes opportunities for higher educated people to meet and know each other, encouraging marriages between men and women with high human capital. At the same time, migration has also created opportunities for women to seek men with higher education levels, and to a certain extent, promoted upward marriages for women in terms of educational level.

The study's limitations should be acknowledged. First, research on exchangeable matches can be expanded. This study discussed the exchange match only from the relationship between age differences and *hukou* type for men and women. This question can also be explored by considering the relationship between age differences and the income gap between men and women, the relationship between age differences and the male's real estate, the relationship between age differences and the male's occupation, etc. Second, this study only used data from China. To make findings more generalized, using data from other countries can confirm or disconfirm this study's findings.

The findings of this study have implications for public policies. First, the findings suggest that rural-to-urban migration in China is beneficial for alleviating social stratification through mate selection. Policy makers should pay special attention to young migrants in the marriage market and provide services they need for finding ideal marriage mates. Second, policy makers should be aware of changing marriage values and behaviors, and should make policies to promote stable marriage, which is not only beneficial for personal wellbeing but also for sustainable economic development and social stability. Third, policy makers should also pay attention to special needs of children and youth resulting from these migrants' marriages because most of their relatives and extended family members from one or both sides are far apart in distance and have different lifestyles.

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