

**Urbanisation of Rural-Urban Migrants:  
A Case Study of *Shiminhua*  
in The Greater Bay Area of China**



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## DECLARATION

This thesis is the result of my own work and include nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my thesis has already been submitted, or is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the relevant Degree Committee.

Joseph Zhao

December 2022

# ***Shiminhua: The Urbanisation of Rural-Urban Migrants***

## **A Case Study of the Greater Bay Area of China**

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## Urbanisation of Rural-Urban Migrants: A Case Study of *Shiminhua* in The Greater Bay Area of China

### Abstract

This thesis on "The Urbanisation of Rural-urban Migrants: A Case Study of the Greater Bay Area (GBA) of China" is designed to answer the research question of "How does the phenomenon of *shiminhua* (urbanisation of rural-urban migrants) unfold in Chinese cities?". It is articulated by two sub-research questions: "What are suitable indicators for measuring the level of *shiminhua*?" and "What are the features that facilitate or prevent the process of *shiminhua*?" with a case study on the Chinese GBA region.

To answer the questions, a mixed-method approach was adopted using Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to construct *shiminhua* indicators from migrants, completing survey questionnaires to test the indicators and to identify the impact factors, and conducting semi-structured interviews with exploring the dynamics in the process. First-hand qualitative and quantitative data collected from fieldwork in GBA were first analysed separately and subsequently triangulated and corroborated with previous literature.

This research found that the rural-urban migrant's perception on *shiminhua* is sharply in contrast with the discourse of *shiminhua* by the government. From the migrants' view, *shiminhua* is an incremental process accompanied by the development of a compromised place attachment and an internalised urban identity. Therefore, place attachment and urban identity are the two most effective alternative indicators for measuring *shiminhua* with settlement intention as a supplementary indicator. In GBA, homeownership in the city, and social circle with a majority of urban natives are associated with high level of *shiminhua*, while a local *hukou*, ability in Cantonese and children's education are of potential impacts. Successful *shiminhua* can be achieved by combining personal striving, supportive urban governance in reducing local barriers and continuing institutional reforms in *hukou* at the regional and national level.

Findings of this study imply that government's interpretation of *shiminhua* need to reconcile with the migrants' perception on *shiminhua*, by incorporating the above-mentioned impact factors. Moreover, cultural-psychological indicators of place attachment and urban identity can be adopted by the studies of the acculturation process which are similar to the *shiminhua* process. Finally, this thesis indicates that more research drawing onto interdisciplinary theories and mixed-method can be

applied to investigate the interaction of people and the built-environment in the process of urbanisation.

## Chapter 1 Introduction: Why *shiminhua* is Important

This introductory chapter starts with research background, investigates gaps of research in the field and positions the research questions. A recapitulation of all eight chapters is set at the end, sign-posting the structure of the whole dissertation.

### 1.1 Research Background

Wandering through Guangzhou, one of the contemporary megacities in China, one will be amazed by the urban landscape: rich building façades; boutiques selling all kinds of avant-garde luxuries; convenient transportation, and vivid nightlife. In provincial capitals, the magnificent overpass systems and newly arising skyscrapers are eye-catching. In the smaller towns, streets are less noisy but equally lively, filled with local restaurants and mobile dim sum stalls. All these landscapes would have been unimaginable several decades ago in China before the massive and rapid urbanisation process, which then had a majority rural population and strictly controlled human mobility.

According to the classic urban economic theory: cities flourish with the in-flow of migrants (O'Sullivan, 2007). Salespersons in luxury shops, construction workers building the overpasses, and stall owners preparing *dim sum* for passers-by: all these service providers are likely to be migrants from other places, the greater number being rural-urban migrants.

Chinese mobility has increased at an unprecedented scale over the last four decades (Chan & Buckingham, 2008). With 200 million people categorized as “rural-urban migrant(s)”, one in seven Chinese is currently experiencing the dramatic urbanisation process and are crossing the rural-urban boundary. The migration process is accompanied by huge changes in city and rural landscapes, central and local institutions, socio-cultural habits, as well as lifestyles (Wirth, 1938; Chan, 1994; Guldin, 2001; Zhang, 2005; Chan & Buckingham, 2008; F. Wang & Liu, 2015). Regardless of the benefits from urbanisation, it could be gruelling for Chinese rural-urban migrants, not only from a socio-economical perspective but also from institutional and cultural viewpoints. Furthermore, regarding problems arising from urbanisation, governments at different levels tend to point to the failure of large-scale integration on the part of rural-urban migrants (Nolan & White, 1984; Central Government of China, 2022). Megacities seem to have the most prevalent problems associated with displaced rural-urban migrants. There are two main reasons for this. First, owing to agglomeration effects, big cities have much more resources and opportunities, they become more attractive to rural-urban migrants: in the meantime, urban problem, e.g. congestions, pollution, urban homelessness could be in a larger scale. Second, bigger cities get more media coverage and their problems are taken more seriously, usually with a more widely spread reputation (Merrilees et al., 2014).

China’s urbanisation is driven by increasing rate of rural-urban and inter-city migration. This phenomenon has resulted in a new era in which second- and third-tier cities, even

smaller towns, have expanded significantly. These unprecedented changes impact on Chinese society profoundly, transforming large plots of rural land into competitive manufacturing and service hubs. However, the impacts of human living in the cities are less emphasized than effects on the built environment in general; the contribution of vulnerable groups such as rural-urban migrants have been under-recognized (Feng, 2017; M. Chen et al., 2019). Hence, it is worthwhile to balance the perspective from a big picture as well as understanding the process that happened on the individual rural-urban migrant (Zhao, 2001; Yeh et al., 2006).

## **1.2 Research Gaps**

This research addresses three research gaps in the existing studies. At a conceptual level, most past studies focus on physical side of urbanisation concepts or “urbanisation of built environment” when mentioning the word “urbanisation”. As most urbanisation-related studies are conducted by planners and geographers who tend to emphasis spatial transition and landscape changes as a result rather than a process studies focusing on the human dimension in the urban transition process are even fewer (Wan & Jin, 2019).

The impact of urbanisation process on people is an important topic to study due to three reasons. Firstly, urban residents’ behavioural changes in urban area are multifaced and in different levels. Secondly, changes of urban-rural migrants are less visible, hence harder to measure. Lastly, the changes of human activities have profound reversed impacts on structure of society, as well as knock-on effects on physical space.

Urbanisation is a process where both space and people change, and the changes are usually interwoven. To better understand the interaction between space and people, it requires holistic conceptualization, more effective measures of people' urbanisation, in specific city and regional context (Mumford,1961; Friedmann & Wolff, 1982; Hall,2014).

At the methodological level, there seems to be a practice of applying existing global framework to the Chinese context (Zhao, 2001; Yeh et al., 2006). More specifically, Anglo-American originated paradigms of migration theories have been widely applied to studies of other regions. This shaped the landscape of current research of Chinese internal migrants: a rather narrow top-down theoretical lens is adopted. Under this lens China-related research is categorized into cases that fitted into the neoliberal 'mainstream' discourse or not (Massey et al., 1993; Yap, 1977). The consequence is a dilemma that Urban Studies theories are exclusive applied to large cities based at developed part of the world while so-called Global South cities are studied mainly with approach from development economics. This dilemma makes it tricky when looking at relative developed cities located in a less developed hinterland, limiting understanding of the context due to lack of ground-developed theories. Hence, there is an intellectual demand for grounded theories systematically and directly developed from the Global South field to bridge Urban Studies and Development Studies theories and traditions.

At the geographical level, there is utterly a lack of inter-tier city comparison studies within GBA. Existing human mobility studies can be categorized into macro- and micro-scale. Either they tend to be limited at the national scale with a series of selected cities or using one geographical region or city as a case study (Banerjee, 1986; Z. Guo & Liang, 2017; Y. Liu, Li, et al., 2012). Whereas inter-city comparison studies are limited to cities of similar kind, for example, comparative studies between Bangalore and Shenzhen, or comparison between Beijing and Shanghai (S. Chen & Liu, 2016; Drolet & Teixeira, 2020; Gao, 2010).

In this research, I argue that to bridge those above-mentioned research gaps, three shifts in research framework are required. Firstly, to broaden the comprehensiveness of the concept of urbanisation through incorporating the element of people at focus; secondly, to analyse migration process by applying both deductive and inductive methods; and thirdly, to study a relatively developed region located in Global South context.

## **1.2 Research Question**

This thesis addresses the key question of 'How does the phenomenon of urbanisation of rural-urban migrants (*shiminhua*) unfold in Chinese cities?' Urbanisation of rural-urban migrants is used as an interchangeable English translation of the from *shiminhua*

directly retrieved from Mandarin Chinese language.<sup>1</sup> The phenomenon is further break down into the level of *shiminhua* and the process of *shiminhua*, generating two sub-research questions based on the key research question, as in Table 1.1.

*Table 1.1 Research Questions and Objectives*

Research questions	Related Chapters
How does the phenomenon of <i>shiminhua</i> (urbanisation of rural-urban migrants) unfold in Chinese cities?	Chapter 4, chapter on qualitative Analysis
What are suitable indicators for measuring the level of <i>shiminhua</i> ?	Chapter 5, chapter on quantitative Analysis
What are the features that facilitate or prevent the process of <i>shiminhua</i> ?	Chapter 6, chapter on triangulation and corroboration

*Source: Author-own.*

The underlying hypothesis for the three research questions is that the phenomenon of urbanisation of the migration does happen in Chinese cities, with a change of level and a process that could potential be analysed. The phenomena of changing built environment that initiate changes of people could be supported by empirical evidences from other regions across the globe (Jacobs, 1962; Gwynne, 1985; Friedmann, 1986; Sassen, 1991; Whyte, 2001). Rural-urban migrants are defined as internal migrants who migrated at least once from areas defined as rural to the areas defined as urban by national authorities. Chinese cities are defined as cities within the territories of People's Republic of China.

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<sup>1</sup> *Shiminhua* is the romanisation of 市民化 in Chinese characters, the italic font style is to indicate a word or concept from a foreign language. In the Chapter 2 sub-section Genesis of *shiminhua*, the cultural connotations and synonyms of this word are scrutinised.



The two sub-research questions are tightly knitted to the key research questions, addressing on both measurable static status of *shiminhua* at a micro-level while treating it as an on-going process at a macro-level.

The three research questions are of intellectual significance as they potential contribute to urban and development theories at different level, as demonstrated in Table 1.1 under the column under Research Objectives.

Apart from intellectual inquiry, this research question has practical consequences for development: since China's economic structure has remained "fundamentally rural" for several thousand years, it shaped the habits, lifestyles, and values of Chinese people profoundly. Individual may find it alienating experience when encountering recent urbanisation and migration, together with institutional changes of the *hukou* system. Those radical changes may clash into the traditional Chinese value system, forming a barrier for further development.<sup>2</sup> How to balance the socio-economic motivations for human mobility along with cultural-psychological impacts of so-called "modern urban world" under constantly reformed institutions presented challenges to development initiators and urban managers. Moreover, by examining the phenomenon of urbanisation of the people in the Chinese case can shed lights on other Global South

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<sup>2</sup> For example, 'ties among families and clans', 'intentions to going back to rural hometown' could prevent elder migrants from moving to the cities with their posterity, causing the left-behind elderly problem (Hsu, 2017).

regions' development strategies and urban policies, with similar characteristics of Chinese development.

A final note on the research questions is that, though geographically defined as "[...] in Chinese cities" this research project does not aim to achieve an overall generalisation of conclusions to all Chinese cities. The rationale is, cities within different regions under various development contexts even within a country could have distinguished historical trajectory, socio-economic dynamics, and cultural-psychological legacies. Saying that, it is the research findings build upon the research questions that could potentially shed lights on studies on other cities in geographical regional context, within China and across the globe.

### **1.3 Chapter Outline**

To systematically study the questions and build up the research, the dissertation is divided into 7 major chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the backdrop and motivation of this research, position this research in current discourse and debates in development and urban studies. It then comes to the research gaps and research objectives, with this last section signposting the structure of this thesis.

Chapter 2 is a systematic literature review of urbanisation of rural-urban migrants in the special context drawing from classic and emerging urban studies and migration studies. This chapter aims to scope down from global debates on migration and urbanisation to regional situations of Greater Bay Area (GBA), including an explicit

description of Chinese city system and a genesis of the concept of *shimin* under Chinese context. Chapter 2 ends with a focused discussion on urbanisation and migration at the GBA, leading to a research framework of Chapter 3.

Chapter 3 provides an overarching research analytical framework based on literature reviews and regional context of Chinese GBA. With *shiminhua* being the core concept in the framework, the methodology for this project is then designed to resonate with elements in the analytical framework. A mixed method research approach under the research strategy of case study is divided into three entwining phases of Focus Group Discussion (Phase I), survey questionnaire (Phase II), and semi-structured interviews (Phase III). The sampling frame and method are then described in detail. Chapter 3 also revealed the practical aspects of fieldwork including how the fieldwork is planned delivered and assessed, ending by reflections on ethical issues and positionality of the researcher in fieldwork.

The first half of Chapter 4 starts from the discussion on research framework and methods to a more detailed, technical aspects of measuring *shiminhua* using survey questionnaires. Variables are designed by taking considerations of matrices covered in past studies as well as contemporary regional situation. The latter half of Chapter 4 focused on the design of analytical method on rich but fuzzy nature of qualitative data, mainly scrutinized the thematic coding process.

Chapter 4 lays out the foundations for thematic qualitative analysis before putting forward the qualitative results based on data collected from Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) and Semi-structure interview analysis. The process of qualitative coding is insightfully revealed to increase transparency. A holistic understanding on the process of *shiminhua* is presented based on six themes retrieved from the analytical framework in Chapter 3 with succinct quotations brought in from FGD and interview transcripts where necessary.

Chapter 5 focus on the sub-research question on measurement of *shiminhua* as a a result by presenting the process and result of quantitative analysis, starting from a descriptive analysis of the data set gained from questionnaires and a set of alternative dependent variables to infer *shiminhua* levels are then suggested. After checking the model requirements, an ordered logistic regression model is conducted against each indicator based on identical set of key variables identified in the previous qualitative Chapter. Lastly, a statistical evaluation of the model is carried out.

Chapter 6 triangulates qualitative and qualitative results and corroborate result with existing literature. Those seemingly counter-intuitive findings from Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. In the triangulation and corroboration process are used to further probe into entangled issues of education, second generation of migrants, and institutions and governance of migrant communities in contemporary Chinese context, leading to the presentation of the contrasting perspectives in understanding *shiminhua*.

Chapter 8 concludes the thesis by presenting , an overall summary the research results and their implications to the current debates on *shiminhua*, migration and urbanisation in China and beyond at different analytical levels. Further research direction based on this thesis is then proposed, subsequent by a final part in evaluating and acknowledging the limitations of the whole thesis. The final chapter also recap how the results answer the research questions.

## **Chapter 2 Understanding Shiminhua: A Literature Review**

Positioned in the field of urban studies and economic development, with a specific focus upon rural-urban migration, this literature review begins by setting out the various mechanisms of migration. After reviewing the essentials of migration, the chapter narrows to a discussion of rural-urban migration in China. Classic urban theories are then drawn upon to analyse the relationship between urban built-up areas and city inhabitants, focussing upon the concept of place attachment, urban identity, and settlement intention. The chapter ends with a review of acculturation theories, with a specific focus upon education and social interactions.

In this chapter, both classic western theories, and the new theories from the Global South have been reviewed, with reference to case studies from other regions beyond this study's geographic context. The academic literature is supplemented with grey literature pertaining to government policies and local statistical yearbooks.

### **2.1 Theories of Migration**

Studies of migrations have featured across the disciplines of development economics, human geography, demography, and statistics as well as in social and political studies. In this section, an overview of migration theory begins with global-level theories and delves into more place-based, recent theoretical debates in a Chinese context.

#### **Global Theories of Migration**

The global theory of migration aims to reflect on the nature and essential features of migration. These theories are derived from studies of internal migration, referring to migration happening within a sovereign state's territories, and international migration, referring to migration occurring across state borders.

### *Definition of the Migrant*

The Oxford dictionary defines a migrant as they "(who) move from one place to another in order to find work or better living conditions" (Soanes, 2006, p. 792). This definition reflects the two significant features of human migration theory highlighted by early theorists. First, the most significant feature is the movement acrosses certain borders; second, the movement is usually initiated by economic motivation (Ravenstein, 1885, 1889; Lewis, 1954; Ranis & Fei, 1961; Lee, 1966; Todaro & Harris, 1970).

Other scholars provide alternative definitions of migration without emphasizing the movement aspects. For example, Bach and Schraml (1996) adopt a narrower definition: people who aim to reside in the migration destination are considered migrants. Nevertheless, 'willingness to reside' can be hard to determine case by case.

Crossing a border makes a movement eligible to be categorised as a migration, whereas ideas vary on what constitutes a valid border to be crossed (Balibar, 1998; Rumford, 2006). Balibar (1998) maintains that the action of crossing a national border

or other administrative limit defines a valid migratory movement (Rumford, 2006). Others argue that the action of crossing a boundary itself does not qualify an individual as a migrant. It is the post-crossing change experienced by an individual between two places that matters (Nanayakkara, 2012), as people from different places have entitlements of different kinds, especially regarding access to scarce resources e.g. education and social insurance, which have implications for economic welfare and quality of life (T. H. Marshall, 1987).

Moving from definitions to the types of migrants, according to whether the borders crossed are sovereign state borders or regional borders, there are international migrants and internal migrants.<sup>3</sup> Based on the 'rationale' for migration, there are voluntary migrants and forced migrants--- the latter includes trafficked humans, refugees, and asylum-seekers etc. (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2016). Regarding motivations and incentives, there are economics migrants, war refugees, environmental migrants etc. (Roger et al., 2013) . According to the direction of migration, there are immigrations and emigrations, the immigration destination is referred to a 'receiving area' while the origin place of emigration is referred to as a 'sending area' (Murphy, 2000). According to patterns of migration, there are seasonal migrants, step-wise migrants, returned migrants, etc. (Constant & Zimmermann, 2013).

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<sup>3</sup> Since national borders are more concrete than other forms of boundary, they often create vastly distinctive entitlements on both sides of the boundary, consequently, international migration is more heavily studied. Political boundaries make it more complex to identify and study internal migrants (World Economic Forum, 2017).



Quantitative studies of migrants and migration concentrate on the measuring of the number of migrants (Caldwell, 1981), migration distance, migrations patterns, changes and adaptation of the migrants (Alba & Nee, 1997), and migrant remittance (Chaudhuri, 1993).<sup>4</sup> This thesis, focusses upon one specific type of internal migrants, those who moved from a rural sending area to an urban receiving area out of economic necessity, as defined by economic motivation and measured by the migration directions and patterns. In the following sub-section, classic theories of migration are presented.

### *Classic Theories of Migration*

Human movement occurred long before modern global migration theory on migrations originated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Potts & Bond, 1990; R. Cohen, 1996). The classic theories of migration derived from both studies of internal and international migration (Zelinsky, 1971; R. Cohen, 1996; Skeldon, 2006). In this sub-section, these theories are categorized into three types, namely classic theories, economic theories, and new theories.

Classic theories consist of early theoretical generalizations concerning migration, based on observations or empirical surveys and censuses (Yap, 1977; Massey et al., 1993; R. Cohen, 1996). The classic foundation is Ravenstein's seven 'laws of migration',

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<sup>4</sup> 'Migrant remittance' refers to the sum of money sent by migrants to families in sending areas, usually earned in the receiving area via working or business.

based on empirical evidence gathered in the British Isles Census of 1871. Ravenstein presented the importance of distance in migration, heterogeneous motivations of migration, accompanied counterflows, the consequence of agglomeration effects, female dominance of short migrations, an increasing number of migrants, and profound impacts on socio-economic development. These laws established by Ravenstein (1876, 1885, 1889) have been verified based on empirical data from the UK and 20 other twenty European countries, and have been challenged and criticized.

A second landmark in theoretical development is Lee's push-pull model derived from the massive migrations following the Second World War (1939-1945), (Lee, 1966). Lee's model is also a critical development of Ravenstein's laws with application to developing areas and a synthesis of the other theories in human geography, i.e. the gravity model (Vanderkamp, 1977; J. E. Cohen et al., 2008). Lee argues that there are push and pull factors, denoted by the symbols '+' and '-' symbols in Figure 2.1. The migration process is considered to be an interaction of these factors in origin and destination, although Lee did not quantify the factors. Lee also noted that, in addition to the geographical distance decay described in the gravity model, intervening obstacles can influence migration (Lee, 1966). Classic theories can be regarded as an attempt to establish overarching rules both for migration, regardless of Farr's argument that "migration appeared to go on without any definite law" (Ravenstein, 1885, p. 242).

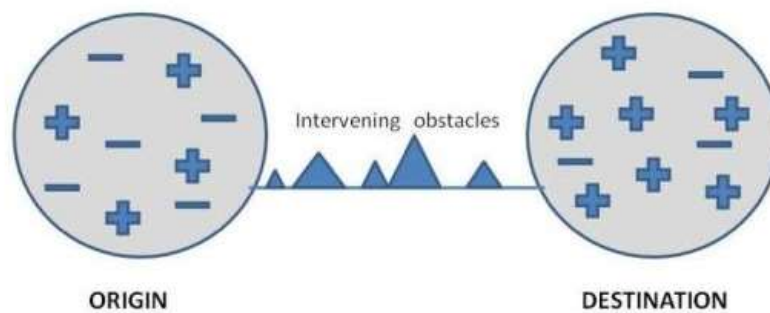


Figure 2.1 Lee's Push-and-Pull Model of Migration

Source: Lee, 1966, p.50.

According to Lee's migration model in Figure 2.1, the migrant exodus to cities is shaped both by push and pull factors and their dynamics. Economic agglomeration provides more employment opportunities and higher salaries compared to those of rural areas, while colourful city lifestyles are attractive set against the dull and hard life of rural villages (Ravenstein, 1885; Lee, 1966; O'Sullivan, 2007). Hart (1973) also argues that the attractiveness of larger human settlements is not unique to industrialized cities but could refer to any port city or commercial township throughout history, based on his studies on the Frafra group's migration in West Africa.

### ***Economic Theories of Migration***

Economic theories of migration are rooted in demographics studies and development economics based on Malthus' work *An Essay on the Principle of Population* published in 1798 (Bloom et al., 1998; Galor & Weil, 2000). The Demographic Transition Model was used to interpret the rapid industrialization process concurrently with changes in national birth and death rates. The model attested that in the earlier, pre-industrialisation stage of development, high death rates hindered population growth.

With industrialization improvement of medical conditions, the death rate drops while the birth rate remains high, leading to a population increase until the birth rate drops as well (Galor & Weil, 2000). The Demographic Transition Model has been supported by evidence from western European countries such as Britain, Ireland, and France, and has been more recently applied to emerging economies in Asia (Tacoli, 1998). In the pre-industrialization stage, surplus population and increasing productivity may lead to incentives for internal and international migration (Caldwell, 1981).

Economists have further interpreted migration as part of the economic development process as the development economist Arthur Lewis (1954) adopting a dual sector model for developing economics with an assumption of unlimited supplies of rural labour.<sup>5</sup> The model argues that the income gap between the subsistence sector and the capitalist is the intrinsic motivation for migration.<sup>6</sup> The Lewis' model also supposes that there is no governmental intervention in free mobility between two sectors in the context of an expanding capitalist sector in the city with its concomitant external investment and industrialization process. After the Lewisian turning point at which the surplus labour pool from the rural sector is depleted, the economic development will then resemble a developed country. Persuasive and prevalent in explaining internal migration in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Lewis' model has been mainly applied in order to provide

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<sup>5</sup> The subsistence sector is considered rural, agricultural; the capitalist sector is regarded as urban, industrial and capital-intensive; though these terms are not always strictly equivalent depending on theoretical context (Basu, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> According to the Lewis model, the income gap is caused by the increase of modern, industrial, urban manufacture sector with investment of capital inflow (Lewis, 1954).

a guide to the economic development of newly-independent countries in Africa and the Caribbean, as well as emerging economies in Asia in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century (J. Knight, 2010). Meanwhile, the model has been criticized due to the lack of attention paid to the modern sector's capacity to absorb rural immigration, its focus upon rural-urban migrants without considering a longer historical context, and for failing to take 'urban bias' into consideration (Hart, 1973; Lipton, 1977; Tacoli et al., 2015).<sup>7</sup>

Successive work by Ranis and Fei (1961) critically built upon Lewis' model by scrutinizing the neglected absorptive capacity of the urban sector and other potential rural factors that shape marginal productivity. They also consider the effects of changing terms in trade regarding the costs of supplied labour in the industrial sector. Todaro and Harris (1970) accepted the basic assumptions that are common to the Lewis model and the Ranis-Fei model, which have hereafter been used to study the mass provision of rural labour in China, South Africa, Brazil, and India (Knight, 2010; Xiao, 2018). The nuance of Harris and Todaro's model is that they stress on the importance of the "expected earnings" (1961, p. 162) of migrants in cities rather than the actual wage as the detrimental pull factor after considering the urban unemployment rate (Fields, 1975; Todaro & Harris, 1970).

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<sup>7</sup> The thesis of 'urban bias' argues that rather than pure economic consideration, elite class in a country usually live in the city thus promote development policies that favour urban sector (Lipton, 1977; Nolan & White, 1984).

Overall, the economic theories encountered three critiques. First, overemphasizing economic factors and ignorance of institutional, socio-economic, and cultural endogeneity (Yap, 1977). Second, there are simplifying assumptions that may neglect differences among nations' development circumstances (Gollin, 2014). Third, the Anglo-American-centric views hindering applicability to studies of migration in other regions (Massey et al., 1993).

### *New Theories of Migration*

New theories of migration are less systematic compared to the classic and economic theories, adopting either heterodox economic or non-economic approaches (Lawson, 2006). Micro-level theories are drawn upon, to extrapolate the migration process from individual decision-making and -taking perspectives (Massey et al., 1993). Alternatively, the migration decision-making process can occur at the level of the family or the household, which tends to be more cautious towards risk rather than prone to taking higher risks to gain more considerable benefits (De Jong & Gardner, 1981). Schultz (1961) sees the decision to migrate as a form of investment in human capital, while Sjaastad (1962), after Schultz, contends that the migration process is in fact a series of investment decisions. Da Vanzo verifies the strong correlation between the first migration of an individual and the tendency towards further migratory movement, concluding that those who have migrated are more likely to migrate further (Constant & Zimmermann, 2013). While Piore (1979) focuses upon the relationship between

labour markets and individual labour, proposing a dual labour market theory comprising four assumptions.<sup>8</sup>

Other migration theories draw upon existing theories of different disciplines to illustrate the migration phenomenon. Zelinsky's Mobility Transition Model (1971) is a further development of the Demographic Transition Model, focusing more upon migration in a developing context. It argues that the internal migration pattern is related to a society's five different development stages, resonating with the development stages of the nation in the Demographic Transition Model. The Mobility Transition Model attested that "there are definite, patterned regularities in the growth of personal mobility through space-time [...] and these regularities comprise an essential component of the modernization process" (Zelinsky, 1971, p. 221).

*Table 2.1 Overarching Theories in Migration Studies*

Classic Theories	Economic Theories	New Theories
Ravenstein's laws of migration (1889)	Lewis Model (1954)	Schultz and Sjaastad migration as investment decisions (1961,1962)
Lee's Push-and-Pull Model (1966)	Ranis-Fei Model (1961)	Demographic Transition Model (1929, 1934,1950)
	Harris-Todaro Model (1976)	Zelinsky's Mobility Transition Model (1971)
		World Migration System Theory (2012)
		Household-decision-making Theory (1993)
		Network Theory
		Migration Gravity Model (2012)
		Institutional Theory
		Cumulative Causation Theory

*Source: synthesized from (Zelinsky, 1971; Massey et al., 1993; R. Cohen, 1996).*

<sup>8</sup> Namely, structural inflation, motivational problems, economic dualism, and the demography of labour supply.

The list of classic, economic, and new theories in migration in Table 2.1 is not exhaustive. Two features of the studies of migration theory warrant further reflection. On the one hand, the interdisciplinary nature of the migration theories is informed by studies from disciplines of geography, political science, sociology, and anthropology (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2016; Triandafyllidou, 2018). On the other hand, migration theories are embedded in larger-scale social theories (H. de Haas, 2014), and intersect with political theories, e.g. justice and entitlement, development theories, e.g. livelihood and capability approaches, and sociology theories, e.g. modernization. Whilst the theories of migration are less than concentrated and systematic, it is worth taking reference points from them so as to fit them into the Chinese context in the next sub-section.

### **Chinese Rural-urban Migration**

This sub-section explores the contemporary literature on Chinese rural-urban migration pertaining mainly to the period since 1949, intending to balance works from scholars both within China and across the globe. Several major economic reforms since 1949 are inevitable topics in the study of Chinese migration, with rural-urban migration being one type under it. The household registration or *hukou* system will be introduced and further discussed in a separate sub-section, considering the system profound and long-lasting influence on Chinese mobility.<sup>9</sup> Recent research trends on

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<sup>9</sup> Definition and detailed semantic explanation of the term hukou will be further elaborated in the sub-section The Household Registration, Hukou System.



Chinese rural-urban migrants are presented at the end of this sub-section with a more detailed introduction of the concept of place attachment and settlement intention.

### *Chinese Economic Reform Since 1949*

While the previous sub-section discussed about the motivation for migration, the economic reforms at the national level cannot be ignored when it comes to the possibility of migration in China. There were three major periods of economic reforms since 1949; each has profound and extensive impacts on human mobility.

*Table 2.2 Period in the economic history of modern China*

Period	Economic Reform Features
1949-1952	Recovery from war
1953-1957	First Five-Year Plan
1958-1960	Great Leap Forward
1961-1965	Readjustment and recovery
1966-1976	Cultural revolution
1976-1978	Post-Mao interlude
1978-1982	Reform of the economic system
1982-1990	Reform and opening-up
1990-	New era

*Source: (Naughton, 2007), adjusted by author.*

As Table 2.2 shows, after the founding of the People Republic of China, there was a period of recovery from war (1949-1952), leading to the period of the First Five Year Plan (1953-1957), which adopted a Soviet command economy model based on state ownership, collective agriculture, and centralized economic planning. There has been increasing control over human mobility through the established household registration system and other means since the First Five Year Plan, in an attempt to promote intensive programmes of industrialization focusing upon heavy industry in the cities and large-scale collective agricultural units in the rural area. The First Five

Year Plan laid a solid foundation for further economic development in China (Kroeber, 2016).

The following periods from 1958 to 1976 saw drastic political changes and constant economic traumas from the Great Leap Forward (1958-1960) to the ten years of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). Despite the rigorous state control of free mobility from rural to the urban areas, a wave of urban-to-rural migration could be observed owing to the Up to the Mountains, Down to the Countryside Movement initiated by the central leadership level in the 1950s.<sup>10</sup> The movement reached its climax during the Cultural Revolution (MacFarquhar, 1983). It is believed that, apart from political considerations, this movement sought to channel the large number of unemployed youths in the cities into participation in rural development (Naughton, 2007).

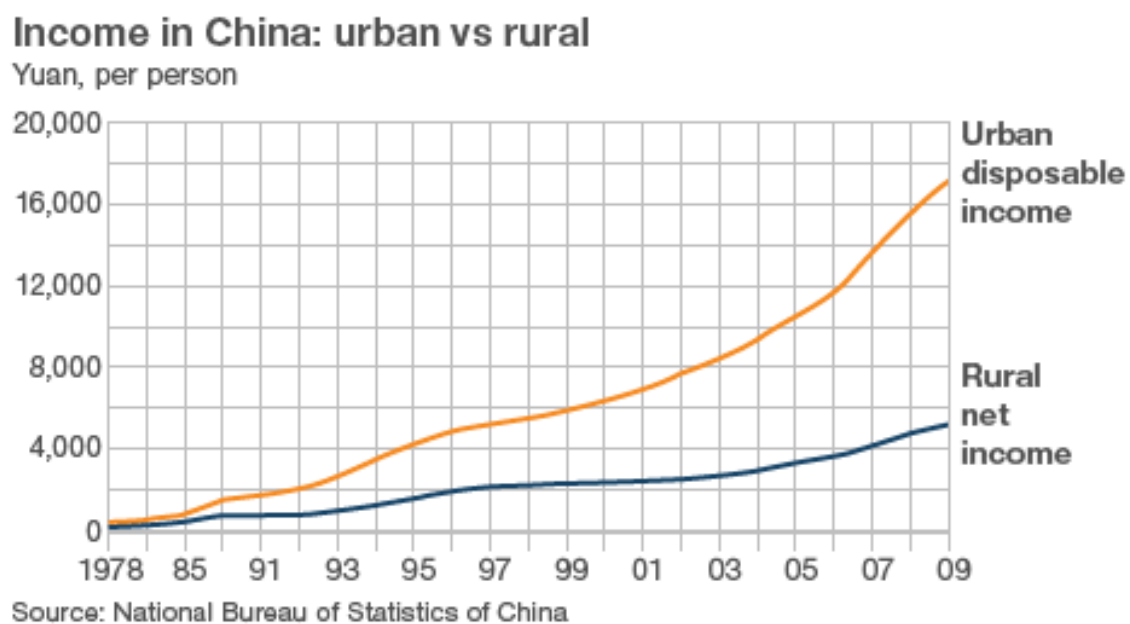
Shortly after the transitional period of the post-Mao Interlude (1976-1978), a profound economic reform was launched under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, deploying market mechanisms, and gradually reducing, rather than eliminating government planning and direct control. The Reform was further exceeded by the Opening-Up strategy (1982), which aimed at absorbing foreign investment and technology in order to develop the manufacturing sector in China. The requirement of a large amount of

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<sup>10</sup> The Up to the Mountains Down to the Countryside Movement (*shangshan xiaxiang*) was a political policy and movement instituted in China between the 1950s and 1978, initiated by Chairman Mao Zedong to avoid perceived to be pro-bourgeois thinking prevalent among the urban youths, as urban youth would be sent to mountainous areas or farming villages to learn from the workers and farmers and help development in rural area.

cheap labour forced the policy change to alleviate control of human mobility within the country (Kroeber, 2016).

Whilst Chinese economic reforms have experienced several waves of back and forth, the policy of Reform and Opening-Up had been established as a fundamental policy at the central level since the 1980s, effectively sustaining the continuous increase of rural-urban migrants among other types of human flows. In the early era of Reform and Opening-Up, a typical Chinese rural-urban migrant's was male, young, more educated than the rural average, and from lower-middle or middle income families with rural *hukou* (H. de Haas, 2010; Kau & Marsh, 1993). They were usually motivated by job opportunities and higher wages in bigger cities, compared to their place of rural origin, as demonstrated by the overall trend of rural-urban income disparity in Figure 2.3:



*Figure 2.2 Rural and Urban Income Disparity in China, 1978-2010* <sup>11</sup>

*Source: Adapted from China Statistics Yearbook 2015, National Bureau of Statistics of China.*

After the Reform and Opening-Up of China in 1978, the Chinese economy had been boomed. It was considered a remarkable economic success which lifted a large proportion of the population out of absolute poverty (J. B. Knight & Ding, 2012). Nevertheless, Figure 2.3 captures the disparity denoted by the monthly income gap between Chinese rural and urban areas since Deng's reform and marketization has been growing (Gao & Fennell, 2018). A significant divergence could be observed from the late-1980s, despite the fact that the rural monthly income constantly improved. In general, after the 1980s, rural youths were more inclined to migrate for economic opportunities in large cities, as well as being pushed out by the lack of jobs, education, and medical care in the rural areas (J. Yang, 2013). In fact, those who managed to migrate into the city possess the necessary economic and social capital to move, while their improved economic status in the city caused further disparity between migrants and those who remained in the village (H. de Haas, 2010; S. Chen & Liu, 2016).

### ***The Household Registration, Hukou System***

The impact of Chinese economic reforms on internal migration patterns is significant and complicated. The reformed governmental institutions comprises different policy tools at the national, provincial, and city levels to influence migration and impose mobility management (S. Liu et al., 2003). One of the major tools at the state level in

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<sup>11</sup> Income per person has been adjusted into real money, waiving the impacts of inflation rates.

controlling internal human mobility is the household registration system, famously known in the English literature as the *hukou system* (Chan, 2009; Y. Huang, 1996). In Mandarin Chinese, *hu* refers to household, *kou* refers to the number of individuals that consume food.<sup>12</sup> The word originated in ancient imperial China and was called *huji* by governmental officials, literally meaning 'of household origin', and was used in relation to the census for taxation purposes devised by the imperial governments with variations in regulations and implementations in different historical dynasties (Chan & Zhang, 1999).

Since 1952, the modern Chinese *hukou* system has been well-established. It forms an essential part of the state planning mechanism as the legacy of the communist period strengthened after 1958 and gradually relaxed after the 1980s. The *hukou* system registers and confines urban and rural residents to their geographical birth locations by bounding individual welfare and state obligations to administrative territories, thus limiting the free movement of labour flow (Chan & Zhang, 1999). The *Hukou* system has also created two layers of rural-urban boundary: one is the physical-spatial boundary that is reflected by the contrast between cityscape and rural landscape, and the other is the institutional boundary reflected by *hukou* status (Elvin & Skinner, 1974).

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<sup>12</sup> *Kou* literally means mouth, it has further connotations when combined with meaning together with other characters, e.g. *renkou*, people plus *kou* is translated as population here.

Lipton (1977) takes the view that it was the urban institutions that influence the pattern of immigration and coined the term 'urban bias' to characterize when the national development agenda has been set by the urban elites at the expense of welfare in the rural areas. Nolan and White (1984), and Oi (1993) argued that the control on human mobility across rural-urban administrative borders in China is an institutional-made strategy, resonating Lipton's view. In other words, the rural-urban dual system can be merely an institutional version of *hukou* rather than the *de facto* urbanized landscape (Cheng & Selden, 1994). Based on the dual rural-urban *hukou*, theoretically, there are four prototypes of migration, and urban migrants are considered to constitute the mainstream (Chan, 2009; Sun, 2019).<sup>13</sup> In reality, migration dynamics can be much more complicated: migrants could be identified stepwise as migrants, circular migrants, or seasonal migrants (Ravenstein, 1885; Conway, 1980; Newland, 2009).

The discussion so far has revealed that the *hukou* system is the device used by the state to control rural-urban migrant flows (Y. Zhao, 2001; Okamoto, 2019). Moreover, the *hukou* system provided the conditions for centrally-planned urbanisation and industrialization after 1949. Urban development in the planning period benefits greatly from the *hukou* system, enforcing the impression that urban people's ways of life are superior. However, it remains debatable whether the *hukou* system is the cause or the result of existing urban-rural disparity. One school of thought argues that the rural-

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<sup>13</sup> The four types are: rural-to-urban migration, urban-to-rural migration, urban-to-urban migration, and rural-to-rural migration.

urban disparity was caused by reform of the *hukou* system following a series of economic reforms, by comprehensively relaxing the household registration condition in medium-sized cities and experimenting in some large cities (Shambaugh, 2000). The point is that, given the more incremental relaxation and reform of the *hukou* system, the rural-urban disparity should not have been so large. While others claim that, as a legacy of Maoist collectivization, the *hukou* system is a constructed myth of egalitarian pre-reform society (Cheng & Selden, 1994). This argument claims that the disparity between rural and urban areas has existed since imperial times. This disparity was inherited by the communist government and embedded by policies such as the 'price scissors' (J. Knight, 1995, p. 2), where grains are bought at a lower price from peasants but sold at a higher price to city dwellers by the state, further intensifying the disparity (Ganguli, 1953; Fei, 1986; Stephen, 1988; Fu & Cao, 2019). Capital earned from the state-deployed price scissor was reinvested and redirected to develop industry in the cities. These pro-urban policies persisted even after the 1978 Reform until the agriculture tax was abolished in 2006 (J. Knight, 1995). Therefore, relaxation of *hukou* could potentially bridge the long-lasting disparity between the Chinese urban and rural sectors.

Analysis of the *hukou* system has in general supported the view that long-inherited rural-urban inequality in China, plus a sudden relaxation of the *hukou* system in the 1980s, were the two major reasons that initiated the large-scale rural-urban migrations in the recent decades (Griffin & Zhao, 1993). *Hukou* remains to be an important

element in the studies of rural-urban migrants in China, regardless of ongoing reforms that propose to comprehensively relax the *hukou* system (Cheng & Selden, 1994; Interesse & Wong, 2021).

### *The Trajectory of Chinese Rural-urban Migrants*

Chinese internal migration has demonstrated common features that follow the global migration theories discussed in the previous sub-section. Chinese rural-urban migration also features unique patterns that might have been influenced by rounds of economic reforms, the *hukou* system, and other factors (Arrighi, 1970; Suits, 1985; Razack et al., 2009; Naudé, 2010; Chakravarty & Barua, 2012; Diao & McMillan, 2018). To explore the other factors, it is worthwhile to reviewing Chinese migration from geographical, cultural-historical, and economic perspectives.

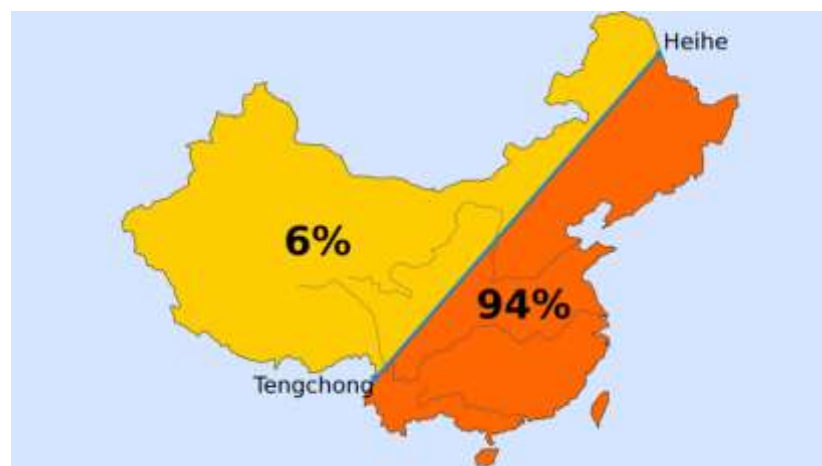


Figure 2.3 The Hu Line of China's Population Distribution

Source: Public domain

The map of Figure 2.2 shows the Heihe-Tengchong Line, also known as the Hu Line, developed by Chinese geographer and demographer Hu Huanyong. It demonstrates the imbalanced distribution of territories, economic activities, and populations in



different geographical regions in China (National Statistical Bureau of China, 2019). The Hu Line separates the country's wild and empty west part from the vastly populous east part: it divided China into half according to territory area. The northwest side of the Hu line, more than half its territory, holds only 6% of China's population, while around 94% of the total population is condensed in the 36% land area on the southeast side of Hu Line (H. Hu, 1935). Historically, this Chinese demographic maintained a relatively stable distribution with fluctuations in certain historical periods (Fu & Cao, 2019; Lavelly et al., 2011). Overall, the spatial distribution of the population divided by the Hu Line persists in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Apart from relatively stable demographic distribution, there have been changing trends in flows of internal migration after the 1980s, the mainstream trend was from the central and western part of China to southern and eastern coastal areas where the manufacturing and service sectors were first developed, while a recent migration trend since the 2010s has seen flows from the central region of China to the west also emerges (Sun, 2019). For major receiving areas, the Yangtze River Delta centred around Shanghai and *Jing-Jin-Ji* region have become national migration centres.<sup>14</sup> The Greater Bay Area, previously known as the Pearl River Delta, serves as a major migration hub and receiving area in south China (Hui et al., 2020). Whilst the Chinese metropolis remains attractiveness to rural-urban migrants, smaller cities have become

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<sup>14</sup> The *Jing-Jin-Ji* region is the metropolitan area in within the territories of Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei.

more and more popular as immigration destinations since the 2010s (Teixeira & Drolet, 2018).

The second perspective used to view the migration trajectory is from a cultural-historical aspect. Fei Xiaotong claims that China has been “earth-bound” throughout its history: Chinese society was mainly organized around the basic cell of rural households and villages (Fei & Chang, 1945, p. 19).<sup>15</sup> The modern concept of ‘urban’ is relatively new in Chinese history, intrinsically different from those early walled cities built for defensive purposes in the Yellow River basin around 2100 B.C. As the Chinese tradition emphasized the social stability based on proper human relations as represented by Confucius’s philosophy and ritual systems, historically Chinese peasants are reluctant to migrate unless facing wars or natural disasters. In general, free mobility of common peasants was not encouraged by the imperial or state governments in most time of the history (Skinner, 1977; Young, 2014). It was not until the Republican era that rural-urban migration flow was properly identified, recognized, documented and sometimes regulated (Elvin & Skinner, 1974).

By way of contrast, from the perspectives of modern culture and media, cities and urbanism have been associated with trendy lifestyles promoted by the mass media and the constructed images of ‘world cities’ after the Opening-Up (Friedmann, 1986; Appadurai, 1990; Sassen, 1991). To some extent, the utopian image of big cities is

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<sup>15</sup> Fei Xiaotong is also spelt as Hsiao-Tung Fei.

reinforced by traditional Chinese values combined with the modern concept of social mobility. According to empirical studies, large cities are associated with better education and 'upward social mobility' which are heavily emphasized by traditional Chinese values (Walton-Roberts, 2011; Chen et al, 2018).

The third perspective on the trajectory of migration is economic, and seeks to explain why economic reforms of the late-1970s and early-1980s generated large-scale migration (Logan, 2008). From the economic perspective, this could be viewed as changes in the demand and supply sides of labour in China due to the 1978 Reform. In economics theories, supply and demand is a mode of price determination in a market: holding all else equal, the unit price of labour will vary until it settled at a point of equilibrium: where the quantity of demand equals to the quantity of supply (Mankiw, 2018).<sup>16</sup>

The theory of supply and demand was not applicable to China under the planned economy, until that the economic reforms have created an environment that resembles a free market. On the demand side, the first wave of mass migration was a response to rapid industrialization and urbanisation on the southeastern coast under Deng's slogan: "let some of the people get richer first" (Kau & Marsh, 1993, p. 64). Cities in those regions demanded labour by providing a higher price in wages. This in

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<sup>16</sup> In the model, labour could be changed into a particular good or other tradable item, or liquid financial assets.

return attracted more rural-urban migrants to the urban area until a point when the demand was satisfied (X. Chen, 1991; Cai et al., 2002; Gao, 2010; J. B. Knight & Ding, 2012). On the supply side, the rural reform of the production system into the household responsibility system has released farmers from the rigid production team, increased their income, and provided a labour surplus for possible jobs in the urban areas (J. Y. Lin, 1987).<sup>17</sup>

By reviewing the historic trajectory of rural-urban migrants in China from the geographical, cultural-historic, and economic perspectives, writers have acknowledged that the rural-urban migration flow became more important to China's development in the 21st century (J. B. Knight & Ding, 2012). In 2009, there were more than a billion rural-urban migrants in China, the world's largest group of internal migrants (Sun, 2019; M. Wang & Ning, 2022). Emerging studies have adopted interdisciplinary perspectives to study the long-lasting impacts of rural-urban migrants on China's economic development, government reforms as well as changes in lifestyles. There has been a switch of study interests from a macro-level, policy-oriented scope to a micro-level individually-focused scope in the literature which will be further elaborated in the next sub-section.

### *Latest Research Trends on Chinese Rural-Urban Migrants*

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<sup>17</sup> The household responsibility system in Chinese, *jiating lianchan chengbao zerenzhi* was a practice first adopted in agriculture in 1979 and officially established in 1982, by which households are held responsible for the profits and losses of an enterprise. The system gradually replaced the collective farming under the planned economic regime.

The study of Chinese rural-urban migration has evolved alongside global debates on migration-related topics. Recent research on Chinese rural-urban migrants has followed three new trends since the 2010s (Boyd, 2002; J. Knight, 2010; Popoola et al., 2017; Diao & McMillan, 2018; Jancewicz et al., 2020). The first trend has extended beyond the geographical concentration on the megacities of Beijing, Shanghai, and Shenzhen to other provincial capital cities and medium-sized and smaller cities (Y. Zhao, 2001; Y. Liu & Shen, 2014a; Z. Wang et al., 2016). One prominent example is the study of provincial-level *hukou* system reform, e.g. studies of Zhengzhou city, the provincial capital of Henan Province by Huang (2014).

The second trend is towards an increasing number of studies focussing on the second-generation of rural-urban migrants, or the new generation of rural-urban migrants, particularly emphasizing the accumulation of cultural capital via education (C. Liu & Cheng, 2008; Y. Zhu & Lin, 2014; Leng et al., 2020; J. Zhu & Delbridge, 2022).<sup>18</sup>

The third trend is a growing number of studies of the socio-psychological dimensions of rural-urban migrant welfare. Characteristic of this trend are Wang et al.'s (2016) study of social integration; Meng's study of subjective well-being among Chinese rural-urban migrants (D. Meng, 2017), and Liu et al.'s (2022) research on a 'sense of

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<sup>18</sup> The new generation of rural-urban migrants, or *xinshengdai nongmingong* in Chinese, is defined by Yue et al. (2010) as those who were born after the late 1970's, educated in the 1980's, and first migrated into cities after 1990's .

belonging' among peri-urban rural migrants in Beijing. Place attachment and Settlement Intention are two other merging themes on sentiment in this trend.

One major popular direction within the third trend to be further elaborated is to apply the sentiment of place attachment from global literature to study the integration of Chinese rural-urban migrants (M. Wang & Ning, 2022). Place attachment is the sense of belonging to a specific place, place in the sense of a combined element of time and memory based on a space of specific geographical locations (Lefèbvre, 1991). Anton and Lawrence (2014) further break down place attachment into two elements of "place identity" and "place dependence". Place identity refers to social and personal identities and the value dimension refers to the evaluation of things in the spatial-physical context (Lewicka, 2010). Specifically for rural-urban migrants, the place attachment to the destination cities is compared with their hometown, sending area: that is the *laojia*, which literally means old home in Mandarin Chinese. This applies to those step-wise migrants who had worked for relatively long periods in other cities, considered the land-bounded traditional value in China (Fei, 1992).<sup>19</sup> It turns out that an acquired place attachment to a city alongside an individual's rural hometown is extraordinary (D. Meng, 2017). Place dependences precedes place identity, meaning a place is able to meet an individual's need so the person becomes dependent upon it and chooses to stay there, hence the place itself becomes unique for the person on a daily-interactive basis (Belanche et al., 2021). Moreover, place attachment is usually

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<sup>19</sup> This sentiment is referred as *xiangtu qingjie* in Fei's book.

considered to be an important aspect of integration according to the views of city administrators and the national government. Empirical studies in South China have confirmed the benefits of place attachment's to migrants and resident welfare (Y. Liu et al., 2018). In contrast, the lack of place attachment to the receiving area may lead to the alienation of the rural-urban migrants (Möbränd, 2015).

As an indicator, settlement intention in a certain place, can be influenced by both pulling factors of the city and pushing factors from both migration origin and immigration destination (Teixeira & Drolet, 2018).<sup>20</sup> Yang and Guo (2018) emphasized on the barriers, including institutional hurdles, as pushing factors of the city which diminish rural-urban migrants' intention to settle. The assumption is that settlement of individuals is likely to occur once there are viable opportunities to reside. This is true for most unskilled labourers or semi-skilled workers, given that better urban amenities in larger cities is regarded as the initial motivator for rural-urban migration decisions in the first place (Liao & Wang, 2019).

Settlement intention is also closely tied to the study of migrants' socioeconomic integration (Song, 2016; Xie & Chen, 2018) and social ties with local residents (X. Huang et al., 2018), as well as acculturation (S. Chen & Liu, 2016). It is also considered more measurable and less subjective by former studies, compared to other sentiments.

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<sup>20</sup> Resonate to Lee's push and pull model in the sub-section classic migration theory in this chapter.

Whilst settlement intention is a more traditionally adapted indicator for studying migrants in megacities (Bach & Schraml, 1996; Wu, 2009), those cities could feature vastly different new scenarios considering their fast paces of development, reformed institutional settings, and changed city ambience (Song, 2016). Moreover, settlement intentions among skilled workers and talents has also been studied in Chinese cities (Liu & Shen, 2014). Some scholars also pointed out the possibility of linking other sentimental studies, e.g. social intention, with the exploration of settlement intention (T. Liu & Wang, 2020).

To summarise this section of theories migration, global migration theories mainly face the criticism of over-simplified assumptions while Chinese theories are associated closely with economic reforms, the *hukou* system, and other local factors. To further assess the impacts on migrants in the receiving area, it is necessary to understand the process of urbanisation and related theories in the next section on 2.2 Theories of Urbanisation.

## **2.2 Theories of Urbanisation**

Systematic studies of urbanization have mainly been developed in the Chicago school of sociology since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, particularly centred around the discussion of urban ecology (Park, 1968; Bulmer, 1984).<sup>21</sup> Globally, with the emerging cities in the Global South and rising sustainable development issues, the realm of Urban Studies

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<sup>21</sup> Refer to the sub-section Urbanisation as a Spatial Process and Study of People in the Process of Urbanisation.



has engaged more with literature from other intellectual disciplines. Regionally, there is more empirical evidence given the advancement of data collection methods, which facilitate theoretical debates based on comparative perspectives and radical postmodern approaches.<sup>22</sup>

### **Global Theories of Urbanisation**

This section reveals the development of urbanisation as a concept which is spatially focused while taking into account more socio-economic factors, touching on the emerging trend in which people or urban residents are placed at the centre of the discussion in further studies on urbanisation. These discussions are further pinned down into the regional context in which dialogues on *shiminhua* are further introduced and assessed.

### ***Urbanisation as a Spatial Process***

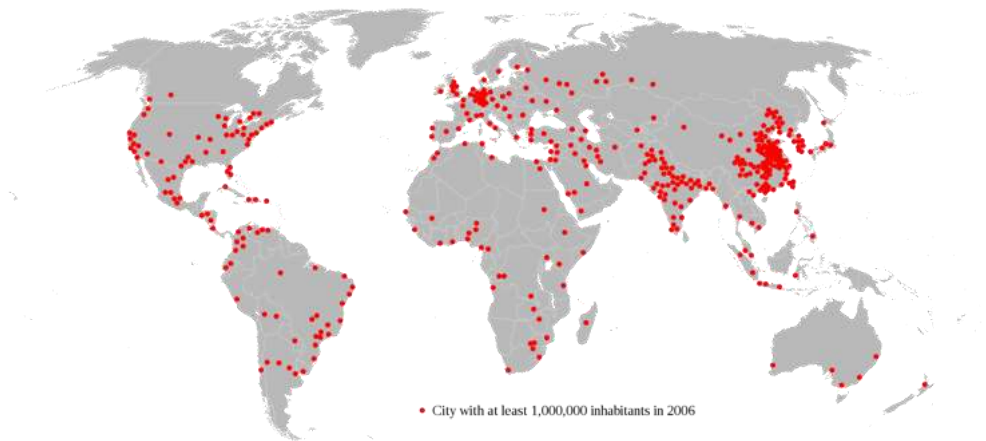
Urbanisation is a multi-dimensional reflection of the entire society (Friedmann & Wolff, 1982). In the New American Dictionary, 'urbanisation' is defined as "the process of making an area more urban". Specifically: "urbanisation refers to the process of the increase of the proportion of people in towns and cities"(Stevenson & Lindberg, 2010, p. 1906). According to the narrow definition, urbanisation is: "a process of urbanisation of space, or "spatial urbanisation". It emphasizes the transformation of the built environment from newly erected high-rise buildings in the city centre, the new urban

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<sup>22</sup> Soja's "social justice to spatial justice" (2010) and Harvey's "the right to the city" (2003) are the representing theoretical examples.

infrastructure of the public transportation system, to carefully designed city amenities, including parks and other forms of public space (Whyte, 2001).

The Chicago School of urban sociology, also known as the Ecological School, was remarkable for proposing that the spatial transformations in urbanisation have inevitable impacts on social aspects (Bulmer, 1984). Focussing primarily upon the crime rate in Chicago from the 1910s to 1930s against the backdrop of dramatic urban space transformation accompanied by the influx of immigrants from continental Europe, this school of thought presented the urban ecology as an analogy of biological ecology (J. Lin & Mele, 2013). By viewing a community, a neighbourhood, or a city as a microcosm of a larger urbanized society, it explains changes in neighbourhoods and districts as interactions of unitary human communities with the spatial transformation process and implies more waves of societal change given an expanded rate of urbanization. Whilst facing the criticism that it idealized spatial interactions and reductionism to mere ecological systems (Ashwani & David, 2001), the Chicago school marked a break in significant theoretical progress by connecting discussion of spatial aspects with socio-economic related studies.



*Figure 2.4 Cities with more than one million urban inhabitants in 2006*

*Source: <https://ourworldindata.org/urbanisation>*

Meanwhile, studies of spatial urbanisation spread to other regional foci (Skeldon, 1992; Hall, 2014; Jancewicz et al., 2020), first based on examples in the western world, have subsequently taken into consideration developing countries, embarking on the process of rapid urbanisation, including China (Mumford, 1961). According to the United Nations, more than half of the world's population was defined as urban residents in 2008, and the trend towards urbanisation is still accelerating in the developing world, with the most heavily populated cities in south Asia and east Asia, as Figure 2.4 demonstrates (United Nations, 2018).

### ***People in the Process of Urbanisation***

'Urban' is not only a space but also a whole set of socio-economic nexuses (Palen, 1981, p. 3; Lefebvre, 1986). Urbanisation has not only changed the physical landscape but also forms new socio-economic-cultural dynamics: urban dwellers are now living in: "a large, dense and permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous individuals" (Wirth, 1938, p. 1).

Scholars have developed theories along more spatio-economic lines, late 19<sup>th</sup>-century locational analysis to 20<sup>th</sup>-century spatial networks, including the work of Alfred Marshall (1884), Jane Jacobs (1962), and other pioneers. More sociological perspectives emerged from the studies by Marx (1933), Polanyi (1957), Weber (1960), and Durkheim (1983). Urban sociologists have made a substantial contribution to the discussion of people as essential elements in urban ecology.<sup>23</sup> Robert Park (1968) pointed out the distinctiveness of newly formed “human ecology” in urbanized areas overlaid with sophisticated social systems, economic institutions, political agencies, and cultural practices. According to Giddens (1984, p. 73), as a “human-created environment”, ‘urban’ has compelling characteristics inherited from the former generations’ interaction with spaces. All of which have impacts on the urbanized inhabitants’ daily practices. Park further attested that urbanism has a significant cultural-psychological aspect (Ballegooijen, 2019). Dayis (1965) has proposed the concept of ‘urbanisation of the people’ by including the human factor. Apart from studying the urbanisation process by emphasising more on objective, observable spatial impacts, the people should be put back at the centre of urban studies. ‘Urbanisation of the people’ refers to “the condition and state of being urban”, comprising economic, institutional, and social factors.<sup>24</sup> The narrow definition of *spatial urbanisation* (Gwynne, 1985; F. Wang & Liu, 2015), is in the account challenged by the evolved discussion of popular urbanisation (Ballegooijen, 2019; M. Chen et al.,

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<sup>23</sup> Including Nels Anderson (1889-1986), Ernest Burgess (1886-1966), Robert Park (1864-1944) etc.

<sup>24</sup> For more details, please refer to Chapter 3, section 3.2 Methodology and Chapter 4, sub-section The Principles of *Shiminhua* Survey Design.

2019), and regarded as a potential solution to urban problems (Beall et al., 2010; Henderson, 2010).

The recent trend of studies of people in the urbanisation process has shifted to explore the urban built environment to its interactions in its social and cultural-psychological aspects. Regarding the social aspects, topics include “urban sustainability”, “just cities”, big data, artificial intelligence, and urbanisation (Harvey, 2003; Soja, 2010; Wan et al., 2018; Orttung, 2019); all of the above-mentioned have a close association with the concepts of urbanisation of people.

The cultural-psychological aspect of urbanisation has highlighted the importance of urban identity--- the connotation of cultural and psychological layer complemented by cultural studies theories (Appadurai, 1990). To take China for an example, being ‘urban’ in China as a migrant means aiming at a high threshold: including all aspect of economic, social, and cultural life. It is closely linked to welfare and *hukou* status, lifestyle and locationality (Wirth, 1938; Porter & Howell, 2009; Streule et al., 2020). Whilst technically speaking residents born and raised in the city are not necessarily born with an intrinsic urban identity, they gained their urban identity in an intangible, unconscious and gradual routine while living in the city (Tittle & Grasmick, 2001; X. Zhang, 2005). We might make an analogy to migrants who have been adopting an urban identity in a similar incremental manner. The dichotomies related to the urban-rural divide realm, modern-pre-modern, advanced-regressive, the civilized-uncivilized

discourse has ranked being 'urban' as superior to "being rural". Urban identity is presented as urban-ness. Rural-urban migrants with an obvious urban identity demonstrate their urban-ness by differentiating themselves in dressing, habits and values from rural relatives and newly arrived migrants in the city rent (X. Zhang, 2005).

There is generally a lack of studies based on self-assessed urban identity in specific contexts across the globe (Gui, 2010). This could be due to the challenges of measuring urban identity by concrete indicators. During data collection, external factors can influence the participants' self-perceived urban identity. For instance, when the interview or survey take place inside the area around CBD, a migrant worker working and living in an urban semi-periphery may have a better chance in reporting an "inadequately urban" status. Being non-urban in cities has been regarded as an individual problem that needs to be tackled by the urban society and the city government.

The power-dynamic that constructs the mixed rural-urban identity lead to debate on whether gaining urban identity will inevitably result in the loss of rural identity (Leng et al., 2020). If the answer is 'yes', a truly urbanised person should have given up all features that are connected to rural life. Whilst both urban identity and rural identity are hard to quantify, urban identity has an emphasizes a series of processes in the adaptation to urban life. Prior studies have demonstrated that the comprehensive process of gaining urban identity consists of a migrant's assimilation of urban

economic dynamics, coping with urban institutions, acceptance by urban society, and adaptation to the urban culture (Wirth, 1938; United Nations, 2018).

Discussion of the urbanisation of people has evolved from the discourse on urban identity. Recent literature has discussed the experience of First Peoples in Canada's transformation process to urbanisation in which identity and locality interweave (Peters & Anderson, 2013; Senese & Wilson, 2013). Ellis and Roberts (2016) have linked the socio-economic indicators to the concept of urbanisation of people rather than spatial transformation as a pathway to improve living quality in South Asian cities. Streule et al. (2020) distinguished the discussion of 'urbanisation of the people' from 'urbanisation by the people', and combined with this recent trend of populism in bottom-up urban planning. In summary, studies of the urbanisation of people have gained importance in the new era of large-scale rural-urban migration into the city.

Apart from the discussion from the conceptual level, on the practice level, the urbanisation of people has been regarded as the solution to many urban problems based on the debates on urban diseases (Beall et al., 2010; Henderson, 2010). These urban diseases include environmental issues of congestion, and sanitation problems, to name two factors. Social problems caused by urbanisation are emerging as well: homelessness; urban enclaves; gentrification; ineffective urban governance; social segregation, and unaffordable housing led by land and real estate speculation (Imoagene, 1975; D. Lu, 2007; Lund, 2011). Numerous solutions aiming at changing

urban spatial forms have been proposed such as the classic Broadacre City designed by Frank Lloyd Wright (1932), and the Garden City by Sir Ebenezer Howard (1946). New urban dwellers are blamed for the number of urban problems (Palen, 1981; Guldin, 2001, p17). Consequently, integration theories such as the assimilation model have gained popularity among urban managers, particularly in America and western Europe following the refugee crisis in 2014 (Bayor, 1978; Glazer, 1993; Alba & Nee, 1997; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2016; Bernt, 2019).

To summarize, due to social and cultural-psychological constructs, new urban dwellers are regarded as inferior, passive, and even deviant. There is an urgent need for them to acquire urban identity, dislodging rural habits so as to be integrated according to 'urban' standards. However, evidence suggests that full integration has rarely been achieved (Glazer, 1993). The new urban dwellers also possess the ability to define and change spatial dynamics. Some scholars further argue that they should be enfranchised to reclaim their right to the city in order to achieve spatial justice (Purcell, 2002; Harvey, 2003; Purcell, 2003; Soja, 2010). That is, the urbanisation of people has not only been regarded as a solution to the real urban problems but has gained *eo ipso* credibility as well.

### **Chinese Urbanisation**

Despite having the general features of global urbanisation Chinese urbanisation since 1949 modern era has seen experienced dramatic changes and possesses unique characteristics. This sub-section highlights the characteristics of modern Chinese



urbanisation and delves deeper into discussions related to terminologies of rural-urban migrants urbanisation--- *shiminhua* in Chinese.

### ***The History and Features of Modern Chinese Urbanization***

Whilst regarded as the “longest and largest continuous urban culture tradition in the world irrevocably industrialized and urbanized” (Guldin, 2001, p. 13), China’s modern urbanisation did not begin until the Republican Era (1912-1949) and the early People’s Republic stage from 1949 to 1957. During this period, urbanisation was led and supervised by central planning aided by insights from the Soviet Union’s experience of city planning and urban development, as successful, well-defined, and thriving urban landscapes were considered propaganda for the superiority of the socialist mode of urbanisation (X. Li & Tian, 2017). Thereafter, the political atmosphere and planned economy which have rigidly controlled mobility caused stagnation until the second period of rapid urbanisation in 1978 (S. Liu et al., 2003). This abrupt acceleration of Chinese urbanisation since the late-1970s can be observed in Figure 2.5:

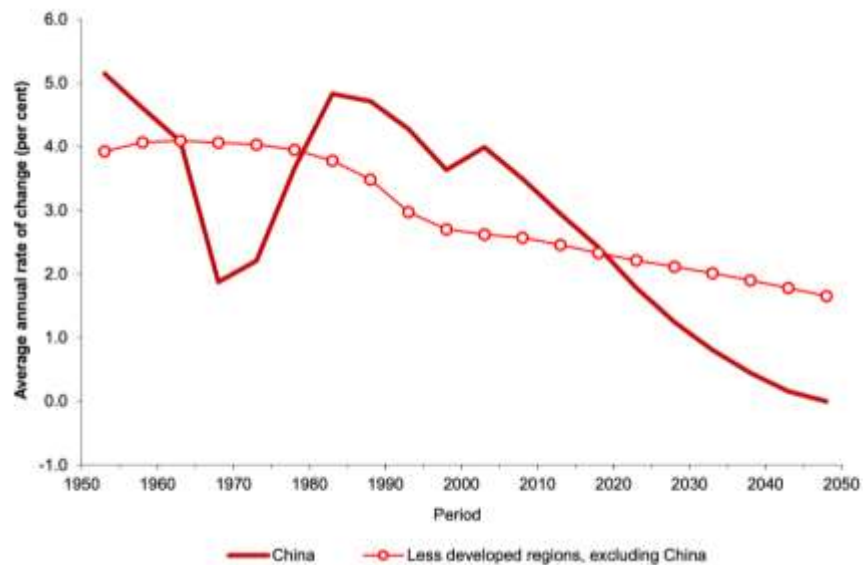


Figure 2.5 Average rate of change of urban population in China and other less developed regions

Source : OECD. <https://www.oecd.org/china/42607972.pdf>

As can be observed in Figure 2.5, one of the major conditions for the rapid urban transition in China is the economic reform and Opening-Up, during which almost ‘endless’ cheap labour was provided from the vast rural areas to facilitate the industrial workforce. While in the same era, foreign investment and capital entered mainland China initially in the southern and eastern Special Economic Zones and coastal cities (Huang, 1996; Pannell, 2002; Yeung et al., 2009).

Chinese urbanisation in the last four decades has had several distinctive features. Firstly, the Chinese urbanisation process has been heavily monitored by the authorities and influenced by central and local government policies even after the market reform. Okamoto (2019) has established that Chinese urbanisation was heavily reliant upon ‘institutional urbanisation’. Here, the term ‘institutional urbanisation’. Here, the term ‘institution’ is defined as a: “humanly devised structures of rules and norms that shape and constrain individual behaviours.” (North, 1991, p. 98). More specifically here, the

term 'institutional urbanisation', vis-à-vis spatial urbanisation, refers to the potential removal of institutional barriers for urbanisation, resonating with the concept of urbanisation of people discussed in the previous sub-section. The methods for achieving institutional urbanisation were notably framed after the Plan for National New Type Urbanization 2014-2020 (Feng, 2017). With the effect of reforming economic and social systems to further promote urbanisation in China, it is believed that institutional urbanisation has the potential to lead to a structural shift towards service-based economics (Okamoto, 2019).

Secondly, Chinese urbanisation is structurally disordered (Q. Li et al., 2012). Compared to other countries at a similar level of industrialization and development, China is regarded to be under-urbanized (S. Liu et al., 2003; United Nations, 2018). Wang et al. further described the "six delays" of Chinese's urban development, in particular that "urbanisation is lagging behind of industrialization", "population urbanisation is slower than land and spatial urbanisation", and "*hukou* transformation is slower than job market transformation" (2014, p. 1). Whilst China has demonstrated a high level of urbanisation, some scholars argue that according to the standard of "urbanisation of people", the rate could be over-estimated by 10% (W. Wang et al., 2014, p. 5). In other words, urbanisation of the rural migrant population is of essential importance to China's development as there is an estimated number of 2 billion rural-urban migrants that have not experienced the proper integration progress in the city (W. Wang et al., 2014, p. 6). These delays could be attributed to problems of definition and

measurement. Throughout history, there have been several definitions of 'urban' in China when applied to population censuses and sample surveys. Given varied definitions and measurements, the degree of urbanisation varies significantly, which reduces the validity of governmental data and international comparative studies (S. Liu et al., 2003).

Thirdly, Chinese urbanisation is regionally imbalanced. The eastern and southern coast has been urbanized dramatically while the central and middle regions have experienced a far less intensive process (Q. Li et al., 2012). This will potentially lead to a larger urban-rural gap between geographical regions (Cai et al., 2002). The unbalanced process of urbanisation seems to have a direct impact on migration, as a major trend of Chinese rural-urban migration has traditionally been from the central and western provinces to the southern and eastern coastal cities (Sun, 2019).

Apart from those major features of Chinese urbanisation, new characteristics have emerged particularly since the 2010s. One recent significant characteristic is the large-scale "in-place" mode of urbanisation compared to the urbanisation mode during the 1990s. This is mainly due to the urban sprawl of many cities' urban core areas and the transformation of semi-urban, peri-urban, or suburban areas into the urban areas according to statistics (Guldin, 2001, p. 17; Gu et al., 2012). A second trend of "urbanisation from below" can be observed more recently (Ma & Fan, 1994, p. 1625; Gu et al., 2012; Marton, 2000). The relative proportion of urban population in super-

large and large cities has declined since the late-1990s, largely owing to the prosperity of rural industries and the transformation of economically weak small towns into a “dynamic segment of society”(G. C. S. Lin, 1999, p. 678). Smaller cities and towns are becoming more important in the urbanisation process (Y. Zhao, 2001).

Whilst the unparalleled scale of urbanisation and large flows of rural-urban migrants has boosted Chinese economic development in recent decades, they have also widened regional disparity (Cai, 2010). Moreover, studies of urbanisation in China constitute a relatively recent phenomenon derived from studies of new-type urbanisation, as well as semi-urbanisation and related city problems since the 1990s (Gu et al., 2012; W. Wang et al., 2014; M. Chen et al., 2019).<sup>25</sup> Features of Chinese urbanisation are numerous as the urbanisation process is sophisticated and fast-environmental, particularly regarding cities in different tiers (Feng, 2017).

The city tier reflects a city’s status and the recapture of its influence in the city hierarchy, in other words, the degree of urbanisation of the city in the urban system (Harvey, 1985; Chen, 1991). The city tier hierarchy also corresponds to the Chinese city governance system (S. Liu et al., 2003; F. Wu, 2009). The contemporary Chinese state has four levels of governance, according to Shambaugh (2000): the central; the provincial or municipal level; the county level, and the local level (2000, p. 170). Several megacities of China and adjacent regions such as Beijing and Shanghai are categorized

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<sup>25</sup> Semi-urban, peri-urban, and suburban areas are all translated from Chinese term *chengxiang jiehebu* (S. Liu et al., 2022).

as direct-controlled municipalities along with two other cities Tianjin and Chongqing.

<sup>26</sup> In South China, Guangzhou and Shenzhen are regarded as provincial-level managed cities--- Guangzhou as the provincial capital while Shenzhen is guaranteed the status of a Special Economic Zone (Yeung et al., 2009). While these two systems may be interpreted differently, the city tier classification is more of an economic than political concepts. This can be verified by its criterion. Most data sets adopt residential population size as a major determinant of the city tier.<sup>27</sup> The Chinese National Plan for New Urbanization 2014-2020 (2014) stresses the importance of maintaining and updating the city tier classification alongside economic development; the State Council of China has accordingly issued a document entitled Notice on Changing the Classification of Cities Scale (State Council of China, 2014), shown in Table 2.2.<sup>28</sup>

*Table 2.3 The Chinese City-Tier*

City-tier categories		City Tier	Urban population size (million)	Examples
Super City		1	> 10	Shanghai, Guangzhou
Mega City		2	5-10	Nanjing, Dongguan
Big City	Big City I	3	3-5	Jiaxing, Zhongshan
	Big City II	4	1-3	Huzhou, Qingyuan
Medium City		5	0.5-1	Zhoushan, Meizhou
Small City	Small City I	6	0.2-0.5	Kunshan, Jieyang
	Small City II	7	<0.2	.....

*Source: The State Council of China (2014).*

In Table 2.3, a more detailed update of city tier classification based on the outdated Law of Urban and Rural Planning categorizes the city tier into five categories and seven

<sup>26</sup> Direct-controlled municipalities, *zhixia shi* in Chinese.

<sup>27</sup> Rather than registered population size.

<sup>28</sup> In Chinese, *Guanyu tiaozheng chengshi guimo huafen de tongzhi*.

ranks based on the urban resident population in the city district area (State Council of China, 2014).

Apart from using urban resident population size, there are several other ways of categorization, as in Figure 2.6. For example, the China Cities Statistics Yearbook in the year of 2018 categorizes Chinese cities into three tiers, namely large, medium, and small, based on the constructed area (National Statistical Bureau of China, 2019). Since the focus of the project is the urbanisation process as it affects new urban dwellers, urban resident population size is a good measurement for city tier categorization. The city tier is an important recapitulation of the level of urbanisation of the built environment in Chinese cities. Generally, the higher the city tier is, the more urban constructed areas it covers and the more well-established the infrastructure, in short, the more urbanized the city is.

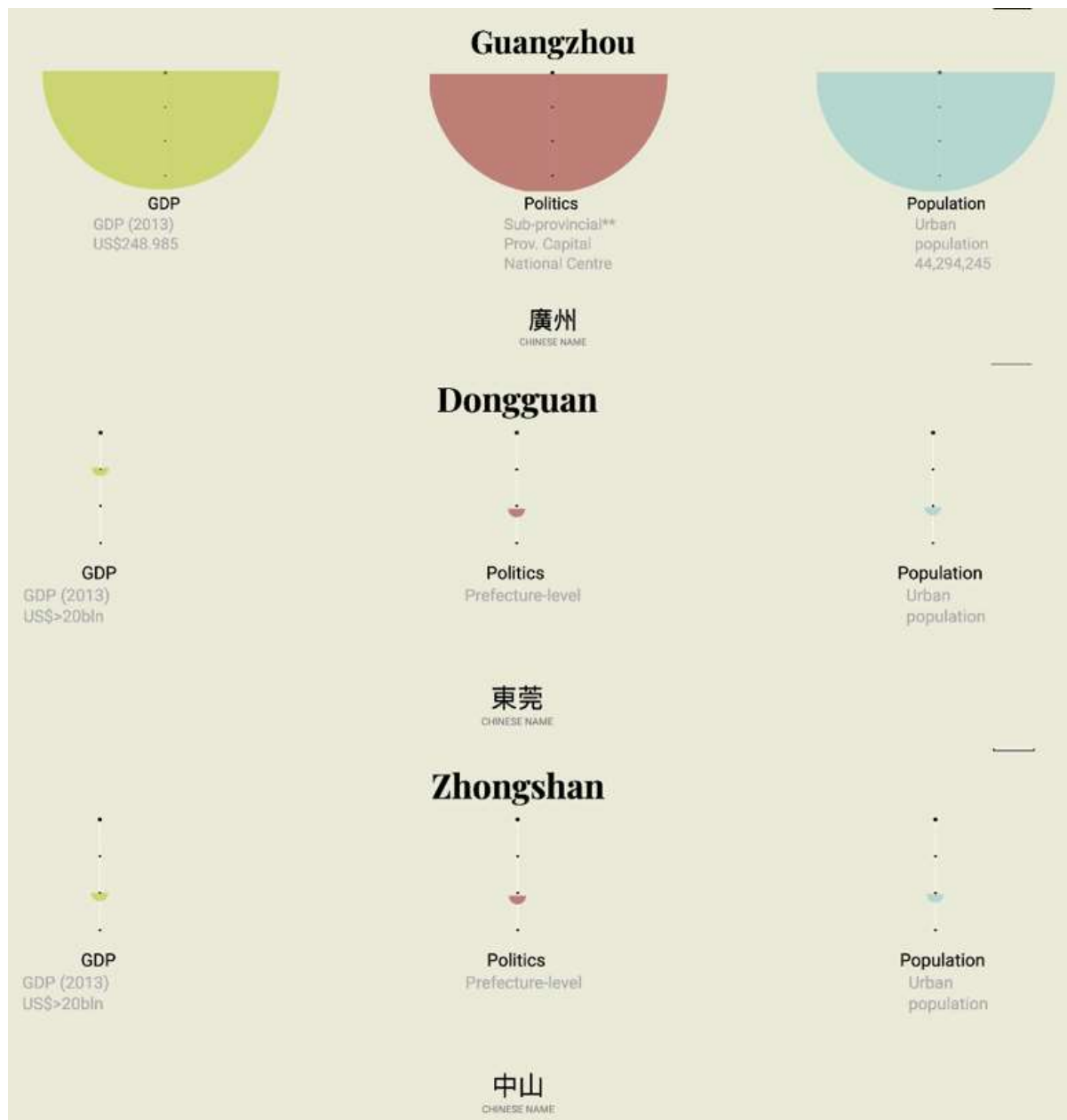


Figure 2.6 Another way of calculating the city tier based on GDP, Politics, and Population Size

Source: South China Morning Post (Online version, 2021).

To summarize the section on theories of urbanisation, urbanisation is a highly contextualized dynamic process consisting of many elements, including the adaptation of the people. The urbanisation of people is a less discussed topic, compared to spatial urbanisation, despite its significance in providing insights into city problems and



addressing current urban myths.<sup>29</sup> The Chinese urbanisation context calls for studies of rural-urban migration in different city tiers from an overarching perspective of urban studies as well as migration studies.

### *A Genesis of shiminhua*

"Urbanization is, in fact, the *shiminhua* of people, not the urbanization of land" (Mobrand, 2015, p. 111). First and foremost, the term *shiminhua* is used interchangeably with "urbanisation of the people" just as terms used in other literature such as "urban-ness" can be ambiguous. In literature it either refers to urban identity (Porter & Howell, 2009), or urban lifestyle, the latter being similar to the connotation of urbanity (Tittle & Grasmick, 2001). The working definition of *shiminhua* as interpreted by the author, is the adaptations of rural-urban migrants in socio-economic and cultural urban conditions owing to living in the cities against the backdrop of rapid Chinese urbanisation since the 1990s.

Studies of urbanisation of people in China constitute a relatively recent phenomenon derived from studies of new-type urbanisation, as well as semi-urbanisation and related problems (Gu et al., 2012; Feng, 2017; M. Chen et al., 2019). Full integration into urban life for a rural-urban migrant is arduous to achieve for lower and semi-skilled workers in the context of large Chinese cities (Feng, 2017; Guo & Liang, 2017). However, the urbanisation of people in China can be considered to be a continuum of

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<sup>29</sup> For example, urban people are distinguished from rural people in certain values.

experience (X. Zhang, 2005; Porter & Howell, 2009). With the recent reform of institutions like the *hukou* system, some new urban dwellers are likely to enjoy more benefits of the urban system and adapt to urban life more easily. This is particularly true for those migrants who have settled in the city and own an apartment, that is, according to recent research, rural-urban migrants who have fewer connections with their original village and a higher socio-economic status (Yang, 2010; Wang & Fan, 2012; Song, 2016; X. Huang et al., 2018).

As for the Chinese terminologies of *chengshihua*, *chengzhenhua*, and *shiminhua*, they can all be translated into the term 'urbanization' in English, originating from the Latin root common to English, French, Italian, and other Latinate European languages. However, the meanings and connotations of the three Chinese terms are nuanced. In Chinese language, *Cheng* means a city, *shi* originally means the city with a major market in ancient China but the meaning has been extended to indicate a large metropolis. *Zhen* means a town or township, the commercial centre in a rural area. In contemporary China it is also an administrative level below county-level administration but above a village (Mobrand, 2015).<sup>30</sup> Hence *zhen* is considered a geographically and spatially transitional place in-between metropolitan cities and rural villages. Thus, *chengshi* is regarded as equivalent to a super large metropolis or a highly urbanised city while *chengzhen* refers to medium-sized and small towns. "- - *hua*" in the Chinese

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<sup>30</sup> The county-level administration includes county, county-level city, city district under prefecture-level city etc.

language refers to a process, equivalent to the translation of the suffix of ‘-isation’, applied to a certain noun that could be considered as a process. Therefore, *chengzhihua* refers to the process of urbanisation on a larger scale to a higher degree than *chengzhenhua*. In policy language, the term *chengzhenhua* is more frequently used as it incorporates a wider connotation: *Chenzhenhua* covers the transformation of the built- environment from larger cities to smaller towns. The definition of *shimin* has a lexical root that can be traced back to the time of the China’s Republican Era (1921-1949), or further to the vernacular novels of the Ming and Qing dynasties in Imperial China (Rabut, 2014), and translated as “people of the market town”(G. Wang et al., 2008). In a modern sense, *shimin* could be translated as urban residents or urban dwellers with certain rights in the city, therefore *shiminhua* is the process of becoming a fully recognized urban resident, so resonates with the concept of urbanisation of people generally, and urbanisation of rural-urban migrants in the GBA context.

In Chinese academic literature studying the process and result of *shiminhua*, the word *shiminhua* has been translated into English as citizenisation (Y. Liu et al., 2012; G. Zhang & Chen, 2013). As holders of different types of *hukou*: local urban *hukou*, non-local urban *hukou*, and non-local rural *hukou*, are considered as being treated differently in the system as if they enjoy citizenship to different extents (Guo & Liang, 2017). Whereas the author contends that the wording ‘citizen’ and ‘urban dwellers’ are of very different connotations in the English language. The term ‘citizenisation’ does not capture the essence of the process of *shiminhua* as it over-emphasizes the aspects of

gaining political entitlement of the individual and impose a formal procedure that overlooks the socio-cultural aspects of the *shiminhua* process. A more suitable analogy is made for new urban 'inhabitantries' as discussed by Henri Lefebvre (1986) in literature in the French language, the concept of *shimin* is more inclined to '*citadins*' rather than '*citoyens*'.<sup>31</sup>

Besides appearing in heated academic discussions, the term *shiminhua* is also frequently utilized in government-drafted policy documents (Mobrand, 2015). For example, *shiminhua* among rural-urban migrants is emphasized by the central government's urban development strategies and policies. In the Chinese National Plan for New Urbanization 2014-2020, the State Council of China defines the urbanization of migrant workers is one of the "key tasks" in the transformation to New Type Urbanization (Chinese National Plan for New Urbanization, 2014; 2:2). *Shiminhua* is not only an analytic concept, but also a political task for most provincial governors and city leaders assigned by the Party, conforming with the discourse of a "harmonious society", a "well-off society", and the "China Dream" (Mobrand, 2015).<sup>32</sup>

Research on the urbanisation of people is frequently mixed with the objective measurement of urbanisation (Ballegooijen, 2019). Whereas the official standard of *shimin* defined by Chinese authorities and academic work tends to follow a rigid matrix

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<sup>31</sup> *Citoyen* is more politically linked to the nation state as individual of entitlement while *citadin* is more attached to the environment of the city itself.

<sup>32</sup> In Chinese, *hexie shehui*, *xiaokang shehui*, and *zhongguo meng*.

based on economic indexes which are usually out of date and ignore the diversified experience of individuals (J. Yang, 2013). The mainstream discourse often takes the people in the metropolis as its primary focus.

According to Zhao (2001), however, the experience of *shiminhua* in small towns is distinct from the mainstream Chinese urbanisation in large cities. Guldin (2001) further differentiates two modes of fundamentally different urban experience - "urbanisation by immigration" and "urbanisation in place" - the latter occurring more often in smaller cities and towns (p.18). Yuting Liu et al. (2010) also argue that people living in village-like precincts of Chinese mega-cities experience a "transitional state" urbanisation (p.135) when compared to those in smaller cities. Hence, a gap exists in the urbanization experiences of migrants as conveyed through governmental discourse versus the migrants' own lived experiences.

The *shiminhua* concept of rural-urban migrants or the formerly coined term "migrant workers" is arguably a suitable analogy to the acculturation process for cross-border immigration (Gui et al., 2012; Miao & Xiao, 2020). Discourse towards acculturation theory is introduced and analysed in the section that follows.

In the summary of the literature review on migration and urbanisation theories, theoretical gaps have been identified in migration and urbanisation theories. Most modes of global urbanisation modes have attempted to establish an incremental, step-

by-step urbanisation trajectory and have focused upon providing solutions to urban diseases. The potential fallacies of these assumptions can be attributed to two factors. On the one hand, the urbanisation process is highly contextualized. For example, Chinese urbanisation may not fit the neoliberal model due to the government's high level of control over urban planning and development processes (G. C. S. Lin, 1999). In addition, many processes may occur which could be described as counter-urbanisation, suburbanisation, and re-urbanisation. Each has a complicated and nuanced background in need of contextual consideration.<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, since there is no clear-cut causality between urbanization and migration or any other attributed issues, it is arbitrary to deliver solutions to contemporary urban problems based on unconfirmed ascriptions, for example, the urbanisation of rural migrants. Moreover, due to the diverse nature of urban problems, there is no one-size-fits-all solution - even if the causes of urban problems are accurately identified. Not to mention that some problems associated with the urbanization process are 'wicked problems': once solved, other problems imminently emerge.

## 2.3 Theories of Acculturation

In order to bridge the literature on migration theory and urbanization theory, this section will feature a review of theories of acculturation used to explain how minority groups or individuals function within a mainstream society, while keeping their unique

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<sup>33</sup> Counter-urbanization, also referred to as 'de-urbanization', is a demographic and social process consisting of people moving from urban to rural areas (B. J. L. Berry, 1980); 'suburbanization' is a population shift from central urban areas into suburbs (Caves, 2005, p. 64); 're-urbanization' refers to the movement of people back into a previously abandoned area (Paddison & Lever, 2001, p. 143).

socio-cultural characteristics. Whilst the Chinese rural-urban migrant's experience after migrating to the city could differ from the acculturation experiences of other minority groups in other societies, many critical aspects of a migrant's interactions with urban natives have been touched upon by theories of acculturation. Therefore, studying theories of acculturation consolidates the foundations for discussing similarities and differences of *shiminhua* in a more conceptualized way.

### Conceptualizing Acculturation

Amongst overarching theories of migration, one of the most important theories related to migration in the receiving area is the theory of acculturation. In European and North American contexts, acculturation is interpreted as "the assimilation to a different, typically the dominant local culture" (Broom & Kitsuse, 1955, p. 44). While the International Organization of Migration (IOM) has given a more comprehensive definition of acculturation as "the progressive adoption of elements of a foreign culture, composed of ideas, words, values, norms, behaviours, institutions, by persons, groups or classes of a given culture." (International Organization for Migration, 2011, p. 7), there have been interchangeable usages of other terms including 'assimilation', 'biculturalism', 'integration', '(re-)socialization' and '*interculturalization*' (J. W. B. Berry & Sam, 2016; Clanet, 1993).<sup>34</sup> Notably among anthropologists, there seems to be a

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<sup>34</sup> Inter-culturation is more often used in French literature, one distinctive feature compared to the concept of acculturation is the formation of a new culture.

preference for using the concept of acculturation; meanwhile, among sociologists there is proliferated usage of the term assimilation (Alba & Nee, 1997).

Berry and Sam posit that "acculturation" is: "a more far-reaching and all-embracing concept [...] in terms of scope and meaning" (2016, p. 23). Consequently, the conceptual term is deemed in this research to be a more suitable when applied to theory development in the studies of migrants in a receiving area.

A major development in the theory of acculturation occurred within the field of psychology, wherein three main aspects of the process of acculturation were plotted: culture continuity, contact, and power (Triandis, 1980). Cultural continuity refers to the extent to which the minority group maintains its heritage culture and identity. Contact is the interactions between individuals or groups of different cultural backgrounds, while power relates to both the dynamic between the mainstream society and the minority cultural group (Van de Vijver et al., 2016).<sup>35</sup> Two influential theoretical models represent the significant developments in acculturation theories. The first is a linear, continuum-like spectrum of acculturation model; the second is a two-dimensional acculturation strategies model (Padilla, 1980; Jean S. Phinney, 1990; Van Oudenhoven et al., 2006). In the first linear model, ties with ethnic groups and ties with the larger society are placed as two opposites; the strengthening of one tie will engender a switch

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<sup>35</sup> It is noted that the dominant group may not be the majority, for example in South Africa where the economically dominant White group is a minority (Van de Vijver et al., 2016, p. 6).



of identity position in the continuum and inevitably lead to distance from its opposite. Those advocating the bi-dimensional model criticize the linear acculturation model, stating that links to ethnic heritage and relationships to the host society should be considered on two different scales. This criticism leads to a quartic model of acculturation results based on four different acculturation strategies (J. W. B. Berry & Sam, 2016).

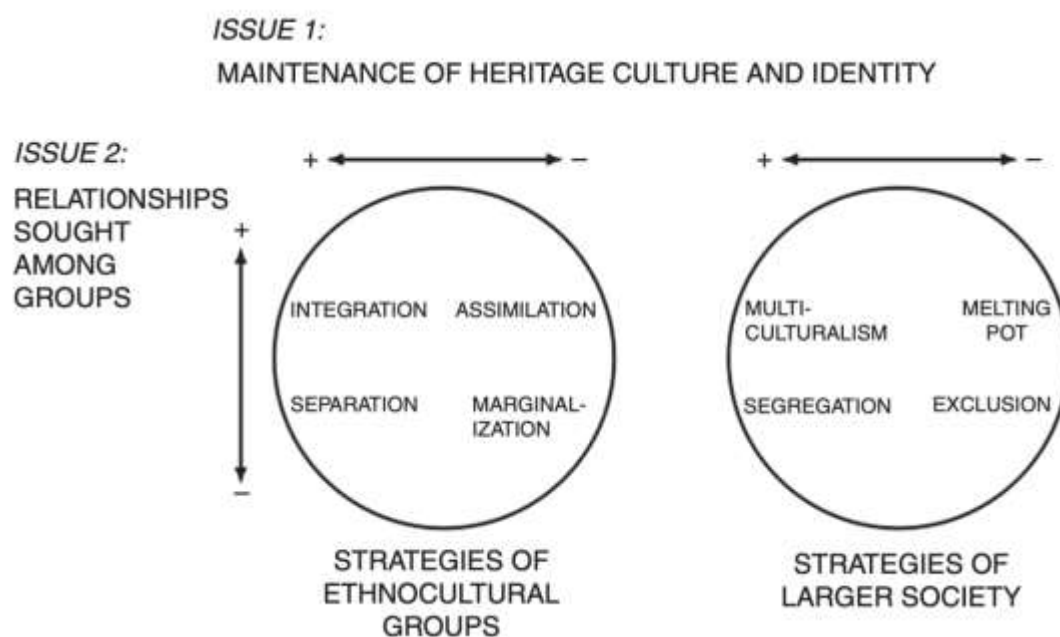


Figure 2.7 Acculturation Strategies Model

Source: *The Cambridge Handbook of Acculturation Psychology*, p.19.

In Figure 2.7, the acculturation strategic model is based on the conceptualization of three aspects: relationships sought among groups, strategies of ethnocultural groups, and strategies of the larger society, as distinctive dimensions. Depending upon attitudes and behaviours, acculturation strategies have been divided into quartics of higher or lower levels of both maintenance of heritage culture and identity, as well as relationships sought among groups. This leads from the group's perspective to the

strategies of integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization. Correspondingly presented are the four strategies of multi-culturalism, melting pot, segregation, and exclusion.

What is the relationship between the theories of acculturation and the *shiminhua* process? According to the acculturation strategic model, assuming it is commensurable to conduct the analogy, the concept of *shiminhua* can be placed somewhere in between assimilation and marginalization. In addition, sampling in studies of acculturation assessment of acculturation can shed light on the study of *shiminhua* in methodological aspects (Redfield et al., 1936; Van de Vijver et al., 2016).

Gui and Berry (2012) have applied acculturation theory to the Chinese context by utilising supplementary psychological measurements of Satisfaction with Life Scale and Global Self-Worth Scale (Pavot & Diener, 1993). While finding the acculturation strategies model suitable overall to explain some results of the data, scrutiny of the conceptual level is lacking and some presumptions of the acculturation strategies are simplified. The shortcomings of this particular piece of research also resonate with more general criticism of the application of acculturation theories to regional, internal migrant contexts.

Critics of those who seek to fit *shiminhua* into acculturation strategic models are also reported (Logan, 2008; J. Yang, 2010; X. Zhao & Li, 2013), echoing critics of the

integration theories that have been widely applied in the studies of cross-cultural migration and indigenous people (Bayor, 1978; Glazer, 1993; Alba & Nee, 1997; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2016). The major criticism is that the culture is crucially based on the concept of acculturation, does the acculturation ignore the importance of socio-economic status and the power attached? Secondly, does urban culture differentiate itself from rural culture in the same way as mainstream western culture and ethnic group's culture, e.g., Islamic culture or Chinese culture? If so, it is valid to consider "urban culture" as a homogeneous category regardless of the regional context in Shanghai or Guangzhou, or the socio-economic differentiation between a tier 1 city and a tier 3 city (Porter & Howell, 2009). Thirdly, while integration or multiculturalism is considered the ideal plot in acculturation strategy models that have been proved to work through empirical studies (Padilla, 1980; Gui et al., 2012; C. Hu et al., 2013), is it truly achievable in the context of Chinese cities? <sup>36</sup> For example, Glazer (1993) suggests that complete integration was rarely realized in a wide range of regional contexts.

Consequently, applications of the acculturation theory need to be thoughtfully scrutinized and should be considered over a longer time frame. For example, the acculturation into urban culture in-between generations of migrants (Portes et al., 2001).

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<sup>36</sup> As for separation or segregation strategy, there are cases like "Zhejiang village" in Beijing that could be regarded as a certain form of segregation.

## Important Factors of Acculturation

Throughout the acculturation literature, particularly regarding integration of rural-urban migrants in the Chinese context, three factors - housing, economic status and social capital are the frequently mentioned aspects as being utilized in the analysis of acculturation in the regional context.

### *Housing & Homeownership*

Housing is a fundamental need if rural-urban migrants are to reside in cities. Many aspects should be considered when trying to assess the housing conditions of an individual migrant or a migrant household. Potential factors related to housing include type of housing ownership type, housing price, types of housing lease, housing satisfaction, perception of housing sales, and attitude towards local housing policy as well as community-level housing support. Among all the above-mentioned indicators, homeownership is the marker of a migrant's settled status in the host society, thus it is considered to be the most important indicator of acculturation related to housing. It proves that the migrant has successfully overcome high property prices and is capable of paying a large lump sum investment (Beswick et al., 2016). Alternatively, the rural-urban migrant might possess the ability to contribute monthly to a mortgage by drawing upon a relatively stable job (Ager & Strang, 2008; Harder et al., 2018). Both situations imply the migrant's capacity for long-term residence in the city. Conversely they are favoured by the city compared to those who cannot achieve the equivalent (Song, 2016). Besides being proof of individual ability in acculturation, migrant house

ownership also demonstrates a generally supportive policy environment on the part of host cities in terms of providing affordable housing resources (Bartnicka, 2021; Barton, 1996).

The advantage of homeownership is significant for the acculturation process (González Fuentes & Iglesias Fernández, 2015). It clearly draws a line between “a place to stay or a place to live”(Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 171). Compared to temporary settlement or tenancy, it involves less risk of being displaced (Chapman & Lombard, 2006), particularly under the Chinese top-down planning system which can initiate abrupt urban land-use changes (Bernt, 2019; Y. Liu et al., 2018). Owning a house is not only an indicator of success in the city (Zang et al., 2015), improving housing satisfaction(Elsinga & Hoekstra, 2005), but also promotes a commitment to adjustment to local social, economic, and cultural life in the future; all considered to be very important factors for *shiminhua* in the FGD pilot studies (Ersoy, 1992). Moreover, house ownership in a neighbourhoods predominately occupied by urban natives is likely to increase interaction and networking with locals, creating opportunities for building social capital, as research on intergroup neighbouring in China demonstrates (Z. Wang et al., 2016).

### ***Economic Status***

The economic attractiveness of the city is the initial reason why rural-urban migrants to migrate, creating a possible environment for acculturation to occur (Lee, 1966).

Income and expenditure correspondence are identified by economists and migration scholars as a valid measurement of economic status (Davies & Wooton, 1992), and both indicators are applicable to migrants at different skill levels: from unskilled labour workers to highly-skilled professionals.

Net monthly income per head is a common indicator for measuring rural-urban migrants' economic condition, 'net' referring to the situation after the deduction of any taxes and social insurance contributions, monthly income in contrast to weekly or annual income, and per head compared to per household (Davies & Wooton, 1992). Monthly income is potentially an indicator in studies of acculturation in urban society for measuring rural-urban migrants' economic status. Furthermore, it also provides an opportunity for the cluster of data to be compared with existing, second-hand statistics which usually use monthly income per household.

However, net monthly income per head also has limitations. According to existing research in Chinese cities, rural-urban migrant workers are likely to endure lower payment with poorer working environments compared to their urban counterparts, which creates hurdles for their acculturation (Z. Lu & Song, 2006; H. Wang et al., 2015). They could be regarded as 'second-class workers' in work insurance documentation, employment contracts and tenure documents, which could also be reflected in the actual amount that they have received as income per month (Démurger et al., 2009). They are more likely to be employed in the informal sectors with salaries calculated by

day (X. Meng, 2001). While in individual cases, the income level could be dependent upon many other factors, including education and skills level, working experience and so on.<sup>37</sup>

The economic foundation is the condition under which acculturation occurs for the minority group as well as for individuals in the minority group. This is further verified by studies of the returning diaspora in Israel (Horenczyk & Ben-Shalom, 2012), as well as immigration in urban China (L. Fang et al., 2016). Solid economic status inferred by income and expenditure levels will help to imply the possibility of acculturation for a minority group in a specific context, for example, when studying rural-urban migrants' *shiminhua* process in different tiers of Chinese cities.

### ***Social Capital & Social Network***

Derived from Pierre Bourdieu's theorization of capital, social capital is defined by Thomas Sander thus: "the collective value of all social networks, and the inclinations that arise from these networks to do things for each other in reciprocity." (2002, p. 214)

<sup>38</sup> According to Coleman, social capital refers to: "a variety of entities with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of actors [...] within the structure." (1988, p. 96). Putnam

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<sup>37</sup> Consumption level is taken as a reference for inferring economic status and there are reasons for that. The main reason is that there are huge differences in expenditure structure and level in rural and urban China: in a rural household, expenditure is usually calculated as a household and it is hard to be divided by individual, (Giles & Yoo, 2007; S. He, 2015).

<sup>38</sup> Pierre Bourdieu distinguishes between three forms of capital: economic capital, cultural capital and social capital.

defines 'social capital' as "connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them." (2001, p. 19) Social capital comprises many other factors including an individual's social style, their social circle, social etiquette that conforms with both the minority community and the mainstream society, and so on. Sander's, Coleman's and Putnam's definitions of social capital have all emphasized the importance of the social network. Possessing a social network is also deemed to be an advantage in the acculturation process for an individual and groups (Bian, 2021).

Social network theories have long been adopted in classic migration studies to explain migrants' adaptation and acculturation to host societies (Constant & Zimmermann, 2013; Bilecen et al., 2018). In the Chinese context, formal and particularly informal networks, denoted by the Chinese term *guanxi* either italics for Chinese terms or single quotes, but be consistent is regarded as an indicator of influence, contributing to the accumulation of social capital (Bian, 2021). According to Yue et al, (2013), a strong non-kin migrant-resident tie - mainly a circle of friends - has significant positive consequential impacts on rural-urban migrants' adaptation to urban life. In addition, having regular, frequent contact with urban natives indicates exposure to more out-group neighbours, which according to Wang et al.(2017)'s research in a community of residential diversity in Shanghai, will alleviate preconceived stigma and build up social trust in most cases.



To take an alternative view of the urban native, the trust built up with the local neighbourhood may also reduce discrimination against the migrant (Z. Wang et al., 2017). Social discrimination against rural-urban migrants can be observed due to the stigma of rural migrants and the sense of pride and superiority among local people, which makes it harder for migrants to interact congenially with locals. Local community's verbal and behavioural discrimination in interactions can be perceived, which will discourage the rural-urban migrants from building their essential social network in China's urban realm (Bilecen et al., 2018). This might prevent them from gaining more social capital by establishing a connection with urban residents and may have negative impacts on their mental health (J. Li & Rose, 2017). Therefore, a well-networked social realm with strong interactions with urban natives helps to accumulate social capital thus facilitating the future potential of the city which rural-urban migrant had chosen to live.

Apart from the three factors of housing, economic status, and social capital that have instant effects on the process of acculturation, education of the next generation is a particularly important factor for the acculturation of new urban dwellers in China in the long run, as it helps to accumulate the social capital required to break out of the migrant enclave, improving the economic status and housing conditions so as to exceed the class limitations. The next sub-section will address the issue of education for second-generation rural-urban migrants, with an explanation of the Chinese education system.

### Acculturation through Education in China

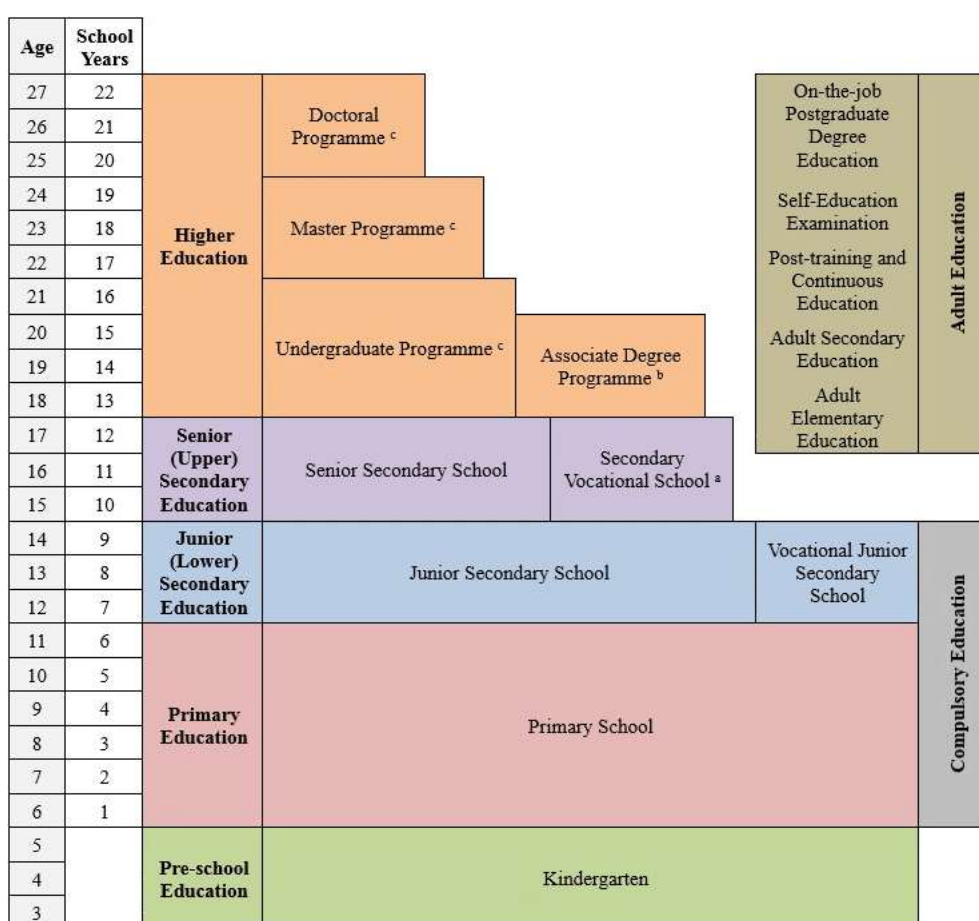
Education plays an important role in the long-term, intergeneration of acculturation, and has profound impacts on an individual's decision-making and cultural practices (C. Hu et al., 2013; Deslandes et al., 2022). Conversely, the education system experienced by migrants in the host society can be shaped by the dominant acculturation pattern of the migrant groups (Sheikh & Anderson, 2018).

The Chinese Education tradition has been deeply influenced by the *Keju* system or the imperial examination system in which state-organized exams are open to the public to assess and select candidates who are suitable for further education based on Confucian classics, nurturing imperial governmental administrators based on a principle of meritocracy (T. Chen et al., 2020; Y. Liu, 2016).<sup>39</sup> *Keju*'s profound influence on contemporary society is also embedded in the emphasis given education by ordinary Chinese families, including rural-urban migrant families, as education is regarded as the most efficient channel for class transition (Woronov, 2016). The hierarchy examination system of *Keju* has also partially adapted to the current Chinese educational system, with each study phase ending with an exam that will lead to the next phase of further study.

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<sup>39</sup> The prototype of *Keju* system originated from Sui Dynasty (581-618) and was formalised in Tang Dynasty (618-901). Lasting for around 1300 years, it had profound impacts on the history of education and examination in the world, similar systems have been adopted by other countries in the Chinese-character culture circle including Korea, Japan, and Vietnam. It had further influenced on the formation of modern bureaucratic examination systems in European nations including Britain (T. Chen et al., 2020).

In contemporary China, the nationwide policy of 9-year compulsory education covers most regions. However, some more economically advanced regions have progressed to a 12-year free education, that is, nine years of compulsory education followed by a three-year free high school education (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2020). After sitting the Junior Secondary School Examination, around 50% of junior high school candidates are admitted into ordinary senior high school with an anticipated academic track to tertiary education after sitting the famous *Gaokao* - the National College Entrance Exam (Jiang, 2017; Howlett, 2021). Those not admitted to senior high schools, usually choose to go on to vocational secondary schools, or directly into the job market (D. Huang, 2021).



*Figure 2.8 The contemporary Chinese educational system*

*Source: Oxford Research Encyclopaedia by Jiang.*

As Figure 2.8 indicates, following secondary education, university graduates from universities obtain a bachelor's degree together with a university certificate. Meanwhile, successful graduates from vocational colleges are awarded a Vocational College Diploma without a degree. This diploma prepares students to work in industry rather than pursue further studies (Woronov, 2016). Holders of a bachelor's degree may choose to continue their studies through a professional Master's degree for two years or through an academic Master's programme for three years in domestic higher educational institutions (Jiang, 2017). Since 2010, more and more bachelor's degree holders apply to overseas graduate schools to further their studies. Included in this group are some second-generation rural-urban migrants from relatively well-off families – following a path rarely afforded to first-generation migrants (J. Chen, 2019; L. Zhu & Reeves, 2019).<sup>40</sup>

Characterized by keen competition for educational resources, inequality of resource distribution, and an emphasis on academic rather than skills-based and general education, the current Chinese education landscape is heavily influenced by the 1999 educational reform. The knock-on effects of this reform on basic, tertiary, and vocational education are closely related to the experience of rural-urban migrants and subsequent generations (Murphy, 2020).

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<sup>40</sup> It is notable that the above is a summary of the Chinese educational and schooling system; regional disparity makes the local situation of the schooling system varied.

Against the backdrop of an overheated economy with a high inflation rate, reforms were launched in the basic education sector despite an imbalanced configuration of resources. More decision-making power was devolved to local governments for educational resource allocation within administrative borders. With limited resources and financial support from the central government, and with the aim of concentrating resources in the county base for better quality schools, many rural schools were demolished. Consequently, children were directed to county-based schools. To some extent, this enlarged the gap between the quality of rural and urban education and accelerated the movement of children towards the city for a better education.

Within tertiary education, universities expanded their admission quota to absorb extra youths who would otherwise have been unemployed, in turn stimulating investment and consumption in the educational sector. This led to a depreciation of the value of certificates; formerly prestigious university graduates were no longer guaranteed an “iron rice bowl” by the state (Putterman & Dong, 2000; Kong et al., 2019). By comparison, migrant groups who were less likely to hold degrees, were less affected by this depreciation. University graduates began to enjoy similar wage levels to these rural-urban migrants without a degree (Y. He & Mai, 2015).<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> There has been a series of studies of “ant tribe” young college graduates who staged in the city and work for low-payment positions (X. Zhang, 2013; Bregnbæk, 2016).

With a set aim of directing half the students into the vocational educational sector, those who were not academically successful were directed into vocational high schools. With poorer resources and 'laissez-faire' teachers, vocational schools began to be stigmatized as 'the school those losers attend'. Since the children of rural families and rural-urban migrants comprised the largest portion of vocational schools' students, due to systematic inequality of social and cultural capital, they were further bonded by social stratification and excluded from the urban higher educational experience that plays an important role in acculturation to urban society.

To summarize, whilst the significance of education in facilitating acculturation has been widely recognized by the government and by migrants' families, due to existing structural inequality and controversial educational reforms rural-urban migrants continue to face challenging circumstances and are often deprived of the opportunities available to other groups.

## **2.4 The Greater Bay Area (GBA)**

After critically reviewing the major theories of migration, urbanization, and acculturation at a global and national levels, in this section discusses the regional context of the research case study will be discussed. This will provide more insights into the historical, geographic, and socio-cultural landscape of the field.

### **Overview of GBA**

Whilst the GBA is a new concept for regional development initiated by the Chinese central government, the geographical region of Canton, or *Lingnan* in the Imperial period, has a unique socio-cultural dynamic that continues to inform contemporary regional development.<sup>42</sup>

### *A Brief History of the GBA*

With the Nanling Mountains separating the Canton region and the Zhongyuan plain, Guangdong is an independent but well-connected geographical area with adequate rains levels and sub-tropical temperatures. Its unique geographical characteristics shape the special Lingnan culture of the region, embracing a distinctive history insulated from the central government's authority ever since the Imperial Qin dynasty. The input of diversified cultures, religions, and traditions have enriched the history of this study area. During the late Qin and Han dynasties, the South Yue was an independent country heavily influenced by the central dynasty, although regarded as a region of southern barbarians until the Song and Yuan dynasties, which saw the expanding influence of central empire, mass migration, and economic development in the south.<sup>43</sup>

Enjoying trading and maritime commerce, Canton flourished into as a hub connected with the Arabic and Islamic world and further beyond.<sup>44</sup> Large numbers of overseas

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<sup>42</sup> The ancient name *Lingnan* refers to the wide region south of the *Nanling* mountain, which approximately covers the province of Guangdong, Guangxi, and Hainan in contemporary China.

<sup>43</sup> South Yue dynasty is from 203 B.C to 111 B.C.

<sup>44</sup> Canton is the area centred around the modern city of Guangzhou.

merchants have been recorded living and trading in this region during the monsoon season. In the later imperial Ming and Qing eras, Guangzhou became the window to the West with large numbers of Chinese diasporas travelling overseas - mainly to Southeast Asia to make a living. Thereafter, it turned into a front-line territory when industrial nations clashed with the old imperial civilisation of China. This period was marked in particular by Hong Kong being ceded to Britain (Welsh, 1997; Patten, 2022). During the period of the Republic, Guangzhou became the capital city of the Republican government amid chaotic fighting of warlords which continued until 1949 (Bonavia, 1995).

With a tradition of international trading from imperial times, this area was portrayed as "a clear success story" and described as "one step ahead" of the rest of China during the early opening-up years (Skinner, 1977; Guldin, 2001, p. 72). Whilst the rate of growth in GDP increase has slowed since the 1990s, Guangdong, practically the core area of the Pearl River Delta, continues to be one of the two most developed and economically dynamic regions in China alongside the Yangtze River Delta. The history of the Canton area is one of commercialism and human mobility, a narrative which differs considerably from the Chinese Imperial tradition of prioritizing agriculture and the stagnation of large-scale spontaneous movement of people (Yeung & Chu, 1994).





Figure 2.9 Guangdong Province in China; the Locations of Guangzhou, Dongguan, and Zhongshan in the Greater Bay Area

Source: <https://www.nextbigfuture.com/2019/02/china-wants-to-integrate-greater-bay-area-into-a-tech-hub-challenger-to-silicon-valley.html>. Guangdong Province.

The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area<sup>45</sup> covers the geographical area of the city cluster in the Pearl River Delta of South China, consisting of two special administrative regions and nine cities in Guangdong province. It covers an area of 56,000 sq. km with a total population of about 68 million (Local Gazetteers Editing Committee of Guangdong Province, 2014).

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<sup>45</sup> Henceforth referred to as Greater Bay Area or GBA.

Established in 2016, the Greater Bay Area inherited the economic institutions of the Pearl River Delta, comprising nine cities and two special administrative regions. It is a national strategic node and one of the three most developed regions in China. Compared to the two other most urbanized metropolitan areas, the *Jing-Jin-Ji* Area and the Yangtze River Delta Area, the Greater Bay Area has seen significantly more migrants become urbanized (J. Haas & Ban, 2014; F. Wang & Liu, 2015). This mode of urbanisation is rather different from “urbanisation in place” as a result of urban sprawl, making it more important to understand the urbanisation experience of the “new city dweller” (G. Wang et al., 2008, p. 14).

Regarding the development trajectory of the region, there are several geographical concepts pertinent to the research that are worth differentiating between.

Guangdong Province was one of the 31 provinces situated in South China. Its administrative area is directly inherited from the territories of the *Liangguang Xingsheng* in the Qing Dynasty. Composed of 21 prefecture-level cities, Guangdong province has continuously ranked top by GDP among all 34 provincial-level administrative regions (Local Gazetteers Editing Committee of Guangdong Province, 2014).

Bearing the nickname of ‘Golden Delta of Guangdong’, the Pearl River Delta (PRD) refers to the low-lying area surrounding the Pearl River Estuary (F. Liu et al., 2018).

Statistically, it is one of the most densely populated and urbanized regions in the world. The boundaries of the Pearl River Delta are difficult to delineate strictly, however the literature reveals three possibilities to consider. Firstly, the narrowly defined PRD refers to Special Economic Zone established in 1994, which included tens of medium-sized and small cities around Guangzhou and Shenzhen.<sup>46</sup> Covering an area of 24,437 km<sup>2</sup>, it constitutes 14% of the area of Guangdong Province (J. Haas & Ban, 2014). Secondly, the larger PRD further extends to nine prefecture-level cities, usually referred to as the PRD Economic Zone in the 1990s (Vogel, 1995). Finally, the Pan-PRD was a concept coined in 2013 as the prototype of the Greater Bay Area. It includes 11 cities within the region and reaches further rural hinterlands in nearby provinces. All in all, these three PRDs overlap not only as regards geographical territories, but in their geographical, socio-economic, and political layers. The misinterpretation and confusion surrounding the concept of the PRD was a pre-condition for the concept of the Greater Bay Area to emerge.

The GBA is a nationally initiated regional planning strategy that intersects part of Guangdong province. Guangdong and the GBA are connected since the GBA is deeply rooted in Guangzhou province's regional space. The GBA could be regarded as "an advanced version" of the Pearl River Delta initiative, despite the GBA having a more clearly defined boundary as per the central government. As of the end of 2020, the GBA is composed of around 56,100 km<sup>2</sup> with around 86 million people living within

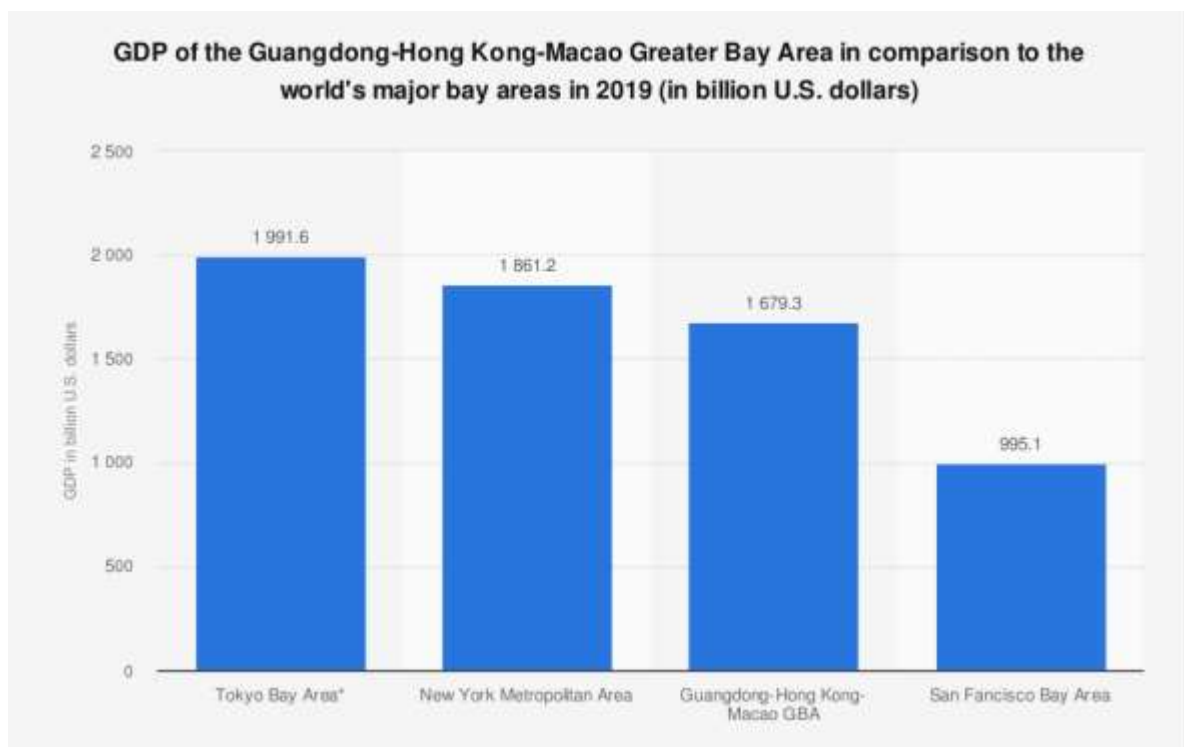
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<sup>46</sup> Excluding Hong Kong SAR and Macao SAR.

the region. Despite comprising less than 1% cent of China's land space, the GBA contributes 11% of China's total GDP (Yu, 2021).

### *Why Study the GBA?*

Why has the GBA been chosen as the focal point of this case study? Firstly, from a worldwide regional studies perspective, the GBA is among the four largest bay areas in the world. It stands alongside the San Francisco Bay Area and New York Metropolitan Area in the USA and the Greater Tokyo Bay Area in Japan.



*Figure 2.10 GDP of the four major Bay Areas in the world*

*Source : <https://research.hktdc.com/en/article/MzYzMDE5NzQ5>*

As observed in Figure 2.10, by 2020 the GBA's total economic output was comparable to the Tokyo Bay Area. Meanwhile, by 2030, the GBA will surpass the New York Bay Area and the Tokyo Bay Area. Its large economic impacts make studies of the GBA very popular. Furthermore, a detailed study of the GBA is likely to provide insights into emerging economic regions in the Global South.

Secondly, regionally speaking, as the most urbanised area in South China, the GBA is a powerful economic growth pole with radiation effects to the hinterland, achieving spill-over effects to affinity regions as well as becoming a key destination for immigration. It also forms part of a larger national development strategy of Belt and Road initiatives (Yu, 2021). The ripple effects on various layers of the hinterland can thus further extend and penetrate state boundaries.

Finally, the concept of the GBA derives from a centrally led, top-down national policy for regional development, revealing the Chinese state's strong intentions to boost local economic development, regional integration, innovation, and sustainable development. Encouraging a nuanced understanding of urban development in a regional context is therefore intriguing and worthy of merit.

### **Cities, Urbanisation, and Migration in the GBA**

Cities in the GBA lie in three different jurisdictions and therefore have different administrative hierarchies, while sharing some common characteristics.<sup>47</sup> Whilst some of the cities have had historic legacies from the past, most of them have experienced rapid urbanization with an influx of labour and consequent urban sprawl since China's

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<sup>47</sup> In Hong Kong Special Administrative Region is a Common Law Jurisdiction, while Macau Special Administrative Region is a Civil Code Jurisdiction. Guangdong Province in China adopts a largely Civil Law System.

Opening-Up (Vogel, 1995). Most of the rural-urban migrants are from the hinterland that has been benefited from the economic success of the Pearl River Delta.

Diverging from cities in the Yangtze River Delta and the *Jing-Jin-Ji* urban complex, cities in the GBA are less intensively planned by the central government. The success of the GBA cities is more driven by the complex of foreign investment-manufacturing-labour immigration, or, in Yang's (2020) term, "foreign investment-induced 'exo(genous)-urbanisation'". The GBA's bonds to international markets are also profoundly established, even when compared to cities such as Shanghai where a larger scale of foreign investment might have been achieved (Choi et al., 2021; L. Wang & Shen, 2017).

*Table 2.4 Data of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area*

No	City	Tier	GDP (billion USD)	Population (million)	GDP per capita (USD/person)	Density (/km <sup>2</sup> )		
1	Guangzhou	1	284.6	14.04	20,271	1888	Study Site	
2	Shenzhen	1	283.0	11.90	23,782	5929	Special Economic Zone	
3	Foshan	2	125.3	7.5	16,707	1935		
4	Dongguan	2	99.1	8.25	12,012	3284	Study Site	
5	Zhongshan	3	46.4	3.23	14,365	1825	Study Site	
6	Zhuhai	2	32.3	1.68	19,226	991	Special Economic Zone	
7	Jiangmen	3	34.8	4.54	7665	475		
8	Zhaoqing	3	30.1	4.06	7438	271		
9	Huizhou	3	49.5	4.78	10,356	428		
10	Hong Kong	1+	319.3	7.37	43,324	6676	Special Region	Administrative
11	Macao	2+	44.7	0.64	69,844	21918	Special Region	Administrative

*Source: Integrated from (Hui et al 2020; Yu 2021).*

In Table 2.3, Shenzhen, as the most successful Special Economic Zone, has developed its own pattern of migration-pulling and development. It is not only a regional mobility centre, but rather one of national mobility; in fact, the other Chinese city that has the

closest connection with Shenzhen in terms of capital investment and human flow is Beijing, rather than other cities in the Greater Bay Area (Pan et al., 2017).

Current rural-urban migrant dynamics in GBA are shaped by three time periods in accordance with the overall urbanization and development process of the region. In the 1980s and 1990s, the GBA was the first region to open up to foreign investment. The region had attracted cheap labour from all around China: "heading to the South to be employed and work", or *nanxia dagong* in Chinese, has become a buzzword for rural residents throughout China to make a living and pursue a better life in the Canton region cities. A large proportion of these migrants usually head for work in the factories (Chinese National Bureau of Statistics, 2005). Shenzhen, and the next Dongguan, are poles for attracting rural-urban migrants (Yeh & Xu, 2011).

Since the 2010s, a slower rate of increase of rural-urban migrants has been observed. The GBA became more of a regional migration destination in south China, while remaining attractive to rural-urban migrants from northern provinces including Henan and Shandong. During this phase, the GBA regional strategic plan was launched to further enhance the regional integration of Hong Kong and Macau into the Guangdong Province. An increasing number of highly skilled expatriates and returned overseas students moved to the major cities of Hong Kong, Shenzhen, and Guangzhou. In response, the local municipal government launched their own scheme to *yincai* - attracting talents to work and settle (Sharif & Chandra, 2022).

Migration strengthened the labour provision in the GBA, particularly in the earlier phase when manufacturing sectors required a large supply of cheap labour. Besides boosting the economy alongside the local residents, migrants have also enriched the culture of the region, having profound impacts upon the flourishing urban life in the GBA (Local Gazetteers Editing Committee of Guangdong Province, 2014). Meanwhile, the urbanization of migrants is far from achieved due to a stringent *hukou* system, unreconciled regional policy, and high levels of expenditure that are beyond most rural-urban migrants' pockets.

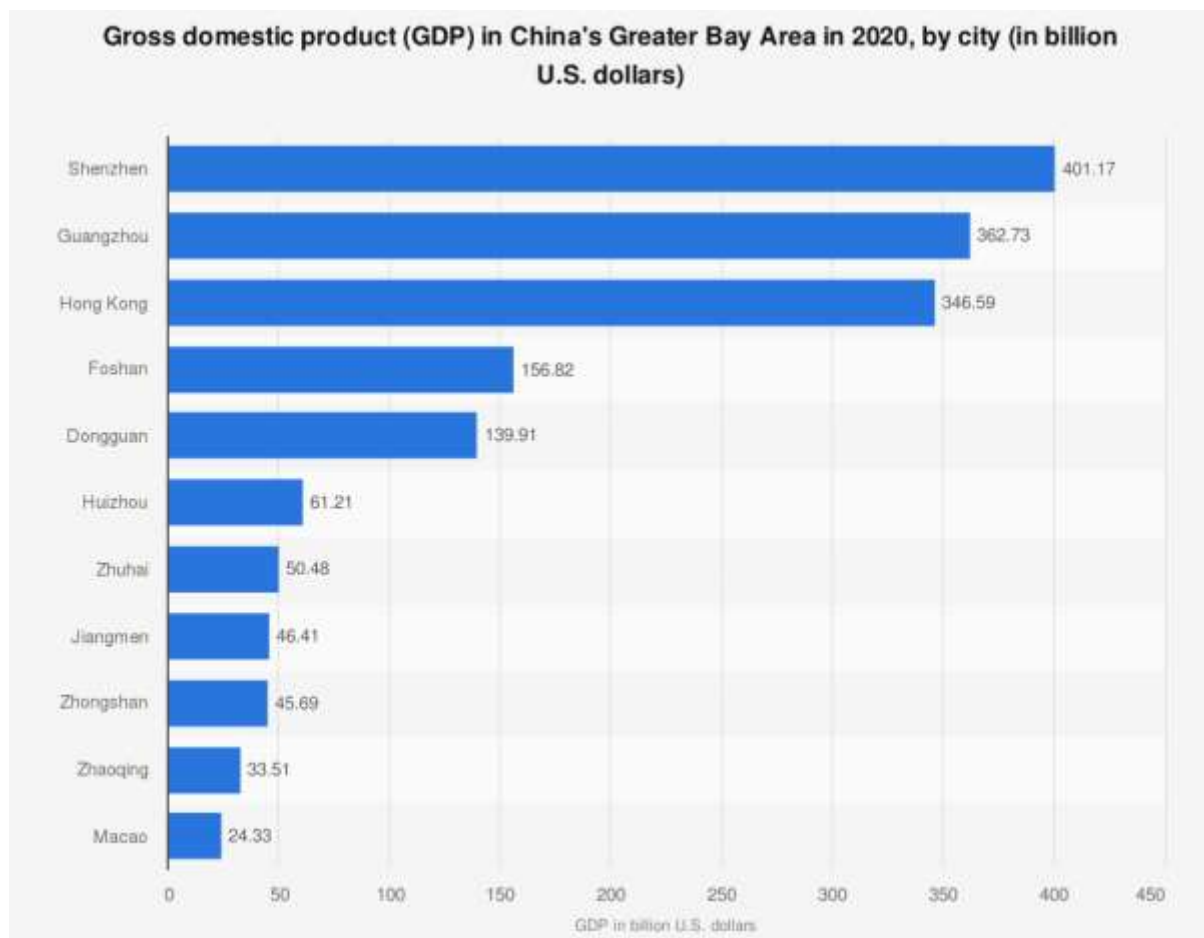


Figure 2.11 GDP in China's Greater Bay Area in 2020 by city (billion US \$)

Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1173989/china-gross-domestic-product-gdp-of-the-greater-bay-area-in-global-comparison/>



The above 11 cities have different scales of development, as demonstrated by the 2020 GDP by city in Figure 2.11. Three cities from Guangdong province - Guangzhou, Dongguan, and Zhongshan - were chosen as sites for study, all at the central geographical location in the GBA. Also referred to as Canton City, Guangzhou is the capital city of Guangdong province. With a population of nearly 15 million and a GDP of 23,628 billion yuan (USD3379 billion) in 2019, it is considered to be the third city in the city hierarchy of China, just behind Shanghai and Beijing, given its strategic position in the Pearl River Delta (R. Wu et al., 2019). Situated between the two tier 1 cities of Guangzhou and Shenzhen, Dongguan has enjoyed the benefits of foreign investment and industrial spill-over from Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. Dongguan was famous for being one of the first of several manufacturing hubs on the frontier of economic reform and opening-up policies; numerous international companies have located their factories there (S.-M. Li & Siu, 1997; G. C. S. Lin, 2006). Zhongshan is a prefecture-level tier 3 city within Guangdong province and the delta, and, with a population of slightly more than 3 million, it falls into the category of tier-3 city. It has a long history of Chinese overseas immigration, as well as rural-urban internal immigration more recently. Guangzhou and Dongguan have been appointed experimental cities under the National New Urbanization Plan (Chinese National Plan for New Urbanization 2014-2020, 2014; Zhang et al., 2015).

*Table 2.5 Comparison of Guangzhou, Dongguan, and Zhongshan*

	Guangzhou	Dongguan	Zhongshan
City Tier	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
Location	23°08'N; 113°16'E	23°02'N;113°43'E	23°08'N; 113°16'E

Population	14,90 million	8.32 million	3.14 million
Rural-urban Migrants	228093	173662	46905
Area	7,434 km <sup>2</sup>	2,465 km <sup>2</sup>	1,784 km <sup>2</sup>
City Status	Provincial Capital	One of the “four tiger cities” in Guangdong	A relatively slow-developing city in the region

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*Source: 2019 Statistical Yearbook of Guangdong Province.*

Studying the sites of Guangzhou, Dongguan, and Shenzhen, situated in the Greater Bay Area of China, is of merit since these are all rapidly developing cities of different tiers located in one of the most vibrant regional economic engines. The cities and regions have historic reasons for integrating immigrants of diversified backgrounds into their local region, both from a *longue durée* and a short frame of recent development trajectories. Geographically, the affinity, as well as the independent mode of development of the cities, provide possibilities for comparative studies within the region. Excluding cities with a special political arrangements and national migration centres reduces the confounding factors and increases the reliability of the site choices and subsequently the field study. Last but not least is the feasibility of conducting field research during the COVID-19 pandemic, which is further assessed in Chapter 3 in the sub-section Administration of Data Collection.

In this chapter, overarching theories of migration, urbanisation and acculturation are critically reviewed and the local context of the GBA region introduced. In the next chapter, an analytical framework is presented preceded by methodology and fieldwork process in the GBA region.

## Chapter 3 Research Framework and Methodology

### 3.1 An Analytical Framework of *Shiminhua* in GBA

In the previous Chapter, rich literature on rural-urban migration and their acculturation process--- more specifically *shiminhua* process in China, is considered a linear process based on a rural-urban dichotomy (Gu et al., 2012; Feng, 2017; M. Chen et al., 2019). Full integration into urban life for a rural-urban migrant was deemed necessary target for semi-skilled workers and unskilled labour (Feng, 2017; Guo & Liang, 2017). Recent studies on Chinese rural-urban migrants have demonstrated that despite the opposite direction of a binary rural-urban division, *shiminhua* in China is more on a continuum (X. Zhang, 2005; Porter & Howell, 2009), with comparable characteristics to the linear model of acculturation mentioned in Section 2.3 (Gui et al., 2012; Berry & Sam, 2016).

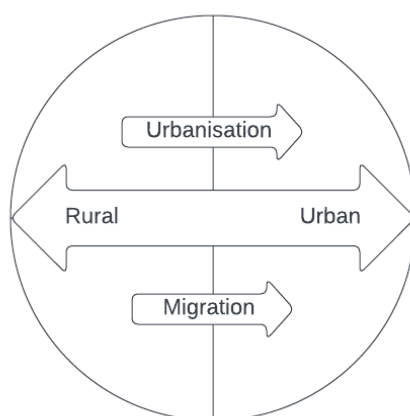


Figure 3.1 The rural-urban continue

Source: Author-own.

This is presented in the spectrum of rural-urban migrants in Figure 3.1. The new trend of urbanisation of the whole nation, since the economic reform in 1978 - denoted by the red arrow, has pushed individuals on the continuum from a more "rural" end to a

relative more “urban” end.<sup>48</sup> Following a similar analogy, urbanisation happening on the individual level accompanied by the urbanisation of built-environment, could also be viewed on a continuum rather than a dual model that based on rural-urban dichotomy.

When representing shiminhua, the red arrow in Figure 3.1 can be expanded into an analytical framework as presented in Figure 3.2. This proposed analytical framework is based on the key research question on ‘How does the phenomenon of shiminhua unfold in Chinese cities?’ Since shiminhua as an analytic concept can be understood from both individual level and policy level, a differentiation has been made in Figure 3.2 by the elongated dotted line to divide the two elements of ‘policy intervention on shiminhua’ and ‘personal strategies of *shiminhua*’.

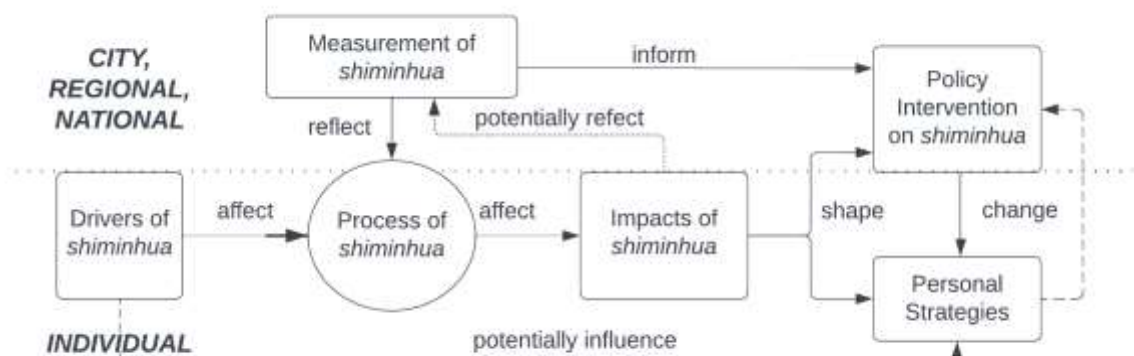


Figure 3.2 New Analytical Framework of shiminhua (draft v2.0)

Source: Author-own.

<sup>48</sup> For details on China’s economic reform since 1949, please refer to Chapter 2 section 2.1 Theories of Migration, in the sub-section of Chinese rural-urban migration.

The elements of 'Measurement of *shiminhua*' and 'Policy Intervention on *shiminhua*' at the topic half of the diagram are considered more related to city, regional, or national level issues (Directorate of Social and Economic Affairs, n.d.; Sun, 2019), while according the authors' interpretation, the other four elements including 'Drivers of *shiminhua*', 'Process of *shiminhua*', 'Impacts of *shiminhua*', 'Personal Strategies' are regarded as more related to individual level, which are the major focus of this dissertation. While all elements are connected indicated by arrow. The arrows with solid lines indicate established relation between two elements in literature, while arrows with dotted line indicate potential connection – as implicated by related literature (Mobrand, 2015). Among all the boxes, 'Policy Intervention on *shiminhua*' is the most well-connected box, indicating the strong policy-driven, top-down, managerial perspective when it comes to the study of *shiminhua* in the Chinese GBA context (Ellis & Roberts, 2016; Wu et al., 2019).

From the left end of Figure 3.2 is the box of 'drivers of *shiminhua*', this could be drivers of sending rural area or attractions the receiving areas of the city, resonating with Lee's push-and-pull model of migration (Lee, 1966) - more specific understanding are to be further explored in the data analysis. Taking reference from the acculturation theories, the drivers can be categories into pushing or pulling factors as well (Gui et al., 2012; Berry & Sam, 2016).

In Figure 3.2, the process of *shiminhua* is denoted by an ellipse rather than a box, indicating the process of *shiminhua* is overarching, fluid and less well-studied. It is potentially a key theme to explore in this research, with connections to other boxes that capture different dimensions in studying *shiminhua* – this is reflected by its position at the centre of this diagram. Furthermore, the process of *shiminhua* can be divided into three sub-aspects: when does the process happen; what is the nature of the process; and how the process occur – or in other words, what are the most significant characteristics of *shiminhua*.

Impacts of *shiminhua* is on multiple levels: individual level, city level, regional level and even on national level. The multi-level nature of impacts thus need to be reflected by the measurement, which is substantially lacking in the past studies when constructing *shiminhua* indicators – either the levels of measurements are not differentiated, nor using a homogeneous national level scale to apply to other levels, which could reduce the credibility of the measurement (W. Wang et al., 2014; J. Yang, 2010). In this dissertation, the measurement of *shiminhua* is interpreted as measuring the level of *shiminhua* of individual or specific cities or regions, as building up to a higher level. Apart from reflecting the impacts of *shiminhua* on individual rural-urban migrant and on wider social context, a good measurement would also reflect the level of difficulties of the urban environment for *shiminhua* to happen, in order to provide solutions for policymakers to tackling the barriers identified (S. Yang & Guo, 2018).

In the analytical framework in Figure 3.2, the policy intervention in *shiminhua* is shaped by the impacts of *shiminhua* (Panwar & Mishra, 2017; Sun, 2019). When it comes to Chinese context, the mainstream discourse often emphasizes on inadequate *shiminhua* of the migrants as obstacles for the development of the city or region (Qin & Huang, 2018; S. Yang & Guo, 2018). Whilst whether the *shiminhua* level is considered adequate or not largely depends on measurement and interpretation, as the fluidity nature of *shiminhua* process, varying measurement applied might generate varied results and lead to different interpretations (Mobrand, 2015). Or in other words, proper measurement of *shiminhua* level can help to identify the significant facilitators and existing hurdles in the *shiminhua* process, thus, to improve the accuracy of impact assessment and evaluation.

To summarize this sub-section, based on the view that rural-urban is a continuum an analytical framework is established. In the framework, six major dimensions of *shiminhua* are identified, including drivers, process, measurements, impacts, policy interventions and personal strategies. Their relevance has been proposed based on the literature. To further understand *shiminhua* developed on this analytical framework, the qualitative data analysis chapter will assess the six dimensions of *shiminhua* while the quantitative data analysis chapter will focus on constructing a set of alternative indicators that could measure different aspects of *shiminhua*. The qualitative and quantitative analysis will then be triangulated referring to the interconnections

between different dimensions to reflect on the process, to improve for policy intervention and to propose feasible personal strategy.

### **3.2 Methodology**

After the research analytical framework has been established, the methodology is introduced to address the research questions. The methodology refers to a system of applied methods with different strategic views to investigate research questions (Bryman, 2012). In Chapter 3, the research strategy of the mixed-method approach and case study are first introduced, following a discussion of specific research methods in different fieldwork as well as research tools.

#### **Research Strategy: Mixed-method Approach**

This research adopts a mixed-method approach. Based on a comprehensive understanding of past literature on migrant model applications, it comes to the analysis of macro-level quantitative data set by statistical methods, the qualitative methods are used to construct theories and further articulate nuances in quantitative analysis in a triangulation process (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

The mixed method is also linked with the idea of methodological eclecticism, indicating a free choice of method that can address the research question. According to Tashakkori and Teddlie, since the “purest” qualitative or quantitative method inevitably include the other approach, it does not make much sense to stick to one



approach and limit the choices of research tools (2010). This pragmatic viewpoint in selecting appropriate research strategies is backed up by the field tradition of Urban Studies to inspire innovations in regional policymaking and to improve urban governance and management. The feasibility of a mixed-method strategy is also rooted in the interdisciplinary nature of this research, guided by the pragmatism of conducting grounded based research on *shiminhua* process. The overall rationale of the mixed-method approach is to apply suitable methods that work well in tackling each sub-research question to answer the key research question of "How does the phenomenon of *shiminhua* (urbanisation of rural-urban migrants) unfold in Chinese cities?".

Additionally, Johnson and Gary (2021) highlight another significant feature of mixed-method as a strategy by using continua to replace dichotomies, which echoes the understanding of rural-urban on a continuum brought in Figure 3.1 and the overall research framework on migration and urbanisation in GBA in Figure 3.2. Additionally the mixed-method strategy balance well with the micro-level scope on individual's livelihood, capability and well-beings as well as macro-level policy-making at the city, regional, and state level (Kosinski & Prothero, 1975; Sen, 2001; Chambers, 2003).

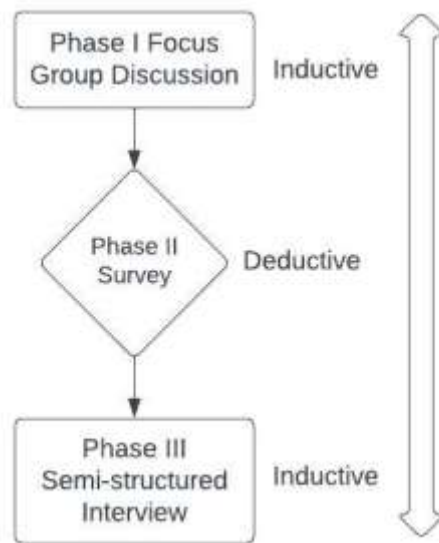


Figure 3.2 The mixed method consists of both inductive logic and deductive logic

Source: Author-own.

In Figure 3.2, the Phase I Focused Group Discussion and Phase III Semi-structured Interview have basically adopted an inductive approach, meaning drawing general rules of *shiminhua* based on individual case, while Phase II Survey mainly adopted a deductive approach, testifying individual migrants' *shiminhua* level against a set of alternative indicators.

Since the research strategy of mixed method is established, the logic of inductive and deductive methods could be further matched to specific fieldwork phases, as presented in Figure 3.3. Phase I will collect evidence from Focus Group to build a collection of potential indicators, subsequent by verifications via surveys, counter-intuitive results and observed outliers will then be invited for an interview to explore the dynamic of their individual experience. By combing the frequently applied methods of urban and development studies, equipped with both inductive and deductive logic,

the mixed-method research strategy possesses the potential to collect comprehensive data to answer the research questions.

One essential step that constructs a cohesive mixed-method research design is triangulation (Sen, 2001). There are different ways of conducting triangulations corresponding to the method, literature, and data (Olsen et al., 2004). In this project, triangulation is mainly carried out in the form of data triangulation and method triangulation. Methods triangulation can be observed in Table 3.1.

*Table 3.1 Research questions and corresponding research tools*

<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>Research Methods/Tools</b>
How does the phenomenon of <i>shiminhua</i> (urbanisation of rural-urban migrants) unfold in Chinese cities?	Semi-structured interviews Focus Group Discussion
What are suitable indicators for measuring the level of <i>shiminhua</i> ?	Focus Group Discussion Survey Questionnaires
What are the factors that facilitate or prevent the process of <i>shiminhua</i> ?	Survey Questionnaires Semi-structured interviews

*Source: Authors-won.*

Quantitative and qualitative tools are linked to specific research questions after being analysed independently. Qualitative methods are mainly applied to explore the 'how' question in the first row, while quantitative methods are used to explore the two 'what' questions, supplemented and corroborated by qualitative methods.

Both the data and method triangulation processes will further contribute to current theoretical debates on urban and development studies, at a middle or grand theoretical level.<sup>49</sup>

### Research Strategy: Case Study

Aside from the mixed-method approach, the other overarching research strategy--- case study, is deployed in the research design. The case study refers to the overall research design by focusing on the rural-urban migrants' urbanisation as a phenomenon in the specific geographical region of Chinese GBA. From past studies, the case study is neither frequently associated with the quantitative method, nor it is fully suited to the qualitative research categories (Schwartz & Jacobs, 1979). A case study is a suitable research strategy framework enables the project to overarch the qualitative and quantitative methods apart from the well-acknowledged epistemological difference (Yin, 2014). As research strategies and methods are under influence of distinctive research philosophy, the reasons for deploying a case study method in this thesis are three-folded (Javadi & Zarea, 2016).

Firstly, since the case study method is "exploratory" and "descriptive" in nature, it resonates with the aim of this research in teasing out the complexity of *shiminhua* as a socially constructed phenomenon. The case study can "investigate the contemporary phenomenon in-depth and within its real-life context" especially when "the boundaries

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<sup>49</sup> For the data triangulation process after the data analysis, refer to Chapter 7.

between phenomenon and context is not clear evident”, as Robert Yin indicates that “In general, case studies are the preferred strategy when ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context” (2014, p. 1). As this thesis’s major research question is more related to the *shiminhua* phenomenon itself in the context of Chinese cities, the primary aim is not to generalise the result into a large-scale generalization to be applicable to other cities in the world. Hence a case study suits the scope of the thesis by effectively generalising data and themes upwards into a theoretical proposition- the process is called “analytical generalization” (Eisenhardt, 2021).

Secondly, using a case study will take good advantage of the researcher’s positionality in fieldwork (Ravenswood, 2011). On one hand, the author as a Chinese citizen with embedded knowledge of the country makes him more accessible to the locally generated literature. On the other hand, the researcher is not originated from the research area of GBA, which implies that he presents professional rather than personal connections. This insightful outsider identity helps to shed him from the caveat of “going local” in the fieldwork if applying a case study strategy in the research hence maximizing the researcher’s positionality advantages (Bryman, 2012).

Thirdly, apart from the epistemological and methodological considerations for conducting the case study, there is a practical consideration of data quality. According

to field researchers who have conducted intensive fieldwork in China, macro-level, secondary data published by the Chinese authorities and associated institutions are frequently questioned for authenticity and accuracy by the academic communities (Becker, 1996; Gao, 2010). A case study enables the collection of first-hand data procedure by limiting the sampling area to a feasible scale. With limited time and resources to conduct large-scale empirical data collection, a case study bestows an opportunity for the researcher to collect first-hand data of various kinds. Intriguing observations and informal dialogues recorded in fieldnotes by the research could be a supplementary source alongside the formal interviews and surveys, as part of the case study research strategy.<sup>50</sup>

Apart from all three justifications for case study strategy, a case study in practice, can be “hard to do” due to the fussy scope to determine which data to be included or excluded (Yin, 2014, p. 16), Therefore, a clearly defined sampling-frame sampling is essential for a successful mixed-method case study, which is presented in the next sub-section.

## **Sampling**

Sampling refers to the process of taking a sample from the population for statistical analysis (Bryman, 2012). In this sub-section, population, sampling method, sampling

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<sup>50</sup> A collection of fieldnote can be found in section 3.3 Research Administration: Fieldwork in GBA, Table 3.7.

frame, sample size and an evaluation of the sampling method in the research are to be addressed.

### *The Population*

Before coming to the sampling process, it is important to identify the population. For both qualitative and quantitative sampling in this research, the population refers to all the rural-urban migrants in the three selected cities of Guangzhou, Dongguan, and Zhongshan in GBA. This implies the necessity of working on a sample over a census for two reasons. Firstly, the enormous size of the population compared to the resource and limitation of time; secondly, the unknown size of the population. As rural-urban migration is in a constantly changing dynamics; and there are conceptual disputes on “who is the migrant” discussed in the literature (Martínez-Mesa et al., 2016). Based on the definition of population in this thesis, when it comes to the generalisation of findings based on the result, it needs to be cautious when findings are generalised to cities in other GBA Chinese cities.

### *Sampling Method*

The overall sampling method for this research is purposive and snowball sampling. More specifically, snowball sampling is applied in recruiting participants for Phase I's Focus Group Discussion. The aim is to engage representative participants from three cities, across the manufacture sector - mainly factory workers and construction workers, as well as the service sector - mainly in the catering industry and small business. In Phase II, purposive, stratified quota sampling is applied, with a pre-settled quota of

5:4:1 in the city of Guangzhou, Dongguan and Zhongshan according to the current number of rural-urban migrants in the 2019 census. Considering the different levels of urbanisation within a city mentioned in Chapter 2 sub-section Chinese Urbanisation and the reflected phenomenon in Figure 3.2, there was an attempt to cover most administrative districts and townships under one city, thus achieving a balanced view from informants living in city districts of various spatial urbanisation level.

*Table 3.2 Division of district for Guangzhou in site locational choices*

<b>Category (no.)</b>	<b>Administrative Districts</b>
Urban Centre (4)	Yuexiu, Liwan, Tianhe, Haizhu
Near Suburban (3)	Baiyun, Huangpu, Panyu
Far Suburban (4)	Nansha, Huadu, Conggua, Zengcheng

*Source: The People's Government of Guangzhou Municipality.*

For example, as shown in Table 3.2, in the sampling for sites in Guangzhou: administrative districts were further categorised into 'urban centre', 'near suburban', and 'far suburban'; and the sampling process make sure that in each district, at least one group of 5 informants for filling survey questionnaire or 1 interviewee were sampled. In total, 45 study sites are selected.<sup>51</sup> In each selected site, a cluster of 3-8 participants are recruited to join FGDs (including pilot questionnaires), survey questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Under most circumstances, they are afflicted in the same institutions, working units, or working for one employer. These affiliation conditions imply relatively homogeneous socio-economic backgrounds within one cluster and potential social connections among them.

<sup>51</sup> For the specific sites for distributing the survey questionnaires and conducting interviews, please refer to Appendix 1 Selected Sites for Fieldwork.



As for the feature of gender, earlier studies including Ravenstein's (1889) laws of migration points out that males are more inclined to move longer-distance than females and this is verified by Fan's studies on gender in migration in China (2023), this sampling frame aims to achieve near equal distribution of male and females as the study scope focus on the receiving area of the city, therefore, the migrating distance concerning gender is less relevant.<sup>52</sup> The participants for Phase III semi-structured interview were a combination of multi-stage purposive sampling: based on their participation and preliminary result in Phase II. In summary, the sampling frame applied to Phase I (Focus Group) is more flexible than that applied to Phase II (Survey Questionnaire) and Phase III (Semi-structured Interview).

Although studies on rural-urban migrants that were conducted in China have utilised probability sampling (Gui et al., 2012; Xu et al., 2021; S. Liu et al., 2022), there are conceptual, methodological and geographical reasons for selecting purposive snow-ball sampling over probability sampling in this research.

Conceptually, the process of *shiminhua* has some presumptions for the rural-urban migrants: unskilled or semi-skilled labour motivated by economic and job opportunities in the city are more likely to have potential intentions to proceed into

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<sup>52</sup> According to data from 2011-2021, the gender ratio of migrant workers in China is around 35%(female) : 65% (female), with sampling errors and non-sampling errors(National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2022)

*shiminhua* process. Therefore, non-probability sampling has the edge in ruling circular or seasonal migrants, highly professionalized experts, and migrants due to non-economic motivations, who neither have the intention nor necessity to be engaged in the *shiminhua* process. Once those groups are excluded from the sample, the data is more likely to contribute to the understanding the *shiminhua* phenomenon.

Methodologically, the quantitative methods in the mixed method approach are most accountable for answering the key research questions, as indicated in Table 3.1. The qualitative approach had a tradition of deploying non-probability sampling to tease out more nuances from the informants (Morse, 2009). By applying purposive sampling rather than probability sampling, participants with a diverse background of demographics, occupation, and *shiminhua* experience can be recruited and potentially improve the richness of the qualitative accounts.

Geographically, the administrative area in the cities of Guangzhou, Dongguan, and Zhongshan are composed of districts of distinctive urbanisation levels in terms of spatial urbanisation.<sup>53</sup> As indicated in Figure 3.1, the urbanisation experience for migrants in urban cores and far-suburban areas are very likely varied. Hence, a purposive selection site will balance the district disparity and provide a more

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<sup>53</sup> For the conceptual differentiation of 'spatial urbanisation' and 'urbanisation of people', see Chapter 2 Global Theories of Globalisation.

comprehensive perspective on *shiminhua* experience in districts of different levels of spatial urbanisation.

### *Sample Size*

The sample size should stop expanding for qualitative research when theoretical saturation emerges. For the quantitative section, this is pre-settled by power estimation of the data, with reconciliation of the budget and practical situation in the field: the ideal sample size for this research would be 200-500 surveys and 15-50 interviews (Schwarz et al., 1991; Bryman, 2012).<sup>54</sup>

### *Evaluation of the Sampling Method*

In this thesis, the choice of sampling method is mainly determined by the research questions and framework established in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, trying to balance the pragmatism factors of data collection in fieldwork (Martínez-Mesa et al., 2016). It is worthwhile to note that several factors may cause sampling errors as part of the evaluation of sampling methods.

Reduction in response rate due to refusals to fill out the survey or lack of information could potentially reduce the internal validity (Martínez-Mesa et al., 2016). Sampling mismatch among different phases of data collection potentially exists: in Phase II where the questions were derived from previous matrixes and modified based on

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<sup>54</sup> The validity of the sample size is cross-checked in Chapter 5 Dimension and Impact Factors on *Shiminhua*.

Phase I pilots, bias could arise due to different participants between Phase I and Phase II, though considering the same identified population, the difference would be minor (Martínez-Mesa et al., 2016; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). Additionally, in the sampling process, there could be an echo chamber effect in which participants and informants tend to refer relatives and friends of similar socio-economic background to the participant in the research, which reduce the diversity of participants (Bryman, 2012).

Despite all the factors that might cause sampling errors, measures were taken in the data collection procedure to ensure the data quality, including cross-checking the background of informants to avoid echo-chamber effects before data collection, assigning research assistant to facilitate the process of filling surveys on-site- as illiterate participants are likely to present a higher response rate aiming at 80% to 90%, etc..<sup>55</sup> Noting all the limitations, the adopted sampling method weighed over and achieve a balanced between the rigour of research design and practicalities in data collection administration in a PhD-scale fieldwork within half a year. In the next sub-sections, research tools in each fieldwork phase are introduced with evaluations on the validity and reliability with an assessment of potential sampling and non-sampling errors.

## **Method I: Focus Group Discussion**

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<sup>55</sup> For more details on deployed methods in data collection to avoid non-sampling errors, see section 3.3 Administration of Data Collection.

A Focus Group Discussion (FGD) is a form of qualitative research where the researcher assembles a group of individuals to discuss one or more specific topics (Crinson & Leontowitsch, 2016). In this research, the main focused topic is the *shiminhua* process of rural-urban migrants in the Greater Bay Area. Related sub-topics include migration decision-making, local *hukou* and homeownership, social interactions with urban locals, and so on.

The research rationale of FGD is inductive (Schwartz & Jacobs, 1979).<sup>56</sup> FGD as a research technique has the power in establishing common ground, eliciting insights and producing knowledge. Considering the diversified understanding of *shiminhua*, as it is a less well-established concept, there could be different understandings among different stakeholders. The value of this research is to understand *shiminhua* not only from the official, or, city administrator's perspective, but it is more concerned with the migrants' livelihoods. Before establishing a system of measuring *shiminhua*, it should be articulated by the object of *shiminhua* themselves.

FGDs has the advantage convenient and economic qualitative data collection method, with the advantage of forming a reconciled group view as it irons out exaggerated biased individual viewpoint (Boateng, 2012). In the meantime, according to Crinson & Leontowitsch (2016), in a Focus Group, a shadowed power relationship might hinder

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<sup>56</sup> See Figure 3.3.

the free expression of opinions within the group of participants if hierarchical relationships among informants are perceived; on the contrary, people within the same genre tend to turn the discussion into a loose dialogue or chat, with too much relaxation and less focus. People who are working in one factory without knowing each other could find it difficult initiating the discussion in the first place; while participants who have previously interacted with each other on daily basis might keep a consent insider's knowledge without revealing it to the observer, purposely or unintentionally. Hence the selection of informants into an FGD is by deploying homogenous informants within one group in terms of status and industry while maintaining a degree of variation among different groups: for example, one FGD is for a worker in a manufacturing workshop while the other is for construction workers on another site. The demographic features of informants within one group are mixed. Each group is planned to have an average number of 4-8 participants. A total number of 15 focus groups have been planned. The typical setting of an FGD is shown in Figure 3.4, the researcher and teammate sat at the facilitating position while informants are invited to sit around the table.



*Figure 3.3 A typical FGD setting, in the conference room of Yonghang Factory, Dongguan<sup>57</sup>*

*Source: Photo by field team, consent of usage gained by participants.*

The primary aim of FGDs is to set up the scene for discussion of *shiminhua* experience and come up with a set of alternative indicators that could reflect the *shiminhua* level that fits in the GBA context. It will be adopted in league with other qualitative method i.e. semi-structured interview in this research in a form of triangulation (Boateng, 2012). Ideally, it will also compare and cross-check the indicators used in other research related to acculturation in China and beyond.

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<sup>57</sup> The towels and soaps are prepared as souvenirs to hand out to the participants, bought from the research budget.

## Method II: Survey Questionnaire

A survey questionnaire is one of the most classically established methods for collecting quantitative data in social research and was frequently utilized in the field of Urban Studies and Development studies (Gold & Nawyn, 2012; Silva et al., 2015).

The survey is a key tool to collect quantitative data in answering the sub-research question "What are the features that facilitate or prevent the process of *shiminhua*?". Besides the four questions to reflect *shiminhua* level mentioned in the previous section, it also comprises other questions related to migration experience, living and working experience in the city, and prospects for future development. In order to achieve the research objectives, several principles are first presented in the sub-section as foundations for constructing questions in the survey.

### *The Principles of Shiminhua Indicator Question Design*

The design of the survey question in general follows five principles (Harder et al., 2018). First and foremost is clarity, the survey questions need to be clear and direct, with a higher value of the options reflecting a higher degree of *shiminhua* of the migrants.

The second principle is based on the distinctive conceptualisation of *shiminhua*, an acculturation process with unique connotations which is under a specific regional



context.<sup>58</sup> Hence the survey questions for probing into the process of *shiminhua* can learn from the survey questions from other studies on the acculturation process but need to be aware of the contextual differences.

The third principle for questionnaire design is that the question should be framed in an objective statement beyond the stereotyped rural-urban dichotomy, to avoid a preconceived understanding of *shiminhua*, e.g., the urban native will not be treated as a point of reference as “fully urbanised person” regarding the level of *shiminhua*. This principle conformed to *shiminhua* is directly developed from the concept of “urbanisation of the people” as discussed in the Chapter 2 sub-section People in the Process of Urbanisation. In the *shiminhua* process, migrants are influenced by the spatial urbanisation process and the accompanied changes in ways of life as well as interactions with other migrants and urban natives. These individuals with various levels of urbanisation can locate their position on a continuum, as presented in Figure 3.1.

The fourth principle is, for potential generalisation of result findings and application of similar survey to other regions, the wording of each question statement should be comprehensible to general participants in GBA and other regions as well. Standard words in English were used and translated into plain statements in written forms of

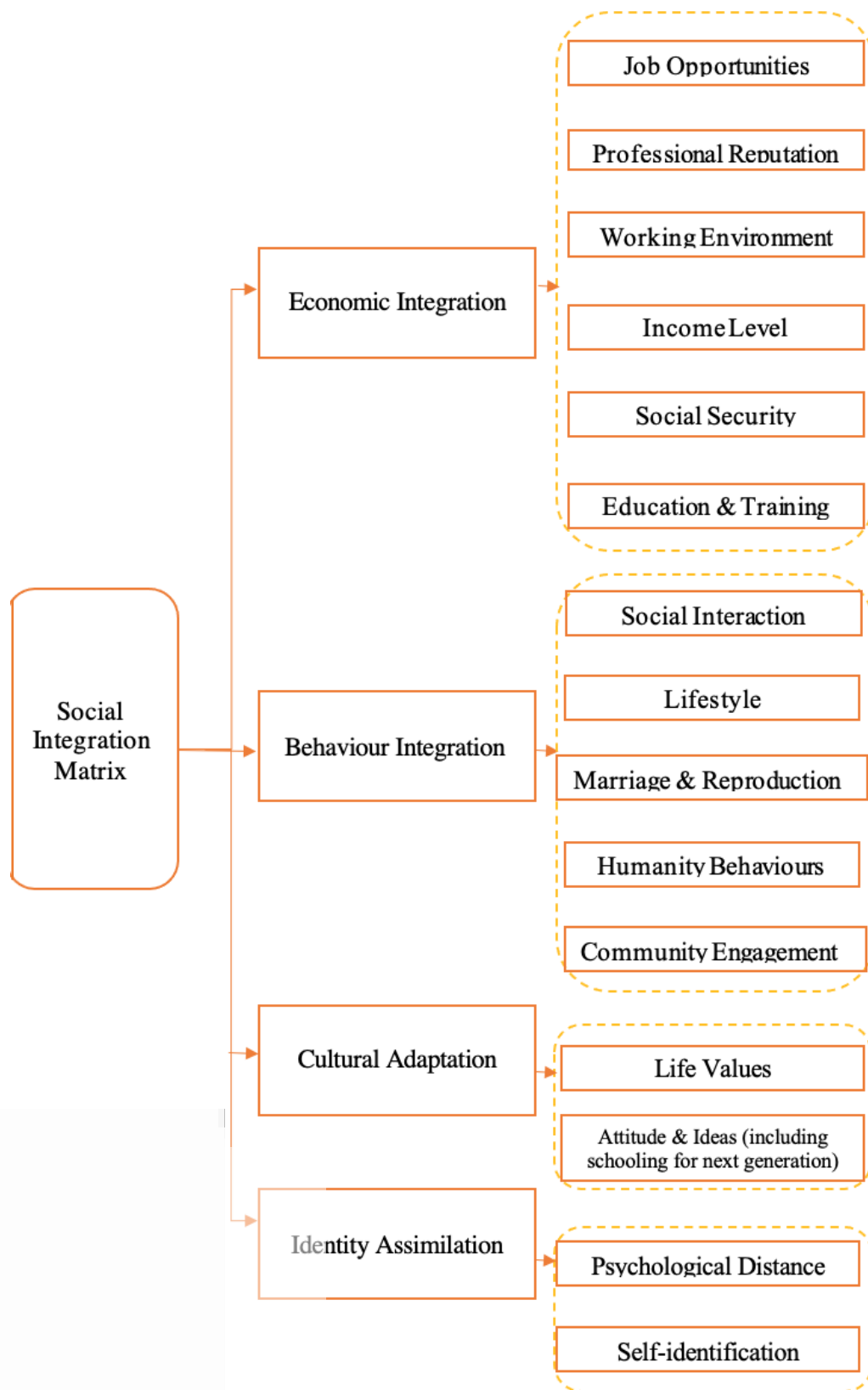
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<sup>58</sup> Conceptual differentiation of acculturation, assimilation, and integration, see Chapter 2 section 2.3 Acculturation Theories.

Mandarin Chinese, and no local dialects or jargon were used despite the key ones, i.e. *shiminhua*, urbanisation of people.

Last but not least, for the convenience of survey administration, questions were designed to be suitable for paper-based, face-to-face interactions. The aim is to add accuracy to the data set, which means some basic information, e.g., gender of the informant; or potential false information, e.g., a fake age reported - could be observed and rectified on site.

Based on the principles, the set of alternative indicators in surveys is supposed to capture key aspects of urbanisation with a limited number of questions in fieldwork (Ersoy, 1992; Oduntan & Ruthven, 2019; Yang, 2010). The total number of questions can take refer to from other research on Chinese rural-urban migrants' integration process as follows.



3.4 Index on integration of rural-urban migrants in Shanghai

Source: (Yang, 2010) translated by author.

For example, in Figure 3.4, Yang's index on 'integration of rural-urban migrants' touches upon multiple aspects of what was considered rural-urban migrants' integration process, supposed to be applicable to Chinese cities with rural-urban migrants. There are in total 15 indices that can be developed into 15 separate survey questions.

*Table 3.3 A set of indicators from other studies of integration*

Indicators	Level 1 Indices	Level 2 Indices	Level 3 Indices	Variables	
UI = 0.2L + 0.2E + 0.2S + 0.2P + 0.2C + ε	L=20%	Living Condition	Housing condition	Housing type Improvement of living conditions	L <sub>11</sub> L <sub>12</sub>
			Neighbourhood environment	Satisfaction with the living environment	L <sub>21</sub>
				Change of living environment	L <sub>22</sub>
	E=20%	Economic Life	Relative income level	Rural-urban migrants' average salary/City average salary	RE <sub>11</sub> /UE <sub>11</sub>
			Relative consumption level	Precepted income Rural-urban migrants Average consumption/City Average consumption Precepted consumption	E <sub>11</sub> RE <sub>21</sub> /UE <sub>21</sub>  E <sub>22</sub>
	S=20%	Social Circle	Having relatives or not (social support)	Having local relatives? Making local friends?	S <sub>11</sub> S <sub>12</sub>
			Social protection	Who for help? Local discriminations?	S <sub>21</sub> S <sub>22</sub>
	P=20%	Political Participation	Labour union	Labour union in your unit? Labour union membership?	P <sub>11</sub> P <sub>12</sub>
			Political party membership	Party or League in community? Special arrangement for migrants to join?	P <sub>21</sub> P <sub>22</sub>
	C=20%	Cultural Perception	Emotional agreement	Emotion to the city? Do you want to get a local city hukou?	C <sub>11</sub> C <sub>12</sub>
			Identity perception	What is your identity? What is your status in comparison to locals?	C <sub>21</sub> C <sub>22</sub>

*Source: Wang et al., 2008, translated by the author.*

In the other study by Wang et al. (2008), the level of *shiminhua* is measured by 5 major aspects, each aspect leads to 4 detailed questions adding up to 20 questions in total in the survey. It also established that the number of 15-20 questions in one set of

survey is achievable in fieldwork in China. An overall urban integration level (UI) is calculated for each individual applying the 20% weigh for each index L, E, S, P, and C, as Table 4.1 shows.

### *Design of the Survey Questionnaire*

Two versions of the survey questionnaire have been developed. The pilot questionnaire was designed based on Wang (2008) and Yang (2010) in Table 4.1 and Table 4.2, 20 questions on *shiminhua* plus the other part on demographic information were presented.

In Phase II of the data collection, self-completing questionnaires were conducted. Before going into the questionnaires, survey fillers were briefed on the confidentiality measures, project content and survey data proceeding process succinctly and then gave consent by signing a consent form (Bryman, 2012, p. 232). The design of survey questions and answer options in the questionnaire has drawn upon three large census projects including, China National Statistical Bureau's National Census and 1% Sampling Census, China Migrants Dynamic Survey (CMDs), National Health and Family Planning Commission's Migrant Dynamics Monitoring Survey (MDMS). The survey questions have been modified and adjusted based on the feedback given to the pilot questionnaires in Phase I.

There are two parts in the survey, Part I ask questions regarding the migrant's living in the city, including housing, socio-economic status, and cultural-psychological

adaptations.<sup>59</sup>Part 2 is the demographic and other basic information to be collected from the individual.<sup>60</sup> This information collected in Part 1 and Part 2 will be proceeded to construct variables in the quantitative analysis.<sup>61</sup>

Questions in the survey are of two types. The first type asks for choosing a categorical answer that is in the form of a statement. The options are meant to reflect the situation of the individual rural-urban migrant while it does not necessarily indicate intrinsic order, while they are assigned order of value later when it comes to quantifying *shiminhua* level in the quantitative analysis. One example of the first type of question is as follows.

Q1. My current housing type is:

- (1) Self-owned
- (2) Rental
- (3) Dormitories provided by work-unit or live with families
- (4) Self-built shelters or without settled housing
- (5) Other

For the second type of the question, a 5-point Likert scale is applied for those options that aim to elicit attitude-oriented answers (Hartley, 2014). Therefore, an intrinsic order of options had been presented to the informant when they were filling out the survey. The option of “neutral” or “undecided” in the 5-point Likert scale is always provided to reduce bias and improve response rate (Schwarz et al., 1991) - as informants

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<sup>59</sup> For specific questions in Part 1, see Table 3.5

<sup>60</sup> Contrary to the questionnaire design in other major census survey questionnaires in China conducted by the government authorities, the section asking for demographic information section was placed as Part 2 after all *shiminhua* questions, this is a lesson learnt from the experience in Phase I pilot survey that informants are less altered and more comfortable to fill the personal information after some interactions with the researcher.

<sup>61</sup> For variable construction, please see Chapter 5, section 5.2 variable construction.

demonstrate difficulties in determining to what extent they agree or disagree with a certain statement in the questionnaire in the pilot. An example is the following question asking sense of belonging to the city the rural-urban migrant has migrated in. The question is framed in a statement to avoid bias in language:

Q16. I belong to/I am part of the city that I currently live in.

Strongly agree

Agree

Undecided

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

As for the order of presentation of those two types of questions, first type of fact-oriented questions was presented in the first half of Part 1 of the questionnaire, second type of attitude-oriented questions were in the latter half of the Part 1 surveys. Within each half, those questions perceived to be relatively easier to understand are placed before those relatively more difficult ones- the difficulty of each question is assessed based on the informant's time in response to filling pilot questionnaire: the longer it took, the more difficult the question was considered.

After preliminary analysis of the 48 pilot surveys, two major adjustments have been done to the survey based on observation and feedback from Phase I of fieldwork.<sup>62</sup> Firstly, "political participation" in Wang's matrix in Table 4.1 is deleted. As discussed in Chapter 2 section A Brief History of GBA, GBA is known for a less authoritarian regional and local government administrative style compared to the North of China (Hui et al.,

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<sup>62</sup> For different phases of fieldwork, see Chapter 3 sub-section Research Administration: Fieldwork in GBA.

2020). There have been difficulties in imposing political influence at the community level particularly in urban villages where most migrants live (He, 2015).<sup>63</sup> This could result in the lack of motivation for rural-urban migrants in GBA to participate in local politics, since the state power does not intervene with daily life. Additionally, participation in local politics might be difficult without a local *hukou*. It seems that the indifference in political participation is a prevalent phenomenon in GBA: according to the FGDs and pilot survey, some participants have never paid attention to whether there is a labour union or party branch, nor have they considered joining the local branch of the Chinese Communist Party. These all justify the decision in deleting the political participation section in the questionnaire, though they have been covered by Wang's and Yang's survey.

The second major revision of the pilot questionnaire is that two more questions on migrant children's education have been added, as in Question 13 and Question 14 of Table 4.2. Wang's indices, the factor schooling of next generation only serves as a subcategory of 'attitude and idea' under 'cultural adaptation', education of the next generation appears to play a significant part in all aspects of migrant life, as demonstrated by the FGDs. Nearly all FGD informants mentioned their aspiration for their children to get a good education at a good urban state school.<sup>64</sup> This echoes the

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<sup>63</sup> Several sites of surveys and interviews are located in the urban villages, for locations of sites, see Appendix 2.

<sup>64</sup> As in China, state school is usually associated with better teaching quality and reputation (Wei & Gong, 2019), for the education system in China, see Chapter 2, Acculturation through Education in China.



argument on Chinese rural tradition where Chinese rural-urban migrant parents regarded the next generation as the extension of their own lives, and thus they feel to bear huge obligations to ensure the children develop well (Fei, 1992). These two questions are Phase II as part of the socio-cultural indicators for *shiminhua*, as shown in Table 4.2.

Table 3.4 List of questions in Phase II survey with categories

No	Questions Type	Statement of Questions
1	Housing & Living Environment	My current housing type is:
2		My conditions or plans to own a house/apartment in this city is:
3		I am satisfied with my living environment.
4		Compared with locals, I have received adequate support in housing.
5		I think the local housing-purchase policy is sensible and easy to understand for rural-urban migrants:
6	Economic Status	My average income per month is _____ RMB yuan.
7		My self-perceived income level, compared to the urban local average, is:
8		My average expenditure per month is _____ RMB yuan.
9		My self-perceived expenditure level, compared the urban local average, is:
10	City Specific	I think this city (Guangzhou/Dongguan/Zhongshan) has a promising development future.
11		I plan to stay at Guangzhou/Dongguan/Zhongshan in a long run:
12	Social Capital	Most of my friends here are locals.
13		I anticipate my children to get an education here and settle in Guangzhou/Dongguan/Zhongshan in the further:
14		The (future) education plan for my children is:
15		I have not experienced discrimination by the urban locals in daily social interactions.
16	Cultural Capital	I belong to/I am part of the city that I currently live in.
17		I want to have Guangzhou/Dongguan/Zhongshan local <i>hukou</i> :
18		I identify myself as an urban person.
19		Compared to the urban local, my status in this society is higher.
20		I prefer to go back to hometown in the future when getting older.

Source: Author-own, modified from the pilot questionnaire.

The modified question presented in Part 1 of the survey could be categorised into five major aspects related to *shiminhua* process, *shiminhua* level, and *shiminhua* results.

These categories are housing and living environment, economic status, locational-based questions related to GBA social capital, and cultural capital. Question 1 to Question 5 is on housing and living environment, ranging from housing type to perception of local housing policy; Question 6 to Question 9 are on economic status, measured by both monthly income and household expenditure; Question 10 and 11 are location-specific questions, asking understanding of prospects of local cities; Question 12 to 15 are on social capital, focusing on the social circle and potential discrimination; Question 16 to 20 are on cultural capital, with a concentration on urban identity and social status.

After the 20 questions in Part 1 of the survey, there is a Part 2 survey, to collect informants' information on home town, occupation, current *hukou* and previous record of *hukou* transfer, education level, labour contract status, residence year since migrating into the city, gender, age, and ability in Cantonese.<sup>65</sup>

### ***Survey Participant Sampling***

In fieldwork, the original English version of the questionnaire is translated into Chinese and distributed. The translated version in Chinese used for fieldwork can be found in Appendix 1. Questions in Part 1 and information in Part 2 are further scrutinised against literature review and preliminary FGD analysis to construct variables for statistical analysis in Chapter 5 Dimension and Impact Factors on *Shiminhua*.

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<sup>65</sup> For the full survey questionnaire used in Phase II, please refer to Appendix 1.

Working places are chosen to be the site for distributing questionnaires as rural-urban migrants tend to have a simple routine of working at the workplace and sleeping at the residence (Bryman, 2012; W. W. Wang & Fan, 2012). A clear and tidy environment was preferred when conditions allow as it provides a more congenial atmosphere and relatively adequate time when handing out the survey questionnaires. Whenever misunderstanding or challenges in understanding a certain question or statement arose, they were usually clarified on-site.

The expected sample size for the valid questionnaire was in the range of 200-300, the actual number of the collected valid questionnaires is 315, slightly higher than the expectations. According to Martínez-Mesa et al. (2016), for this project with a comparable scale, a valid sample number that is more than 200 is a decent sample number. More specific criteria are used as sampling frames for selecting participants in Phase II as this survey is exclusively designed for rural-urban migrants who were currently undergoing *shiminhua* process.

The first criterion is the time of residing in the city. Only migrants who have stayed longer than 6 months were sampled. This minimum 6-month period is defined from the day of movement from their original county of household registration to the city where the site is located. This category reconciled to the definition in a recent major census on Chinese internal migrants i.e., the 2014 China Migrants Dynamic Survey (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2022; Xu et al., 2023). The second criterion is

regarding the rural background of the individual: to be included in the sampling frame, the migrants should be originated from rural areas. That is usually denoted by an agriculture *hukou* in rural villages or townships-- regardless of their current *hukou* status. The third criterion for the sampled rural-urban migrants is their migrating motivation. Only migrants out for economic purposes are eligible for this study. Since migration motivation can be a synthesis, the dominating motivation for migration is out of economic considerations. Therefore, migrants who migrant for health care purpose in GBA cities or to join the army are not counted.

Different from previous studies' sampling framework on Chinese migrant workers where relatively highly educated individuals are excluded (National Statistical Bureau of China, 2019; Xu et al., 2023), I added the category of migrants with tertiary education experience into the sampling frame – most of whom have received certain level of tertiary education out of the GBA area. This reflected the two new trends mentioned in the Chapter 2 sub-section Latest Research Trends on Chinese Rural-Urban Migrants: elevation in the education of second-generation migrants; and the inflation of tertiary education degrees where college graduates are no longer considered elites who were guaranteed decent city jobs by the state as before the 1990s (Cheng & Smyth, 2021).<sup>66</sup> In the meantime, migrants who have obtained some sort of tertiary education could

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<sup>66</sup> Chinese tertiary education is a complex system composed of different tiers of universities and colleges in the academic and professional-vocational pathways, please refer to Chapter 2 sub-section Acculturation and Education Figure 2.8. University graduates from prestigious universities included in 211 and 985 Projects are still considered elites to some degree by employers and the public (Costa & Zha, 2020).

provide a good sample for potential comparison in discussing the indicator of education in the process of *shiminhua*.

Preliminary analysis of the questionnaire during Phase II aims to identify outliers so that they could be included in Phase III sampling framework. Outliers were identified based on basic-demographic information, all *shiminhua* questions in Part 1, and other characteristics. The criterion for defining outliers is three-fold. Criterion one, is those who are at the extreme of the sampling frame, e.g, a person who has migrated for many years and the other who has just arrived and settled for only half a year. Criterion two, group consist of those whose answers to certain questions are counter-intuitive to on-site observation; for example, a person living in the city for only a short period, has developed a rather strong sense of belonging to the city, as this might reveal a unique experience in the *shiminhua* process. Criterion three, is individuals who have demonstrated other interesting characteristics, e.g., who declared the *shiminhua* process had never existed in Chinese cities; or who challenged fundamentals on the questionnaire design. Those cases might present insights for evaluating the research design and methodologies. The three criteria were applied comprehensively, taking into practical points including whether the informants are available for interviews and so on, to balance the rigour of research design and the feasibility of research administration.

### **Method III: Semi-structured Interview**

A semi-structured interview is a qualitative research tool by asking questions based on guided, semi-opened questions. It has more flexibility than a survey question interview in asking the following-up questions while having more in-depth than the structured interview (Bryman, 2012). In a typical semi-structured interview, following-up questions from the interviewer and supplementary remarks from the interviewees are usually allowed while the dialogue is kept to thematic flows following the interview guide prepared (Crinson & Leontowitsch, 2016).

A semi-structured interview has the power to draw onto insights while keeping on track of the key research question in this thesis “How does the phenomenon of *shiminhua* (urbanisation of rural-urban migrants) unfold in Chinese cities?”, it is capable of forming grounded theories to construct explanations on “how” and “what” questions (Bryman, 2012; Crinson & Leontowitsch, 2016).

In Phase III, semi-structured interviews were carried out with around 30 rural-urban migrants, the majority are those identified as ‘outliers’ in Phase II. An information sheet and a question guide were prepared before the interview. Interview questions are designed based on the following themes with cross-referenced to the FGDs’ discussion topics:

*Table 3.5 Topics covered in the semi-structured interview guide*

Round No.	Topics for rounds of discussion
1	Migrating experience in the city
2	Motivations and reasons to migrate
3	Job, contract and daily routine
4	Family, hometown and potential <i>hukou</i> transfer
5	Social and cultural adaptation
6	Definition of <i>shimin</i> and understanding of <i>shiminhua</i>

7	Anticipation of next generation (optional)
8	Understanding of the development of GBA (optional)

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*Source: Author adapted from interview guide in the fieldwork.*

After the topics have been covered in the interview guide in Table 3.4, follow-up questions were asked whenever there were interesting points raised, to explore and investigate more insightful explanations. Certain answers in the Phase II survey questionnaire were quoted as teasers to prompt more in-depth explanations. Informants were allowed adequate time in the interview to speak whatever they would like to say and were usually not interrupted unless for clarification purposes, where necessary. Participants were asked whether they have any questions for the research team on the research projects at the end of each interview,

All semi-structured interviews were recorded and transcribed during the interview process, after acquiring permission from the interviewees. Interviewees were given a number and organised a social-network diagram for reaching out to interview participants was designed and presented using NVivo, as shown in Figure 3.5. The major aim of the interviewee relationship diagram was to ensure that the sampling procedure in Phase III was transparent and unbiased.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> For a list of the demographic characters of each individual informant, please refer to Appendix.



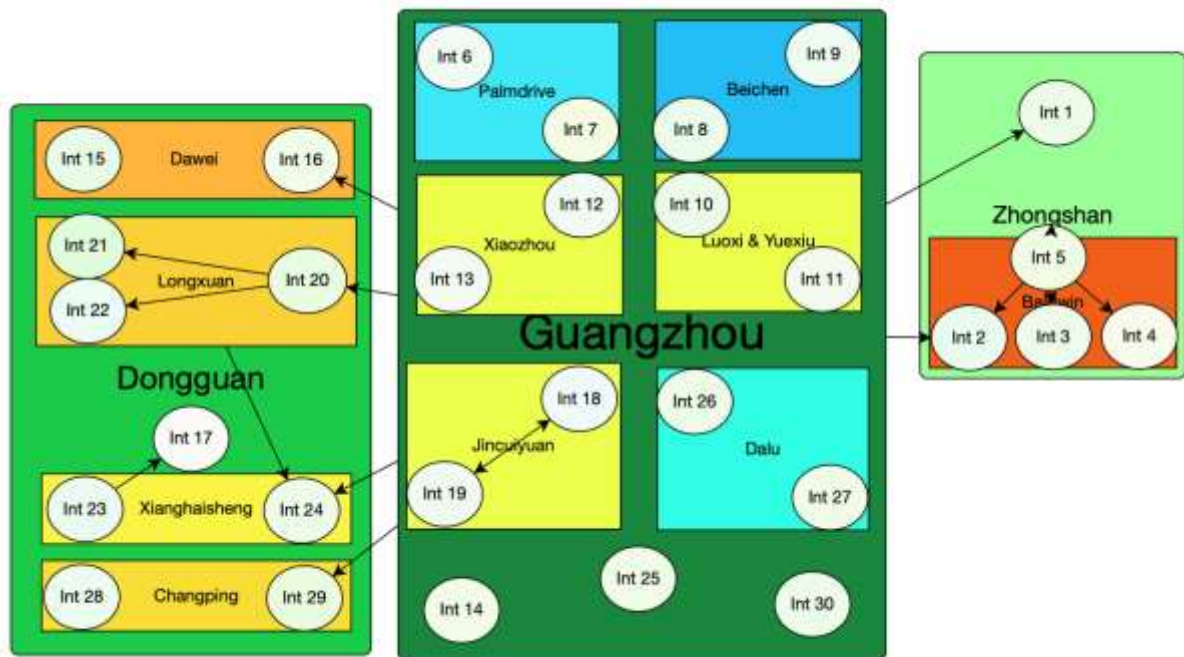


Figure 3.5 Interviewee relationship diagram

Source: Author-own.

Note that the numbering of interviewees follows a chronological order, the researcher was based in Guangzhou, the provincial capital and regional centre for most of the time in the field. The first city to be reached out to, is the tier 3 city of Zhongshan. Several special interpersonal relationships among the interviewees need to be paid attention to: Interviewee 5 is the factory workshop supervisor of Interviewee 2, interviewee 3, and interviewee 4. Interviewee 18 and Interviewee 19 are husband and wife. Other interviewees - despite those being indicated by the relationship arrow, were co-workers without frequent interactions. For visual clarity in Figure 3.4, bright colour tones of yellow and orange within small boxes indicate that the interview was conducted in the residential environment, and darker colour tone indicated those

interviews were conducted in their working units. The detailed coding process of a semi-structured interview is given in Chapter 4.

### **3.3 Research Administration: Fieldwork in GBA**

The fieldwork is referred to the process of data collection for both qualitative and quantitative analysis, including the organization of FGDs, administration of the surveys, as well as conducting interviews. Practicalities and reflections on fieldwork are also addressed within this section.

#### **Administration of Data Collection**

Doing fieldwork to collect research data amid the COVID-19 pandemic in China was challenging. I applied for visiting research assistantship at the School of Geographical Science and Planning of Sun Yat-sen University in the summer of 2019 before entering the substantial fieldwork for this thesis. The merits for basing at this locally well-known higher educational institution are three-fold: first, to obtain easier access to a well-established research network within the GBA; second, to add credibility and to build trust when approaching agents and employers of rural-urban migrants, who were very likely to be the gatekeepers; third, to provide channels for me in recruiting local research assistants.

I recruited eight field research assistants via contraction through Sun Yat-sen University, to assist with data collection under an intensive research schedule, with limited resources, and of uncertainties. I paid a decent salary rate in line with the local

payment level from the fieldwork research fund secured from the Department of Land Economy, University of Cambridge and the Henry Lester Trust research grant. The recruitment process for field research assistants started in late April 2020 after I had completed the first draft of PhD first-year report, before I came into the field at GBA in December 2020. I drafted an advertisement in the Chinese language with a short introduction of the background of the research, eligibility for application, time framing of the fieldwork, forms of participation, and the application process, particularly highlighting the benefits of application and participation in this field project, and circulated the advertisement through WeChat public account and groups of senior undergraduate students and postgraduate students in School of Geographical Science and Planning and Department of Sociology at Sun Yat-sen University.

Online interviews for field research assistants were then conducted via zoom, out of a pool of 60 applications. Successful candidates were selected based on their motivation in joining the field research team in GBA, their experience in conducting fieldwork in challenging environments, and their ability to facilitate outreach to migrant groups. Speaking the local dialect of Cantonese was considered a bonus for recruitment. All the selected field research team members were subsequently asked to sign a contract drafted by me and proofread by colleagues from the University of Cambridge to clearly define their rights and responsibilities before the data collection process started.

As the newly recruited assistants were from diverse backgrounds, three one-hour training sessions have been designed. In these sessions, early career researchers who had accomplished intensive fieldwork in China, were invited as guest speakers to equip the team with qualified ethics, knowledge, and skills in the fieldwork. The detailed training schedules are as follows in Table 3.5:

*Table 3.6 Fieldwork training for the fieldwork research assistant team*

Session	Time	Theme	Guest Speaker
1	Wed 11 November 19:30-20:30	Overview and Ethical Issues of Fieldwork	Elise Gao (London School of Economics): Dealing with local bureaucracy in fieldwork in China
2	Sun 15 November 20:00-21:00	Quantitative Fieldwork: Assisting Surveys	Frank Lyu (Stockholm Economic School): Resident survey administration for high-quality data
3	Wed 18 November 21:00-22:00	Qualitative Fieldwork: FGD & SSI	Yiru Jia (University of Cambridge): Doing interviews in China Xiaoyao Liu (Local Journalist in Guangzhou): Transcribing semi-structured interviews efficiently

*Source: Author-own.*

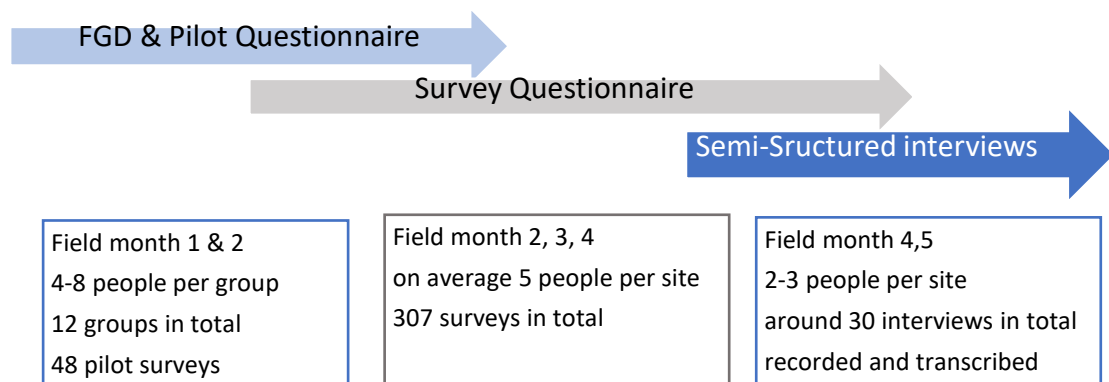
Through this training session we shared our concerns and polished our tactics based on the guest speakers' sharing and individual's experience, which were of essential help to the successful administration of the fieldwork.

The fieldwork officially started in late November of 2021 and lasted till early May of 2022, a 5-month span with a half-month interval during the spring festival of the Lunar New Year. The fieldwork result turned out to be fruitful: 45 sites in three selected cities

have been visited. Data have been generated from a total number of 12 FGDs, a pilot study of 48 questionnaires, 307 survey questionnaires and 30 semi-structured interviews.

*Table 3.7 Cities and Fieldwork Sample Number Conducted*

City & Sites	Methods
Guangzhou	6 FGDs, 152+20(pilot) surveys, 15 interviews
Dongguan	4 FGDs, 123+20(pilot) surveys, 10 interviews
Zhongshan	2 FGDs, 30+8(pilot) surveys, 5 interviews



*Figure 3.6 Research Tools Application Timeline*

*Source: Author, adapted from (Bryman, 2012)*

In Phase I (November 2020- January 2021) 12 FGDs with a range of 4 to 6 participants in each group had been conducted, all facilitated by the researcher with one or two assistants on site assisting introductory video playing, discussion recording, notes-taking, souvenirs delivery, and contingencies preparation. Field research assistants also coordinate the administration of the pilot survey questionnaires after the discussion part. The major aim of the pilot questionnaire was to test the validity of the questionnaires as proactively designed. The team accompanied the informant while they were filling out the pilot survey, some of them might want to clarify their understanding of certain words and a few of them provided opinions on the design of the questions. The assistants would

read the questions out and write on the questionnaires on the informants' behalf for those who are illiterate. After each FGD, the whole team would usually sit down and reflect on the process after tidying up the documents - the tidying-up process includes procedures of the numbering of the questionnaires, figuring out missed or hard-to-read handwriting, and completing documentation by transferring questionnaires answers into excel spreadsheet. Field notes were made by me and on several occasions assistant, we marked down any situation worth noticing or any points to be further discussed within the field team or with the PhD supervisor.

Phase II and Phase III of fieldwork were operated in combination due to pragmatic considerations of time limits. Informed consent was obtained one or two days before each participant joined the interviews and confirmed once again, on arrival. Suitable participants were in most cases asked on-site once completed the survey questionnaire. Outliers would be identified shortly and invited to conduct a more in-depth, open-ended semi-structured interview.

For each site visited, we would expect to receive 5-20 valid survey responses, preferably in the multiple of 5. I participated in all of the site visits except for 2 during which I conducted the major work of questionnaire fillings, and semi-structured interviews.<sup>68</sup> Those two sites were covered by assistants who had already successfully assisted me in previous Phase II and Phase III outreach.

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<sup>68</sup> The only two absences were caused by the Spring Festival break of the researcher.

After several interviews, data saturation in themes could be observed in the later phase of fieldwork Phase III (Crinson & Leontowitsch, 2016). Three reflective sessions were held within the research team together to discuss and evaluate the data collection procedure; building team solidarity and providing insights to adjust reaching out strategies after each fieldwork phase.

Besides keeping track of the project progress in the fieldwork, I also evaluated the performance of the field researchers at the end of each field Phase by ranking them according to individual performance contributions. The top five are awarded with a certificate and invited to have a free afternoon tea organised by me as an encouragement for teamwork as well as creating opportunities for mutual learning and insights-dissemination within the field team.

The collected data were firstly tidied up and documented on-site and then preliminarily analysed afterwards within the field of GBA: survey questions recorded in excel spreadsheets on-site were then proceeded into two more rounds of cross-checking to avoid errors and mismatch. Translation of the recorded transcripts from Mandarin and Cantonese Chinese to English was done by the researcher with consultancies from translation experts. Contextual words have been preserved in the format of *pinyin* in the translated transcripts after consulting with translation and language experts to keep authentic meaning and vivid expressions. Field photos were captured with permission, and usually not showing the face of people to protect

privacy. Detailed field notes had been kept regularly in Chinese and English, usually within the same week after on-site fieldwork. Those notes are further collected by themes after I travelled back to Cambridge. The list of field notes is prepared as a reference and supplementary materials for data analysis and thesis writing.

*Table 3.8 List of Recollection Field Notes by Themes*

No.	Themes of the Notes
1	Notes on fieldwork sites
2	Notes on gender issue (being female) of internal migration
3	Notes on the living environment and condition of the rural-urban migrants
4	Notes on analysing qualitative data
5	Notes on questionnaire design and adjustment
6	Notes on further analysis of the quantitative data
7	Notes on the point-based system in getting a local <i>hukou</i> in three cities of GBA
8	Notes on China's educational system rural-urban migration studies
9	Notes on collected data overview with quality evaluation
10	Notes on fieldwork preparation and dealing with uncertainties
11	Notes on field research team building
12	Notes on the usage of Cantonese language
13	Notes on the culture in GBA
.....	

*Source: Author-own.*

The final point is on dealing with uncertainties imposed by COVID-19. Considering the constrained time of less than half a year the uncertainty posed by the 2019-2020 COVID-19 pandemic, the plans of fieldwork has been changed for several times. Those uncertainties also highlight the importance to have a comprehensive project management plan that incorporate flexibilities and contingencies.<sup>69</sup> To summarize the key factors for successful administration of fieldwork: detailed and proactive

<sup>69</sup> The fieldwork experience of data collection was subsequently published, on The Cambridge Researcher Blog, titled "Dealing with Uncertainties in PhD fieldwork" under the category of "Fieldwork Diaries" in March 2021: <https://cambridgeresearcher.com/dealing-with-uncertainties-in-phd-fieldwork/>.



contingency plan, effective teamwork with rigorous training, and affiliation to with supportive local institutions are the essentials.

### **Ethical Issues and Positionality**

The other aspect to consider throughout the fieldwork are ethical issues and positionality, high standard ethical issues and awareness of fieldwork reflectiveness are believed to be useful in improving data quality and building (Satterthwaite, 2010).

Not all rural-urban migrants are poor, but most are vulnerable for several reasons, including precarious job status, unsuitable living conditions, suffering from local discrimination etc. (Khan & Kraemer, 2014). Hence, ethical issues should be considered holistically to protect the informants from potential harm (Sun, 2019). Before delivering the survey and conducting the interview, participants have been briefed in clear manner regarding important aspects of this study via the *Participation Information Sheet* and sign the *Informed Consent Form* with the informant's full acknowledgement recorded.

During the interview, questions were asked based on the prepared *Interview Guide* with potential following-up questions. Participants were invited to safe and quiet spaces that are agreed upon, usually the conference or meeting room in the factory, if conditions allow. After the data was collected, all information was kept throughout the analysis procedure, and name and other personal information were codified to prevent

the revelation of real identity. The ultimate aim is to reduce the negative impacts on the informants.

The language used for communication in fieldwork in GBA is worth consideration. Although Mandarin Chinese is the official language in China with the majority of the population capable of communicating in Mandarin; Cantonese is the dominant language in Guangdong Province. Migrants coming from areas with identical dialects prefer to communicate with each other using their dialects. The researcher is a native speaker of Mandarin Chinese and a fluent speaker of Cantonese, he can conduct interviews directly with the informants and lead FGDs with rural-urban migrants without a perceived language barrier. Saying that, informants' wording in Mandarin could be influenced by their native dialect, for example they might choose to use local dialectical wording to express more subtle feelings and sentiments. When encountering difficult dialect or regional glossaries in transcribing interviews or FGD recordings, he drew on help from field assistants and colleagues from Sun Yat-sen University who are capable of speaking most variations of southern China dialects.

Several lessons had been learned during and after the fieldwork, concerning positionality and reflectiveness:

The concept of 'positionality' indicates the researcher's self-positioning and perception in the field, belonging to the wider reflectivity process. In qualitative

research, where the researcher examines his own belief, judgement and practice, and how these will influence research (Ben-Ari & Enosh, 2011; Bryman, 2012). More specifically, for this research, how should I interview the participants of the FGDs in a semi-formal setting as well as interact with them in daily life? What would they think of me? What kind of social role do I want to demonstrate to participants and teammates? Moreover, more uncertainties lay in the fact that we never know how people will interact when promoted by questions in fieldwork.

Intuitive answers from others' fieldwork to these complicated questions might oversimplify the circumstance in my fieldwork. With a mentality of learning by doing in the fieldwork, I managed to pick up some wisdom by learning from the respondents in fieldwork. When I was interviewing a group of four elderly male workers in one garment factory, one participant jumped in and asked me a sharp question, "Are you a foreigner?". As I am a Chinese citizen from Northern China, his question might have come from my northern accent, which is different in Guangdong province. Contextually speaking, it was a sensitive question in January of 2021 when the pandemic had just been overall managed in China and many foreigners and Chinese students who returned from overseas were accused by some netizens of "bringing back the virus". Hence, instead of answering it directly, I joked with him by taking a funny southern tone---which is acceptable in Guangzhou but generally considered as non-standard Mandarin. "I am speaking such *standard* Mandarin; how could I be a foreigner?"-

Luckily, they accepted my gag and we burst into laughter. And the interview could carry on smoothly.

In summary, the researcher is aware of himself as part of the research method, as depicted by Xiang and Wu (2020)'s book title "Self as Method", his value and background help to shape the fieldwork and data collection procedure thus the whole thesis.

In the following chapter, based on the research methodology and methods, the research tool is further investigated. Survey design for quantitative data analysis, as well as thematic coding for qualitative data are discussed subsequently, together with the preliminary analysis of FGDs transcripts that generated indicators for measuring *shiminhua* level.

## Chapter 4 Unfolding *Shiminhua*: Qualitative Analysis

### 4.1 Thematic Analysis for Qualitative Data

This section demonstrates the detailed procedure on qualitative data coding and analysis. Data are prepared before being coded by thematic analysis approach, constructed grounded theories that are presented according six major themes in section 4.3.

#### Data and Coding Preparation

The qualitative data analysis started from Phase I field data collection of FGDs. It served as part of the pilot studies to test out surveys for the quantitative section, by establishing four major indicators of *shiminhua*. The overall analytical framework for qualitative analysis is designed to respond to the research questions and objectives, more specifically, to unfold the process of *shiminhua* in GBA.

Qualitative data are collected and documented in the form of interview transcripts or FGDs transcripts. In the transcribing process, efforts have been spared in maintaining data qualities with originality and authenticity. This is demonstrated in terms of translation and presentation: In translation, interviews conducted in Mandarin Chinese or Cantonese Chinese are transcribed and translated strictly within one week after the interviews – this helps to maintain accurate memories of the context when constructing the transcripts. When ambiguity in wording appears, the researcher

contacted the informants and field assistants on the same site for clarification.<sup>70</sup> The transcriptions were further proof-read and modified by consulting experts in translation and native speakers of the English language with a decent understanding of research in the Chinese regional context.

In the processing of transcripts, the English translation was aligned in paragraphs just above the matching Chinese passages in transcripts. These were then organised into separate Chinese and English transcripts, with a sample provided in Appendix 4. Footnotes are added when there appears to be a need for the explanation of context or terminologies. Additionally, a list of context-specific glossary in Mandarin and Cantonese Chinese is prepared in Appendix 5 as a supplementary reference for the original interviews.

After the transcripts were processed for preliminary analysis, a summary table of the information on FGD and semi-structured interview participants are prepared, as shown in Table 4.1.

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<sup>70</sup> For the operation of field research team, see Chapter 3 sub-section Administration of Data Collection.

Table 4.1 Summary of participants' information in FGDs and semi-structured interviews

<b>Semi-structured Interview</b>			
<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>
Age		City	
Below 30	9	Guangzhou	17
31-49	16	Dongguan	8
Above 50	4	Zhongshan	5
Unknown	1		
Gender		Place of <i>Hukou</i>	
Female	18	Local	9
Male	12	Non-local	21
Cantonese Speaker		Interviewing Language	
Yes	9	Mandarin	28
No	21	Cantonese	2
Hometown			
Guangdong Province	9		
Other Province	21	Total Respondent No.	30
<b>Focus Group Discussion (FGD)</b>			
<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>
Age		City	
Below 30	16	Guangzhou	20
31-49	21	Dongguan	20
Above 50	9	Zhongshan	8
Unknown	2		
Gender		Place of <i>Hukou</i>	
Female	17	Local	4
Male	31	Non-local	44
Cantonese Speaker		Hometown	
Yes	6	Guangdong Province	8
No	42	Other Province	40
		Total Respondent No.	48

Source: Author-own.

As table 4.1 shows, there are totally 30 interviewees plus 48 informants for FGDs participated. To proceed with these data, the qualitative analysis programme NVivo 12 was utilised. Compared to manual coding and other qualitative software, for instance, ATLAS, the NVivo programme is versatile in both summarizing data, scrutinizing codes,





concepts, nodes and themes in the analytical process that follows. They turned out to be heavily emphasised in the following qualitative analysis Chapter 6.

### **Analytic Strategy: Grounded Theory**

The next step is to choose an analytical strategy and corresponding coding method. In qualitative analysis, there are two mainstream methods for qualitative data analysis: analytic induction and grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 2010). The grounded theory approach was chosen as coding method in the analysis owing to three reasons as follows.

Firstly, the research questions are open and explorative in nature. For “how” and “what” type questions, the analytic induction methods’ requirement of making a hypothesis can be arbitrary. The presumptions that the analytic induction requires might lead to ignorance of the sophisticated dynamics of potential emerging themes in the analytical procedure (Glaser & Strauss, 2010). Conversely, the strategy of grounded theory emphasizes on the process of analysis, as demonstrated in Figure 4.2, which could potentially identify more subtle narratives and sentiments.

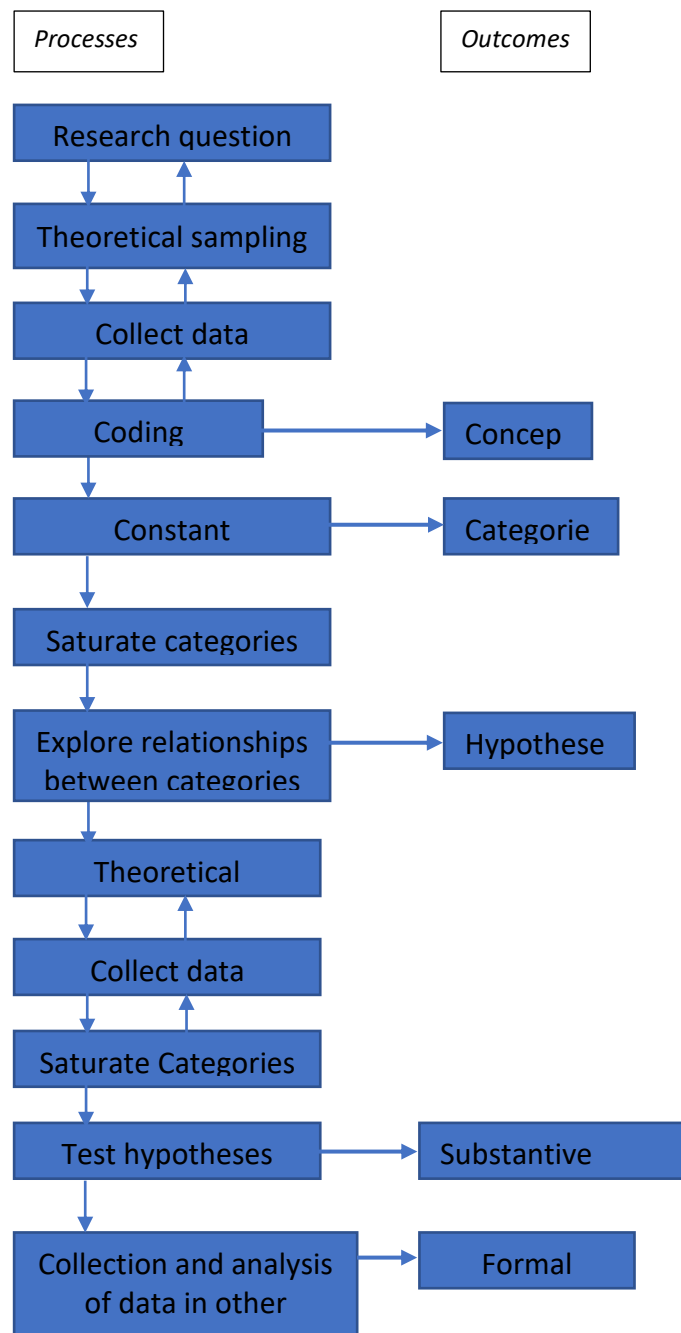


Figure 4.2 Logic of Grounded Theory

Source: Social Research Method

Secondly, the data to be analysed are first-hand data collected from the field. For first-hand data, during the collection process, there were numerous factors influenced the quality of the data. In the meanwhile, authentic data directly collected from the field can be messy. Therefore, the analytical strategy should first enable the process to elicit a clear meaning, with an effort to avoid potential analytical bias. As there are several

rounds of feedback and reflection steps in the grounded theory approach as shown in Figure 4.2, it resonates with the idea of learning by doing when it comes to analysis for fussy but rich qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Thirdly, one important objective of the research is to shed new light on regional policy making. While most policies are based on intuitive judgement with a top-down perspective, it is easier to omit the people's voices with shadowed agendas and result-oriented functionalism in the decision-making process. The analysis of semi-structured interview scripts has the best potential to tease out the essential but latent experience in understanding rural-urban migrants to *shiminhua* process directly from the rural-urban migrants. This bottom-up, inductive strategy of grounded theory will enable grass-root people to talk. As the analytical strategy of grounded theory for qualitative data analysis has been chosen, thematic coding is introduced as the corresponding coding method (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### **Coding Method: Thematic Analysis**

Thematic analysis is the coding method for building grounded theory, a non-linear type of analytical logic with steps moving forward and back. It aims to make sense of the collected data by organizing the qualitative data into themes and sub-themes. It also evaluates the significance, relationships, as well as dynamics among thematic clusters (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Figure 4.4 also shows that the exact coding process requires intuitions guided by the values of the researcher, when generating "outcomes" from "processes". In this research, although a step-by-step method is observed, the following principle is applied: when conducting thematic analysis, there are constantly forward and backwards regarding analysis procedures (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The process of research design, sampling, data collection, coding and analysis do not have clear cuts in between. This vagueness is not deemed as unfavourable, rather "messy" nature of the data proceeding itself reflects the progressive and incremental nature of inductiveness in the thematic coding approach.

Three rounds of thematic coding were conducted. In the following Figure 4.3 shows, a first round of hands-on coding started while the FGDs recordings are being transcribed. Initial coding was jotted down manually based on field notes and keyed into an excel form for classifications during the fieldwork. Four categories of analysis including "housing", "economic", "social", and "cultural" factors are retrieved using coloured differentiation: housing in yellow colour, economic in green colour, social in blue colour, cultural in purple colour, those nodes that fall out of the four categories are highlighted in red. These categories echo with themes covered by FGDs and question types in survey Part 1.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> See Table 3.4 and Table 4.3.

	D	E	G	I	K	M	O
1	Dongguan-C	Dongguan-D	Dongguan-E	Zhongshan-A	Zhongshan-B	Guangzhou-A	Guangzhou-B
2	DG-C[Migrating because of 2008 global financial crisis]	DG-D[Few fundamental changes in the local area]	DG-E[Moved to Dongguan from Shenzhen with the relocation of factor]	ZS-A[Huge changes in cityscape since arrival]	ZS-B[Came to Zhongshan to join family]	GZ-A[Guangzhou has a cityscape which is lower than the expected]	GZ-B[Guangzhou looks like a Tier 1 city]
3	DG-C[Having difficulties finding jobs in hometown]	DG-D[More prosperous economy in city]	DG-E[Live in Shenzhen, work in Dongguan, living a commuting life]	ZS-A[Rapid changes within recent years]	ZS-B[Significant changes after coming to Zhongshan]	GZ-A[First impression of GZ: dilapidated old house and streets in]	GZ-B[The infrastructure and city environment are]
4	DG-C[The popular trend of moving out and "dagong"]	DG-D[Rapide changes in urban landscape within rec]	DG-E[Was forced to move to keep their job and position in the factory]	ZS-A[Difference in language, diet and lifestyle between]	ZS-B[Economic situation has been improved a little bit]	GZ-A[Well-equipped medical and health-care infrastructure]	GZ-B[More opportunities to learn for technicians]
5	DG-C[Difficulty in livelihood back home]	DG-D[Migrating to Dongguan in order to earn more]	DG-E[Dongguan in lack of "mentality to serve" compared to Shenzhen]	ZS-A[Difference in treatment and welfare]	ZS-B[Very rare interactions with the locals]	GZ-A[Migrated because of boyfriend's job-hunting needs]	GZ-B[Considering career path and good economic d]
6	DG-C[Introduced to the city by Jiaokang]	DG-D[Do not want to move to other cities once settl]	DG-E[Dongguan in lack of institutionalised regulations compared to Sh]	ZS-A[Locals have more time to take care of children a]	ZS-B[Locals are polite and do not bully rural-urban mig]	GZ-A[Worse road condition compared other tier 1 city]	GZ-B[Weather is better (warmer) than hometown]
7	DG-C[Difference in treatment between locals and non-local]	DG-D[Coming to Dongguan because of Dongguan's r]	DG-E[The main target is to earn money]	ZS-A[Migrants with poorer economic condition usually]	ZS-B[Who plan to buy house in Zhongshan owing to lack]	GZ-A[Disparity compared to imagination, Guangzhou looks more]	GZ-B[Less interactions with the Guangzhou locals]
8	DG-C[Rural-urban migrants' children cannot attend local st]	DG-D[Higher life quality than back to home town]	DG-E[Dongguan looks more like rural area compared to Shenzhen]	ZS-A[Migrants need to pay extra fees for children to a]	ZS-B[Children attending local private school as the pu]	GZ-A[Low commodity price]	GZ-B[Different diets and living habits between lo]
9	DG-C[Rural-urban migrants' children need to pay extra mor]	DG-D[Increased local commodity price]	DG-E[Migrating out will sacrifice the stable life back at hometown]	ZS-A[The private school fees is unaffordable for rural]	ZS-B[Having a local house will boost the possibility of]	GZ-A[Suitable for common people's life]	GZ-B[The south has higher salaries than the north]
10	DG-C[Much more expensive expenditure in children's educa]	DG-D[Increased expenditure and ability to spend m]	DG-E[Coming to Shenzhen because of friends]	ZS-A[Less farmland back home made people migrate c]	ZS-B[Plan to send children to attend junior high school]	GZ-A[Other lower tier cities maynot provide suitable jobs]	GZ-B[Hot summer makes it harder to work for th]
11	DG-C[Understanding of the limitation of local state schools]	DG-D[Moving to Dongguan due to family (partner)	DG-E[Faster and promising economic development attracted people]	ZS-A[Less job opportunities back to hometown]	ZS-B[Rural-urban migrants tend to solve problems ind]	GZ-A[Easy to communicate with locals without knowing the local]	GZ-B[Young migrants have not considered much a]
12	DG-C[Cheater policies for locals in purchasing houses and car]	DG-D[Stay at Dongguan because of the warm clima]	DG-E[Worse public safety condition in Shenzhen compared to Dongguan]	ZS-A[As there are more factories in Dongguan, there]	ZS-B[Less discriminations compared with before as son]	GZ-A[Compared to other Tier 1 city like Beijing, Guangzhou local people are more tolerant to different cultures]	
13	DG-C[Lottery system and local social insurance participatio]	DG-D[Moved hukou, self-labelled as "new Dongguan"]	DG-E[Even worse safety in Dongguan, the experience of bett]	ZS-A[Introduced by Jiaokang and friends to come to D]	ZS-B[Migrating is for freedom of choosing jobs]	GZ-A[Guangzhou's culture and history construct a more acceptable environment for rural-urban migrants living her]	
14	DG-C[Rare opportunity to get a number for the non-locals]	DG-D[Point-system for attending local state schools]	DG-E[Moved hukou to Shenzhen mainly for children's education, will]	ZS-A[Without Jiaokang or friends in destination, it is not safe enough]		GZ-A[The mixed culture of Canton as traditional place of migrating]	
15	DG-C[Protectionism for locals by the city government]	DG-D[Most factory workers are rural urban migrants]		ZS-A[Improved life quality than before with every meal having fish and meat]		GZ-A[Hard to get a urban local hukou]	
16	DG-C[Reputations still differs after changing into Dongguan]	DG-D[Wealthier locals]		ZS-A[Sometime lunch box from the factory can be unsavory]		GZ-A[Relatively easier to get a local hukou compared to other Tier 1 Chinese cities]	
17	DG-C[Keeping rural hukou to enjoy the state's rural develo]	DG-D[Locals among managerial level in local factory]		ZS-A[Worse management in Zhongshan factories in the recent years]		GZ-A[Difficulties in applying for public loan without a local hukou]	
18	DG-C[Very rare opportunity for rural-urban migrant work]	DG-D[Problem of calculating personal expenditure out of family expenditure]		ZS-A[Welfare and payment to rural-urban migrants varies across different factories]		GZ-A[Hukou determined rural-urban migrant's next generation's education]	
19	DG-C[Close support for rural urban migrants in entrepreneurship]			ZS-A[Moved hukou to Zhongshan for children's future education]		GZ-A[Younger people think less about hukou due to high possibility of mobility]	
20	DG-C[Ambitions for second generation to get into prestigious universities]			ZS-A[After moving hukou to Zhongshan, the lands back hometown lost]		GZ-A[Hukou is important as it is associated to buying house and children's education]	
21	DG-C[Difference in thought among generations of rural-urban migrants]			ZS-A[Solving the housing issue for migrants to have a stable life in order to attract and integrate more migr]		GZ-A[Guangzhou lacks very good universities as a tier 1 city]	
22	DG-C[Keeping rural hukou to enjoy the state's policy for rural area children's college entrance examination]			ZS-A[Rural-urban migrants have little or no sayings in local agenda, local residents have more]		GZ-A[Protective policy for local candidate in joining college entrance exam and receiving tertiary education]	
23	DG-C[Thinking from the state's perspective, reservation local education quota is rational and for long-term development]			ZS-A[High housing price cause difficulties for rural-urban migrants to shiminhuo]		GZ-A[Big cities are more attractive to rural-urban migrants]	
24	DG-C[Housing issue as the major concern]			ZS-A[The recent development of home province's big cities]		GZ-A[Suburban Guangzhou has a lower housing price]	
25	DG-C[Rural-urban migrants should enjoy equal welfare as they pay local city-level council tax equally]			ZS-A[Life is tiresome for rural-urban migrants]		GZ-A[Good education resource agglomerate to certain districts]	
26	DG-C[Attending senior high school is more unaffordable than junior high school]			ZS-A[Discriminative name imposed on non-locals when just arrived]		GZ-A[Younger people plays a great role in determin which location to settle hukou for rural-urban migrants]	
27	DG-C[The current state policy is to maintain minimum labour in agricultural sector]			ZS-A[Less discrimination to the migrants compare to before]		GZ-A[Less changes in lifestyle]	
28	DG-C[College entrance exam quota should not take special care of rural-urban migrants' children]			ZS-A[Locals are aggressive and frightening]		GZ-A[Guangzhou's ambience of local culture]	
29	DG-C[COVID-19 pandemic has more impacts on coastal exporting-oriented cities than inner-land cities]			ZS-A[Easy to tell the locals and rural-urban migranys apart because of appearance and accent]		GZ-A[Small cafes and snacks shops are prevalent]	
30	DG-C[The tendency of less and less rural-urban migrants coming to Guangdong with development of inner-land major cities]					GZ-A[Guangzhou have many shopping malls with discounts]	
31	DG-C[Other alternative cities like Chengdu or Chongqing in the southwest become more appealing]					GZ-A[Housing issues plays an fundamental role]	
32	DG-C[Inadaptability of migrants who has left rural hometown for long time]					GZ-A[The public-renting house scheme for rural-urban migrants is for transitional period only]	
33	DG-C[Imbalance of income and expenditure in cities]					GZ-A[Children's education plays an important part in rural-urban migrants' migrating decision process]	
34	DG-C[Dongguan's city problem: hygienic issues and unlawful viechels]					GZ-A[Local house ownership is associated with the sense of belonging]	
35	DG-C[Tier 1 or bigger cities' advantages in attracting migrants]					GZ-A[The integration from a physical level]	
36	DG-C[Chengdu as a city for retirement life not for career striving at early age]					GZ-A[The integration from a spiritual level]	
37						GZ-A[Job opportunity is another factor for attracting rural-urban migrants]	
38						GZ-A[Complexity in shiminhuo process]	
39						GZ-A[Climate and weather condition also matters as migrants]	
40						GZ-A[When locals are friendlier, migrant want to integrate more]	
41						GZ-A[Guangzhou as a big city can develop tourism to promote the city and attract more skilled people]	
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Figure 4.3 Selection Process of First Round of Coding in Field in Excel Spreadsheet

Source: Author from fieldwork.

A second round of coding was performed in the NVivo programme coding interface after all qualitative data have been finished and imported properly into the software. *Nodes* and *sub-nodes* are developed with sentence-by-sentence coding, based on the translated English transcripts. The reason is that different expressions in Mandarin and Cantonese Chinese have been reconciled during the translation process, thus the potential semantic ambiguity in coding had been reduced. Coded texts are marked with side stripes as demonstrated on the right side of the screen, in Figure 4.4:

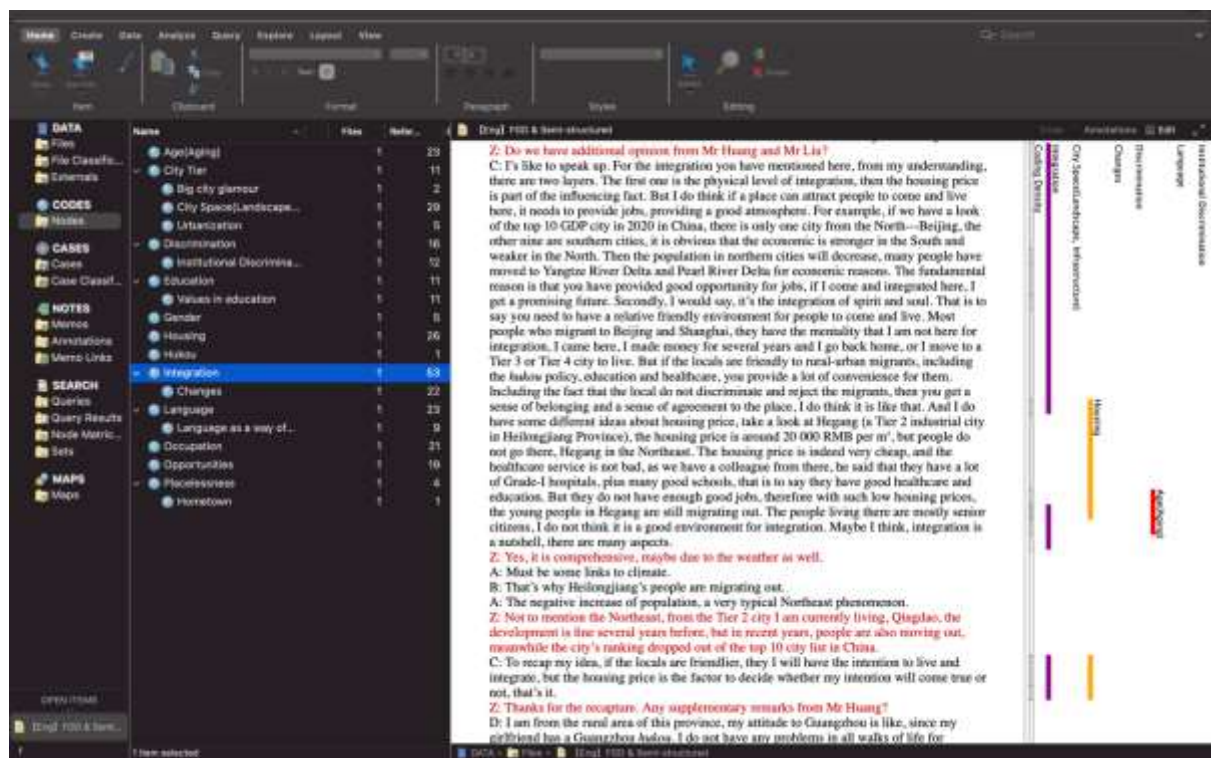


Figure 4.4 The working interface of the second round of thematic coding in NVivo programme

Source: Author in fieldwork, analysed by NVivo 12.

The principle for the second round of coding is 'coded once related', to capture any potential camouflaged themes. Hence, under different nodes, the same paragraph or group of sentences could be coded several times if they were associated with numerous themes or sub-themes. In Figure 4.5 of the NVivo working interface, the nodes are



named as succinctly as possible, with remarks in notes explaining the criterion for the nodes to be included. Those identified themes in qualitative analysis round two were then organised into a mind map in Figure 4.5- arrows in the figure indicate associations between any two concepts:

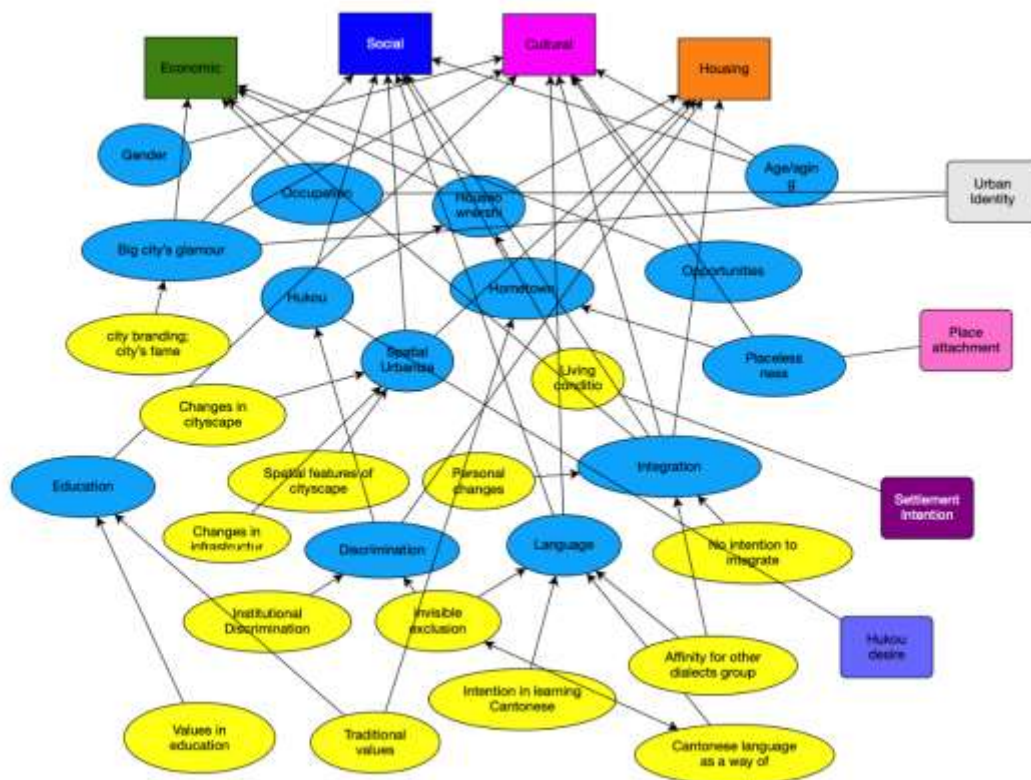


Figure 4.5 Mind map of first two rounds of qualitative analysis

Source: Author, produced in NVivo 12.

In Figure 4.5, blue coloured ellipse indicates the major nodes, also known sometimes as 'category'. Most nodes were identified in the first round of qualitative analysis based on FGD transcripts. Yellow-coloured ovals imply emerging sub-nodes retrieved from the second round of coding based on both FGD and interview transcripts, corresponding to the second step of "collect data" in Figure 4.2 of the grounded theory

process. It turns out that associations among nodes, sub-nodes, and themes are entwined. Therefore, it requires a process of data clearing.

After the procedure of data cleaning, the remaining nodes were commonly shared in most of the transcripts. They are treated as key points to form the writing of logic flows of third round of thematic coding.

*Table 4.2 Factors affecting Urbanisation of the rural-urban migrants*

<b>Nodes</b>	<b>Sub-nodes</b>
<i>Shiminhua</i>	Urban Identity Place-attachment Settlement intention
<i>Hukou</i>	Desire to obtain local <i>hukou</i> The barrier to obtain local <i>hukou</i>
Age/aging Big city's glamour	Spatial features of city/landscape Spatial Urbanisation
Discrimination	Institutional discrimination
Education	Values in education Self-education
Gender Housing	Living conditions and environment
Integration	Changes in life quality Changes in lifestyle Changes in thoughts and mentality
Language	Language as a way of exclusion
Occupation	Opportunities in career development
Placeless-ness	



Impression on hometown  
Cross-city comparison

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*Source: Author-own.*

Those shared nodes and sub-nodes in the third round of thematic coding are from semi-structured interview transcripts, supplemented by FGDs. NVivo's function of the concept map is used; thematic diagrams were applied to demonstrate the logical flow of each semi-structured interview with a selected sample presented in Figure 4.6.

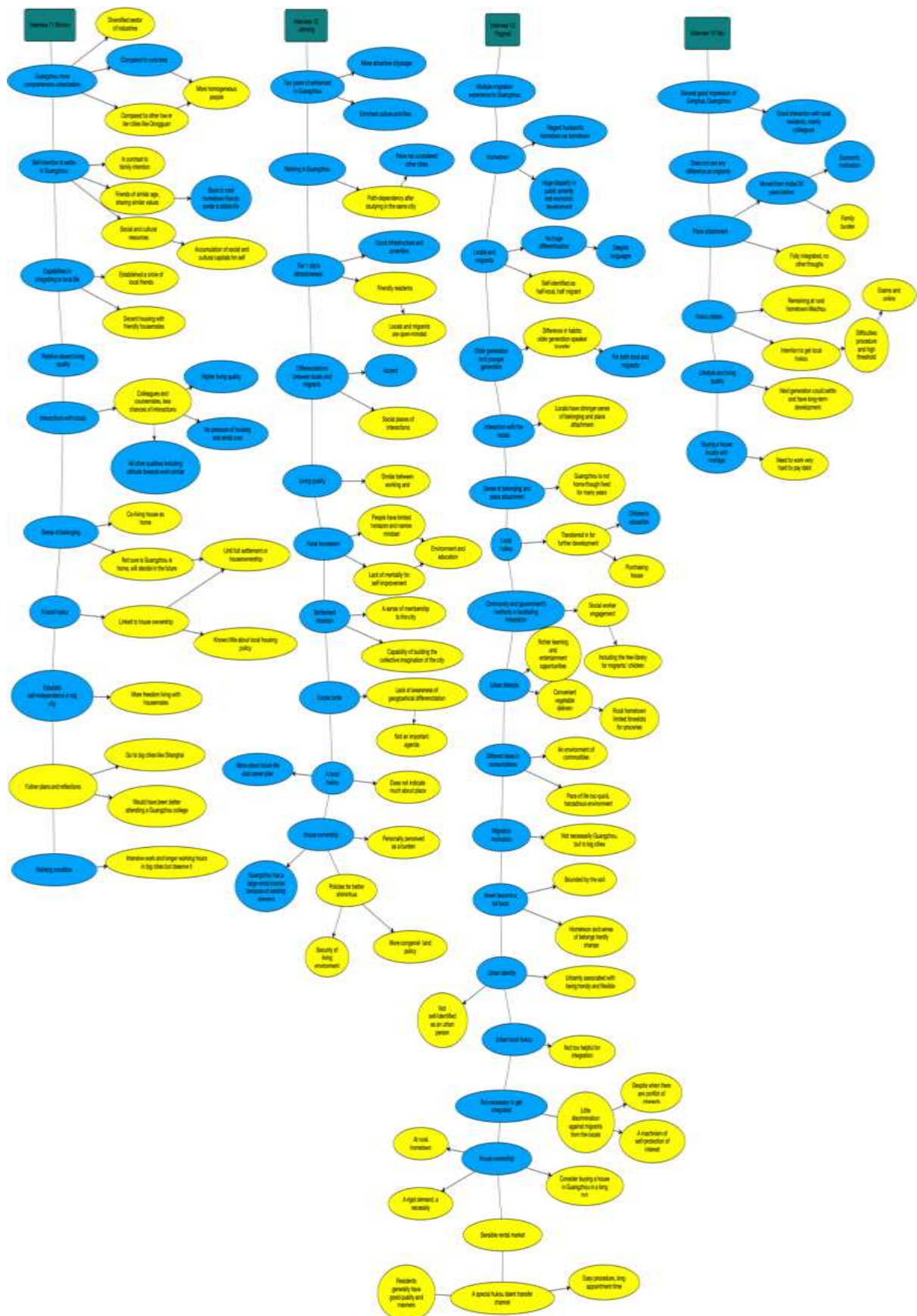


Figure 4.6 Selection of Conceptual Maps of Semi-structured Interviews

Source: Author, produced by NVivo 12.

In those diagrams, the blue colour is fused for indicating major nodes and yellow for emerging nodes in each interview. Those new sub-nodes were usually connected to a main node as Figure 4.6 suggests.

Data saturations can be observed while doing the last several diagrams: overlapped discourse without many newly emerged themes being observed. By the time 30 concept maps were produced, the researcher had been familiarized with the qualitative data, capable of conjuring the majority of overlapped concepts and nodes by organising them into meaningful scenarios that form a story. The overall thematic coding process aims to achieve a balance between rigour and flexibility. A grounded theory that echoes with research framework of the thesis is then built, covering drivers, process, measurement, impacts, policy intervention and personal strategy in *shiminhua*. presented in the 3<sup>rd</sup> section of this Chapter.

## 4.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

### Drivers of *shiminhua*

Based on the research framework in Figure 3.2, referred as the factors which causes a particular phenomenon to happen or develop - the drivers of *shiminhua* are at the forefront of analysis in the qualitative data. The qualitative data have reveals on both what are the drivers and when the drivers start to have effects on *shiminhua*.

Interview data demonstrated that a commonly acknowledged essential driver for *shiminhua* at the individual level migrants' awareness of the development disparity

between their rural hometown and the city. This is typically experienced by the vibrant vide and highly urbanised landscape, described as light from the city, one example is shown in Figure 6.1. Amazed by the cityscape of Guangzhou, 25-years-old Miss Chen describes:

‘There are huge differences. My hometown is a small city, in the mountainous area, thus no matter whether it’s the physical landscape or the human landscape, in the city it is much, much better, Guangzhou is a city full of colour! There is basically no such thing back in my home town at all.’ (Interview 12)

“差异还是挺大的。因为我家乡算是小县城嘛，比较偏山区。所以就各种无论是楼房的建筑还是人文景观还是城市里一些文化活动，都是广州是更加丰富，家乡里面基本上是没有的。”

While acknowledging the advanced economic status in the city, Miss Chen may not be driven to *shiminhua* process until she sensed the disparity in person the affluent lifestyles in the city help to make up her mind in stay, in compensation for all the bitterness she could have anticipated as a first college-level graduate in her family and a rural-urban migrant, to some extent the economic opportunities plays a less important role in her decision to settle down – as settlement intention is argued to be an important element in *shiminhua* . She accentuated that participating in those cultural activities “makes me feel like part of the cultured urban native group” who enjoyed the affluent urban life.



*Figure 4.7 "Lights from the city" the riverside walk near Zhongshan city CBD*

*Source: Photo by author.*

By describing Guangzhou as "a city of colour", the interviewer could sense the huge visual and sensory attractiveness of the city for the newly arrived rural-urban migrant. The first encounter with the "city's glamour" also blatantly reveals the disparity in development between his rural home town and imagined "world cities" (Friedmann, 1986; Graham, 2008). This imagination and glamour form a strong pulling factor by the city, as depicted in Lee's push and pull model for migration: the economic incentives might be a fundamental pull or push factor- but without being sensed by the migrant individual, the economic disparity as a factor is more of a motivation to migrant than a driver for *shiminhua*. After an individual had moved and attempted to

settle, this feeling of discrepancy could initiate a sentiment of inferiority and alienation, which can further evolve into a driver to *shiminhua*.

While perceived rural-urban gap is often the trigger for the beginning of *shiminhua* process at individual level to pursue an urban identity, evidences from qualitative data show that city-branding of specific city via relatives and acquaintances can be another driver. As people hear about, think about, and dream about the city, the lights from the city do not need to be physically presented to become a strong pull factor as those factors mentioned in Lee's model (Lee, 1966; Vogel, 1995). This will further lead to a discussion on place-specific pull factors, as in the migrant could be attracted specifically by one certain city.<sup>72</sup> When recalling his decision to move to Dongguan as a manufacturing worker in the late-1980s, one middle-aged informant recalled Dongguan's famous nickname of "little Hong Kong":

'...then why did you specifically come to Dongguan?'

'Because I have heard from other people, saying that Dongguan is nicknamed *little Hong Kong*, right? I immediately had the intention to come here' (FGD 10 Dongguan)

"...为什么会专门选择来东莞呢？"

"因为老听他们说嘛，不是说，东莞是小香港嘛。所以就想在这边。"

She specifically paused and emphasised the word "little Hong Kong" while responding to the question. A young village girl's ambition to see the world in the fast-developing

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<sup>72</sup> This resonates with the point that Place Attachment (PA) can served as a measurement of *shiminhua*/

cities can still be seen from the informant with her eyes lightening up when speaking the piece of phrase inspiration: *little Hong Kong*--- a magic word during the past several decades for millions of rural youths like her owing to Hong Kong's economic success.

In the 1970s, Hong Kong attained the status of "Four Asian Tigers"<sup>73</sup> with flourishing manufacturing and service sectors. By the 1980s, Hong Kong had already established its reputation as a prosperous regional hub, building up its image as an emerging global city. After the 1978 Reform and Opening-Up strategy, Hong Kong's investment flowed into Dongguan's factories in the new era of Chinese economic transformation, contributing to the blossoming of Dongguan's economy.<sup>74</sup> The very name 'Hong Kong' was interpreted as a synonym for "city of wealth and opportunity" (Yu, 2021; Sharif & Chandra, 2022). Whilst the above-mentioned informant had not been to Dongguan before making the decision to migrate and potentially to adapt to city life, she heard from friends and acquaintances who have migrated and worked there about Dongguan's affluence and abundant work opportunities. He realized the gap of quality of life between his rural home town and Dongguan before personal experience, which serve as a supplementary driver of *shiminhua*.

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<sup>73</sup> Other three emerging economies that underwent rapid industrialization and rapid economic growth rate in the 1970s Asia are Singapore, Taiwan, and South Korea.

<sup>74</sup> For the historic background of China's Open Up strategy, refer to Chapter 2 sub-section: Chinese Economic Reform Since 1949.

The interesting point is, when asked whether she had been to Hong Kong before moving to Dongguan, the informant was rather embarrassed. In fact, she had never been to Hong Kong in her life. Nevertheless, she agreed that her assumption of the affluence in Hong Kong had been developed through watching Cantonese TV back in a rural village as a child. She admitted that if given less strict border controls between Guangdong Province and Hong Kong in the 1980s, she might ended up moving to Hong Kong .

Apart from perceived development disparity and lights from the city owning to city-branding at the initial stage, for those migrants who have obtained a stable job and start to plan for the next step, views are that *shiminhua* is a necessary process for maintaining an improved life quality after settling down in the city. The ameliorated life quality can be conveyed in a very daily context, for instance, shopping for groceries, as Ms Liang recalled the inconvenient of grocery shopping back to her rural hometown and the instant delivery in the city:

‘...back to my home town even going for groceries is an arduous task. Every morning we need to get up around five so that we can wait for the vendor of pork and chicken to come. But if you live in the city, there are no such limitations, it’s even like you can order and the goods will be at your door in several minutes. That’s an improved living condition. As for life habits, in Guangzhou, no matter where you go, whether social or study, (life experience here), it is much richer than back in my rural home town...(that’s why) I was determine to settle and develop my life here in Guangzhou’ (Interview 13)

“...比如说在老家买菜都是很不方便的，每天都要很早去等卖猪肉啊卖鸡的人来。但是你在城市这一边，你是不受这个限制的，甚至你直接下单他会给你送上门。这是生活条件啦。那生活习惯上面呢，在广州不论是外出、交际还是学习，他娱乐的一些东西，他其实比在老家丰富非常多的。...会



长期留在广州发展。”

Ms Liang has highlighted two prominent characteristics of modern city life---convenience and more options, which help her to make up mind in kicking off the settling process. This was further enabled by China's popularity for e-commerce, widespread express delivery network, evolving mobile payment after the 2010s (Liu & Chen, 2021). An urban resident can theoretically stay at home and order a large variety of daily necessities including dairy products and groceries online via mobile apps and the products will be delivered to the nearest express station very quickly.

As Ms Liang depicted, being a modern urban consumer is a significant part of her urban identity. Living in the city she does not only consume daily necessities but also cultural products, for instance, movies or culture talks---the latter not only enrich the means of entertainment but potentially increase social and cultural capital for her, encouraging more consumption of cultural products.<sup>75</sup> She also enjoyed the style of online and mobile shopping as a consumer. The *shiminhua* process, enabled her capacity of consumption by increasing her salary, as well as broadening the variety of products that she could get access to.

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<sup>75</sup> For the discussion on social capital, see Chapter 2 sub-section Important Factors for Acculturation; for urban identity, see Chapter 2 sub-section Latest Research Directions on Chinese Rural-Urban Migrants.

Apart from the improved material life, a better living quality can be results from the removal of traditional social and moral pressures imposed by rural society and the clan family. One commonly mentioned example is parental pressure to marry back to rural hometown:

‘If you go back to your hometown, after reaching a certain age, you will be urged to get married, here (in the city) you never get urged by nobody.’  
(Interview 7)

“会呀，你要是回家的话，到某一定岁数就会被人家催婚啊。你在这里就不会被问什么时候结婚啊什么之类的喽。”

Ye smiled unnaturally when mentioning the possibility of being urged by rural parents to get married, we could instantly feel that he must have been urged many times himself, that he can deliver such an answer intuitively. This represents dozens as several of the other interviewees also mentioned, but they did not put this cultural difference as the largest division between life in the city and life back home with the rural family.

In Fei's *China from Soil* marriage is analysed as an essential part of rural reproduction (1945). The younger generation needs to get married at an age that could bear healthy offspring thus fulfilling the expectation of filial piety. The elderly according to the Chinese rural tradition, are supposed to have the obligation to supervise this reproduction procedure, to make sure it goes on properly so that there are continuous labour provisions running through the family clan. However, with the urbanisation and *shiminhua* process, this ancient tradition could potentially contradict the individualism of the younger generation when went to the city. The urban society is not a society

bonded by blood, kinship, and traditional obligations in the family clan--- by migrating to the city, the rural young are entitled to choose a different way of life that is alternative to the prospect in the rural area. In this way, the *shiminhua* process is also one of realizing individual pursuits and freedom for some migrants, reclaiming their own privacy and decision-making power, which potentially helps to construct a better life in the future.

Apart from active reasons for maintaining high living quality and having more choices in life, *shiminhua* can be the result of path-dependency for a lot of migrants. Ms Gao describes her family's experience of staying and adapting to life in Dongguan, giving up subsequent opportunities to move to larger cities like Guangzhou or Shanghai for the following reasons:

'There are numerous reasons (for settling in Dongguan and not moving), plus we have been living here for a long while. Now we have more familiarity with the city, children who have become accustomed to the environment here in Dongguan... Therefore, if we could get stable work here, it's a facilitating factor in settling down.' (Interview 24)

“(原因)比较多，再加上在这边生活的也比较久。现在我们可能更多，包括孩子，已经适应了，过渡到一个这边的生活状态。所以觉得因为家人、亲人都在老家。所以说如果能在这边有一个固定的工作啊，就留下来。”

In contrast to her job as a workshop worker, Ms Gao tried to adopt an over-official tone in answering our interview questions, using formal words and phrases, as if she was receiving an interview by China Central Television Channel news run by the governmental authorities. I am not sure if her unmatched formality is due to the factory

manager's appointment of her to be the speaker of the factory, to pass on some positive energy to the research team. But this passage does portray some real-life dilemmas, despite her highly ceremonial voice of speaking.

This narration may be due to more sophisticated economic and cultural considerations. Stability brought by a contracted formal-sector job was the word that had been heavily emphasised by the informant when it came to the topic of settlement intention. When it comes to the formal and informal urban sectors, Harris-Todaro extended the Lewis Model by adding another informal sector, utilizing the anticipated employment rate in the formal sector to adjust the migration motivation--- a higher unemployment rate will reduce the possibility of migration decision (Todaro & Harris, 1970). For migrant families like the informant in the above interview, moving to another city means losing the obtained formal sector job while securing a job with formal labour contract in a new city is uncertain. A social network may play another part in the trade-off in moving on or staying in as well, as a stable job usually mean more solid connection with colleagues. On the contrary, moving to a new city means interruptions to established social network, career progress, and familiarity with the former city, which could lead to the degradation and stagnation of social capital (Schultz, 1961; Conway, 1980; Bian, 2021).

In addition to the above-mentioned reasons for *shiminhua*, a deep-seated mentality of justifying previous migration decisions is identified among five out of the 30

interviewees. In other words, whether the migration decision is 'appropriate' somehow depends upon whether the *shiminhua* process is successful or not. For example, one young migrant female Miss C with a negative experience of the city, doubts her former decision in moving to Guangzhou:

'The impression of Guangzhou for me is really bad, maybe that's caused by my first job, which is bad; then I get tricked and lost all my money, I feel like very sad and depressed... there are many defraud here to live with; thus, I regret migrating to here.' (Interview 25)

“因为我觉得就它这里给我的感觉就，可能找的工作也不是很好，可能被骗了就感觉有点那个……就很多那些坑蒙拐骗啊，就后悔来了。”

This young lady has difficulties in finding words that can express the severity of her disappointing experiences moving to the big city, she must have endured a rather devastating time as a single girl knowing nobody in this alienating working environment with inflow of and outflow of migrants. These negative urban experiences have determined her mind to go back to her rural home in the coming month by the time of being interviewed.

The last significant driver for *shiminhua*, identified from qualitative data, is migrant's intention to avoid bitter discrimination and exclusiveness experienced from the urban native group. Hostility made the migrants uncomfortable and prompted them to adjust and adapt - one informant in Zhongshan recalled her earlier unpleasant interaction with one local father and a daughter:

'... (Those urban native) look down on us, when we first arrived, they call us,

the migrants *laomei*--- that is to say, this girl is here only for money, like *laozai* is the male equivalent... there are fewer cases these years. When we first arrived, we were heavily discriminated against by the urban locals. For example, a local guy was with his kid, his daughter called me 'auntie', he went into a rage: that's because he does not count us as human-being, he shouted at his kid: "DO NOT EVER CALL THESE FOLKS AUNTIE!" (FGD 12 Zhongshan)

“...看不起外地人，刚来的时候称呼外地人“捞妹”——“捞妹”就是来捞钱的，“捞仔”“捞妹”，就这样称呼外地人。不过这几年没太有了。刚来的时候，很歧视的。比如刚来的时候本地人看见小孩叫我阿姨。就凶他那个小孩，就是看不起，不把你当人一样的。他就凶那个小孩：‘不许叫她阿姨！’”

There seems to be an abrupt switch from the informant's normal tones of indifference to a hateful voice mixed with profound sorrow and sadness. As she imitated the tone and facial expression "do not ever call these folks..." so fiercely, as if now she is an urban native lady shouting to another dingy rural girl. She was somehow for one second, frightened by her own voice and then burst into laughter, partly to cover her embarrassment of gaffe, partly to celebrate the relief on her current status---after *shiminhua* and as an urban lady, no one could dare to shout towards any longer. It is the subtle reactions that reviled how deeply those discriminating and alienating experiences could hurt the migrant as a younger person.

While readers could also be shocked by the urban native father's rudeness, he had at least made one valid point that most of the rural inflow migrants moved to Zhongshan for economic opportunities, which could be traced back to the review and analysis of the Lewis Model and Harris-Todaro model mentioned in Chapter 2. According to the models, though the number of urban jobs in the formal sector is limited, the supply of rural labour will eventually overflow the number of formal jobs, pushing other workers

including urban natives' workers to the precarious informal jobs. This could potentially explain the hatred sentiment by the local father and why he had used the discriminative nicknames to address the innocent rural girl--- as if she had stolen his job.

It is also interesting to note that the discriminatory and alienating nickname "*laozal*" and "*laomei*" originates from local Cantonese "*loujal*" and "*loumul*", indicating the pride of people being both Cantonese local and urban native, while differentiating themselves from "the other" - who are neither Cantonese local nor urban residents. They perceive migrants to be lucrative because of previous austerity, thus associated with immoral actions and alienated identities. In other words, when the urban local's anger and xenophobia manifest, he might not be particularly angry towards the female migrant, but towards the group labelled as incoming competitors who are different from "us". *Shiminhua* makes these situations less likely to happen thus become a last driver for migrants to upgrade from "the other in the city" to be "one of us" from urban native's perspective.

To summarize this sub-section, rural-urban migrants start *shiminhua* with different drivers from active, to passive. *Shiminhua* is essentially driven by acknowledging the development disparity, expanded by the branded lights from the city. Migrants are motivated to *shiminhua* to maintained economic affluence and freedom of lifestyle; to

refrain from potential loss of stability bestowed by long-term job and established social circle; and to avoid discrimination from urban natives.

### **The process of *shiminhua***

To understand the *shiminhua* process mapped out in Figure 3.2, this sub-section further delved into asking when, what, and how on the process.

With multi-factors of drivers, when does the process of *shiminhua* start? Contrary to the 'common senses that *shiminhua* begin after migrant moved to the city, evidence from the interviews implies that the process can be traced back to when the migration decision was made at home. Before the person physically moved into the city, *shiminhua* could have already begun.

'We tried to learn more (about life and construction work) before coming to Guangzhou, so that we can accumulate experience faster after arrival – we expect a good salary that match our skills here, with a foreseeable career promotion.' (FGD 2 Guangzhou)

“这边能学到的专业知识方面更全面，一个就是也好学习积累经验；感觉广州这边发展也挺好，有发展前景。”

In this quotation, Mr Liu, a devoted construction technician on his apprenticeship has revealed the knowledge and psychological preparation before moving into the big city. Other informants in FGD 8 at Dongguan, Interview 1, Interview 9, and Interview 29 have also indicated expectations for adjustment in city life, and correspondent preparations including obtaining information on the immigration destination city via relatives and friends. The beginning of *shiminhua*, could therefore be traced back shortly after the migration decision have been made.



The narratives retrieved from qualitative data also help to reveal the nature of the *shiminhua* process, that is, what *shiminhua* really means to a migrant as a person. It is identified from the data that an intangible process of internalizing urban identity can build up a huge contrast compared to those relatives back in the rural home town. One middle-aged female migrant from Sichuan describes the vivid scene when she went back to rural Sichuan from Guangzhou during the first Lunar New Year:

‘When I went back home, as I was back from metropolitan Guangzhou to my rural home town, my family saw me changed from a rural girl into an urban lady. From the way I dressed-up, they see me in an envious way, that’s a huge change for me. But here back to the city, even though I have a proper job--- because I was a young and inexperienced migrant, I had tasted much bitterness...’ (Interview 19)

“家里人就看到我们回去，然后因为从一个农村人变成一个城里人一样，那种各种的穿着打扮，他们一看就是城里人，就用非常羡慕的眼光看着我们，我们也享受那种优越，就仿佛自己就变成城里人一样。但是，就有这些变化。但是，在这里，即使工作——因为年轻，但当时吃的苦头也不少...”

This is a particularly interesting piece of dialogue especially when presented on-site, sitting on her cosy balcony sofa of a self-owned apartment in one of the middle-class neighbourhoods in Baiyun District, Guangzhou. Adopting a calm while eloquent tone Ms Xiao recalled her early experience as a rural girl migrating to work in the factory in Guangzhou, a common decision by many but a life-changing experience for herself as she ended up making her fortune. She had not realised that changes in dressing style could indicate an affinity and inclination to imitate the style of her urban native co-workers, as an important, internalised, cultural-psychological aspect of *shiminhua* during that time.

From the discourse, the rural-urban continuum mentioned in Chapter 3 sub-section A Framework of Rural-Urban Migration in the GBA is mutually constructed by rural and urban resident.<sup>76</sup> Since there is no ultimate urban or an ultimate rural person, there are always more urban and more rural people. A migrant is positioned on the continuum by others judgement, and the position on the rural-urban continuum is fluid, one can become more urban by internalising and demonstrating the relatively more urban identity, even not on purpose.

Ironically, the first outcome of an internalized *shiminhua* is demonstrated by external changes such as dress. Relatives and rural friends' envy have strengthened the urban-rural hierarchy also It may further justify the value of gaining an urban identity by living and working in the city. The "bitterness" owing to inadequacy in the eyes of urban locals could have been more bearable with the anticipated compensation of elevated status through *shiminhua*.

Apart from being urban, *shiminhua* is also interpreted as connected to a specific place, also known as 'place attachment' (Lewicka, 2005; Anton & Carmen Lawrence, 2014). Taking the strong soil attachment in Chinese social structures into account, the new

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<sup>76</sup> For the rural-urban dichotomy and how it had been constructed in China, refer to Chapter 2 sub-section Chinese urbanisation.

place attachment to the city is in fact a negotiated place attachment. This is particularly true for second-generation migrants. Interviewee Nan moved to Guangzhou from Chongqing together with her parents at the age of six, and describes her complicated sense of attachment to Guangzhou:

'To be fair, I only lived a short time in Chongqing. If you are asking me like that, I would say I sense more humanity back to Chongqing every time I go back. But life here (in Guangzhou) is definitely more convenient, because of the familiarity. But in Chongqing, despite the inconvenience, as you are walking along the street and you catch up with someone, ask him or her question in local dialect, he will enthusiastically send you to your destination or anywhere you would like to go.' (Interview 27).

“说实在的，我在重庆待的时间非常短。所以硬要说的话，每年老家回去感觉到重庆比广州更有人味。生活在这里，那肯定是广州更加方便，因为熟悉。但是重庆的话呢，你不说你方不方便。但是你在大街上逮着一个人，用乡音跟他说两句，哪怕不是乡音，用普通话跟他说两句，他就非常热情地把你送到那儿。”

In the interview, Nan speculated that as a second-generation migrant, she forgot to raise this identity in the survey question which might lead to her “being regarded as an outlier”, compared to other interviewees, she is highly educated with a lavished home in Guangzhou sponsored by her first-generation rural-urban migrant parents. Her answers are highly reflective and rather well in articulating the elusive feeling of being at the border of rural and urban even though she has not lived in rural hometown for a decent amount of time for 8 years old.

On one hand, Nan appreciates the convenience of amenities and infrastructure in the modern city of Guangzhou, which she described as “her home, more connected to real life” in the following part of the interview. On the other hand, her home town of

Chongqing where she has not lived for long was described as a utopian environment replete with the comforting interpersonal relations of *renqing wei*, or the taste of hospitality, generosity, and friendliness.

It is also worth noticing that she has mentioned the term *xiangyin*, referring to the local Chongqing dialect, a variation of the Chinese dialect that shared similarity with Mandarin.<sup>77</sup> This also indicates her linguistic familiarity with Chongqing dialect rather than the Cantonese dialect. As *xiangyin* reveal a place identity and becomes forms of social capital, people speaking Mandarin are considered as non-local, the hospitality of Chongqing has been emphasised with the fact that non-locals would also receive potential help and hospitality from the rural locals.

From the above analysis, it is apparent that Nan has a strong place attachment to both Guangzhou and Chongqing, but it stands unclear how the strong attachment was built: more likely to be gained when she was visiting the rural home during vacation than when she was living there--- she might be too young to remember anything before moving with families to Guangzhou at 8 years old. According to the two elements--- place dependence and place identity that forms the concept of place attachment, though Nan clearly has a place dependence on Guangzhou in accessing all the

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<sup>77</sup> The dialect of Chongqing is called xinan guanhua, a Southwest variation of Mandarin language, mutually understandable but with differences in words and pronunciation.

amenities, her place identity is partly belongs to Chongqing. In other words, Nan has demonstrated a negotiated and compromised place attachment.

Unlike negotiated place attachment, another concept that had used to capture the sentiment of migrants in the *shiminhua* process, as proposed in section 4.1 - settlement intention - tends to be less negotiable and more explicit, as it is shaped by pragmatic considerations.<sup>78</sup> Perhaps this is why it is preferred as a measure of *shiminhua* in recent scholarship (Connelly et al., 2011; S. Chen & Liu, 2016). When asked about settlement intention, one participant admitted that it is a cautious decision taking many factors into account:

'I set off to Guangzhou to seek my fortune after graduating from middle school. I have relatives in Guangzhou. I have been four to five years here, and I have become sentient attached to the city. I come from Zhanjiang, not far from here, and left my home town again because of economic considerations, as well as missing our personal networks and fellow workers in the city.' (FGD 3 Guangzhou)

“我高中毕业时就来广州闯荡，广州有亲戚在这里，生活了四五年后也有了一定感情，我们是湛江人，离这里比较近，再次出来也是由于经济，还有人脉关系都在这里，同学都在这里。”

This middle-aged lady working in a childcare centre has moved back and forth from Zhanjiang to Guangzhou for several times, with a marriage arranged by rural parents to a villager from closed linked family clan and two pregnancy experiences as major interruption to her *chuangdang* in Guangzhou--- literally means striving in a nomad

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<sup>78</sup> Please see the Chapter 2 sub-section Latest Research Directions on Chinese Rural-Urban Migrants for a detailed review of the concept of place attachment and settlement intention.

lifestyle. Every time she went back to work due to financial pressure from rural livelihood, whereas she specifically went back to the city of Guangzhou because of the social connections.

Despite personal life events that may interrupt the migrating trajectory thus influence personal settlement intention, the data also demonstrates that there is no direct causal relationship between the intention to settle and *shiminhua* or vice-versa.

The social network of relatives has played an important role in her decision on the destination of migration. Relatives working in Guangzhou form the first layer of trust and accountability for the migration. As social capital had been accumulated for new migrants throughout the duration of residence in the city via *shiminhua* process, they may build up more trust based on other urban native friends - they may become a source of trust to other newer migrants, forming a vitreous circle of reciprocity, in Coleman's (1988) and Putnam's (2001) theory of social capital building.<sup>79</sup>

Overall, it is understood from this passage that, *shiminhua* is more of a congeries of many approaches rather than one option among many others when establishing individual or household settlement intentions. The essence of *shiminhua* could therefore be identified as a negotiated attachment to a particular place for rural-urban

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<sup>79</sup> For the theoretical discussion on social capital, see Chapter 2 sub-section Important Factors for Acculturation.

migrants if they are to adapt to city life without losing rural connections. It is through association with the city that they gain an urban identity, but it is the rural home town's confections as reference affection for the rural town that makes *shiminhua* as an individual experience.

When asked about the most outstanding characteristic of the process to *shiminhua*, informants commonly mentioned the incrementalism: it occurs in daily life, being such an unconscious proceeding that it is nearly undetectable. When asked about the milestone for her urbanisation process, Ms Huang from Zhongshan thought very hard but concluded that it is more of a "seeping experience":

'(The process of *shiminhua*) is drop by drop, little by little, not like suddenly. It is like the local identity is seeping through, very slowly.' (Interview 4)

“它是慢慢的，一点一滴的，不是说突然间。就好像渗透一样，就慢慢渗透。”

This incremental feature of *shiminhua* is further underpinned by the fact that those who have been living in the urban area for more than a decade can also feel not "fully adapted to urban life". In contrast, those who have been living there for a short period of time have already gained some aspects of urban identity. Drawing on the discussion on the concept of place attachment, place identity is usually developed slower than place dependence (Belanche et al., 2021). Urban identity could be an analogy of place identity as one element of the concept of place attachment. One common feature shared by the development of place identity and urban identity in the *shiminhua* process is that, though the gaining process is relatively slow, they usually increase with

the duration of residence in the city. In contrast, settlement intention could fluctuate, as there are many other factors out of the current living city to be considered for settlement intention--- as in the case of Interview 25 in sub-section 4.3.3 , once obtaining an informal sector job, the settlement intention improved prominently.

Based on the analysis of this sub-section, it revealed that *shiminhua* is essentially incremental process of internalised urban identity and negotiated place attachment.

### **Measurement of *shiminhua***

The incremental and intangible nature of *shiminhua* process creates a challenge for the measurement of *shiminhua* level. The quantitative indices may only capture certain aspects of the *shiminhua*, Qualitative data demonstrate that several markers from socio-institutional and cultural-psychological aspects should be considered when comes to discussion of measurement of *shiminhua*.

Apart from the described seeping-through nature of *shiminhua* process, when prompted, informants also admitted the process of *shiminhua* is characterized by milestones that mark major attainments – these milestones could therefore be regarded as variables to establish measurement. According to Ms Huang, this achievement often occurs within several years after migrating to the new city, with clear socio-institutional milestones including obtaining their first stable job and later acquiring a local urban *hukou*. Mr Jia emphasizes the importance of realizing economic



independence in the city as a symbol of successful *shiminhua* status. Starting as a semi-skilled migrant worker who rises to managerial level position, he deems economic capacity a universal solution to nearly all obstacles of urban life:

‘You cannot deny that in big cities there are existing relationships, that is for sure, but for most common people striving by yourself and achieving a respectable life is not that difficult. You can make 10,000 RMB per month, which I do not think is too difficult...You can at least afford to rent a place. You can make yourself more comfortable...well, you can see that urbanisation has changed a lot of things.’ (Interview 8)

“那你说大城市有没有关系，那也有，但是对于大多数普通人来讲，自己靠自己努力，获得体面的生活，靠自己努力挣个 10000 块钱，其实我觉得不难。对大城市的人来讲不是特别难，你在市区买不起 100 平的，在郊区还买不起 50 平的吗？甚至租房子也是可以啊。他可以让自己更舒服一些…”

Mr Jia spoke out this passage in a confident tone, he considered himself one of those who have completed this road of migrating, striving, and thriving, he applauds for his own successful *shiminhua* process and gives further credit to *shiminhua* as an opportunity of realizing his potential via independent lifestyle, rather than relying on and being bound by his parents’ financial support him as many other Chinese youths did in megacities. Resonating with Lewis’ Model, the assumption for the dual-sector model is based on the free movement of labour, his words also reconcile with the entrepreneurial spirit and rules of the free market only made possible after the 1978 Reform and Open-Up national strategy.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Please see Chapter 2 sub-section Chinese Economic Reform since 1949.

He also pointed out that multiple sources of income and an alternative lifestyle have given him “a sense of real security”, in contrast to a sense of security based on his family. However, migrants within the sample usually did not recall the moment of obtaining local *hukou* as a turning point. In fact, nearly two-thirds of the interviewees pointed out that a local *hukou* is of minor help in integrating into urban society.

Furthermore, the “sense of security” that has been mentioned by many interviewees also comes along with stability: this also explains why owning an urban apartment could be an important factor in measuring *shiminhua* level. This point is depicted by Ms Huang. Seating in her narrowly designed working space situated in one of the most crowded urban villages, she is very eager to have a self-owned apartment in Guangzhou city even a tiny apartment located in the suburb as long as she can afford the price:

‘I would say if you were renting a place then there are many unpredictable factors. Like the uncertainties are huge, for example, maybe you live your life well in the city but suddenly the landlord sold the house, then you need to move all the time, that could also be a special phenomenal for the Chinese nationals, we want stability and do not like the hassle (of moving around). But once you have your own apartment, you feel more comfortable and stable. Like no matter what kind of blows or setbacks happened outside, I could do whatever I want back at home. I will not worry all the time about when I will be driven out, driven away.’ (Interview 6)

“就是租房的话还是会有比较多的变动吧。就是不确定性太大了，可能你住的好好的，房东突然说他这个房子要卖了或者怎么样。就是搬家啦就是我觉得也是国人的习惯吧，还是蛮麻烦的。但是有了自己的房子之后我会觉得比较安心咯，就是不管怎么样我在外面受怎样的挫折、打击啊，我回去想怎样都行。就是不会有那种担心随时被人赶走的感觉。”

Ms Huang frowned a lot when prompted to recall her experience of being driven out by the landladies in her shabby and sometimes dangerous dorm in several of the Guangzhou urban villages, as shown in Figure 6.2. She learned from those hard lessons that having a self-owned place is invaluable. In her depiction, owning a house does not only provide a stable place to live physically but also a psychologically haven from depression and humiliation outside. The qualitative has proved homeownership to be included as a variable when comes to measurement of *shiminhua*.<sup>81</sup>



*Figure 4.8 One of the urban villages dwelling where Ms Huang has lived, the structure is known as a “hand-shake building” due to the high density*

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<sup>81</sup> For discussion on homeownership, see Chapter 2 sub-section Important Factors for Acculturation.

Additionally, some may argue that since homeownership is closely related to local *hukou*, those who desperately own a house and boost up their *shiminhua* process bar are supposed to be very keen to have a local *hukou*. Whereas according to qualitative evidence, when mentioning the attachment to a city, a self-owned property is much highly valued than a *hukou*. Despite the all-round utility of a self-own apartment, the informants regard *hukou* only necessary for long-term settlement:

‘*Hukou* is something that will impact more on your future’s development, for example, if you plan to build up a family here in the city. Of course the sense of belonging is beyond the physical aspect, but it is developed only after you having long been living here.’ (Interview 12)

“户口更多是涉及到你以后的人生发展，整一个个人要组建家庭的一个规划。但是归属感的话是超出这一个物理上面的东西。”

Ms Chen, in this particular quotation placed a local urban *hukou* as something least relevant to the emotional attachment to a certain place, saying that a sense of belonging is something “beyond the physical aspect of *shiminhua*”. The physical aspect could be interpreted as the economic independence as mentioned by many informants, But she also acknowledges that the accumulation of placement in the *shiminhua* process may lead to a desire to obtain local *hukou*, thus when it comes to the measurement, *hukou* status and *hukou* desire are still valid variables to be included.

Even though economic independence plus a clear plan on whether or not to obtain local *hukou* can mark the solid standing of an urban person, the cultural-psychological aspects also need to be reflected in the measurement as they contribute to *shiminhua*

in the long run. One possible factor to construct variable for *shiminhua* in GBA appears to be ability in Cantonese language. For example, one informant in Dongguan realized that by speaking Cantonese, her self-perceived, high-level *shiminhua* could be observed, so she insisted to accept the interview in Cantonese as well:

‘I currently think that I am local, but the *real* locals don’t consider me as a local. I wish after a while I will become a true local one day.....It is really hard to say how we could be fully accepted from improving our own quality so that the locals don’t see us with prejudiced eyes.’ (Interview 29)

“我而家觉得我自己都系本地人咯，但系本地人就唔觉得我系本地人咯。但系我就希望再过一段时间我就可以真真正正成为东莞人咯……呢个好难讲啊，我地自己素质提高，唔好带有色眼睛睇我啲咯，就系佢地从心里面睇落来，就怀疑我地系外地嘅，就觉得我地低佢地小小，咁就要用时间来改变咯。”

This informant nicknamed teacher has worked very hard to adapt to local lifestyle including imitating tones and languages. Although with an identifiable non-native accent, she unashamedly spoke Dongguan-style Cantonese, in contrast to her fellow workers living for the same period in the city but reluctant to try to speak or even to understand Cantonese. The lack of motivation in learning Cantonese among most migrants may be due to the flexibility for GBA urban local’s bilingual skills. Whilst for this informant, the Cantonese language is part of her newly gained identity as *Xinguranren* – or new Dongguan resident, a demonstration of her cherishing the local cultural heritage.

The above analysis reveals three variables of homeownership, *hukou*, and ability in Cantonese are highlighted in the measurement of *shiminhua* in GBA. It further

establishes that for the alternative set of indicators the measurement should cover both short-term milestones from economic and institutional aspects but also emphasis the long-term cultural-psychological aspects, and capable of reflecting the changes of dependent variables like homeownership, *hukou* and Cantonese ability.

Throughout the analysis, four indicators as measurement of *shiminhua* have emerged from all groups of FGD participants, namely Place Attachment (PA), Urban Identity (UI), Settlement Intention (SI), and Hukou Desire (HD).

PA is understood as developing an identity plus belonging to the city that the migrant moved in as one informant depicted clearly.

‘I came to Dongguan for one year to taste the life here. When I got familiar, I got used to it and I want to set my roots here – I do not want to move back.’  
(FGD10 Dongguan)

“初始是在(东莞)这里搞多一年。熟悉一点，等于在这里扎根了，不走了(笑)。”

While other may develop the attachment by comparing the migration destination to rural hometown, for example. Mr Li admitted his newly developed.

‘Do you think Guangzhou is your hometown?’  
‘May be compared to my home town Meizhou?’

‘Which city do you have more sense of belonging?’  
‘Currently I would say I am more attached to Guangzhou.’ (Interview 9)

“那你会觉得广州是你的家吗？ ”

“就可能和梅州相比...”

“那你对哪个城市会更有归属感？ ”

“目前来说还是广州多一点。”

This dependence is partly from a sense of recognition, resonating with the core process of negotiated place attachment as mentioned in the previous sub-section on the process of *shiminhua*, whilst the sense of familiarity that contribute to place dependence also forms an undividable part of PA as an indicator of *shiminhua* level:

‘Yes, but are there any alternative? Why Dongguan?’

‘Well, we have been here for a while, they you get accustomed to Dongguan.’

“也可以去其他地方，为什么选择东莞？”

“这个是因为，来东莞来久了，待到久了都习惯了。”

‘Aye, we are familiar with everything here now, the buildings and paths here for example, if I go outside, I am familiar with everything, then here is where I belongs to.’ (FGD7 DG A)

“这个，来久了，待了久了都习惯了。”

“不管什么东西，环境啊，走到外面去，都熟悉了。”

The second indicator, UI is interpreted as a modern, civilised, affluent lifestyle supported by urban *hukou* and preferably a self-owned urban home. The UI is also frequently referred to as a lifestyle, a unique ambience of the city.

‘(Guangzhou city) provide us with a different lifestyle, the life is diversified and opulent – every weekend I have a good place to visit’ (FGD 4 Guangzhou);

‘(In the city), what I described as full is that no matter from demographic perspective or from the aspect of opportunity. There are just so many opportunities and every moment of the city is full.’ (Interview 27 Nan)

“无论是从人口啊还是说机遇上面。他有繁多的机遇，也有无数的人追逐那个机遇，这个城市它时时刻刻都是饱和的。”

The second indicator UI also resonate with the identification of *shiminhua* process as migrant will gradually develop an internalised urban identity.

The third indicator SI refers to the willingness and aptitude to stay, to climb the housing ladder, and to nurture children in the city, as described 'If I were to make a decision, I would still choose to settle in Dongguan' (interview 17). From the qualitative data, the SI theme is most closely related to homeownership, as many informant regarded it a 'determining factor':

'What is the determining factor for you to get a house here? '  
'The determining factor is that I want a stable life here, I want to settle down here in the city.' (Interview 19 Xiao)

“那你当时决定买房的决定性因素是什么呢?”  
“决定性因素就是，我要在这里，安个家。”

Additionally, SI is also interpreted as long-term settlement that need to take plans for families and education for next generation in close consideration – but all are only possible with a long-term, stable, contacted job:

'Do you have plans to develop here?'  
'I have plan to settle and develop my career here... given that I have secured a stable job' (Interview 21)

“之后有打算长期在这边发展吗？ ”  
“嗯，有这个计划，只要有稳定工作。”

The last indicator identified, HD means the intention to obtain a local *hukou*, as in the *shiminhua* process, without a local *hukou* , the migrants will consider him or herself



atan disadvantage. But *hukou* itself does not necessarily contribute to a sense of belonging as PA or UI indicated:

‘And finally, now you are the Dongguan people.’  
‘I would rather use the word “new Dongguan people” (laughter). What we have locally is the *hukou* merely.’ (FGD10 DG D)

“就已经是东莞人了。”  
“应该是叫‘新莞人’吧（笑），如果只是户口在这里。”

Notable, HD also has a connection with SI and homeownership:

‘Will you plan to change your *hukou* here?’

‘If I plan to buy a house here, getting married and develop my family here, I will need to transfer my *hukou* in. At this moment, I am uncertain about transferring in *hukou* and change it to Guangzhou.’  
(Interview 9)

“那会不会想要把户口迁过来？”  
“看情况，如果以后要买房，要结婚生子的话要落户口。还是因为我不太确定。”

Apart from being mentioned by nearly every FGD, these four indicators have been embedded in the discussion in Chapter 2: the indicators of PA and SI resonate with the recent literature on the studies of Chinese rural-urban migration and their adaptations to urban life.<sup>82</sup> The identified indicator of UI echoes with the investigation on the cultural-psychological aspects of people in the process of urbanisation.<sup>83</sup> HD is an indicator that had been raised by FGDs’ informants that fits for the GBA context in south China: despite several rounds of national and local household registration

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<sup>82</sup> For a detailed discussion, see Chapter 2, sub-section Latest Research Trends on Chinese Rural-Urban Migrants, under the section of Chinese rural-urban migration.

<sup>83</sup> Refer to Chapter 2, sub-section People in the Process of Urbanisation, under the section of Global Theories of Urbanisation.

reforms, *hukou* still exist in GBA and have impacts on the rural-urban migrants' *shiminhua* experience (Chan & Buckingham, 2008; Tyner & Ren, 2016).<sup>84</sup>

Correspondent survey questions for the alternative indicators of measurement in *shiminhua* are presented in the format of a statement.<sup>85</sup> Informants were asked to encircle the one option among the 5-point Likert scale that match their attitude based on their clear understanding of the presented statement:

Question for PA (Question 16)

I belong to/I am part of the city that I currently live in.

Strongly agree (2) Agree (3) Undecided (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree

Question for UI (Question 18)

I identify myself as an urban person:

Strongly agree (2) Agree (3) Undecided (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree

Question for SI (Question 20)

I prefer to go back to hometown in the future when getting older

Strongly agree (2) Agree (3) Undecided (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree

Question for HD (Question 17)

I would like to have Guangzhou/Dongguan/Zhongshan local hukou in ideal situation:

Strongly agree (2) Agree (3) Undecided (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree

## Impacts of *shiminhua*

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<sup>84</sup> For the details of the history of *hukou*, the household registration in China, please see Chapter 2, sub-section The Household Registration, *Hukou* system.

<sup>85</sup> As compile with the section on the section of Survey Design.

Apart from revealing the 4 alternative indicators in measuring *shiminhua* level, he qualitative data also revealed the impacts of *shiminhua* on individual rural urban migrants. Since the internal migrant is a heterogeneous group, the impacts of *shiminhua* differs in accordance with demographic features. There are both positive and negatives aspects of *shiminhua* depending on individual cases, though the consensus is that *shiminhua* is an overall helpful thing once started and progressed, with some challenges amid the progresses. Three features have been identified from the data to analyse the impacts of *shiminhua* on rural-urban migrants.

Age is the most obvious hurdle when it comes to the different impacts of *shiminhua*. For migrants who moved at an older age, they may have negative expectation on *shiminhua* mainly a lack of confidence in their personal capacity to adapt to the new environment. One example answer is:

‘Do you think you can become one of the local Dongguan people? Like after living here for 10 or 20 years?’

- one informant said:

‘This is tricky, you know, we are old people. The future depends upon the younger generation, we have no say and little control over our future.’  
(Interview 21)

“那觉得自己有没有可能成为东莞人？比如在这里住上十年、二十年的情况下。”

“这个是，我们上了年纪。以后就是靠年轻人了，靠子女了，我们是为无力了。”

Whilst personally pessimistic, Mr Fan, a migrant worker in his late-50s, expects his daughter and son to strive for a bright future in the city, he also trusts their ability to

figure out their own way of becoming well-established urban residents. From this perspective, *shiminhua* has more positive impacts on younger migrants owing to the expectation for them and the ability they possessed to initiate the process at the first place. Whilst there is no clear-cut line, *shiminhua* have fewer substantial impacts on people in their 40s or 50s. In other words, 'the aged' becomes a group that has been excluded from the positive impacts of *shiminhua*.

Mr Fan also mentioned an intriguing concept of *kao zǐnǚ*, translated as "replying on, depending on the next generation". This could be interpreted within context as "depending on children for their successful settlement in the city" or "relying on the next generation to secure an economic foundation for their own retirement", or both. In fact, according to Fei (1992; 1945), in the rural tradition in China, children are supposed to support their aged elderly family in reciprocity to their financial support until marriage.<sup>86</sup> From this perspective, the impacts of *shiminhua* in changing the mindset and lifestyle have little to do with the older generation.

Besides the factor of age, gender matters when it comes to impacts of *shiminhua*. On obtaining a local *hukou*, eight of the 17 female interviewees demonstrated flexibility in having local *hukou* for the sake of a larger collective rather than for individual

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<sup>86</sup> For parents' obligation in rural household, refer to the sub-section Why to *shiminhua*? Interview 7 in this Chapter, on the topic of urged marriage, *cui hun*.

interest's sake. The larger collective is usually interpreted as a household, a family by the informants, or in Ms Dai's case, it could be her company:

'According to my own judgement, in our generation, one thing is my individual willingness, one thing is the family, as in a typical Chinese family you may find that most of the time the *hukou* factor is closely related to family conditions. If I have thoughts like having local *hukou* later on, once I get married, I might need to change *hukou* for family reasons...it does not need to be after the family is formed, maybe once the company need me, I will transfer my *hukou* to local registration.' (Interview 26)

“个人判断，可能在我们这一辈上，主观意愿是一个，包括中国家庭，很多时候你会发现他的户口和家里的话联系度是比较紧凑，可能我后面如果有这方面的想法的话，我结婚了我这个家庭需不需要我迁动户口…也不一定是成家吧，可能公司需要，我也迁。”

The more practical attitude of females compared to their male counterparts could be partly attributed to the traditional rural society's gender-based role wherein 'men deal with affairs out of the household, women deal with internal chores: *nanzhu wai nvzhu nei*. Simultaneously, we also observed that males are expected to provide the major income source of the household. Research indicated that, for a household, securing the husband's job and income is the top priority (Luo, 2006), while job security is often linked to *hukou*. As a result, the female's *shiminhua* needs to be more flexible, to cater to the demands of the husband's job. Whilst for the female, the impact could mean the sacrifice potential career opportunities for themselves, most of the interviewees put it as an inevitable commitment to the family. Generation gaps of culture-value could also be observed, compared to the older generation of female migrants, younger female migrants are more likely to put their individual needs as the most important

factor than family factors in moving *hukou*, which resonated with other studies on urbanisation's impact on gender-based family roles (de Jong, 2000; Fan, 2003).<sup>87</sup>

In addition to age and gender, skill level also forms a threshold with divergent impacts of *shiminhua*. Unskilled labours are heavily engaged as construction workers or in the service or manufacturing sectors. Due to the nature of the construction industry, workers are constantly mobile according to the project's location. Consequently, lack the conditions to engage with *shiminhua* in a certain city, as pointed out by a male migrant construction worker who had worked in: "cities in nearly every province in China without staying at a single location for more than two years". Interestingly, he mentioned those semi-skilled workers working in the manufacturing sector who have a more stable life, thus should more actively engage and enjoy the benefits of *shiminhua* process compared to low-skill labour on the construction sites:

'As for this aspect (of *shiminhua*), you know we are working on construction site, we are the rural-urban migrant workers, we move all the way round. To be fair, we basically work here for less than or around two years, then we move to other places. Working on a construction site is not like working in factories, for those working in factories, if they have a better salary and welfare, they may want to have a stable life here at Dongguan. That is for the factory workers. Rural-urban migrants' workers like us who are working on construction site, we barely have this thought.' (FGD 8 Dongguan)

“在这个方面呢，因为我们工地嘛，农民工，流动性太大了，因为基本在这里干的话，多也就是两年，又跑到别的地方了。他不像说是在厂里面，假如说工资待遇比较好，可能想在这边安稳。他们工厂可能是有这个想法。像我们农民工，基本上不会有这个想法。”

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<sup>87</sup> For the data regarding to gender, please see Chapter 3 section 5.3 Descriptive Statistics Figure 5.3.

This discussion could once more be linked to the migration model by Harris-Todaro where migration flow is highly related to job security. Since the nature of on-site construction work in China is usually semi-formal, most workers we interviewed are on short contract - in order to renew the labour contracts, they usually have no other choice but to move with the job. The separated life in collective dormitories, as encircled by the blue barrier in Figure 6.3 on the construction site. The living environment of the migrant workers in Figure 6.3 also suggest that little social interaction with the urban natives, plus surveillance and supervision from the contractors, it is creating an enclave that prevent any possible impacts of *shiminhua*.



*Figure 4.9 A construction site in Guangzhou, with the CBD's Canton Tower in the background*

*Source: Photo by author.*

By contrast to low-skill construction labour, several rural-urban migrants have managed to level up their knowledge and skills into skilled workers. They may choose to prevent being *shiminhua* to a specific city, as moving to different city does not make too many differences for them:

‘I was on a business trip to many cities including Shanghai and Hangzhou. Those cities are all very urbanized. ... last Friday I was in Hangzhou and last Saturday I was in Shanghai: I didn’t feel that I had ever switched cities. They feel all the same, without identifiable senses of place.’ (Interview 10)

“因为我出差也去过上海啊、杭州啊，这些很都市化的城市，包括我上周周五在杭州，周六在上海，我都不会觉得我是好像到了某个地方的切换感。我是觉得都一样，没有什么太强的地域感。”

Working in the marketing service sector, Miss Tan has been living a rather urbane lifestyle since moved to Guangzhou. She had a sense of indifference to the Chinese mega-cities that she has been to, she described the homogenous experience by using the word place-lessness. It seems that despite the variations in development scale and population sizes, urban living experience can be similar, thus there being *shiminhua* to a specific city does not make much sense. The homogeneity in cityscape could be explained by the fast pace of development, while the urban experience maybe intertwined with a lack of place attachment to a specific city.<sup>88</sup>

In the previous dialogue before the passage, Miss Tan also admitted that she managed to obtain a local *hukou* by attempting the local *Hukou Transferring Scheme for Talents*.

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<sup>88</sup> For the urbanisation process in China, refer to Chapter 2 sub-section History and Features of Modern Chinese Urbanisation.



After failed for several times, Miss Tan finally had a successful attempt in applying for local *hukou* recently after being promoted to her current position.

Being qualified for *the Hukou Transferring Scheme for Talents* also makes it much easier for skilled workers to settle down in a city. From the analysis, it seems that the impacts of *shiminhua* on migrant depends upon the individual's demographic features and skill level, to name a few. Group of these features may enjoy fewer positive impacts of *shiminhua* due to the obstacles that prevent them to start the process at the beginning.

It should be noted that the *shiminhua* inevitably have impacts on urban natives and other local stakeholders, as well as a possessing impacts on regional and national level, while it is acknowledged that since there are larger volume of literature/studies on higher level, the qualitative data collected will exclusively address the impacts on rural-urban migrants at individual level. To sum up, the impacts of *shiminhua* varies at individual level due to certain demographic features. The qualitative data in this project show that older, lower skill migrants might have endured challenges but enjoyed little positive impacts from *shiminhua* results, while female migrants are likely to sacrifice their own career development for the family's *shiminhua* sake. Skilled migrants actively prevent to be *shiminhua* thus bounded to a specified city.

### **Policy Intervention for *shiminhua***

Despite the abundant policy intervention towards *shiminhua* at different levels, particularly those on transferring into local hukou registration via settlement scheme, the informants do not seem to be familiar with those policies. The lack of information channel on policies about *shiminhua* seems to be a major reason. For the migrant workers in manufacture or construction sectors, the long working hours and work intensity have deprived them of time in obtaining that information, nor do they have feasible infrastructures that provide those information – in fact, if they have acknowledged any local policies, that information are usually provided from mouth-to-ear or via mobile phone short-videos, thus hard to judge the validity.

A second reason is migrant's own ignorance, as a Mr Li answered the question:

'Are you aware of any policies or resources that help you to adapt life in Guangzhou?'

'Maybe there are some, but I know nothing about it!' (Interview 9)

“地方政府和你现在生活的社区会帮助你融入本地的生活吗？”

“可能有，但是我没太关注。”

When prompted about the reasons of unawareness or indifference of the policy regarding *shiminhua*, most reported an irrelevance due to longer projection of plans, connecting back to the driver of *shiminhua* and motivation for migration. Generally speaking, for those older migrants with longer term plan to settle in the city, they are more active in gathering information about policy interventions reading *shiminhua*. While for younger migrants, their precarious working status makes planning in a

longer term simply unfeasible. For example, when asked about their familiarity of local policies, instead of answering the question in a direct manner, two FGD participants asked a rhetorical question to the interviewer in a mockery way:

‘How old are we ...?’ (All burst into laughter)

‘I think we yet to come to the age of considering these issues seriously’

‘I think I won’t be bothered by these until my marriage’(FGD 6 Guangzhou)

“我们多少岁来的？”（众笑）

“我觉得大家可能还没有到思考这个问题的年龄…”

“我觉得可能到结婚的时候才着急。”

Even for those who self-identified as well-informed *onshiminhua* policies, when it comes to individual experience in muddling through the system of policies and institutions, many were discouraged by the bureaucratic procedures or the complexity of the documents:

‘I have attempted to apply for a local *hukou* before for several times, but I ended up giving up... (the government officials) said I need qualifications like this or that, and I could not figure out the channels to even get those documents... that is to say, the application procedure and system are not user-friendly at all! Once I applied online, I was told to pay money somewhere, I thought it’s a fraud and I don’t know what to do. ’(Interview 14)

“不过我是之前申请过（本地户口），后来又放弃了...需要考试，也找不找渠道，就是说…没有一个好的渠道。之前是在网上申请的，然后又要自己去缴费，都不太会，怕被骗了。”

Similar accounts are prevalent among the informants and there seems to be a gap between understanding the local policies and the achievement of benefiting from the understanding. Therefore, it could further explain why most informants simply do not

bother to know the policies at the first place. Whereas it is interesting that for those who have attempted to muddle through the system, they generally keep a further interest in gathering new information about any policy changes. Very rare that one may take advantage of the policy change. One father from Chongqing proudly mentioned the newly launched school bursary scheme that his son is entitled to join, as a student of a second-generation rural-urban migrant. Albeit he seems to be indifferent to national and state policies change on migration of children, as long as his son is supported, he is satisfied:

‘Well, as for this area, we enjoy some welfare as new residence. My son is at school here, like me, because I do not have adequate points, my son will not be able to go to the state school. But he enjoyed monetary support from the government as son of new city dweller, there are Grade I and Grade II support. Each grade has correspondent amount. That is the welfare.’ (FGD 1 Dongguan)

“像这个方面还是有那个福利享受的。我儿子在这边读书嘛，像我，因为我积分不够所以我儿子就进不了公办学校。但是他有补助，有入一档、二档的补助。一档就是补多少，二档补多少，享受了，这个福利待遇。”

In fact, during the interview, he was a bit ill-at-ease in revealing how much monetary support and welfare his son is entitled to enjoy. Meanwhile, his words expressed his sense of satisfaction towards the new local policy intervention on education system in Dongguan city, his son’s ineligibility to be admitted to a state-managed public school did not seem to irritate him as much as long as the monetary support from the city government is in the place.

Apart from educational policies regarding to *shiminhua*, some informants also revealed their aware of company-level policies in supporting housing purchase as an important bonus:

‘I think it is hard for the government to launch any policy on this (housing for rural migrants in the city), there are many uncertain factors when it comes to individual circumstance... but I know we do have policies at company level to support our housing.’ (Interview 15)

“购房政策怎么样呢？他怎么限制的？人家都很难去控制这个问题？我们怎么能看得清呢...像我们买房的支持，公司有。要根据自己的条件来看。他鼓不鼓励？你自己看自己的条件。”

This informant pointed out the nature of high-level policy being off-the-ground and difficult to implement. This may well be the circumstance for other migrants who are not concern nor relate themselves to national, regional, or city level. In general, the informants have taken a realistic and utilitarian perspective regarding policies interventions on *shiminhua*, unless they envisage to benefit from the policy, most would not know the policy both due to lack of motivation and lack of access.

### **Personal Strategies for *shiminhua***

Rural-urban migrants’ adaptation of personal strategies as responses to policy interventions were not new (Sun, 2019). While the qualitative data also show that personal strategies to *shiminhua* does not need to be associated with overarching policy. In fact, personal strategies for *shiminhua* are heavily dependent on individual’s perception on the urgencies, importance, and difficulties of *shiminhua* process. Despite one or two rural-urban migrants who have achieved a managerial role, others would prefer attachment to a particular city to accumulate adequate financial assets as

well as social and cultural capital, especially at the earlier stage of settlement in the city. The perceived realistic strategy of *shiminhua* are usually attached to obtaining a local *hukou* with the purpose to get access to local welfare system, leading to the access to local social welfare system, as pointed out by one middle-aged female informant:

‘If you have Guangzhou *hukou*, you are entitled to join Guangzhou medical insurance even though you are not employed...’ (FGD 3 Guangzhou)

“如果你是广州户口的，即使你没有上班，你也可以买广州医保。”

This lady does not possess a Guangzhou urban *hukou*, nor is she at the stage near to get one considering her precarious working status. She is well aware of all the advantages enjoyed by urban natives with a Guangzhou *hukou* and would regard getting local welfare as priority in her personal *shiminhua* strategy. Even though most migrants obtain local *hukou* for children’s registration in a local state school, some of them the welfare accompanied with a local *hukou* for themselves equivalently valuable, medical insurance is such a consideration as service public hospitals in megacities in Guangzhou could be deemed as unaffordable compared against most migrants’ monthly income.<sup>89</sup> Therefore, obtaining a local *hukou* at a specific city compensate for health risks for the relative deprived economic status for most migrant families, thus being regarded as a good personal strategy to lower-income migrant household.

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<sup>89</sup> For the introduction of economic status for migrants in the city, please refer to Chapter 2 sub-section Important Factors for Acculturation.

Rural-urban migrants that could be categorised as stepwise migrants appeared to adopt more sophisticated *shiminhua* strategies, blessed with their wider experience and comparative perspectives. Interestingly, although not having been to all those other famous tier 1 cities, interviewees that are stepwise migrants tend to compare the mega-cities in China before comes to their migration decision and *shiminhua* strategy:

‘Guangzhou was a commercial city for many centuries, and it did international trade. The locals--- as I manage to learn some local history.....In a word, Guangzhou is historically famous as a trade hub, and it attracted ambitious people from adjacent provinces, the Guangzhou locals is a group composed of generations of migrants. There are no pure Canton people---maybe there are, but the current urban culture is mixed, and there is no more xenophobia. But a city like Beijing and Shanghai are the other side of the story...’ (FGD 1 Guangzhou)

“因为本身广州他古时就商业非常发达，而且是对外商业——我也了解过广州一些历史。……现在广深这一块都是对着全球贸易。我觉得这是种文化原因，很多敢闯敢拼的人，像我们湖南人，好多，都是来广东打工。来打工就形成了，就是说广州本身商贸都是很发达的，又把广州其他省份的人给吸引过来，——你现在当然也有很纯、很地道的广州人，但是大部分他有一个融合的文化在里面。就没有这种排外了。但反过来分析，人家北京这种，上海这种……”

Zhou is an absolute star among his colleagues having studied and lived in several big cities and even pursued a postgraduate degree, he is also the leader of this and several other working sections after moving to the planning firm. This piece of a monologue is rather long in a Focused Group but was not interrupted once by any colleagues, implying colleagues’ respect for his background as a knowledgeable stepwise migrant.

Zhou also possessed a rather self-justifying understanding of GBA’s regional culture: Lingnan’s culture of tolerance plus the spirit of entrepreneurship released by 1978

Reform and Opening- Up strategy.<sup>90</sup> In his view, Guangzhou's cultural attractiveness is significant even for those who have experienced life in another Chinese metropolitan e.g. Beijing and Shanghai. With a culture of openness that is deeply rooted in the local history, Guangzhou has been serving as a window of China to the west since the imperial time. He also draws on his own decision-making story to justify his argument on the comparative view of the Chinese megacities of Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen and Guangzhou.

The above analysis might have revealed the essentials of *shiminhua* strategy in a longer term to strive for a better life for the next generation. Twenty-eight of the 30 respondents invoked the major motivation of education and career development for the next generation. This sentiment was incisively captured by Mr Liu, a delivery man with a rented tricycle motorbike, working more than 12 hours per day without a formal labour contract from his employer:

'I don't really have any thoughts besides work, my idea is to work hard for the next generation to thrive--- you know, a Chinese man is like that, am I wrong?' (Interview 30)

“也没什么想法，只能努力找钱，为了下一代——一个中国人就是这样，对不对？”

He squeezed a smile out of his smoked teeth after saying this near-fatalism sentence, with an exhausted expression after working in the sizzling hot weather all day.

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<sup>90</sup> For the history and culture of GBA and Lingnan area, see Chapter 2 sub-section A Brief History of GBA; for historical background of Reform see, Chapter 2 sub-section Chinese Economic Reform Since 1949.



In other words, most rural-urban migrants choose to accept the pain involved in attaining the benefits of *shiminhua*, expecting the next-generations' to be living as dignified urban citizens. And this forms the underlying logic of individual's *shiminhua* strategy.

This discourse resonates with Fei's point in *China from soil*.<sup>91</sup> Traditionally, the peasants strive to work on the land through all the difficulties including unpredictable natural disasters, unbearable taxation loads, and uncomfortable living conditions, only to achieve the self-evident mission of succession to the next generation, or in Chinese *chuanzong jiedai* (Fei, 1992). Nowadays, they are still striving as their ancestors, though not as the peasants but as the migrant workers: they no longer work on a small plot of land but work in big city. The bitterness to taste by a peasant-turned rural-urban migrant includes all the efforts it takes to *shiminhua*. Therefore, the abovementioned quotation revealed, *shiminhua* as a term invented to capture a phenomenon of China on the move, is in fact connected closely to the cultural tradition of the China from soil. What makes relief for the striving generation could be attested by several other interviews: in interviews with the two second-generation rural-urban migrants, their parents' *shiminhua* goals seem to be achieved to some extent: both have secured

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<sup>91</sup> See Chapter 2 in the sub-section The Trajectory of Chinese Rural-urban Migrants.

decent and well-paid salaries after tertiary education. One of them has studied for a master's supported by the accumulated wealth of her migrant parents.

To compare *shiminhua* as individual strategy and national-level strategy, what rationale supports the actions of central, regional, and city governments? From national-level *shiminhua* is defined as a "central goal of urbanisation and national development" (National People's Congress of China, 2016), designated and distributed as a political task (W. Wang et al., 2014). To keep the city energized, for urban managers and regional policy makers, it is more of an issue to maintain a constant inflow of labour with different skill levels. But what does it cost to provide basic welfare for these myriad groups? Studies of varying governmental rationales to *shiminhua* might provide further insights and corroborate with the data based on individual migrant's *shiminhua* strategy.

To summarise this section on qualitative analysis, themes are mainly organised based on the conceptual framework presented in Figure 2.3, covering the divers, process, impacts, policies as well as individual strategies regarding *shiminhua* but the measurement of *shiminhua* remains less well-established. In the next chapter, emerging alternative indicators are testified.

## Chapter 5 Dimension and Impact Factors on *Shiminhua*

In the previous Chapter 4 section 3 Measurement of *shiminhua*, a set of alternative indicators PA, UI, SI and HD have been identified, which laid out the foundation for quantitative analysis. This chapter prepare and analyse quantitative results collected from fieldwork Phase II, with a summary of quantitative finding and a preliminary interpretation of the results.

The section 5.1 Survey Data recaps the method of the survey through which the quantitative data is collected. In section 5.2 Variable Construction, the procedure for inferring the dependent variable *shiminhua* was established from survey questions, and how the independent variables are constructed and tested. In Section 5.3 Descriptive Statistics section, tables and pie charts are presented in summarising the sampled data set of a population. In the section 5.4 Ordered Logistic Regression model sub-section, the choice of model is justified based on data type, with equations listed and explained. In the section 5.5 Inferential Statistics, the results of the models proceeded by Stata 17 are bestowed. In the last section of Model Evaluation, the goodness of fit of the four models based on various independent variable indicators are conducted, followed by evaluation on limitations on the chosen statistic model and sample of data set.

### 5.1 Survey Data

Quantitative data were collected from Phase II of fieldwork through questionnaires. The survey design has referred to the themes and important factors in *shiminhua* identified in FGDs and pilot study: the survey is in two parts, the first part is composed of twenty questions adapted from studies measuring rural-urban migrant's socio-integration, social inclusion, settlement intentions, place attachment, and urban identity (Ager & Strang, 2008; Yang, 2010; Harder et al., 2018; Yang, 2013; X. Wang et al., 2022), with suitable adjustments based on reflections of pilot questionnaires in fieldwork Phase I.<sup>92</sup> These questions have addressed all major issues raised in the sub-sections of 'The processes of *shiminhua*' and 'impacts of *shiminhua*', including housing conditions and living environments, economic situation and employment status, social integration and adaptation, as well as the cultural-psychological sense of belonging.

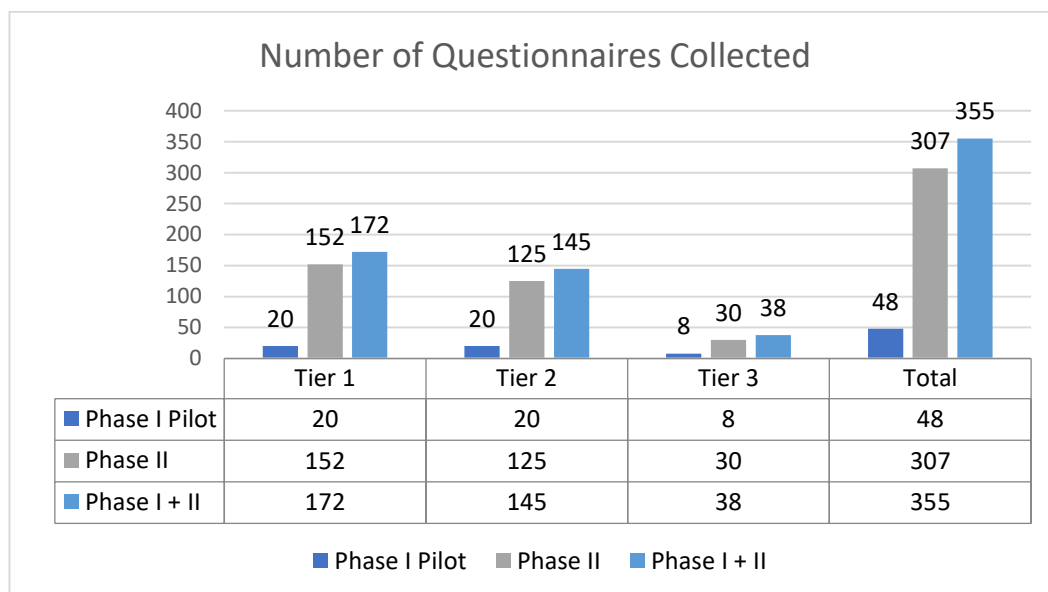
The second part of the questionnaire consists of seven questions collecting demographic information including age, gender, educational level, current occupation, and hometown as well as other basic information regarding migration, including residence year, current *hukou* registration place, *hukou* transition history, ability in understanding and speaking local dialect Cantonese, and labour contract. In Part 2 of the questionnaire, informants are asked to a as detailed answers as possible regarding to home town, preferably more detailed than the prefecture or township level. The

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<sup>92</sup> Chapter 2 Literature Review, for place attachment and settlement intention refers to sub-section New Research Trends in Chinese Rural-Urban Migration under 2.1 Theories of Migration, For urban identity, please refers to sub-section in section 2.2 Theories of Urbanisation.

informants were asked to write any changes of *hukou* registration, indicating specific transitions of *hukou* registration locations, while participants are encouraged to recall the specific year of change, where feasible.

My pilot surveys had shown that most participants are reluctant to fill in the information about marital status, the Phase II survey waived the question on collecting current marital status.



*Figure 5.1 Numbers of Valid Questionnaires Collected in Different Data Collection Phases*

*Source: Author.*

The proportion of number of survey questionnaire distributed in each of the three cities is the size of rural-urban migrant population in the city, therefore Guangzhou: Dongguan: Zhongshan = 5:4:1. The number of valid questionnaires collected in each city corresponds to the same ratio. Sites where questionnaires are handed out in the city of Guangzhou, Dongguan and Zhongshan are listed in Appendix 1.

Based on the sampling frame discussed in section 3.2 Methodology, the gross valid sample size is 307, out of a total observation number of 325.<sup>93</sup> The overall response rate of questionnaires that have been handed out is 87%.<sup>94</sup>

## 5.2 Variable Construction

To construct the variables, *shiminhua* level in GBA are measured by four potential alternative indicators inferring *shiminhua* level, denoted as Place Attachment (PA;  $y_1$ ), Urban Identity (UI;  $y_2$ ), Settlement Intention (SI;  $y_3$ ), and local *Hukou* Desire (HD;  $y_4$ ). The thesis treats each of the four indicators as an alternative dependent variable  $y_i$  in respective models.

According to literature and qualitative analysis, the level of *shiminhua* of individual rural-urban migrant is affected by a series of individual and societal factors. Individual factors comprise of demographic characteristics, for example, age ( $x_1$ ), gender ( $x_2$ ), as well as the residence year ( $x_3$ ). This group of individual factors are considered to be intrinsic and stable, regarded as unchanged when life events happen. The second group of individual-related variables are the city tier of the receiving area where the

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<sup>93</sup> According to the sampling frame, a working definition of the rural-urban migrant is those originally with a rural type *hukou* who migrated mainly because of economic motivations and have worked and lived in an area classified as a city for more than 6 months; thus, excluded other types of migrants.

<sup>94</sup> The invalid questionnaires are all due to non-response to questions which are used to form dependent and independent variables.

migrant is currently based ( $x_4$ ); current *hukou* status ( $x_5$ ), more specifically on whether the migrant possesses an urban local *hukou* by the time when the survey is conducted.

The labour contract ( $x_6$ ) status of the migrant at the time of survey educational level ( $x_7$ )--- divided in a scale of seven from the categorial of “illiterate and below primary school” to “university degree and above” and ability in speaking or understanding local Cantonese dialect ( $x_8$ ) are the other three variables that belong to the second group of individual factors related to job and education.

The third group of variables are more associated with the migrant’s socio-economic status within the city, including homeownership, relative monthly income, social circle, and children’s education, as revealed as important by qualitative analysis sub-section on drivers, the process, and personal strategies of *shiminhua*. Homeownership is constructed into a dummy variable – whether the migrant owned at least a property at the receiving city ( $x_9 = 1$ ) or not ( $x_9 = 0$ ). Relative month income is measured by a dummy whether the monthly average income of the individual migrant is higher than or equal to ( $x_{10} = 1$ ), or lower than ( $x_{10} = 0$ ) local urban average monthly income, compared against the figures retrieved from secondary data in Table 5.1:

*Table 5.1 Individual Income and Expenditure Level of Residents in Guangdong Province*

Individual Income (RMB/Month)		Individual Consumption (RMB/Month)	Notes
Guangdong Province	4212	2694	Average between rural and urban (January-April 2021)
Guangzhou	6950	3754	Urban area only
Dongguan	3845	2892	
Zhongshan	3684	2931	

Source: Guangdong Statistics Yearbook, 2019; Guangdong Provincial Government Website, accessed 2021.

The migrant's social circle is measured by the proportion of friends who are urban natives compared to other migrant friends ( $x_{11}$ ), on a scale of 5-point Likert scale. Education of the next generation is measured by the expectation and arrangement for children's education ( $x_{12}$ ), regardless of whether have had children or not, in a similar 5-point Likert scale similar to that question of social circle.

Listed in Table 5.2, all 4 dependent variables and 12 independent variables are synthesized from selected questions in Part 1 of the Phase II survey, a table of variables is presented as following. The intrinsic difference between the questions that collect data for dependent variables and the questions that collect data for independent variables is that, for the dependent variable  $y$ , questionnaire answers are based on attitude measured by a 5-point Likert Scale, e.g. having a *strong* or *very strong* sense of belonging to Guangzhou could be subjective and is determined by the migrant individual thus connected to the interpretation of *shiminhua* as a seeping through process at individual level, while the independent variable  $x$  is based on factual circumstances, e.g., owning a house or not is a fact.



Table 5.2 Variable and Indicators

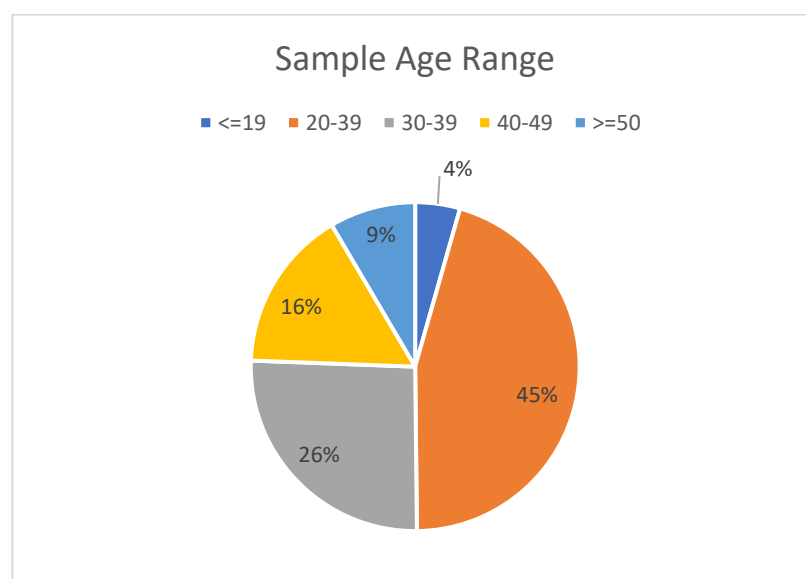
Type		Variable(var.name)	Range	Variable Descriptions
Model 1 Dependent variable	$y_1$	Place Attachment (PA, R16)	1-5	Strongly Attached =5; Somehow Attached =4; Neutral =3; Unattached =2; Strongly Unattached=1
Model 2 Dependent variable	$y_2$	Urban Identity (UI, R18)	1-5	Strongly Urban =5; Somehow Urban =4; Neutral =3; Somehow Rural =2; Strongly Rural =1
Model 3 Dependent variable	$y_3$	Settlement Intention (SI, Q20)	1-5	Strong Intention =5; Some Intention =4; Neutral =3; Low Intention =2; No Intention =1
Model 4 Dependent variable	$y_4$	Hukou Desire (HD, R17)	1-5	Strong Desire =5; Some Desire =4; Neutral =3; Low Desire =2; No Desire =1
Independent variable Group A	$x_1$	Age	17-70	Continuous Variable
	$x_2$	Gender	0-1	Male = 0; Female = 1
	$x_3$	Residence year (d_migration)	0.5-54	Continuous Variable
Independent variables Group B	$x_4$	City Tier (city_t)	1-3	Guangzhou=1 (reference); Dongguan=2; Zhongshan=3
	$x_5$	Local Hukou (local_hk)	0-1	Yes = 1; No = 0
	$x_6$	Labour Contract (L_Con)	0-1	Yes = 1; No =0
	$x_7$	Education Level (education)	1-7	Below primary=1 (reference); primary school=2; junior high school diploma=3; senior high school diploma=4; professional college education=5; quasi-university education=6; university and above=7
	$x_8$	Ability in Cantonese (s_Cantonese)	0-2	Fully (Speaking Fluently, reference) =2; Partly (Understanding Only) =1; None (Not Understanding) =0
Independent variables Group C	$x_9$	Homeownership (HO)	0-1	Yes = 1; No =0
	$x_{10}$	Monthly Income (IH)	0-1	Higher than urban native average = 1; Not higher than urban native average =0
	$x_{11}$	Social Circle (SC, SCO denotes ordered results)	1-5	Mainly Local =5; More Local =4; Half-half =3; More Laoxiang =2; Mainly Laoxiang =1
	$x_{12}$	Children's Education (CE, SCO denotes ordered results)	1-5	Local State School =5; Local Private School =4; Neutral=3; Local School transfer to Rural School=2 Rural School=1

Source: Author based on Phase I FGD and pilot survey data.

In Table 5.2, the type refers to the difference between dependent and independent variables, as well as the grouping of independent variables based on the intrinsic individual characteristics, changeable related characteristics, and other socio-economic characteristics. Both variable names, abbreviations of variables that are used in Stata 17 software, and mathematical denotation of variables in equations are presented in the second column under “variable”. The range refers to the value of the data collected for each variable, designated by the numerical minimum value to the numerical maximum value. The variable description depicted the meanings in the questionnaire of each corresponding value.

### 5.3 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics are conducted in Stata 17 and excel spreadsheet based on the features of the listed variables in Table 5.2. Special observations of features are presented as follows.



*Figure 5.2 Sample Age Range of Survey Questionnaires.*

*Source: Data collected by author and team.*

Among other important demographic features to note, the median age of the sample is 30 years old, and 83.72% of the sample falls into the category of “active working age” which is 20-50 years old as defined by Chinese authorities (National Statistical Bureau of China, 2019). A fair proportion of younger people account for around one in ten of the sample’s demographic composition.

The descriptive statistics of each variable derived from the survey are listed in the following Table 5.3.

Table 5.3 Descriptive Statistics

		Gender		Age					Residence Year				Level of Education					
		Male	Female	≤19	20-29	30-39	40-49	≥50	1	1-10	10	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Tier 1	152	65	87	5	84	33	19	8	29	87	34	10	31	13	16	23	50	9
	(%)	42.76	57.24	3.29	55.26	21.71	12.5	5.26	19.33	58	22.67	6.58	20.39	8.55	10.53	15.13	32.89	5.92
Tier 2	122	65	57	5	40	36	23	13	18	56	44	18	33	11	36	12	13	2
	(%)	53.28	46.72	4.1	32.79	29.51	18.85	10.66	15.25	47.46	37.29	14.4	26.4	8.8	28.8	9.6	10.4	1.6
Tier 3	30	18	12	3	10	7	5	4	5	13	12	0	14	3	6	3	3	1
	(%)	60	40	10	33.33	23.33	16.67	13.33	16.67	43.33	40	0	46.67	10	20	10	10	3.33
<b>Total</b>	307	148	156	13	134	76	47	25	52	156	90	28	78	27	58	38	66	12
	(%)	51.23	48.77	4.23	43.65	24.76	15.31	8.14	17.45	52.35	30.2	9.35	28.25	8.94	21.54	11.38	17.28	3.25

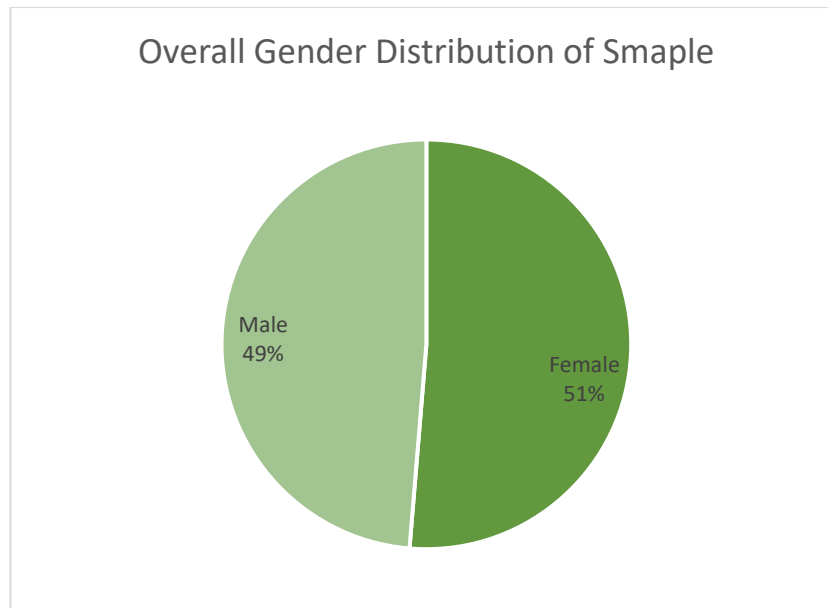
(continued)		Relative Monthly Income				Formal Labour Contract		Hukou		Ability in Cantonese	
		3000	3001-6000	6001-9000	9000	No	Yes	Not transferred	Transferred	No	Yes
Tier 1	152	29	58	26	28	122	30	116	36	57	95
	(%)	20.57	41.13	18.44	19.86	80.26	19.74	76.32	23.68	37.5	62.59
Tier 2	122	24	57	21	10	125	0	111	14	66	59
	(%)	21.43	50.89	18.75	11.2	100	0	88.8	11.2	52.8	47.2
Tier 3	30	9	9	2	7	16	14	25	5	15	15
	(%)	33.33	33.33	7.41	25.93	53.33	46.67	83.33	16.67	50	50
Total	307	62	124	50	44	263	44	252	55	138	169
	(%)	22.14	44.29	17.86	15.71	85.37	14.63	82.08	17.92	47.56	52.44

<i>(continued)</i>		Homeownership		Relative Monthly Income		Social Circle		Children's Education	
		<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Lower</i>	<i>Higher</i>	<i>Others</i>	<i>Mainly with local</i>	<i>Others</i>	<i>Attend local schools</i>
Tier 1	152 (%)	130	22	85	53	86	24	82	64
		85.53	14.47	61.59	38.41	78.18	21.82	56.16	43.84
Tier 2	122 (%)	104	21	26	84	99	26	61	61
		83.2	16.8	23.64	76.36	79.2	20.8	50	50
Tier 3	30 (%)	19	11	10	17	21	9	12	17
		63.33	36.67	37.04	62.96	70	30	41.38	58.62
<b>Total</b>	307 (%)	253	54	121	154	206	59	155	142
		80.28	19.72	38.04	61.96	77.11	22.89	50.13	49.69

<i>(continued)</i>		Place Attachment (R16)					Urban Identity (R18)				
		<i>1=Strongly Attached</i>	<i>2=Somehow Attached</i>	<i>3=Neutral</i>	<i>4=Somehow Unattached</i>	<i>5=Strongly Unattached</i>	<i>1=Strongly Urban</i>	<i>2=Somehow Urban</i>	<i>3=Neutral</i>	<i>4=Somehow Rural</i>	<i>5=Strongly Rural</i>
Tier 1	152 (%)	7	23	47	61	14	30	47	21	29	25
		4.61	15.13	30.92	40.13	9.21	19.74	30.92	13.82	19.08	16.45
Tier 2	122 (%)	2	9	45	60	8	28	55	14	18	8
		1.61	7.26	33.58	48.39	6.45	22.76	44.72	11.38	14.63	6.5
Tier 3	30 (%)	2	1	9	15	3	5	7	9	7	2
		6.67	3.33	30	50	10	16.67	23.33	30	23.33	6.67
<b>Total</b>	307 (%)	11	33	101	136	25	63	109	44	54	35
		3.41	8.98	32.04	46.12	7.96	20.7	36.48	15.57	17.62	9.63

<i>(continued)</i>		Settlement Intention (Q20)					Hukou Willingness (R17)				
		1= Strong Intention	2= Some Intention	3=Neutral	4=Low Intention	5=No Intention	1=Strong Desire	2=Somehow Desire	3=Neutral	4=Low Desire	5=No Desire
Tier 1	152	32	17	64	14	22	47	29	31	13	32
	(%)	21.48	11.41	42.95	9.4	14.77	30.92	19.08	8.55	8.55	21.05
Tier 2	122	16	19	53	21	14	50	28	26	8	12
	(%)	13.01	15.45	43.09	17.07	11.38	40.32	22.58	6.45	6.45	9.68
Tier 3	30	2	6	14	7	1	9	7	7	1	5
	(%)	6.67	20	46.67	23.33	3.33	32.03	24.14	3.45	3.45	17.24
<b>Total</b>	307	50	42	131	42	37	106	64	64	22	49
	(%)	14.43	15.05	43.71	15.88	10.93	35.73	21.77	6.57	6.57	14.58

Source: Data collected by author.

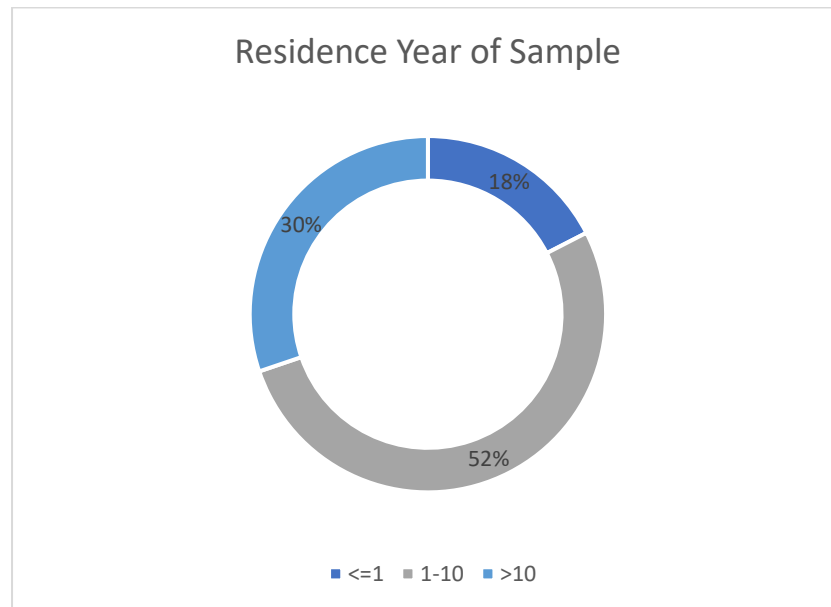


*Figure 5.3 Overall gender distribution in sample*

*Source: Data collected by author and team.*

According to the pie chart of gender distribution of the sample in Figure 5.3, the overall number of males and females is balanced, with female 2% higher than male. Whereas referring to the descriptive statistics in Table 5.3 and there appears to be an observable imbalance of gender samples from the different cities, for instance, in Guangzhou 22 more female migrants than males sampled under random sampling. This imbalance might could be attributed to occupational choices. In Guangzhou, the tier 1 city, more female migrants than male migrants are sampled since most respondents are recruited from the service sector as research demonstrates that female rural-urban migrants tended to be employed in this sector (Fan, 2003); while in Dongguan, a larger proportion of the participants are recruited from construction sites or manufacture factories. As for the overall number of female migrants, there are 157 females out of 307 participants in Phase II in total, slightly over half of the entire sample - this could

be elucidated from the unbalanced occupational disproportion as more positions in front-line manufacture worker's position are females (Fan, 2003).



*Figure 5.4 Residence year as in the specific surveyed city*

*Source: Data collected by author and team.*

The migrants' residence year in the city, also known as the duration of migration, or years of residence in the receiving area, where the survey was conducted, ranges between half a year to more than 50 years, whereas 52.35% of the sample resided between 1 and 10 years, as Figure 5.4 shows.



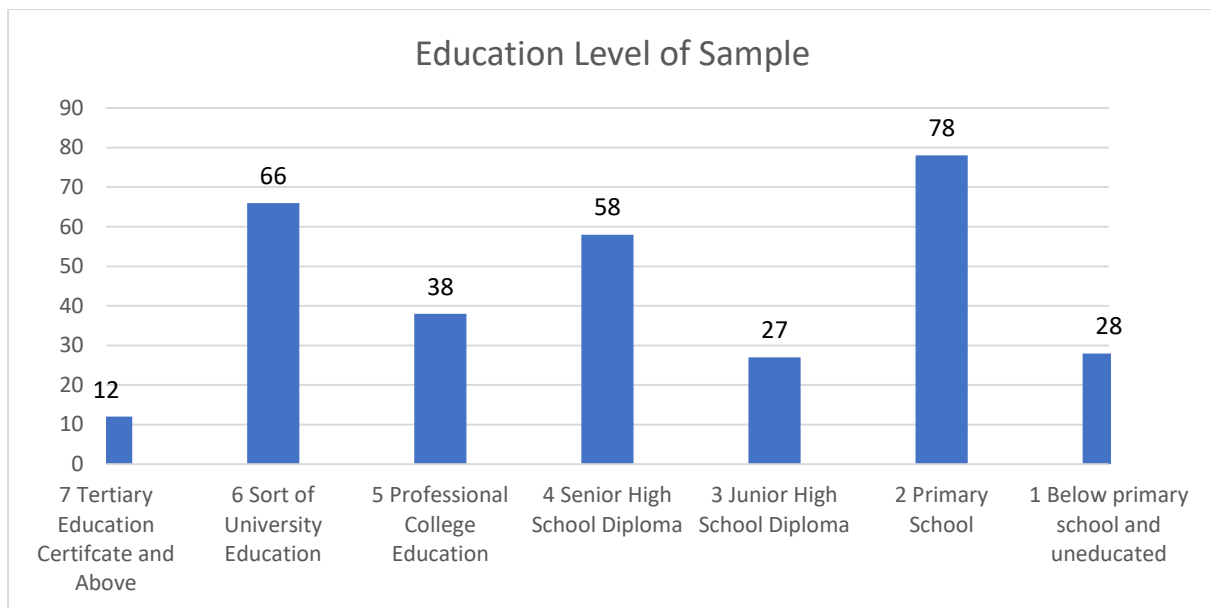


Figure 5.5 Education level of sampled respondents

Source: Data collected by author.

In Figure 5.5, the educational level of respondents varies. At the lower end, only one in 10 have a primary level of education or below. Empirical observation between age and educational attainment reveals that the older generation usually has lower educational achievement. Surprisingly, 20.53% have at least some sort of university-level education, though their institutions' reputations are not identical. Some admitted that they decided to drop out to *dagong* due to economic pressure and family reasons. This is usually the case among those born after 1990, consonant with the trend of enrolment in Chinese tertiary education in the late-2000s (Jiang, 2017). Furthermore, respondents are outliers in educational achievement as they have overseas study experience while still categorized as semi-skilled or unskilled due to skill mismatch. In fact, both could be regarded as second-generation migrants who moved to the city with their parents at a young age.

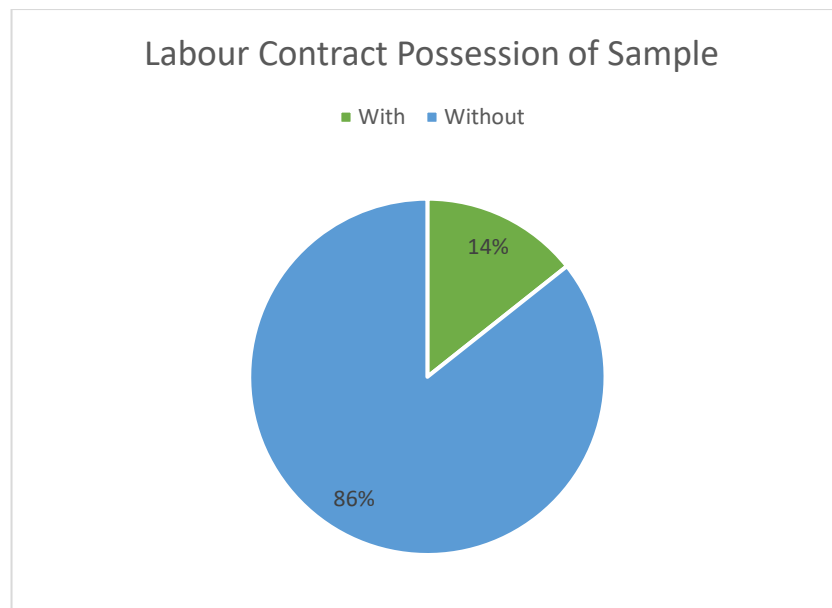


Figure 5.6 Labour contract possession of sample

Source: Data collected by author.

The labour contract variable is derived from the question of whether the respondent is in a job where they have signed a contract in agreement with the employer (Li, 2006). In Figure 5.6, most of the interviewees (85.37%) do not currently possess formal labour contracts, which indicates precarious job status and the potential consequence of loss of wages or unaffordable expenditure relating to work injuries. Those who have not signed labour contracts usually face difficulties when attempting to claim compensation for work injuries. They may also find it hard to claim delayed salaries through legitimate channels without a labour contract. Hence contracted employment is also regarded as a safeguard for job security as those positions covered by "five insurances and one housing fund" --- *wuxian yijin* are usually offered by reliable employers (Cheng et al., 2014).<sup>95</sup>

<sup>95</sup> The Five Insurances (*wuxian*) include retirement insurance, medical insurance, work injury insurance, unemployment insurance, and maternity insurance.

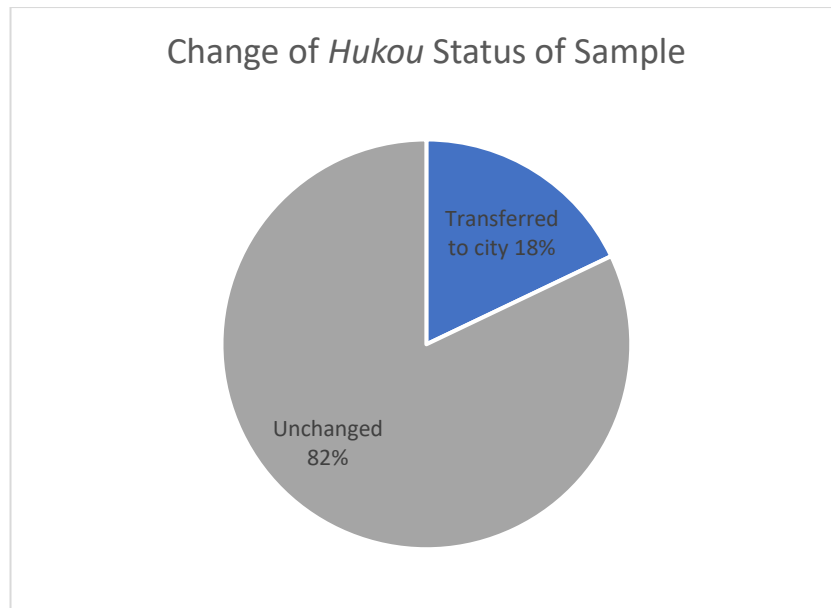


Figure 5.7 Change of *Hukou* status of sample

Source: Data collected by author.

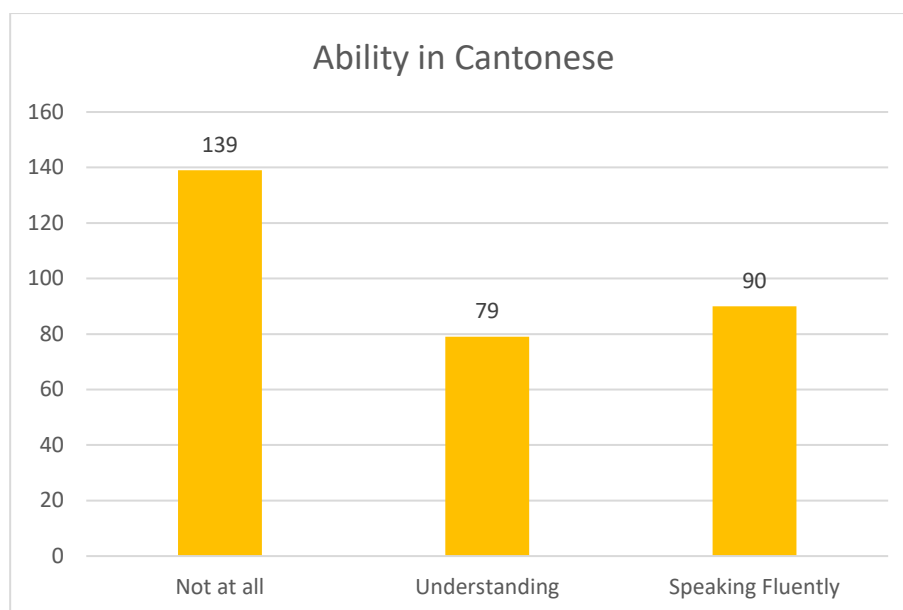
As for current *hukou* status in Figure 5.7, only 17.92% of the rural-urban migrants in the sample have successfully transferred their *hukou* household registration to an urban *hukou* where they are currently working and residing: in this research, an urban *hukou* is interpreted as *hukou* registered in the municipal district,<sup>96</sup> cities without district,<sup>97</sup> neighbourhood committees,<sup>98</sup> and other areas, for example, municipal government resident sites. Some rural-urban migrants have expressed an emphatic willingness to transfer their *hukou* to urban ones but did not manage to do so at the time of the survey.

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<sup>96</sup> In most cases of Guangzhou.

<sup>97</sup> In most cases of Dongguan.

<sup>98</sup> In most cases of Zhongshan.



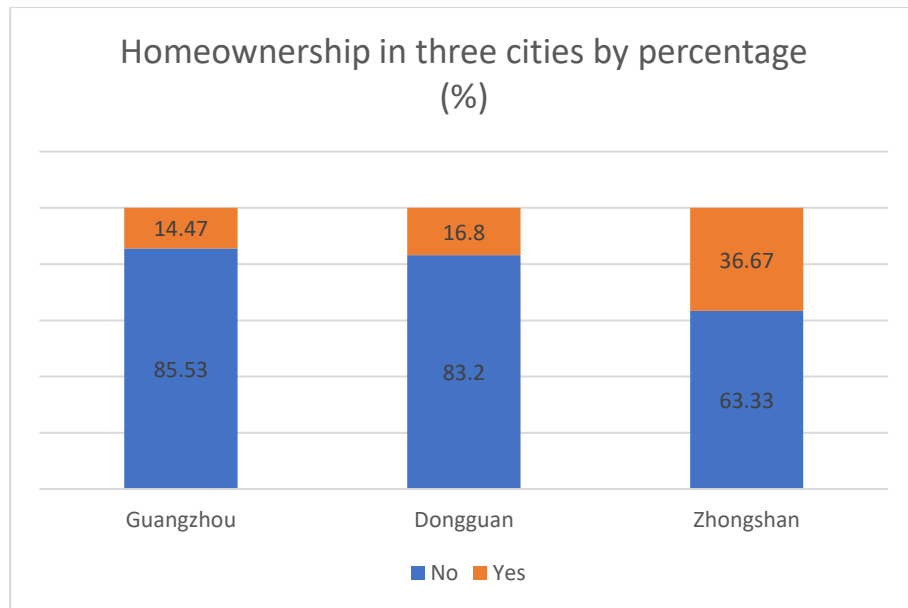
*Figure 5.8 Ability in Cantonese*

*Source: Data collected by author.*

Since there are variations of Cantonese language in Guangzhou, Dongguan and Zhongshan, understanding and speaking ability is based on the version that is used by urban natives in the city where the survey was conducted.<sup>99</sup> Regarding the ability to speak or understand the local dialect of Cantonese in Table 5.3 and Figure 5.8 bar chart, 52.44% of the participants speak Cantonese at varying proficiency levels, whereas most admitted that they have a much more limited level of speaking than understanding, in Cantonese: *sik ting mu sik gong*. The implication is that around half of the respondents could either understand or speak Cantonese in simple everyday contexts. Notwithstanding, this question is based on self-reported language ability and thus was not verified by evidence of capacity in communicating.

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<sup>99</sup> Cantonese is generally considered as a language within the Sinitic branch of the Sino-Tibetan languages as well as regional dialect of Chinese originated in Guangzhou, sharing the same writing system of Chinese characters. Cantonese Chinese and Mandarin Chinese are regarded as branch of language or dialects developed from the Middle Chinese --- the historical variation of Chinese recorded in the Qieyun dictionary (601 A.D.).



*Figure 5.9 Homeownership in three cities by percentage*

*Source: Data collected by author.*

As for socio-economic factors, regarding local homeownership, in Table 5.3 only 19.72% of the sample have owned a house locally, mainly supported by families and relatives back home. If the percentage is broken down by city, it is observed in Figure 5.9 that in city of higher tier, the percentage of homeownership is lower: tier 3 city has a decent percentage of 36.67% owning a house for self-living compared to only 14.47% homeownership in tier 1 Guangzhou in the sample. By the time of the survey, most participants lived in rental apartment units.

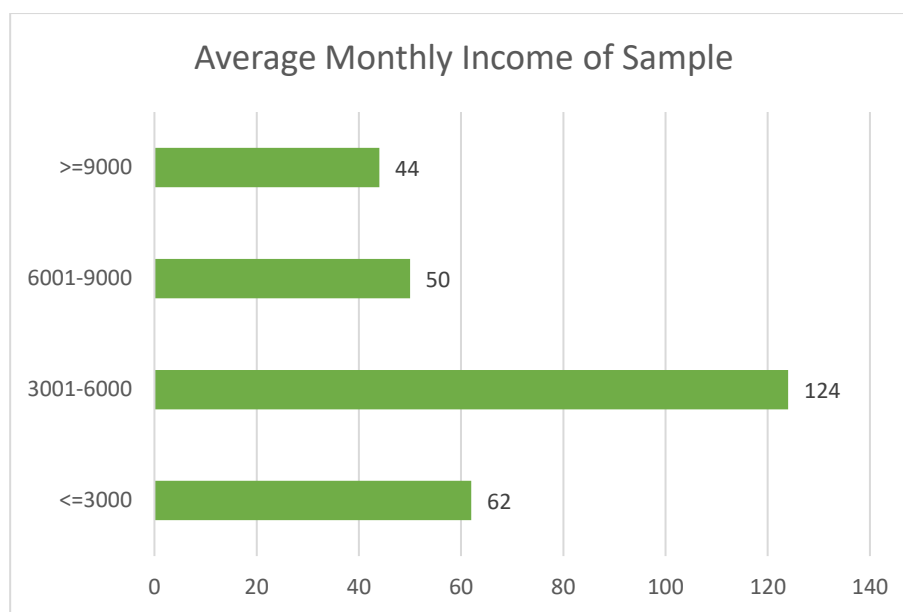


Figure 5.10 Average monthly income of sample (RMB)

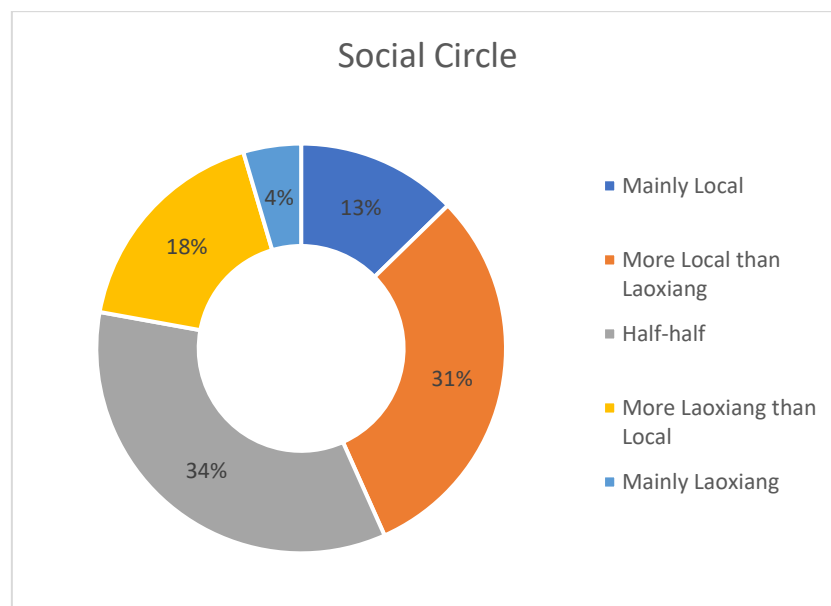
Source: Data collected by author.

One important indicator of rural-urban migrants' economic life is the monthly income in *Renminbi*, as in Figure 5.10.<sup>100</sup> The average is RMB 6122.9 per month, which is higher than the provincial average of RMB 4212 per month as well as the estimated national average (Statistics Bureau of Guangdong Province, 2019).<sup>101</sup> Nearly half of the samples (44%) fall into the categories of monthly income 3001-6000 RMB, with a decent percentage of sampled migrants (16%) reported a monthly income higher than 9000 RMB, which is considered high income even by urban native standard. In the data collection process, many reported difficulties in answering this question correctly. This can be attributed to two reasons. First, as many rural-urban migrants work in the informal sector, their incomes fluctuate by month. Second, some are confused when

<sup>100</sup> Also designated as RMB or Chinese Yuan (¥).

<sup>101</sup> Equals to around £708 per month.

attempting to distinguish between monthly income by individual and by household budgets as they work collaboratively with family members and do not keep a separate income-expenditure budget pertaining to themselves. They were asked to estimate a monthly average by the individual based on the immediate year, or simply fill in the number for the last month before the interview was conducted as an alternative. Relative monthly income compared with the local average indicates that 61.96% of the sample have a higher or equal income compared with the city average.



*Figure 5.11 Social circle of the migrants*

*Source: Data collected by author.*

Regarding their social circle, participants were asked whether they interact more with urban locals or with their migrant peers with a descending score from five to one: 5 indicates that the rural-migrant's social circle mainly comprises of local urban native, 1 indicate his or her social circle mainly comprises of migrant fellow worker from same

rural area--- *laoxiang*.<sup>102</sup> It appears that 22.89% of the sampled rural-urban migrants interact primarily with urban locals, combining the categories of “mainly local” and “more local than *laoxiang*” in Table 5.3 and Figure 5.11.

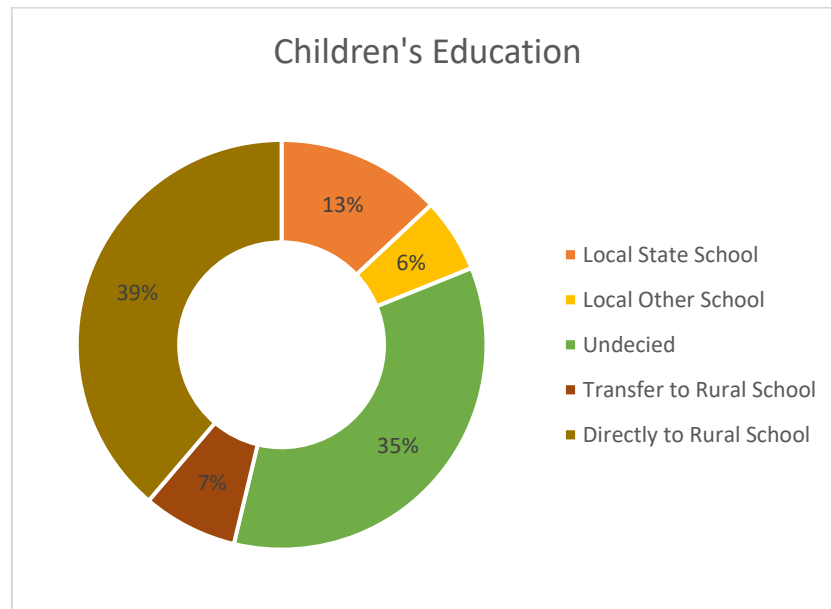


Figure 5.12 Types of school for children's education

Source: Data collected by author.

The types of school where rural-urban migrants' children got educated are approached by the question: “what kind of education do the participants anticipate their children will receive?”. The answer in descending order conformed to the *shiminhua* priority, in other words, if the migrant parents can get their children into local state schools, that is the ideal situation; by contrast, sending children back to rural schools is regarded as the worst outcome. From the descriptive statistics Table 5.3 and pie chart in Figure

<sup>102</sup> Please refer to Appendix Glossary for a detailed explanation of the Chinese term *laoxiang*. The range of *laoxiang* can vary depending on situation, while most people refer to those coming from same village or rural-area under the prefectural-level administration, while inter-provincial migrants also refer to those who are from same province or even nearby province as *laoxiang*, as long as they share common dialect of Chinese. Hence the understanding of *laoxiang* can be contextual according to different informant.



5.12, 49.69% of sampled rural-urban migrants plan to send or have sent their children to local schools located in the urban area where they are working and living by the time of the survey happened.

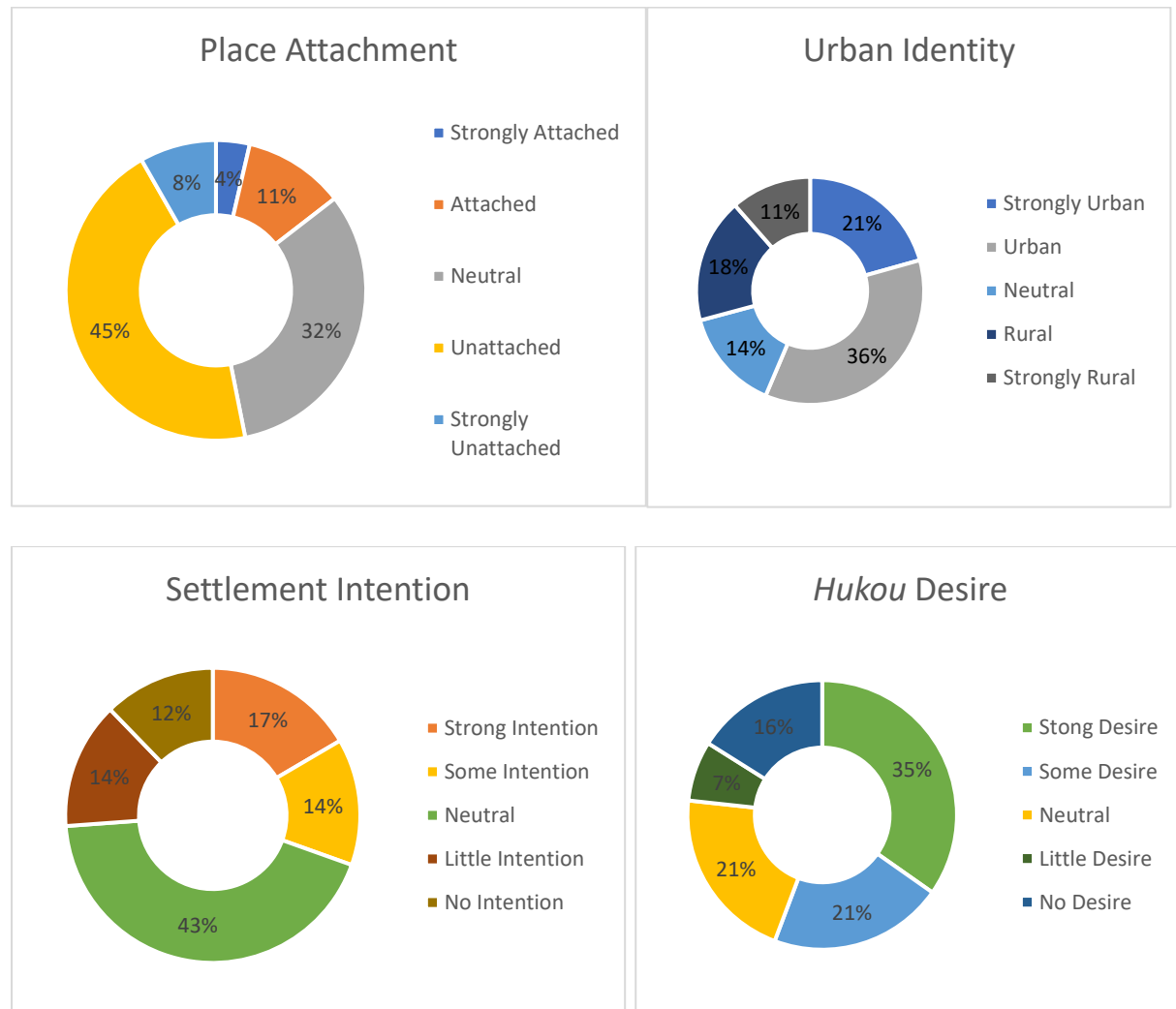


Figure 5.13 Dependent variables' distributions in sample

Source: Data collected by author and team.

Finally, to summarize the dependent variables for Phase II, from Figure 5.13 and Table 5.3: for place attachment (PA), only 12.39% reported "Strongly Attached" (3.41%) and "Somewhat Attached" (8.98%) to the city where they work and reside while the rest have an answer inclined to unattachment. For urban identity (UI), more than half of the participants reported that they either identify themselves as "Strongly Urban" (20.70%)

or reported "Somehow Urban" (36.48%). When it comes to settlement intention (SI), most of the answer falls into the neutral category of undecided or without specific preference, as they are uncertain whether to settle in the city or return home (43.71%). For local *Hukou* possession, 35.73% of those surveyed are determined to obtain a local urban *hukou*.

## 5.4 Model Selection

### Ordered Logistic Regression

The four dependent variables are converted from the 5-point Likert scale in the survey (i.e., PA= very strong, strong, neutral, weak, very weak). Ordered logistic regression (OLR) model is selected to investigate the main drivers of *shiminhua*.<sup>103</sup> Among the independent variables, five are binary variables ( $x_2, x_5, x_6, x_9, x_{10}$ ), five are ordinal variables ( $x_4, x_8, x_{11}, x_{12}$ ), two continuous variables: age ( $x_1$ ), and residence year ( $x_3$ ) are treated as interval variables in the analysis.<sup>104</sup> Hence, the profile of dependent variable fulfil the conditions of using OLR model (Hosmer et al., 2013).

To verify the regression model selected, the means and standard deviations (S.D.) of each dependent variable ( $y_i$ ) are calculated:

Table 5.4 Statistics of Independent Variables

Place Attachment ( $y_1$ )		Urban Identity ( $y_2$ )		Settlement Intention ( $y_3$ )		Local <i>hukou</i> Desire ( $y_4$ )	
Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
2.49328	1.42664	3.43288	0.91592	2.63087	1.29671	2.91275	1.20007

<sup>103</sup> Ordered Logistic Regression is also known as Ordinal Logistic Regression.

<sup>104</sup> As both age and residence year can be measured along a continuum that has fixed values between two points: year, but do not have a meaningful zero-point.

*Source: Author calculated using Stata 17 programme from survey data set.*

As Table 5.3 shows, the chosen dependent variables:  $y_1, y_2, y_3, y_4$ , means and standard deviations (S.D.) are plotted as part of the descriptive statistics. The implication of means and S.D. of each show that none of the response variable data is normally distributed.<sup>105</sup> While this kind of distribution could be transferred into a normal distribution by logistic regression, it justified the selection of the OLR model.

The OLR utilized in this section of quantitative analysis is an extension of the binary logistic regression model that applies to dichotomous variables 5:

$$\text{logit } (P) = \log \frac{P}{1-P}$$

$P$  is the probability where an event occurs. The odds,  $P/(1-P)$ , is an alternative way of expressing probabilities, denoting the probability of an event happening divided by the event not happening. The logit function is the log of proportional odds as of probability in the equation.

$$\log \frac{P_i}{1-P_i} = A + B_1x_1 + Bx_2 + \cdots + B_jx_j \text{ (Extended Equation)}$$

This is the extended equation of the OLR model applied, where  $x_j$  is the set of independent variables:  $x_1$  is age,  $x_2$  is gender,  $x_3$  is residence year,  $x_4$  is city tier,  $x_5$  is local *hukou*,  $x_6$  is labour contract,  $x_7$  is educational level,  $x_8$  is ability in Cantonese,  $x_9$  is homeownership,  $x_{10}$  is relative monthly income,  $x_{11}$  is social circle, and  $x_{12}$  is children's education. Hence,  $x_j$  could be a binary independent variable, i.e.  $x_2, x_5, x_6,$

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<sup>105</sup> In a normal distribution the mean is zero and the S.D. is one.

$x_9, x_{10}$ ; categorical independent variable, i.e.  $x_4, x_7, x_8, x_{11}, x_{12}$ ; or continuous independent variable i.e.  $x_1, x_3$ .  $B_j$  is the coefficient of each independent variable related to dependent variable.  $A$  is the constant term.<sup>106</sup>

By establishing four models regarding four different response variables,  $y_1$  Place Attachment (PA),  $y_2$  Urban Identity (UI),  $y_3$  Settlement Intention (SI),  $y_4$  *Hukou* Desire (HD), the equation of Model 1 for measuring PA is:

$$\text{Logit}(PA) = \text{Logit}(y_1) = \log \frac{P_1}{1-P_1} = a_1 + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + \dots + b_{12}x_{12} \quad (\text{i})$$

The other three equations with UI, SI, and HD as dependent variables are:

$$\text{Logit}(UI) = \text{Logit}(y_2) = \log \frac{P_2}{1-P_2} = a_2 + c_1x_1 + c_2x_2 + \dots + c_{12}x_{12} \quad (\text{ii})$$

$$\text{Logit}(SI) = \text{Logit}(y_3) = \log \frac{P_3}{1-P_3} = a_3 + d_1x_1 + d_2x_2 + \dots + d_{12}x_{12} \quad (\text{iii})$$

$$\text{Logit}(HD) = \text{Logit}(y_4) = \log \frac{P_4}{1-P_4} = a_4 + e_1x_1 + e_2x_2 + \dots + e_{12}x_{12} \quad (\text{iv})$$

For the purpose of estimating the goodness of fit and comparing the significance of dependent variables, within each model, variables of models are divided by adding Group A ( $x_1, x_2, x_3$ ) variables with Group B ( $x_4, x_5, x_6, x_7, x_8$ ) and Group C ( $x_9, x_{10}, x_{11}, x_{12}$ ) variables. Therefore, for OLR with dependent variable PA in three model variations:

$$\text{Logit}(y_1) = \log \frac{P_1}{1-P_1} = a_1 + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + b_3x_3 \quad (\text{i-A})$$

$$\text{Logit}(y_1) = \log \frac{P_1}{1-P_1} = a_1 + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + \dots + b_8x_8 \quad (\text{i-B})$$

---

<sup>106</sup> The constant term in regression is also called y-intercept, as it is the value at which the regression line crosses the y-axis.

$$\text{Logit}(y_1) = \log \frac{P_1}{1-P_1} = a_1 + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + \dots + b_{11}x_{11} + b_{12}x_{12} \text{ (i-C)}$$

If variables in Group A variation have minor effects on the selected dependent variable PA, a diminishing  $p$ -value could be observed after adding the Group B variables to the model's variation A, with the stabilization effects of OLR model. Similarly, if variables in Group B variation have minor effects on selected dependent variables PA, UI, SI, HD, a diminishing  $p$ -value could be observed after adding the Group C variables to the model's variation B.

$$\text{Logit}(y_2) = \log \frac{P_2}{1-P_2} = a_2 + c_1x_1 + c_2x_2 + c_3x_3 \text{ (ii-A)}$$

$$\text{Logit}(y_2) = \log \frac{P_2}{1-P_2} = a_2 + c_1x_1 + c_2x_2 + \dots + c_8x_8 \text{ (ii-B)}$$

$$\text{Logit}(y_2) = \log \frac{P_2}{1-P_2} = a_2 + c_1x_1 + c_2x_2 + \dots + c_{11}x_{11} + c_{12}x_{12} \text{ (ii-C)}$$

$$\text{Logit}(y_3) = \log \frac{P_3}{1-P_3} = a_3 + d_1x_1 + d_2x_2 + d_3x_3 \text{ (iii-A)}$$

$$\text{Logit}(y_3) = \log \frac{P_3}{1-P_3} = a_3 + d_1x_1 + d_2x_2 + \dots + d_8x_8 \text{ (iii-B)}$$

$$\text{Logit}(y_3) = \log \frac{P_3}{1-P_3} = a_3 + d_1x_1 + d_2x_2 + \dots + d_{11}x_{11} + d_{12}x_{12} \text{ (iii-C)}$$

$$\text{Logit}(y_4) = \log \frac{P_4}{1-P_4} = a_4 + e_1x_1 + e_2x_2 + e_3x_3 \text{ (iv-A)}$$

$$\text{Logit}(y_4) = \log \frac{P_4}{1-P_4} = a_4 + e_1x_1 + e_2x_2 + \dots + e_8x_8 \text{ (iv-B)}$$

$$\text{Logit}(y_4) = \log \frac{P_4}{1-P_4} = a_4 + e_1x_1 + e_2x_2 + \dots + e_{11}x_{11} + e_{12}x_{12} \text{ (iv-C)}$$

As above, the other three models with UI, SI, and HD as their dependent variables are listed from equation ii-A to equation iv-C.

## OLR Model Requirement Checking

For applying the OLR model, four requirements are needed: no or very insignificant multicollinearity; independence of errors; linearity in the logit for continuous variables; and no outliers or extreme values in observations (Long, 1997; Hosmer et al., 2013)

To fulfil the four requirements that make an OLR eligible, the first step is to check multicollinearity among dependent variables by performing the variance inflation factor (VIF) test. It turns out that against the four dependent variables  $y_1$ (PA),  $y_2$ (UI),  $y_3$ (SI),  $y_4$ (HD), the mean VIFs are 2.13, 2.09, 2.12, 2.08 respectively, falling into the interval of [1,3], with all VIFs of specific independent variables far less than five or 10, verifying that there is no significant multicollinearity issue among the variables based on the data set.

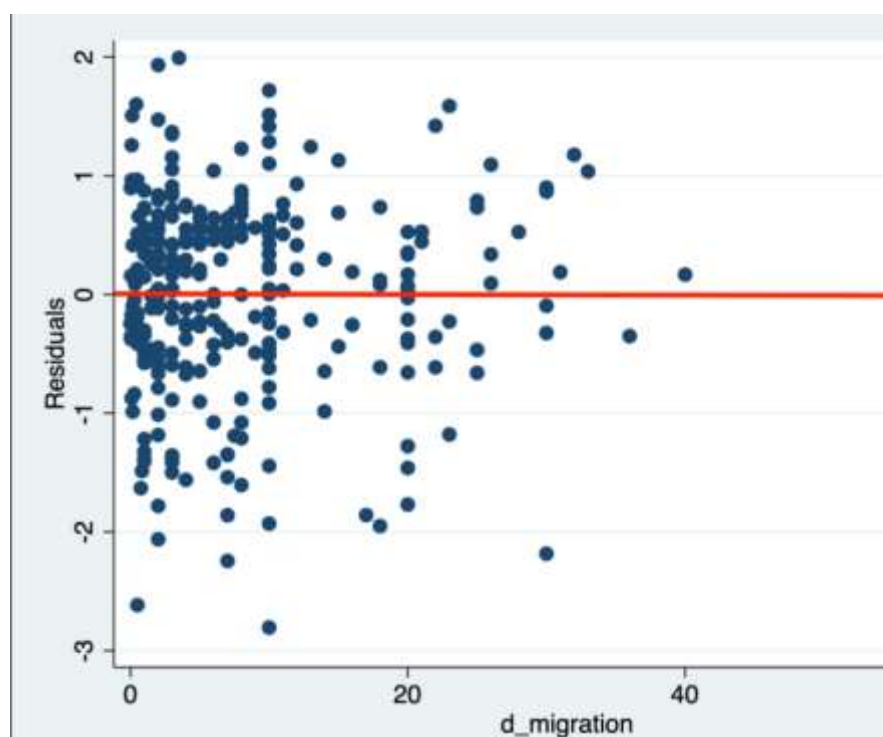
*Table 5.5 Results of multicollinearity check by VIF*

Variable	VIF-PA	VIF-UI	VIF-SI	VIF-HD
Age	2.10	2.09	2.10	2.12
Gender	1.14	1.13	1.14	1.13
d_migration	2.06	2.09	2.09	2.11
City_t				
2	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.59
3	1.35	1.33	1.33	1.33
local_hk	1.36	1.36	1.36	1.35
L_Con	1.32	1.34	1.33	1.34
Education				
2	3.47	3.49	3.64	3.67
3	2.21	2.21	2.27	2.30
4	3.14	3.17	3.26	3.30
5	2.71	2.76	2.82	2.88
6	3.80	3.85	3.98	4.02
7	1.77	1.76	1.79	1.80
S_Cantonese				
1	1.31	1.30	1.30	1.30
2	1.43	1.44	1.44	1.44
HO	1.46	1.49	1.49	1.49
IH	1.29	1.27	1.28	1.29
SCO				
2	2.61	2.56	2.66	2.55
3	2.94	2.87	2.98	2.87
4	2.23	2.22	2.27	2.22

5	1.59	1.65	1.67	1.65
CEO				
2	2.61	1.45	1.45	1.47
3	2.94	3.09	3.07	3.17
4	2.23	1.59	1.59	1.62
5	1.59	3.10	3.09	3.18
Mean vif.	2.08	2.09	2.12	2.13

*Source: Author, produced with Stata 17.*

Second, to check the independence of errors, scatterplots of residuals versus fits are conducted in Stata 17 software. It appears that for all the independent variables, residuals are generally symmetrically distributed above and below the line of 0, providing intuitive proof that the independence of errors is observed in the data set.



*Figure 5.14 Residuals-versus-fitted plot on variable "residence year" (d\_migration)*

*Source: Author, all graphics presented with Stata 17.*

The third requirement of ordered logistic regression is "linearity in the logit for continuous variables", by performing the Box-Tidwell test. Since the  $p$ -values produced by Stata software are all greater than 5%, the data set fulfils the third requirement of the statistical model. The least likely option is used to delete the 1% extremes and then

make sure there is no existing extreme, neither there are statistically influential outliers. This satisfies the last requirement of performing an OLR. Cook's distance is an alternative to rule out the possibility of statistical outliers in the data set. As all four requirements are testified to, statistical models of ordered logistic regression can be performed, and the result presented should be considered valid.

## 5.5 Inferential Statistics

The OLR model is applied to quantitative data using Stata 17 software. The first model uses Place Attachment (PA) as the independent variable, while Urban Identity (UI), Settlement Intention (SI), and *Hukou* Desire (HD) are treated as predicted variables for the other three models. The data analysis was undertaken using raw data imported from excel sheets compiled of information keyed in at the field. The level of significance threshold is set at  $p=0.01$ ,  $p=0.05$ , and  $p=0.1$  respectively, designating strong ( $p<0.01$ ), moderate ( $p<0.05$ ), and low ( $p<0.1$ ) possibilities of null hypothesis  $H_0$  being true. The null hypothesis  $H_0$  of the model is:

$H_0$ : There is no statistically significant factor among the variables  $x_j$  that influence the indicator of *shiminhua* level  $y_i$ . That is, in Model  $Logit(y_i) = \log \frac{p_i}{1-p_i} = a + B_1x_1 + B_2x_2 + \dots + B_jx_j, B = 0$ .

If the significant level in the model exceeds the threshold of  $p$ -value, it indicates a valid possibility that null hypothesis  $H_0$  is rejected, and alternative hypothesis  $H_A$  is true:



H<sub>A</sub>: There is at least one statistically significant factor  $x_j$  that influence the indicator of *shiminhua* level  $y_i$ . That is, in Model *Logit*  $(y_i) = \log \frac{p_i}{1-p_i} = A + B_1x_1 + B_2x_2 + \dots + B_jx_j, B \neq 0$ .

In the OLR models, the  $p$ -value for each term tests the null hypothesis that the coefficient is equal to zero: the smaller the  $p$ -value, the lower probability that  $H_0$  is rejected incorrectly. Significant level  $p$ -value are set at  $p=0.1$ ,  $p=0.05$ , and  $p=0.01$  indicates identifiable, decent, and considerable significance impacts on the dependent variable, marked by one, two and three asterisks next to the B value respectively in Table 5.6 to Table 5.9 (Bryman, 2012; Olsen et al., 2004). In other words, these thresholds imply the possibility of wrongly accepting the respective alternative hypothesis (Hosmer et al., 2013). The Loglikelihood and Pseudo  $R^2$  of the models were calculated to test the goodness of fit for the model with quantitative data results.

Table 5.6 Model 1: Place Attachment

Place Attachment (PA-Q16)	Model 1-A				Model 1-B				Model 1-C			
Sample Size: 285	B		EXP(B)		B		EXP(B)		B		EXP(B)	
Age ( $x_1$ )	-0.008	(0.013)	0.992	(0.013)	-0.002	(0.145)	0.998	0.014	0.000	(0.152)	1.001	(0.015)
Gender( $x_2$ , ref=male)	0.013	(0.104)	0.013	(1.110)	-0.049	(0.235)	0.952	(0.223)	-0.138	(0.242)	0.902	(0.218)
Residence Year ( $x_3$ )	0.029*	(0.016)	1.029*	(0.017)	0.013	(0.174)	1.013	(0.017)	-0.015	(0.019)	0.989	(0.019)
City Tier ( $x_4$ , ref=Guangzhou)												
2=Dongguan					0.506*	(0.264)	1.659*	(0.438)	0.363	(0.292)	1.355	(0.396)
3=Zhongshan					1.051**	(0.423)	2.862**	(1.211)	0.518	(0.447)	1.680	(0.751)
Local <i>Hukou</i> ( $x_5$ )					0.086***	(0.331)	2.373***	(0.786)	0.557	(0.348)	1.745	(0.607)
Labour Contract ( $x_6$ )					-0.607*	(0.352)	0.545*	(0.192)	-0.580	(0.365)	0.560	(0.204)
Education ( $x_7$ )												
2=primary school					-	(0.510)	0.362***	(0.185)	-0.984*	(0.530)	0.374*	(0.198)
					1.015***							
3=junior high school					-0.685	(0.594)	0.504	(0.300)	-0.847	(0.626)	0.429	(0.268)
4=senior high school					-0.810	(0.541)	0.445	(0.241)	-1.089	(0.566)	0.337	(0.190)
5=professional college					-0.686	(0.538)	0.503	(0.289)	-1.070	(0.602)	0.343	(0.207)
6=some university education					-0.238	(0.754)	0.788	(0.296)	-0.575	(0.568)	0.563	(0.319)
7=graduate & above					-0.934	(0.754)	0.393	(0.296)	-1.215	(0.788)	0.297	(0.234)
Ability in Cantonese ( $x_8$ )												
1=understanding					0.192	(0.281)	1.211	(0.341)	0.288	(0.289)	1.334	(0.385)
2=speaking fluently					0.640**	(0.298)	1.896**	(0.566)	0.603*	(0.306)	1.827*	(0.559)
Homeownership ( $x_9$ )									0.609	(0.289)	1.838	(0.694)
Higher Income ( $x_{10}$ )									0.288	(0.306)	1.333	(0.345)

Social Circle					
(x <sub>11</sub> ,ref= mainly local)					
2= <i>laoxiang</i> >local			0.757**	(0.391)	2.131** (0.832)
3=half-half			0.936***	(0.406)	2.551*** (1.034)
4=local< <i>laoxiang</i>			1.056***	(0.459)	2.876*** (1.321)
5=mainly local			2.895***	(0.768)	18.085*** (13.898)
Children's Education					
(x <sub>12</sub> ref= rural school)					
2=transfer to local school			0.615	(0.561)	1.849 (1.036)
3=undecided			0.373	(0.417)	1.452 (0.606)
4=attending local private school			0.449	(0.562)	1.567 (0.881)
5=attending local state school			0.490	(0.411)	1.633 (0.670)
Loglikelihood	-364.9052	-350.3967	-337.72185		
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.0052	0.0447	0.0793		

*Source: Author retrieved from Stata 17 programme.*

According to the OLR Model 1, Model 1-C has more predictability than Model 1-B as indicated by Pseudo  $R^2$  ( $0.0793 > 0.0447$ ) and backed up by Log likelihood.<sup>107</sup> The same analogy applies to Model 1-B's Pseudo  $R^2$  compared to Model 1-A's Pseudo  $R^2$ , implying an improved goodness of fit. It also indicates that the rationale of adding variables based on the sequence of variations of Model 1-A, Model 1-B, and Model 1-C is feasible. The sequence is further applied in Model 2, Model 3, and Model 4.

Model 1 regards PA as the dependent indicator of *shiminhua*. In Model 1-A residence year ( $x_3$ ) has an identifiable level of significance to the logit of PA. For Model 1-B, possessing local *hukou* ( $x_5$ ) and attainment of primary school education ( $x_7$ ) have significant positive impacts on *shiminhua* level. Living in the tier 3 city of Zhongshan ( $x_4$ ) has a significant positive influence compared to living in the tier 1 city of Guangzhou. In addition, speaking Cantonese fluently ( $x_8$ ) has a significant positive impact compared with those migrants who do not speak nor understand Cantonese. Living in the tier 2 city of Dongguan ( $x_4$ ), or having a labour contract ( $x_6$ ) has an observable level of significance to PA. In Model 1-C, maintaining a social circle ( $x_{11}$ ) consisting of engagement and interaction with urban locals is of considerable significance to PA.<sup>108</sup> Last but not least, graduating from primary school ( $x_7$ ) has a barely identifiable significance to PA.

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<sup>107</sup> Adding more explanatory variables almost always gives more predictability in the OLR model.

<sup>108</sup> The three categories of half-half, more locals than *laoxiang*, and mainly local are regarded as having substantial interaction with the urban locals in the migrant's social circle.

In Model 1, it is observed that having a local social circle can significantly affect a migrant's sense of place attachment. Compared to those who mainly interact with *laoxiang*--- fellow migrant workers from similar backgrounds, migrants who interact with an equal number of migrants and locals or mainly locals tend to have a stronger sense of place attachment to the city. Similarly, those who speak Cantonese fluently seem to have a higher level of place attachment compared to those internal migrants who neither speak nor understand the local dialect.

Table 5.7 Model 2: Urban Identity

Urban Identity (UI-Q16)	Model 2-A				Model 2-B				Model 2-C			
Sample Size: 285	B		EXP(B)		B		EXP(B)		B		EXP(B)	
Age ( $x_1$ )	-	(0.013)	0.952***	(0.012)	-0.151	(0.013)	0.985	(0.015)	-0.018	(0.016)	0.982	(0.015)
	0.492***											
Gender( $x_2$ ,ref=male)	0.181	(0.216)	1.198	(0.258)	-0.917	(0.229)	0.821	(0.188)	-0.241	(0.235)	0.786	(0.184)
Residence Year ( $x_3$ )	0.061***	(0.016)	1.062***	(0.169)	0.039**	(0.017)	1.040**	(0.179)	0.019	(0.018)	1.019	(0.019)
City Tier ( $x_4$ , ref=Guangzhou)												
2=Dongguan					-0.115	(0.263)	0.891	(0.234)	-0.339	(0.291)	0.713	(0.208)
3=Zhongshan					0.828**	(0.394)	2.311**	(0.909)	0.455	(0.416)	1.576	(0.656)
Local <i>Hukou</i> ( $x_5$ )					1.505***	(0.324)	4.505***	(1.458)	1.193***	(0.333)	3.296***	(1.097)
Labour Contract ( $x_6$ )					-0.445	(0.334)	0.641	(0.214)	0.058*	(0.347)	0.562*	(0.195)
Education ( $x_7$ )												
2=primary school					-0.092	(0.493)	0.912	(0.449)	-0.100	(0.508)	0.905	(0.459)
3=junior high school					1.041**	(0.571)	2.833**	(1.618)	0.946	(0.590)	2.575	(1.520)
4=senior high school					0.983**	(0.519)	2.673**	(1.389)	0.814	(0.542)	2.256	(1.233)
5=professional college					0.905	(0.554)	2.472	(1.370)	0.584	(0.575)	1.794	(1.031)
6=some university education					2.057***	(0.535)	7.819***	(4.181)	1.910***	(0.556)	5.752***	(3.756)
7=graduate & above					2.652***	(0.707)	14.178***	(10.022)	2.652***	(0.756)	14.183***	(10.727)
Ability in Cantonese ( $x_8$ )												
1=understanding					0.245	(0.277)	1.227	(0.353)	0.311	(0.284)	1.365	(0.387)
2=speaking fluently					0.526**	(0.291)	1.692**	(0.492)	0.476	(0.299)	1.610	(0.482)
Homeownership ( $x_9$ )									1.201***	(0.359)	3.324***	(1.193)
Higher Income ( $x_{10}$ )									0.185	(0.252)	1.204	(0.304)

Social Circle					
(x <sub>11</sub> ref= mainly local)					
2= <i>laoxiang</i> >local			-0.305	(0.395)	0.737 (0.291)
3=half-half			0.390	(0.411)	1.477 (0.608)
4=local< <i>laoxiang</i>			0.021	(0.459)	1.021 (0.468)
5=mainly local			0.912	(0.666)	2.488 (1.658)
Children's Education					
(x <sub>12</sub> ref= rural school)					
2=transfer to local school			0.186	(0.575)	1.204 (0.693)
3=undecided			-0.440	(0.423)	0.644 (0.273)
4=attending local private school			-0.419	(0.546)	0.658 (0.359)
5=attending local state school			-0.186	(0.411)	0.830 (0.341)
Loglikelihood	-424.68789	-378.97259	-367.30973		
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.0227	0.1279	0.1548		

*Source: Author retrieved from Stata 17 programme.*

Overall, Model 2 demonstrates that several variables affect the explained variable of UI. In Model 2-A, both age ( $x_1$ ) and residence year ( $x_3$ ) have considerable significance for UI. For Model 2-B, having some university education and above compared to illiterate or no education ( $x_7$ ), and having a local *hukou* ( $x_5$ ) compared to being without a local *hukou* impose a considerable level of significance for UI. Living in the tier 3 city of Zhongshan ( $x_4$ ), as well as attaining a high school education at junior high and senior high level ( $x_7$ ) have a decent level of significance as well. In Model 2-C, homeownership ( $x_9$ ), possessing local *hukou*, and college and above education ( $x_7$ ) are strongly significant ( $p < 0.01$ ), while having a formal labour contract only has an identifiable level of *shiminhua*.

When evaluating Model 2-A, Model 2-B, and Model 2-C, it turned out that homeownership ( $x_9$ ) has a significant impact on UI. Compared to those who do not own houses, those owning a house in the city have 230% higher odds in achieving a higher UI. Having a local *hukou* has an equivalent effect. While possessing a local house and a local *hukou* are problematic. With a local *hukou* it is easier to own a local apartment via the point-based purchasing system and vice-versa. Moreover, achieving a university level and above education hugely facilitates a sense of UI: for those with some university education, they are five times more likely to feel 'urban' compared to illiterate migrants. In addition, having a legal labour contract ( $x_6$ ) by rural-urban migrant worker has a limited positive correlation on UI.



Table 5.8 Model 3: Settlement Intention

Settlement Intention (SI-Q20)	Model 3-A				Model 3-B				Model 3-C			
Sample Size: 285	B		EXP(B)		B		EXP(B)		B		EXP(B)	
Age ( $x_1$ )	0.045***	(0.013)	1.046***	(0.014)	0.020	(0.015)	1.020	(0.015)	0.023	(0.016)	1.024	(0.016)
Gender( $x_2$ ,ref=male)	-0.314	(0.219)	0.730	(0.016)	0.128	(0.232)	0.879	(0.204)	-0.076	(0.238)	0.927	(0.221)
Residence Year ( $x_3$ )	-	(0.017)	0.929***	(0.016)	-	(0.019)	0.943***	(0.018)	-0.045**	(0.020)	0.956**	(0.019)
	0.735***				0.058***							
City Tier ( $x_4$ , ref=Guangzhou)												
2=Dongguan					-0.104	(0.263)	0.901	(0.237)	0.017	(0.289)	1.017	(0.294)
3=Zhongshan					-0.183	(0.385)	0.833	(0.321)	-0.002	(0.406)	0.998	(0.405)
Local <i>Hukou</i> ( $x_5$ )					-0.791**	(0.320)	0.453**	(0.145)	-0.590*	(0.340)	0.554*	(0.188)
Labour Contract ( $x_6$ )					0.649*	(0.353)	1.914*	(0.676)	0.709*	(0.363)	2.032*	(0.738)
Education ( $x_7$ )												
2=primary school					-1.083**	(0.494)	0.339**	(0.167)	-0.939*	(0.511)	0.391*	(0.200)
3=junior high school					-	(0.591)	0.191***	(0.113)	-1.437**	(0.617)	0.238**	(0.147)
					1.654***							
4=senior high school					-	(0.519)	0.250***	(0.130)	-1.088**	(0.546)	0.337**	(0.184)
					1.386***							
5=professional college					-	(0.569)	0.140***	(0.080)	-	(0.596)	0.209***	(0.125)
					1.963***				1.566***			
6=some university education					-	(0.569)	0.136***	(0.073)	-	(0.570)	0.175***	(0.100)
					1.993***				1.744***			
7=graduate & above					-	(0.756)	0.121***	(0.092)	-1.948**	(0.795)	0.143**	(0.113)
					2.109***							
Ability in Cantonese ( $x_8$ )												
1=understanding					0.038	(0.277)	1.039	(0.288)	-0.009	(0.281)	0.991	(0.278)
2=speaking fluently					-0.185	(0.286)	0.832	(0.238)	-0.092	(0.292)	0.912	(0.266)

Homeownership ( $x_9$ )			-0.264	(0.382)	0.768	(0.293)
Higher Income ( $x_{10}$ )			0.074	(0.253)	1.077	(0.273)
Social Circle ( $x_{11}$ ref= mainly local)						
2= <i>laoxiang</i> >local			-0.383	(0.397)	0.682	(0.271)
3=half-half			-0.988**	(0.419)	0.372**	(0.156)
4=local< <i>laoxiang</i>			-0.911**	(0.456)	0.402**	(0.183)
5=mainly local			-	(0.693)	0.146***	(0.101)
			1.924***			
Children's Education ( $x_{12}$ ref= rural school)						
2=transfer to local school			0.583	(0.549)	1.792	(0.984)
3=undecided			0.743*	(0.417)	2.101*	(0.877)
4=attending local private school			0.079	(0.547)	1.083	(0.592)
5=attending local state school			0.334	(0.411)	1.397	(0.574)
Loglikelihood	-409.58252	392.84548	384.51243			
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.0264	0.0662	0.086			

Source: Author retrieved from Stata 17 programme.

In Model 3, more factors tend to have significant impacts on the dependent variable denoted by Settlement Intention (SI). Both age ( $x_1$ ) and residence year in the city ( $x_3$ ) have a high level of significance in Model 3-A. For Model 3-B, in addition to residence year ( $x_3$ ), education ( $x_7$ ) above high school level: junior high school, senior high school, professional college, some university education, graduate school and above, demonstrate high levels of significance. Whereas primary school education and possession of a local *hukou* ( $x_5$ ) have a moderate level of significance. Possession of a labour contract ( $x_6$ ) has a low level of significance in variation Model 3-B. In Model 3-C, having a social circle mainly comprising urban locals has considerable significance ( $x_{11}$ ); professional college education and some university education ( $x_7$ ) have the same level of significance. A social circle ( $x_{11}$ ) with some engagement with locals in the categories of half-half, and local > *laoxiang*, as well as other levels of education ( $x_7$ ), except for primary school education, have a moderate level of significance to SI. Local *hukou* ( $x_5$ ), labour contract ( $x_6$ ), primary school education ( $x_7$ ), and undecided school choice for children ( $x_{12}$ ) only show limited significance.

The overall interpretation for this set of models includes variables including residence year ( $x_3$ ), possessing local *hukou* ( $x_4$ ) and a labour contract ( $x_5$ ). These independent variables are all significant to SI. However, it is worth noting that the residence year has a negative correlation to SI. Another result to note is, those with a higher educational achievement including those who finished professional college, have some sort of university education or beyond, have significant negative impacts on SI.

Regarding social circles, it appears that those who interact with locals are less likely to have the desire to settle in the city. These results are to be further elaborated in the following interpretation sections.

Table 5.9 Model 4: Hukou Desire

<i>Hukou</i> (HD-R17)	Desire	Model 4-A				Model 4-B				Model 4-C			
Sample Size: 285		B	EXP(B)			B	EXP(B)			B	EXP(B)		
Age ( $x_1$ )		-	(0.013)	0.965***	(0.013)	-0.123	(0.153)	0.988	(0.151)	-0.019	(0.017)	0.982	(0.017)
		0.357***											
Gender( $x_2$ , ref=male)		0.461**	(0.217)	1.586**	(0.345)	0.101	(0.235)	1.107	(0.260)	0.129	(0.244)	1.137	(0.277)
Residence Year( $x_3$ )		0.077***	(0.017)	1.080***	(0.018)	0.052***	(0.019)	1.105***	(0.020)	0.038*	(0.020)	1.039*	(0.021)
City Tier ( $x_4$ , ref=Guangzhou)													
2=Dongguan						-0.270	(0.264)	0.763	(0.202)	-0.744**	(0.297)	0.475**	(0.141)
3=Zhongshan						0.161	(0.403)	1.175	(0.473)	-0.155	(0.439)	0.856	(0.375)
Local <i>Hukou</i> ( $x_5$ )						3.034***	(0.391)	20.770***	(8.125)	3.021***	(0.408)	20.513***	(8.371)
Labour Contract ( $x_6$ )						-0.544	(0.362)	0.581	(0.210)	-0.689*	(0.387)	0.502*	(0.194)
Education ( $x_7$ )													
2=primary school						0.752	(0.522)	2.212	(1.107)	0.186	(0.571)	1.204	(0.687)
3=junior high school						0.494	(0.613)	1.639	(1.004)	-0.124	(0.661)	0.884	(0.585)
4=senior high school						0.810	(0.539)	2.249	(1.211)	0.228	(0.591)	1.256	(0.742)
5=professional college						0.871	(0.577)	2.389	(1.378)	0.226	(0.632)	1.253	(0.792)
6=some university education						1.116**	(0.552)	3.054**	(1.686)	0.318	(0.605)	1.375	(0.832)
7=graduate & above						0.915	(0.765)	2.498	(1.910)	0.022	(0.809)	1.023	(0.827)
Ability in Cantonese ( $x_8$ )													
1=understanding						0.205	(0.287)	1.227	(0.352)	0.124	(0.293)	1.132	(0.332)
2=speaking fluently						0.288	(0.296)	1.333	(0.395)	0.182	(0.306)	1.200	(0.367)
Homeownership ( $x_9$ )										0.075	(0.391)	1.078	(0.422)
Higher Income ( $x_{10}$ )										0.847***	(0.265)	2.333***	(0.619)

Social Circle					
(x <sub>11</sub> ref= mainly local)					
2= <i>laoxiang</i> >local			0.105	(0.405)	1.111 (0.405)
3=half-half			0.018	(0.423)	1.019 (0.431)
4=local< <i>laoxiang</i>			0.334	(0.470)	0.431 (1.396)
5=mainly local			0.788	(0.754)	2.200 (1.658)
Children's Education					
(x <sub>12</sub> ref= rural school)					
2=transfer to local school			0.120	(0.613)	1.128 (0.691)
3=undecided			-0.021	(0.443)	0.979 (0.434)
4=attending local private school			1.268	(0.569)	3.553 (2.022)
5=attending local state school			1.073	(0.433)	2.924 (1.265)
Loglikelihood	-414.29785	-365.60215	-348.3324		
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.034	0.1476	0.1878		

*Source: Author retrieved from Stata 17 programme.*

In Model variation 4-A, age ( $x_1$ ) and residence year in the city ( $x_3$ ) have moderate relevance to local *hukou* desire (HD), while gender ( $x_2$ ) has a low degree of significance. As for Model 4-B, both possession of local *hukou* ( $x_4$ ) and residence year are highly significantly related to HD, while university education ( $x_7$ ) is moderately related. Model 4-C reveals that possession of local *hukou* ( $x_5$ ), holding a labour contract ( $x_6$ ), and having a higher income ( $x_{10}$ ) than the urban local average has a high significance level to HD. Living in the tier 2 city of Dongguan ( $x_4$ ) has moderate negative impacts on HD, recalling the pre-selection bias mentioned in the methodological chapter and further discussed in the triangulation chapter. The number of residence year ( $x_3$ ) turns out to have a limited level of significance.

In Model 4's three variations, it is observed that rural-urban migrants with a higher monthly income ( $x_{10}$ ) than the urban local average have an odds ratio that is 130% higher than those earning less in desiring a local *hukou*. Whilst it is understandable for those who are determined to get a local *hukou*, most of them have already attained this aim: they currently hold an urban local *hukou* ( $x_5$ ) by the time of the survey, thus presenting a high correlation between the odds of HD and possession of local *hukou*. Furthermore, rural-urban migrants living in the Tier 2 city Dongguan ( $x_3$ ) are considerably less desirous to obtain a local *hukou* while migrants in Zhongshan ( $x_3$ ) show no difference compared with migrants in Guangzhou. Moreover, possessing a labour contract ( $x_6$ ) and having a longer residence year also have marginal impacts on local *hukou* desires.

By combining all the variations C of the four models, a collection of significant factors that influence the level of *shiminhua* is plotted in Table 5.10:



Table 5.10 The factors influencing shiminhua (Standardized Coefficient)

Dependent Variables (Model Variation C)	Place Attachment	Urban Identity	Settlement Intension	Hukou Desire
Age ( $x_1$ )				
Gender( $x_2$ , ref= male)				
Residence Year( $x_3$ )			0.96**	1.04*
City Tier ( $x_4$ , ref=Guangzhou)				
2=Dongguan				0.48**
3=Zhongshan				
Local Hukou ( $x_5$ )		<b>3.29***</b>	<b>0.55*</b>	<b>20.51***</b>
Labour Contract ( $x_6$ )		0.56*	2.03*	20.51***
Education ( $x_7$ )				
2=primary school	<b>0.37*</b>		<b>0.39*</b>	
3=junior high school			<b>0.24**</b>	
4=senior high school			<b>0.34**</b>	
5=professional college			<b>0.21***</b>	
6=some university education		<b>5.75***</b>	<b>0.18***</b>	
7=graduate & above		<b>14.18***</b>	<b>0.14**</b>	
Ability in Cantonese ( $x_8$ )				
1=understanding				
2=speaking fluently	1.82*			
Homeownership ( $x_9$ )		3.32***		
Higher Income ( $x_{10}$ )				2.33***
Social Circle ( $x_{11}$ ref= mainly local)				
2= <i>laoxiang</i> >local	<b>2.13**</b>			
3=half-half	<b>2.55***</b>		<b>0.37**</b>	
4=local< <i>laoxiang</i>	<b>2.87***</b>		<b>0.40**</b>	
5=mainly local	<b>18.08***</b>		<b>0.14***</b>	
Children's Education ( $x_{12}$ , ref= rural school)				
2=transfer to local school				
3=undecided			2.10*	
4=attending local private school				
5=attending local state school				

Note that reference groups are in parentheses.

\*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Source: Author collected from data.

Similarly, influencing factors in model variation B and A can also be mapped out.

Considering the Group A independent variables are much more stable than Group B and Group C, significant variables that influence indicators for inferring *shiminhua* level

are selected based on model variations B and model variations C, as listed in Table 5.11.

Table 5.11 Models and significant factors of influence

Models	No. of variables of significance	Variables of significance
<b>Model variation C (12 variables)</b>		
PA	3	education ( $x_7$ ), ability in Cantonese ( $x_8$ ), social circle ( $x_{11}$ )
UI	4	local <i>hukou</i> ( $x_5$ ), labour contract ( $x_6$ ), education ( $x_7$ ), homeownership ( $x_9$ )
SI	6	residence year ( $x_3$ ), local <i>hukou</i> ( $x_5$ ), labour contract( $x_6$ ) , education( $x_7$ ), social circle( $x_{11}$ ), children's education( $x_{12}$ )
HD	5	Residence year ( $x_3$ ), city tier ( $x_4$ ), local <i>hukou</i> ( $x_5$ ), labour contract( $x_6$ ) , higher income( $x_{10}$ )
Total	10	Residence year ( $x_3$ ), city tier ( $x_4$ ), local <i>hukou</i> ( $x_5$ ) , labour contract( $x_6$ ) , Education ( $x_7$ ), Ability in Cantonese ( $x_8$ ), homeownership ( $x_9$ ), higher income( $x_{10}$ ), social circle( $x_{11}$ ), children's education( $x_{12}$ )
<b>Model variation B (8 variables)</b>		
PA	5	city tier ( $x_4$ ), local <i>hukou</i> ( $x_5$ ), labour contract ( $x_5$ ), education( $x_7$ ), ability in Cantonese ( $x_8$ ),
UI	5	residence year( $x_3$ ), city tier ( $x_4$ ), local <i>hukou</i> ( $x_5$ ), education ( $x_7$ ), speaking Cantonese ( $x_8$ )
SI	4	Residence year ( $x_3$ ), local <i>hukou</i> ( $x_5$ ), labour contract ( $x_6$ ), education ( $x_7$ )
HD	3	residence year( $x_3$ ), local <i>hukou</i> ( $x_5$ ), education ( $x_7$ )
Total	7	Residence year ( $x_3$ ), city tier ( $x_4$ ), local <i>hukou</i> ( $x_5$ ), labour contract ( $x_6$ ), education ( $x_7$ ), ability in Cantonese ( $x_8$ )

Source: Author retrieved from Stata 17 programme.

In model variation C, there are 10 variables of significance identified among the 12 independent variables; in model variation B, there are 8 variables of significance among the 8 independent variables.

To recollect, the purpose of the quantitative data analysis is mainly to answer the research question “What are the features that facilitate or prevent the process of *shiminhua*?” from the quantitative results, three factors are identified as of great importance: possession of a local *hukou* ( $x_5$ ), and maintaining a wide social circle ( $x_{11}$ ), with urban natives are the two most significant factors that have a positive influence on the set of indicators on *shiminhua*. The third factor: individual migrant’s education level ( $x_7$ ), has a significant though complex impact on *shiminhua* level, depending on which level of education the migrant received. Additionally, having labour contracts ( $x_6$ ), owning a flat in the city ( $x_{10}$ ), and living longer in the same city ( $x_3$ ), also demonstrate potential significance of a positive correlation, implying positive influence on aspects of migrant’s *shiminhua* level, though the correlations are less well established by the data, compared to the three major factors. The ability to speak rather than merely understand the local dialect of Cantonese ( $x_8$ ) may have a positive correlation to PA only; while having a higher income ( $x_9$ ) than city average may have a positive correlation to HD. Additionally, regarding other variables that have been devised as potentially significant in Phase I, age, gender, and city tier does not appear to be significant at all according to the analysis based on this certain sample.

## 5.6 Model Evaluation

The four models capture different aspects of *shiminhua* and have varying levels of goodness of fits, according to the Pseudo  $R^2$  and Loglikelihood presented in Table 5.2, Table 5.3, Table 5.4 and Table 5.5. Per individual module. By adding more set of

independent variables upon original factors from Model A to Model B then to Model C, the accuracy and predictability of the logistic regression model increase, implicating that those factors are potentially impactful factors to specific aspect of *shiminhua* level.

For the potential limitations of his model, three aspects could be addressed, the statistical limitation embedded in the OLR statistical model itself, sampling errors due to potential questions in the survey design, and other non-sampling errors.

For the statistics *per se*, whilst the OLR model could effectively determine the strength of different predictors, the limitations in applying OLR should also be mentioned in this evaluation. Firstly, the OLR model explores the relation between the dependent variable and the independent variable as correlation rather than as causation, which post difficulties in the generalisation and interpretation of some results. For instance, though a very significant correlation ( $p < 0.01$ ) between an independent variable  $x_j$  and a dependent variable  $y_i$  are established in the model, an increase of certain proportion of odds ratio in  $x_j$  does not necessarily lead to a corresponding increase of a certain proportion of odds ratio  $y_i$ .

Secondly, there remains the possibility of overfitting effects<sup>109</sup> in the models. The effect could be further embedded in the format of pre-selection bias due to the limited sample size. Considering the groups which migrated to Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 cities:

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<sup>109</sup> Overfitting effect in OLR refers to not having enough input data for the model to find meaningful patterns in.

under the GBA circumstance, people who migrated to Dongguan anticipate working in the factories for a short period without routes to long-term settlement, bestowing special group characteristics that cannot be explicitly captured by the indicators. Although in research design, many aspects have been pondered clearly and cross-tabulations and multicollinearity are conducted to avoid confounding effects as much as possible. There remain possibilities that some independent variables may inevitably possess a degree of influence for the other independent variables. For example, having a higher income than the local average may make it more possible to own a house locally, though, considering the housing prices, the salary's influence could be marginal. Or more interaction with locals made it easier to gain information on local schools, thus influencing their plans for the next generation's education.

Thirdly, since the variables are teased out based on a limited number of transcripts, other important factors that might influence the degree of *shiminhua* may not have been exhausted. For example, the anticipation of the development of the city or region (Song, 2016), and relative social status (J. Wang, 2017), which are all included in the residual term (*A*) and not explicitly analysed.

Two issues embedded in the questionnaire design could potentially impose sampling errors

One consideration regarding model design is that in Model 4 HD - Hukou desire as a dependent variable might have a mediating factor with the status of hukou for rural-

urban migrants, though not turned out to be problematic for influencing the results in the multicollinearity checking. The other survey design issue is that children's education question is asked without differentiating whether the migrant have already got children or not – the plans of children's education could be vastly different from reality. These two issues are acknowledged as limitations of the qualitative analysis as well, thus requiring not only data, but also method triangulation in the next chapter.

Besides sampling errors, delivery and administration of survey by researcher and comprehension of survey questions by informants may lead to non-sampling errors. For example, among the 48 pilot questionnaires, some participants reported that terms like 'Greater Bay Area' and 'labour contract' are hard to understand, as they have not heard about the terms before. Some questions retain certain degrees of ambiguity, despite maximum efforts spared to clarify them. One example is the monthly income per head might be hard to calculate, particularly for those who are self-employed or working in the informal sector. These are all factors which need to be considered for research based on this study and further research projects which adopt similar quantitative methods.

Whilst acknowledging the existing limitations, sampling errors remain in an acceptable range, and the models are regarded as valid. The merits of the models consist of creating an approach in which a seemingly abstract concept of *shiminhua* can be

testified to step-by-step with clear and alternative indicators that can be concisely captured by survey questions in the field.

To summarize the chapter, the quantitative results indicate that four alternative indicators could capture different aspects of *shiminhua* with varying level of goodness of fit. Both locational characteristics and socio-economic aspects contribute to the *shiminhua* status of rural-urban migrants. Lack of means to obtain a local *hukou* and separation from interactions with urban natives prevent rural-urban migrants from *shiminhua* in terms of those 4 alternative indicators of *shiminhua*.<sup>110</sup> The effect of educational attainment remains complicated with several other seemingly counter-intuitive results are to be further explored in the next chapter of data triangulation.

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<sup>110</sup> In capability of obtaining local *hukou* is related to UI and SI; separation from interactions with urban natives is related to PA and SI.

## Chapter 6 Contextualizing Shiminhua in Multiple Perspectives

Building on the qualitative findings of Chapter 5 and the qualitative findings of Chapter 4, this chapter first triangulates the results and findings to elaborate on the qualitative findings. It turns out that four quantitative results require further analysis and elaboration. These four abstruse results are identified as counter-intuitive findings and thus further explored with more in-depth analysis of triangulations between different pieces of qualitative data as well as drawing onto the literature. Subsequently, all qualitative and quantitative findings were examined in relation to the four alternative measurements: place attachment (PA), urban identity (UI), settlement Intentions (SI) and *hukou* desire (HD) of *shiminhua* arising from the questionnaire design in Chapter 4 to further corroborate with contemporary and past studies.

### 6.1 *Shiminhua*: The Dynamics of the Findings

In the quantitative analysis of Chapter 5, the significant correlations between dependent variables and independent variables generated from the ORL models are presented in Table 7.1.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> For the detailed significance level of each variable in statistical Models, refer to Table 5.10



Table 6.1 Correlation between selected independent variables and different dependent variables

No.	Independent Variables	Place Attachment (PA)	Urban Identity (UI)	Settlement Intention (SI)	Hukou Desire (HD)
1	Migrant Social Circle -more urban locals	+	X	+	X
2	Speaking Cantonese	+	X	X	X
3	Labour Contract	X	+	X	+
4	Education				
	-Primary Education	+	X	X	X
	-University Education	X	+	—	X
5	Homeownership	X	+	X	X
6	Age	X	+	+	X
7	Year of Residence	X	+	—	X
8	Local <i>Hukou</i>	X	+	— (data bias)	+
9	Monthly Income -Higher than locals	X	X	X	+
10	City Tier	X	X	X	X
11	Children's schooling -Attending local state school	X	X	+	X

Source: Author adapted from data.

In Table 6.1, a '+' indicate positive correlation between the independent variable and the alternative *shiminhua* indicator; a '—' indicates negative correlation; while an 'X' indicate no significant correlation at the set critical value. The categories in this table could be reduced to a list of seven major quantitative findings in Table 7.2:

Table 6.2 A list of 8 quantitative key findings

No.	Quantitative Findings
1	The migrant's social circle with more participation of urban natives enhances PA and SI.
2	The ability to speak the local dialect -Cantonese in local variation, is related to a higher level of PA in a city in GBA.
3	Migrants who have finished primary education have a higher level of PA compared to those who have dropped out of primary education or are illiterate.
4	Owning at least one apartment in the city where the migrant works give the migrant a higher level of UI.
5	Having a labour contract, an indication of a stable job in the formal sector, helps to improve the level of UI.
6	Living in the city for a longer period is usually related to a higher degree in UI; having a local <i>hukou</i> is positively related to SI in the city.
7	The migrant individual with higher income than the local average is more likely to obtain a local <i>hukou</i> vis-à-vis those who earn lower than the local average.

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8	The city tier is not significant to any <i>shiminhua</i> indicator, contrary to the assumption that is evident in previous studies.
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*Source: Author adapted from data.*

Based on Table 7.2, three counter-intuitive findings are reviewed through a triangulating between the quantitative results and other qualitative data and secondary data in the region. Firstly, the finding that rural-urban migrants in the Tier 2 city of Dongguan are significantly less likely to transfer their *hukou* into an urban Dongguan *hukou*. Secondly, that while a longer period of residence in the city, in general, indicates a higher level of UI, it also indicates a lower degree of SI, according to the quantitative result. Thirdly, though a higher level of education among migrants in general is associated with a high-level UI, achieving tertiary education or above correlates negatively to SI and HD in a specific city.

Another counter-intuitive point emerges when corroborating the quantitative finding with qualitative data in Chapter 6: Here the quantitative results show that the variable of age is positively related to SI and UI. However, in the qualitative interviews subsection the *The process of shiminhua*, informants revealed that older migrants faced more barriers in the process of *shiminhua*. This could be explained by the mediating factor of the number of years of residence in the city - those who have lived in the city longer are usually older than the new immigrants.

According to Chapter 4, whilst theoretically a comprehensive matrix that is composed of a set of alternative indicators of *shiminhua* can be established with "expert panel

input” or other top-down methods (W. Wang et al., 2014; Yang, 2010, p. 66), there are two justifications for not using an overarching indicator when it comes to the analysis of the complicated process of *shiminhua* in GBA. The first consideration is that it is hard to determine the percentage of impact factors as qualitative analysis sub-section measurement of *shiminhua* revealed. The second reason is that the categories of variables, for example, cultural variables, social variables, and psychological variables in other overarching matrix in measuring *shiminhua*, could be correlated which could make it difficult to separate out the individual effects. Therefore, in the triangulation process of this research, each variable and indicator in the quantitative section were analysed independently and then triangulated with qualitative findings. Quantitative findings regarding demographics are first analysed, subsequent by other socio-economic and cultural factors represented by predictors ( $x$ ) in quantitative analysis.

### **Age, Residence Year in the City**

As Section 5.2 Descriptive Statistics imply, the quantitative sample covers a wide age range from 17 years to late-60s, as an independent variable, the age of the individual migrant demonstrates positive impacts on PA, UI, and SI but has significant negative effects on HD. This is further verified by qualitative results in the Chapter 6’s sub-section on Impacts of *shiminhua*. As older people tend to be considered and consider themselves as “hard to adapt to urban life”, and “having difficulties in *shiminhua*”, what prevents them from settling down in the city might be the established family life back

in their rural homes, regarded as a pulling factor in Lee's push and pull model.<sup>112 113</sup>

Though it is not a linear correlation, age has been shown with an important impact on *shiminhua* (Liao et al.).

The most significant positive correlation of age is to the indicator of UI, while the negative correlation between age and UI can be explained by the feasibility to settle rather than willingness of settlement: in other words, elderly people know they are difficult to *shiminhua*, therefore the option of going back home over those of stay, settle, and *shiminhua* in the city is a more feasible plan for most of these elderly workers. This further indicates that those who are presently determined to settle down and who could buy real estate and acquire a local *hukou*, would have already achieved such status of settlement in the city in during earlier years after migration. While other individuals who left the city without substantial aspects of *shiminhua* are neither qualified nor have the intrinsic intention to *shiminhua*, most frequently, as revealed by qualitative analysis, a combination of both two reasons

### Monthly Income<sup>114</sup>

The qualitative result shows that higher monthly income than the city average is associated with higher HD. This is an understandable but interesting result. Shown as qualitative results in Chapter 6 in the sub-section of The process of *shiminhua*,

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<sup>112</sup> Older people are defined by interviewees and FGD individuals as people in their 50s or 60s.

<sup>113</sup> Quotations that are excreted from interview transcripts were translated by the author.

<sup>114</sup> This dummy variable is constructed by the net monthly income of the individual compared against the city's average monthly income, details in variable construction, see Chapter 5 sub-section Variable Construction.

pursuing a stable job of higher income is an initial motivation for migrating for many. In Chapter 6 sub-section Driver of *shiminhua*, it revealed that in order to maintain the higher urban income level, the migrant would need to stay in the city for a substantial period, ideally obtaining a local *hukou* and a settlement status in the city- which further facilitate the progress of *shiminhua* process necessary. In contrast to the initial aim of seeking higher income in the city and moving into the formal sector, rural-urban migrants face the stark reality challenge of remaining employed in the informal sector, , leading to wage discrimination and lack of insurance for work-related injuries.<sup>115</sup>

In the quantitative analysis in Chapter 5, the monthly relative income is transformed into a binary variable consisting of the income level compared with the city-average monthly income, as the absolute average income may be hard to report for workers working in informal sectors. Two thoughts emerged from the triangulation. First, urban locals in Guangzhou and Dongguan were considered as 'richer' and 'wealthier', those earning more than urban locals can position their own lives as living like a local. Second, some migrants with higher income considered money or higher income to be the ultimate solution to all the barriers encountered in the *shiminhua* process, this thought is vividly captured by Mr Jia's words:

J: "when you are rich enough, you don't care about having a local *hukou* or not. What is *hukou* essentially? It is an entitlement for your next generation to get a quota into a good school, it is somehow a threshold to the poor. But if you decide to send the child overseas or to an international school, then he

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<sup>115</sup> For the discussion on formal and informal sectors' jobs for migrants, refer to Chapter 2 Harris-Todaro Model in the sub-section Economic Theories of Migration.

or she will attend the GMAT and SAT exams, you won't even consider to send your child to the local state school, then you choose a private kindergarten, international primary school, international high schools and so on. In that case, *hukou* is not the most important thing anymore, as I have said, money can solve 99% of all the problems." (Interview 8).

Nevertheless, in this passage, Mr Jia also made a seemingly contradictory point that people earning much higher than the urban average might not even intend to pursue a local *hukou*. That is because welfare associated with *hukou* can be substituted by higher quality resources from other channels, which is conventionally much more expensive than the rural-urban migrant's maximum affordability. It seems that though relative monthly income is a factor in impacting *shiminhua*, the numerical relationship is yet to be solidly established.

### **Labour Contract, Local *Hukou*, and Homeownership**

According to the quantitative findings, all three factors - possessing a labour contract, having local *hukou*, and owning an apartment in the city contribute to a higher degree of UI. Besides, a labour contract further contributes to a higher level of HD, and a local *hukou* is related to higher PA. However, it remains unclear whether potential interlinks among the three variables influence the correlations of each and *shiminhua* indicators - a stable job with a contract makes it financially easier to buy a house, and a locally owned apartment adds extra points in the points-based *hukou* transfer system. This is further corroborated by literature on housing and migrants as discussed in the Chapter 2 sub-section Important Factors of Acculturation on Housing and Homeownership, as it indicated that homeownership in the city is closely related to a settled condition and enables the rural-urban migrant to earn extra points in the point-based system of

*hukou* and school enrolment for children (Cai & Zhang, 2019; Dong & Goodburn, 2020). Settling down in a self-own apartment also enables migrants' parents and children to join the worker in the city, hence making the whole family "urbanised" (de Jong, 2000).

The seemingly contrasting findings of local *hukou*'s negative impacts on SI can be explained by the way in the questionnaire was designed, as those who have obtained local *hukou* may habitually considered themselves thus choosing "already settled" status. Therefore, the findings in the quantitative part relating to the labour contract, local *hukou*, and homeownership in general concur with the qualitative findings in Chapter 4.

### **The City Tiers**

Contrary to the assumption, the city tier does not appear to be significant to *shiminhua* indicators. While this could be explained by the relatively small sample which does not have a representative collection of individuals, it could also be that sectors of employment has greater as pointed out by qualitative chapter sub-section Drivers of *shiminhua* and Impact of *shiminhua*. For example, a migrant working in the construction sector is less likely to develop higher value in any of the four indicators, compared to their counterparts working in service setting like restaurants, regardless of whether this is Tier 1 city of Guangzhou, Tier 2 city of Dongguan, or Tier 3 city of Zhongshan.

### Social Circle, Ability in Cantonese

The quantitative findings reveal that a larger proportion of urban locals within the migrant's social circle has positive impacts on PA and SI, while speaking as well as understanding the local dialect of Cantonese improves PA and UI respectively in the *shiminhua* process. In section 5.2 Variable Construction, the rural-urban migrant's social circle is defined as the realm of interactions with close friends, colleagues, and acquaintances on a daily basis. In Chapter 2' section on The Greater Bay Area, Cantonese is introduced as an influential dialect widely spoken in the GBA region, it is not considered mutually intelligible to Mandarin Chinese – the national official language.

According to the qualitative analysis Chapter 4 sub-section *The Impacts of shiminhua*, the different behaviours and dress of rural-urban migrants is the main trigger of discrimination from the locals. That is probably because the appearance, habits, and lifestyles of rural-urban migrants are considered to be 'backward' or low-*suzhi* as implied by the Chinese *suzhi* discourse (Jacka, 2009). Thus, the *shiminhua* process is not only valued by the individual, but by the urban society as well. On one hand, being accepted into the local social network is an indication that the migrant is of little difference from the urban native, and the established social network will enhance a sense of belonging, regarding place identity as an element of place attachment (Lewicka, 2005). On the other hand, it also helps to accumulate cultural capital, improving the ability to understand and speak Cantonese, and the appreciation for the



local Cantonese culture, which could be positive factors for SI in a long term. In the fieldwork, it is also empirically verified that people who frequently interact with locals are more willing to learn and speak Cantonese, thus they are more capable of making more urban friends who are native speakers of Cantonese and further enlarge their social circle. These processes form a virtuous circle in building language ability and extending social networks. To triangulate with Chapter 4 on the essence of the process of *shiminhua*, following a long period of interaction with the urban locals, the rural-urban migrant will finally develop a new 'compromised place attachment' and an 'internalised urban identity'.<sup>116</sup> This new identity makes them more of a friend than 'a non-local' to their urban native friends - which will reduce the chance of discrimination. To summarize, the migrants' ability in speaking Cantonese and making urban native friends increase the likelihood of a positive reception and re-affirm a high degree of *shiminhua* for the rural-urban migrant individuals.

### Education and Schooling

Education is a frequently mentioned sub-theme from the qualitative data analysis. From the quantitative findings based on Table 7.2, generally, higher education level of the migrant is associated with higher levels of *shiminhua*, but there are nuances to each indicator. As the variable of the education level of rural-urban migrants has been divided into seven levels from 'unfinished primary school & illiterate' to 'university graduate & above', it has the potential to bestow more insights into the influence of

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<sup>116</sup> The 'compromised place attachment' does not necessarily relate to negative connotations.

the individual migrant's educational level on their *shiminhua* potential. Two findings related to education level are worth noticing.

First, when it comes to the educational level of migrants, those who have completed primary school, without completing junior high school have significantly lower PA and SI compared with migrants of other educational levels. From a statistical point of view, this group who completed primary school education could either be those primary school graduates who cease to go to junior high or those junior high school dropouts. In the sub-section Acculturation through Education in China, it has pointed out that the Chinese Compulsory Education Law first launched in 1986, required a compulsory 9-year education sponsored by the state. It declared that a child at the age of 6 should attend six years of primary school plus three years of middle school. Whilst in reality, what has not been recorded in the official data is that there is a large number of primary school dropouts who move to the city to *dagong* at an early age in rural China, due to the lack of educational resources (Pong, 2014). This may explain why in the quantitative data those who finished primary school would theoretically be those who graduated before 1986, indicating an older group of people. Therefore, it remains undetermined whether the negative association with SI is caused by lacking junior high school educational level or because of their age, as are supposed to be in their late 40s or early 50s. From the analysis above, the factor of primary education turns out not likely to be significantly impactful on *shiminhua* level.

The second interesting finding is that migrants with some sort of tertiary education either in universities or professional colleges ended up having significant negative correlations on the SI level. This finding reflects the intrinsic gap between groups of rural-urban migrants of varying skills and education tracks, which is to be further analysed in the discussion section with corroboration information on schooling and education in the GBA in the next sub-section.

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Three contradictory findings remain, namely the impacts of tertiary education on *shiminhua*, the educational choice for second generation, and the nuanced interpretation of *shiminhua* in different aspects: These seeming contradictory findings will be discussed drawing to the collective method of FGD and addressed respectively in the following sub-section.

## 6.2 Unfolding Three Confounding Results

### The Impacts of Tertiary Education on *Shiminhua*

The very first controversy of findings lie in-between two quantitative results, which shows that tertiary education has a negative correlation with one of the alternative *shiminhua* indicator SI. Which is in contrast to the general positive correlation of higher education level of individual migrants to higher PA, and UI – with the later positive correlation resonated by previous literature on *shiminhua*. (S. Chen & Liu, 2016; Liao & Wang, 2019; Drolet & Teixeira, 2020).<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> For the two tracks of academic and professional education in China, see Figure 2.8 in Chapter 2.

<sup>118</sup> Tertiary education includes the full-time undergraduate degree programmes and the vocational associate degree programmes or *dazhuan* in Chinese, as indicated in Figure 2.8.

To address the complicated impacts of tertiary education on *shiminhua* requires a closer look on certain aspect of proposed *shiminhua* indicator SI with insights from qualitative data. Scrutinizing the variable SI, one characteristic of the aspect is that SI is considered associated with a 'specific' city. Whilst in the qualitative data some skilled workers who had received tertiary education expressed that – when it comes to plans of settlement, cities of comparable scales are considered as homogeneous and replaceable to each other, and do not play an important part in their choices of settlement given satisfactory income and convenient urban amenities. For example, in the interview, one informant pointed out:

“I went on business trips to many other cities out of GBA including Shanghai and Hangzhou, those cities are all very urbanized. In fact, I didn't feel that I had ever switched places. It's like all the (cities are the) same, without a very clear distinction [...] like living in Guangzhou or Shanghai, that does not make much difference to me.” (Interview 10)

Furthermore, some skilled rural-urban migrants are willing to keep their free options of cities rather than to be bounded by one specific city. This willingness resonates with the characteristic of international expatriate migration or those mobile 'talents' in China, as discussed in Chapter 2 (L. Zhao & Zhu, 2009; Kunz, 2016, p. 90). Noting that high skill-level job are often reserved for candidates who achieved tertiary education degree in China, the degree-holder among the sample are likely to share the similar motivation to keep future migrant destination flexible as they regard themselves as quasi-talent. Moreover, based on the qualitative interpretation, those educated in higher education institutes, mostly located in the cities, also tend to have more choices among cities thanks to their relative abundant experience living and working in urban

context. In a word, achieving tertiary-level education does not discourage settlement to urban area overall, but it may reduce the willingness to be settled in a specific city with the hope to keep up for more job and city options.

The other possible underlying reason appeared from FGDs, is the delay of marriage and parenthood as a result of taking longer to complete the academic programme, specifically for those undergoing higher education – which usually requires 4 years for a bachelor's degree compared to other kind of certificates and professional diplomas (To, 2013; Ji & Yeung, 2014). As the qualitative analysis has shown that marriage and parenthood is closely related to SI, as backed up by other literature in Chapter 2. The knock-on effect of higher education in delaying marriage age thus undermining settlement intention.

Therefore, in summary, it is not the tertiary education itself that discourage settlement intention, in contrast, higher education may have bestowed the rural-urban migrants' further freedom to choose which specific city to settle and gives them more free time before the family and parenthood commitment. This is particularly true for younger, second generation rural-urban migrants, who tends to be more well-educated with much later marriage compared to their parents' generation.

### *A Rural-Urban Gap or A Labour-Talent Gap*

To further tease out the discussion of tertiary education's impacts on individual *shiminhua* experience, it is noted that there seems to be an increasing polarisation among the homogeneously defined "rural-urban migrants" group (Yu, 2010). Those migrants who received tertiary education have demonstrated certain aspects that differentiate or excluded them as 'typical' low-skilled, hard-to-*shiminhua* rural-urban migrants.

From the urban governance and the policy-maker's perspective, this further raises the question on whom to *shiminhua* - whether every migrant individual in the city requires *shiminhua* or not. In fact, when discussing the genesis of *shiminhua* as a concept, certain genres of migrants are intuitively excluded from the objectives of *shiminhua* process: including returning overseas students as well as those who are recognized as skilled workers or 'talent', - a category that similar benefits and welfare to expatriates in China<sup>119</sup>(L. Zhao & Zhu, 2009; Y. Liu & Shen, 2017; X. Lin et al., 2021).

Hence, what is the foundation in differentiation in policy treatments between migrants and those who are identified as "talents"? When scrutinized, these two groups nevertheless share numerous similar characteristics: both groups have numerous

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<sup>119</sup> Talent is referred to as *rencai* in China, it is an overarching category that incorporates researchers and innovators, managerial level administrative staff, and skilled workers in certain specificity and industry. Provinces and cities usually have their own 'talent recognition scheme' or 'talent absorbing scheme', apart from the national policy (Lin et al., 2021).

individual with rural origins; both groups moved to cities for job opportunities with higher rewards; they are able to settle and sustain themselves in the city for relatively long periods (L. Zhao & Zhu, 2009). If both groups choose to migrate internationally to a different culture context out of China, it is likely that both groups would undergo process of acculturation, as discussed in Section 2.3 Theories of Acculturation. When it comes to the process of *shiminhua*, however, from a city administrator's perspective, the talents are seen as a desirable potential resource to the city compared with low-skilled or semi-skilled labour could be regarded as necessary burden. The reasons are two-fold. In contemporary mode of economic development, migrants were deemed as contributing less to the economic development of the city compared to talent, measuring their productivity by income and expenditure; moreover, low-skill labour even semi-skilled labours are highly replaceable with the introduction of automation and AI (National Statistical Bureau of China, 2019; Statistic Bureau of Guangdong Province, 2019).

Both reasons have corroborated with to the qualitative data, migrants working in manufacture and construction section generally consider their own job less productive than those working in the service sector. Whereas this also reflected the overall adjustment of GBA regions' economic structure change: labour-oriented migrants used to be more desirable when the manufacturing sector was booming during the 1980s-1990s. This, as Vogel (1995) points out, is deeply fixed in the socio-economic condition of certain development phases of the region and is shaped by the demand

of the global market, which also echoes the different stages in Zelinsky's Mobility Transition Model.<sup>120</sup> In the 1990s, most industries in GBA were involved in labour-intensive manufacturing, with abundant investment from Hong Kong and nature resources from the hinterland, labour input was the significant pivotal for regional development. With the development of the GBA, living standards have been raised and labour recruitment has been more expensive. Since the 2010s, particularly after the citywide lockdown in China to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, global manufacturing firms are moving to other emerging economies for cheaper labour, the GBA has adjusted its vision to become a more knowledge-based economy which required a different type of labour – broadly defined as the talents. The industrial upgrading is represented by the rising of Shenzhen as the 'Silicon Valley of China', while other cities' managers in GBA including Guangzhou, Dongguan, and Zhongshan are sparing no efforts to catch up (X. Zhang et al., 2021). In other words, from the regional policy-makers' perspective, rural-urban migrants are no longer as favourable as those talents for the new regional development transformation to a knowledge-based economy, they shall at least be integrated to fit for urban residents, increasing contributions to the regional development while mitigating the negative impacts on the city's management cost.

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<sup>120</sup> For Zelinsky's Mobility Transition Model, see Chapter 2 Table 2.1.



The above analysis has taken a wider scope, and addressed the regional context in impact on *shiminhua* towards the group of generally low-skilled or semi-skilled rural-urban migrants compared with their high skilled counterparts. While it does not clearly explain why *shiminhua* at the individual level could accumulatively impact on the regional-scale urban and economic development?

It is understood that the term *shiminhua* was first coined as government discourse regard the provision of decent working and living condition to migrants as reciprocity for those who have contributed to the economic development for China as a nation. In the meantime, the Not-In-My-Backyard mentality of the major city governments tends to shirk the responsibility of for achieving the targets of *shiminhua* proposed by the central government, to nearby regions, particularly when there is no existing clear-cut measurement of to evaluate *shiminhua* effectiveness. These are likely to be rural areas that are underdeveloped, which means there are even fewer resources to invest in the process of *shiminhua*. Compared to input on *shiminhua*, the local government tended to be more generous in establishing programmes for attracting talents.

Moreover, even if the city government has reluctantly channelled resources to support the *shiminhua* process, the resources may not be allocated to the most effective areas due to asymmetrical information between individual rural-urban migrants and government officials. This also traces back to the administrative system in which the city officials are responsible to implementing the policy guideline of higher level

administration, than caring for the preliminary welfare of rural-migrant. Rural-urban migrants have little impacts the evaluation of their performance in urban governance. As supporting the process of *shiminhua* is regarded as more of an absorbing strategy of central and regional governments it has been admitted and carried out more like a political task.

To summarize, the identification of objects that require *shiminhua* is more based on the labour-talent gap than the rural-urban gap. This sub-section further elaborated the essential impacts of higher education on migrants' *shiminhua* trajectory. As higher education remains one of the few channels to turn migrants from 'unwanted labour' to "favourable talents" viewed by the urban administrators. Hence *shiminhua* at regional and city level of governance could be regarded as an intention to push forward the lagging-behind group, embedded deeply in the Chinese discourse of modernisation and echoing with political propaganda of national revitalisation (Mobrand, 2015).

### **The Education Choice for Second Generation Migrants**

The second counterintuitive finding is that qualitative interview data demonstrates that children's education is one of the most important concerns for first-generation rural-urban migrants to make migration and settlement decisions in the GBA context. However, in the quantitative results presented in Table 5.10 and Table 7.1, children's

education is not significant correlated to the alternative sets of *shiminhua* indicators PA, UI, SI or HD.

It is also helpful to note that the variable of children's education is constructed by the question on types of schooling that children were educated, with the assumption that ideal situation is to send children a local state school – based on the qualitative research from FGD.<sup>121</sup> One potential explanation for this confounding result is that the capacity to send children to an ideal local state school might not be a cause but a consequence after decent level of *shiminhua* has been achieved. Therefore, in the earlier years of the process, children's education might not be a major factor that impacts on *shiminhua* level.

The solution to triangulate and explain the second seemingly contradictory findings will utilise FGD findings. As in Chapter 3 Methodology has set out, semi-structured interviews and FGD are two types of qualitative research methods that have been deployed in this study and have both been analysed by thematic coding. The particular value of FGDs as a collective way of qualitative data collection is that it allows individuals to present their views among a group who have similar characteristics. This is a very useful technique which could ironing out inconsistencies of views among a group (Boateng, 2012).

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<sup>121</sup> Education is universally emphasized by new generations of migrants in a foreign country or a big city. It is seen as a channel for social mobility in the receiving society and will ensure job security and prosperous city life for the next generation.

Evidence from FGDs demonstrate that migrants do not formulate plans on their future children's education when they were young and unmarried. One FGD which consists of mainly younger migrants in their 20s, when asked about long-term planning for settlement and children's education, the informants mentioned that these issues are currently out of their considerations:

"How old are we?" (Turned to the other informant, all laughing)

"I think we yet to come to the age of considering these issues (of children's education)..."

"I bet, I won't consider these issues until my marriage"  
(FGD 6 Guangzhou)

While there seems to be no evidence from quantitative data that age is an important factor inflecting decisions on children's education, marriage might be, as revealed by the FGD. Other more mature migrants have their thoughts on children's education, but due to a lack of clear information of the options and limited by the contemporary complicated and discriminating education system to migrants, they have difficulties muddling through the system by themselves:

"Due to the current regulation, my children cannot attend local school ...We migrant parents are paying far more tuition than local parents, (for children) to attend state school here, for them, normally they pay their children's living cost, that's it, but we need to pay extra fees which is much higher compared to them." (FGD 9 Dongguan)

The migrant parents who have established an urban life and lived in Dongguan for more than a decade have the intuitive feeling that in order to enrol their children into local state school they will need to pay higher fee, but when prompted, he is not able

to name the criterion of fee, as himself was not briefed properly with all details by the school managers and officials from the local education bureau.

As a result of inadequate plans and difficulties in muddling through the local education system, education for second-generation migrants has been turned into a system that reproduce migrants that are considered as necessary to *shiminhua*.

### *Schooling and Education in Reproduction of Shiminhua*

From sub-section 6.2.3, one of the most important motivations for *shiminhua* to occur is to build up a foundation for the next generation to flourish (H. Chen et al., 2018; Wu & Zheng, 2018). Hence those indicators of PA, UI, SI, and HD could be understood as internalised expressions of ability to send children to reputable local state schools. To further explain how the factor of education plays its role in the *shiminhua* process, this sub-section starts with the aspiration for education and discuss to what extent this aspiration can be achieved in reality.

Most of the rural-urban migrants themselves receive an lower level of education than their urban counterparts; dropping out of school or poor educational performance and experience are prevalent among the rural-urban migrants (Whyte, 2010; Cheng & Smyth, 2021). In fact, poor academic performance in school is one of the key reasons to justify the choice of migrating to work in the city. This has further shaped their

interpretation of "*bitterness*" they have experienced in the city as a result of their own 'low' quality, aptitude or *suzhi* (Jacka, 2009).

"Despite *hukou*, what aspects do you think are more help. ful for you to achieve successful *shiminhua*?"

"This is really hard to say, but I think to facilitate *shiminhua* we really need to improve our own quality [...]" (Interview 29)

This interviewee regarded improving the migrant's quality – *suzhi*, as a synthesis of culture, education, and taste, leading to further *shiminhua* and integration into city life. This education-improve-*suzhi* discourse is rather similar to the strategies of acculturation discussed in Chapter 2. The rationale is, after learned the lessons from their own living and working experience, to prevent their children from living a miserable life or blocked out from *shiminhua* with barriers, the rural-urban migrant parents regard good educational achievement as an achievable channel for successful *shiminhua* and thriving urban life for their children.

Despite the migrant parents' strong emphasis for their children's education, limited by their own educational level, the migrant parents could hardly assist with their children's coursework or assignments by themselves. In the qualitative data analysis, most interviewees and FGD informants refer to their children's education as *shangxue*, "to go to school". They did not seem to have insights into the education system in GBA, neither did they acknowledge any details of the curriculum that their children studied. Instead, they strongly imply that the school is responsible for all educational activities, and the parents' responsibility in education is to send them to a good-quality school.

Despite the lack of understanding of the educational system for their children, some informants referred to *Gaokao*, the national-wide college entrance exams to be somehow the end of the most essential moment for their children's educational trajectory:

“For the College Entrance Exam - *Gao Kao*. we have used mock-up question papers from different places, the Beijing Mock-Up Paper is the easiest. However, Beijing has so many universities, especially the good ones. Many good universities in Beijing, they have lower requirements for Beijing's candidate. That will make a huge difference. It is the same situation in Hunan province where local universities have lower requirements for local candidates. I think it is the same circumstance for other provinces.” (FGD 1 Guangzhou)

To be qualified to participate *Gaokao*, a Chinese pupil typically has nine years of compulsory education plus three years of senior high school education; the latter usually has the major purpose of preparing the student to take the *Gaokao* exam (Fang et al., 2017). As discussed in the sub-section Acculturation through Education in China, following the expansion of university admission in 1999, and again after the 2008 global financial crisis, university graduates may find it difficult to obtain a job in the city, an unimaginable fate for their parents who grew up in the era in which university students were regarded as the elite (Jiang, 2017). The transformation of status of college graduates has also shaped the education choices for the current generation of second generation rural-urban migrants: some informants decided to send their children back to rural hometown to receive education due to the unaffordability and keen competition in the city.

Returning children would usually live with grandparents or other relatives and are labelled 'the left-behind children'(Murphy, 2000). According to studies, left behind children face a significantly higher risk of developing psychological and behavioural problems compared to other returned children accompanied by both parents (Qu et al., 2018). The arrangement for single parent to go back to rural hometown and the other working in the city – usually the male, the husband, is also prevalent. While for those who are lucky enough to continue their education in urban schools, they may be charged extra school-selection fees and are required to take the *Gaokao* exam back in their hometown.

One interviewee described his dilemma when facing all the barriers for his children raised in the city vividly in the FGD:

“But your children were attending school here in the city since an early age, right?”

“Indeed, my son was here from a young age. He attended kindergarten here, but we did pay a great deal of money in the name of ‘school selection fee’ or ‘school sponsorship’”.

“Do you plan to go back to your hometown in the future?”

“When I get older, I will go back to my hometown. I stay here now to be with my children. Once my children are well established... I won’t stay.” (FGD 4 Guangzhou)

If this young couple’s youngest son does not enter the local primary school as planned, they will have no choice but to send both of their children back to their rural hometown. Well informed of the potential harm this decision may cause to their children in the long run, the only mitigation they could think of is to work even harder to earn extra



money to pay for the tuition fees in a higher quality local private school which charges 3 to 5 times higher than local public school. They will usually realize that there is no way their children can get into a local state school.

Given all the educational barriers involved in realizing the prospect to achieve upward mobility in the *shiminhua* process, it seems that a new generation of working-class, rural-urban migrants is created before they were born, and the actual number is growing steadily. Having limited access to high-quality education, despite the challenging experience of *shiminhua* that has somehow turned them into new urban residents, the migrants' parents are expecting to reproduce a new generation of migrants working in similar low-skilled insecure jobs. But this is not because they lack recognized education certificates and proper training but could be traced back to a mechanism of barrier, with a specification of education system that reproduces the low-skill labour in both rural and urban area.

The new generation of rural-urban migrants are then described as a 'drifting population' who neither belongs to the urban nor the rural (Heng, 2010, p. 42). Conceptually, it in fact creates a group of people with fussy rural-urban identity that resonate with the rural-urban continuum as presented in Figure 3.2. In practices, there are multiple questions that yet to solve by the city administrators. How will the city then provide jobs for them? How will the city governance influence their lives? These are beyond out of the scope of discussion regarding *shiminhua*, but the understanding

of the mechanism in *shiminhua* may stimulate more thoughts on the future second-generation rural-urban migrants – when the traditionally regarded social mobility channel – education, is narrower and narrower.

In summary, this sub-section explores the rationale behind the seemingly contradictory results on education of migrant children from qualitative and quantitative findings, further reveal the myth that well-wished migrant parents are capable of achieving their children's social mobility – the result turned out to be their new generation still need to *shiminhua* again. This is due to the exclusive nature of the current education system in the urban sector. While the second-generation rural-urban migrants can pick up the urban lifestyle and get accustomed to city life, most are anticipated to receive an inferior education compared to their urban native counterparts - no matter taken the option of staying in the city or the option of going back to rural areas. In this way, it is argued that a loop of reproduction of cheap labour is then created between the generation through the current schooling and education system in the urban sector. The current analytical framework of *shiminhua* does not address this issue sufficiently. Lost in-between rural and urban sector the marginalised new generation may create challenges that reduce the credibility of the whole *shiminhua* idea and narratives.

### **The Two Contrasting Perceptions on *Shiminhua***

The previous sub-sections have addressed two confounding results, leading to more in-depth discussion on the eligibility criterion of *shiminhua* and how next generation of rural-urban migrants is reproduced under the current system of *shiminhua* with the example of education. To further the discussion, this section addresses the confounding issue of measurement of *shiminhua*.

Taking one step back from the issue, an overarching reflection would be it is necessary to build a *shiminhua* matrix; if necessary, whether it is viable to establish a version of wider applicability in cities of different socio-economic conditions. Regarding these two questions, there seems to be contradictory perspectives. From the literature that have taken an overview at national, provincial, and city level, much efforts have been devoted in building matrices and identifying potential indicators (S. Chen & Liu, 2016; Yang, 2010; G. Wang et al., 2008; Xu et al., 2023). In contrast, as the qualitative analysis in sub-section *The process of shiminhua*, of Chapter 4 revealed, *shiminhua*'s nature as a seeping-through process made objective measurements difficult, as referencing point of a resident of full degree of *shiminhua* can be hard to define. These interpretations were backed up by the fact that quantitative models using SI and HD as response variables do not have a high Pseudo  $R^2$  – an indication of limited predictability when the sample size is enlarged.

Despite the contradictory qualitative findings against national and regional literature, efforts in establishing a measurement *shiminhua* has reflected the mentality from the

Chinese institution that governing mobility is a political task that requires national and city government's responsibility. This contributed to the top-down political perception in the pair of contrasting understanding of *shiminhua* could be established as indicated in Figure 6.1.

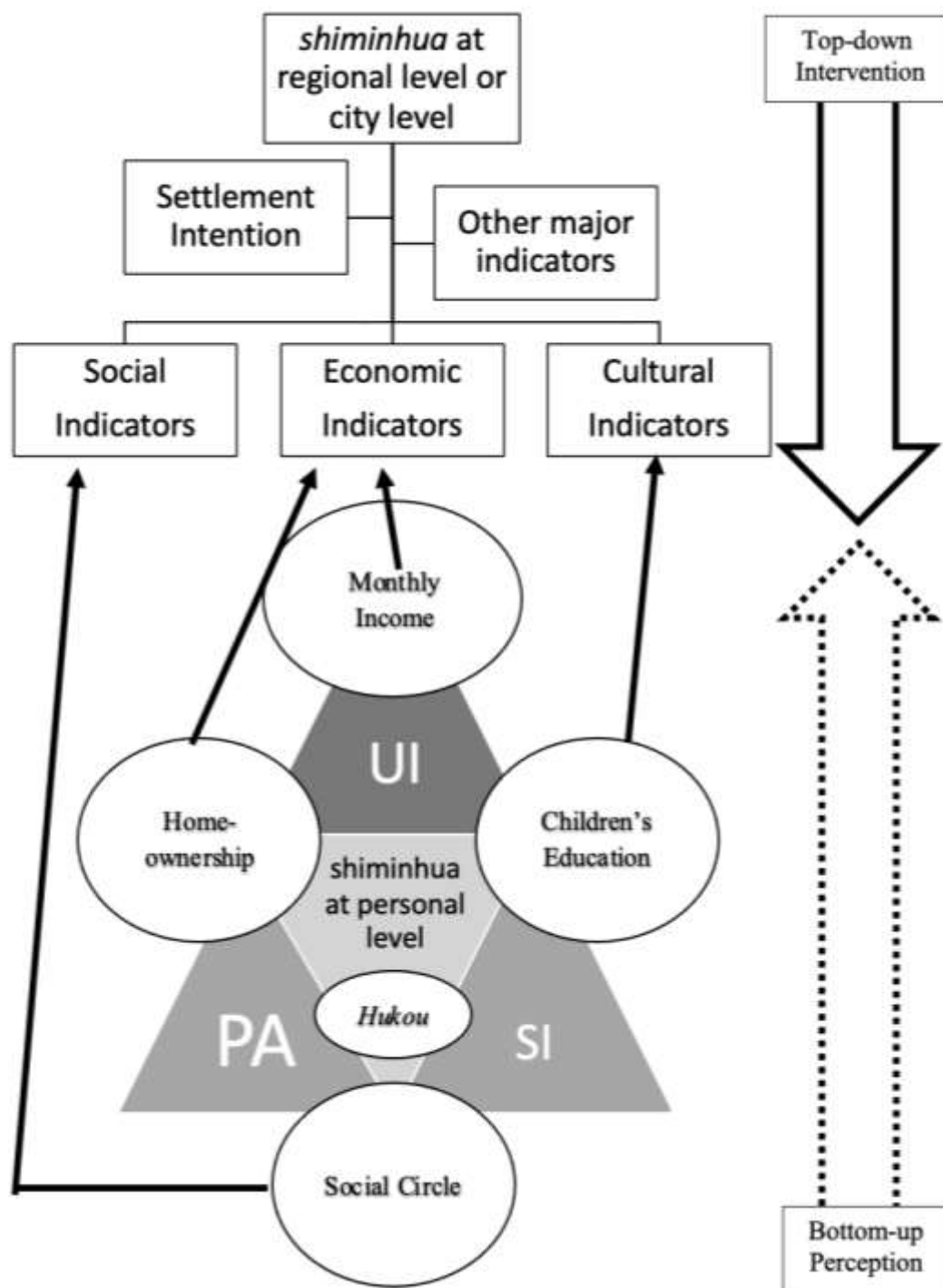


Figure 6.1 Two contrasting perceptions on of *shiminhua*.

Source: Author-own retrieved from data.

In Figure 6.1, the top-down, governmental perspective of *shiminhua* is mostly prevalent in policy discourse, as discussed in Chapter 2 sub-section The Genesis of *shiminhua*. In other words, national, regional, or city-level administrators take the

responsible in both making and implementing top-down policy intervention to progress *shiminhua* process as an ultimate solution in addressing issues raised from internal migration, failure in delivering *shiminhua* for rural-urban migrants was considered inability to cope with urban problems.<sup>122</sup> The success of *shiminhua* is usually measured by socio-economic status of the migrant individual and settlement intention, as they are often adopted as direct indicators for reflecting *shiminhua* level, comprise of sub-level indicators that mainly adopt socio-economic factors of individuals or household (S. Chen & Liu, 2016; Song, 2016). The high intention of settlement alongside with other indicators could be assigned by the government via “policy experts” or based on previous studies, which does not always have a solid rationale. The indicators are designed for overarching geographical areas and are less likely to capture the *shiminhua* situation in a specific regional context, for example, in GBA.

In contrast, the perception of rural-urban migrant individual in GBA on *shiminhua* process, as revealed by this study, emphasizes on the cultural-psychological aspects of place attachment and urban identity, with settlement intention and *hukou* as either trivial or less-directly related considerations for *shiminhua per se*. . Despite proposing a set of rigid indicators that match categories set by the government, informants may

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<sup>122</sup> There are also nuances of understanding of *shiminhua*, among different levels of government, for example, the central government would take a more strategic view and embed *shiminhua* in the process of urbanisation, and convergence of regional economic development; while a city government would pay more attention to the more specific problems associated with *shiminhua* topic, e.g, how to effectively register all rural-urban migrants within the territories of governance.

prefer a framework and discourse that could reveal personal, place-based, characterized experience of *shiminhua* process in GBA.<sup>123</sup>

Although having fundamentally different rationales in building up the concept of *shiminhua* - the government's perception focuses on effective governance and strategic planning whereas the individual focuses on the improvement of personal welfare and urban experience, these two perceptions appear to influence each other in the process of implementation. For example, city government like Dongguan promote the new term of 'new Dongguan residents' – or *xin guanren* to strengthen the sense of belonging of rural-urban migrants in contributing to the development of Dongguan city, which reflected the shifting of focus on cultural-psychological elements by top-down governance; while many migrants as informants do agree that achieving a good level of *shiminhua* is not only beneficial to the wider community and society, but helpful for personal and career development in the city, and particularly advantageous for the next generation.<sup>124</sup>

To summarize, the two-perspectives comply with each other and provide alternative insights, thus forming more comprehensive conceptualization of *shiminhua*. By taking

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<sup>123</sup> One of the most prominent characteristics is the ability in Cantonese, as triangulated in the previous sub-section.

<sup>124</sup> For details on motivation and driver of *shiminhua* at individual level, refer to Chapter 4 sub-section Drivers of *shiminhua* and sub-section Impacts of *shiminhua*.

both views into consideration it will shed light on specific policy instrument at the local level.

### *A shiminhua future for all?*

One approach to reconcile the divergence of views in understanding *shiminhua* is to figure out better policy intervention that facilitate effective *shiminhua* process at individual level. Switching from a political-governance perception to more cultural-psychological perceptions in urban governance is a potential pathway for achieving successful *shiminhua*. It includes demystifying the discourse of an individual string for success and replacing it by a group constructive process, that permits taking a wider range of stakeholders on board.

This thesis argues that combination of the traditional value of working hard, and modern working-oriented ethics forms the attitude towards personal striving as the best individual *shiminhua* strategy in the city. From the qualitative data analysis, it revealed that migrants draw upon the traditional value, for instance, obligations to families in finally supporting the elderly and the children to justify the pursuing for modern working ethic like efficiency and productivity, establishing a connection between successful *shiminhua* results and painstaking efforts in working. From literature review, on the one hand, the mentality of working harder and earning remittance to support rural families can offer some psychological compensation for absence from their children and elderly relatives in their rural hometown (Q. Zhao et al., 2014). On the other hand, the lack of cultural and entertainment amenities in



migrant settlement areas limits the options for recreational choices, leaving the migrants a few opportunities for interaction outside of their working hours, given some free time (Liao & Wang, 2019). As a result, migrants work for the sake of working, making for a vicious circle that heavily deteriorate migrant's health and long-term career development, and hinder their *shiminhua* process (Borhade, 2011). Or approaching it from another perspective, one of the most significant impacts of *shiminhua* is that rural migrants have embraced the urban value of working harder and consuming more.

The toxic side of this 'personal-strive-for-success' discourse is that whoever failed to *shiminhua* were attributed to personal incompetence, not only causes psychological pressure upon the individual, but intensifies the level of discrimination towards new migrants as a group from rural-urban migrants who have settled in the city earlier (Tittle & Grasmick, 2001). Urban residents and older migrant would regard those who failed to achieve *shiminhua* as people who reject to accept the new lifestyles, and who are lazybones. This can create culture shocks for both urban residents and rural-urban migrants, and may trigger further resentment and deepen segregation between the two communities. It may also reversely result into rural-urban migrants of stereotyping urban residents as arrogant, rude, and malicious.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> See Chapter 4 sub-section the quotation from FGD 12 in Zhongshan.

Nevertheless, for the factory managers and city governors, migrants' attitudes as such could be taken advantage of, providing an excuse for exploitation of their labour in the enterprise or the city. Therefore, hardworking with less requirement for welfare was thus further encouraged and can strengthen by the discourse. It also adheres to the popular narrative that if the rural-urban migrant fails to settle and thrive in the city they should scold themselves for laziness and bad luck. This discourse prevents migrants in actively identifying other factors at a societal scale – they would accuse their inability to afford local housing and lack of interactions with urban natives in their social circle as reasons for less successful *shiminhua* process, while not acknowledging what factors at the city or national level that have caused the unaffordability and segregation with urban natives.

One typical factor that forms barriers to *shiminhua* is the city-level institutions: quota system or *yaohao* system for buying apartments for rural-urban migrants without local *hukou*, which added difficulties for non-local *hukou* migrants in owning a property – while homeownership is a condition that contribute significantly to *shiminhua* level according to this thesis.<sup>126</sup> The housing quota system resembles a lottery, as described by many informants where some may be lucky enough to get a spare quota, while others end up being onto a waiting list. The original aim of the *yaohao* system, according to the city government local policy briefing, is to form a limitation at policy

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<sup>126</sup> Refer to Chapter 5 section 5.5 Inferential Statistics.

level for speculation in local real estate market thus ideally curbing housing prices, but the low opportunities for obtaining a quota turned out to hinder homeownership for the rural-urban migrants who are first time buyers. Burdened by sky-rocketing urban housing prices and constrained by the quota system for buying a property, some migrants who originally intended to settle down in the city had no other choice but returning to their rural homes. Meanwhile, some of the migrants would choose to take the risk by delving into the grey area of state laws and local regulations, for example, buying collective property right real estate, known locally as *xiaochanquan fang*, which is not legally regulated in the housing market, imposing risks and uncertainties for life in a long run (Y. P. Wang, 2004; 2021; Qiao, 2017; He, 2019; M. Zhang & He, 2022).

Another example of the failure in urban governance regarding *shiminhua* at the city scale can be directly observed from the sites for fieldwork – the physical segregation of urban native and rural-urban migrant community can be huge.<sup>127</sup> For example, *Shipai* village in Guangzhou and *Zhangmutou* township in Dongguan are described by FGD informants as ‘rural-urban migrants enclaves’, since the proposed urban regeneration was delayed without matching policies to facilitate mixing of the urban residents community and the migrants community, the segregation of living areas had prevents mitigation and mingling of rural-urban migrants with urban natives (Yue et

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<sup>127</sup> See Appendix 2 Selected Sites for Fieldwork.

al., 2013). Both the *yaohao* system and the formation of the local urban enclaves are devised by city-level urban governance policy which are obstacles to the important factors of homeownership and social circle with the locals, - according to quantitative analysis of this thesis, two most important factors in achieving *shiminhua* process. These two examples are beyond the extent of personal striving effort to tackle, thus they challenge the logic of striving to succeed in urban setting as individuals.

Apart from the barriers caused by urban governance, at national level policy, the one specifically highlighted by qualitative data is the point-based *hukou* transfer system. Firstly introduced in Zhongshan in 2010 as an experimental policy and hereafter established as a national policy (Cai & Zhang, 2019) Arguably it is not the condition of the *hukou* transfer system but the erratic implementation that caused confusion for migrants who endeavoured to have a local *hukou*. As one of the informants described her experience from motivation to desperation while muddling through the point-based system:

“To transfer in my *hukou*, I need to accumulate points in the point-based scheme - it is sometimes difficult if you do not know the rules [...] point-scheme (*hukou* transfer) system, in ages like us, the eligibility considers factors like participation of social insurance system, we don't have a competitive advantage (as rural-urban migrants).” (Interview 24)

It seems that the assumingly good-intentioned policy design of point-based system could be obscure and unsupportive for the rural-urban migrant individuals' *shiminhua* experience. In fact, according to several informants in FGDs and semi-structured interview, it becomes an institutional barrier for city government to apply to keep the

unwanted migrants want, regardless of the original policy intention to facilitate *shiminhua* (Cai & Zhang, 2019).

The numerous barriers caused by urban governance, for instance, the housing quota and the national policy of the point-based *hukou* transfer system have created a challenging environment for *shiminhua*. For this reason, the view that personal striving is the key factor for successful *shiminhua* is not accurate, but rather appears to be an urban myth. It seems that a smooth and successful *shiminhua* process – even the simplified version defined by the government– required continuing reforms and alleviation of institutional barriers at all administrative levels.

Before proposing remedies to change of urban governance, as well as regional and national policies, it is important to understand the possible rationale of this exclusive urban governance in GBA, one possible explanation is the deeply rooted mentality in city branding and development competition.<sup>128</sup>

In the Chapter 5 sub-section on Drivers of *shiminhua*, the city is regarded as a symbolic place where the process of *shiminhua* occurs. The “bright lights”, or the glamour of the city is one of the most important drivers (Connelly et al., 2011, p. 284). It is easy to underestimate numerous benefits of migrant and their *shiminhua* that has brought to the city. From the view of regional development, the urban sector is understood as

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<sup>128</sup> See section 2.2 Theories of Urbanisation.

part of the mechanism by which suitable labour is attracted as resources for the city's economic development. Considered as a resource rural labour is absorbed by the city administration for the specific purpose of boosting rapid economic development – a logic acquired and obtained from the market economy since the early era of Opening-Up (L. Zhao & Zhu, 2009). To certain extent, the more efficient the ability to attract labour and talent from a wider geographical area, the more successful a particular city is deemed - compared against other cities. Since being able to provide higher-paid job and drawing immigrations from all over the world will contribute to cities a city's "World City" status, regional cities have joined the same competition within their own regions and nations (Friedmann, 1986; Purcell, 2003)

This assumption of city competition explain why city administrators tend to focus most upon the eligible urban citizen's welfare, as their primary task is to keep their city energized without too much considerations on impacts to the other areas (Knight & Song, 1999). They are not obliged to take care of rural-urban migrants who manage to live in the city as long as they do not cause problems for the city administrators. The migrants' hardship, their endeavour, and their ambition in the city may not be so crucial when it comes to the appraisal of the administrator's performance by higher-level government officials, thus leading to the assumption that welfare and well-beings of the migrants is a very last priority. Furthermore, as officials at city and higher administrative levels are not directly elected by the urban dweller, nor the rural-urban migrant. Thus a good *shiminhua* result may have little positive impacts on the

evaluation of the officials' appointment in practice, despite the fact that migrants has contributed substantially to the economic development of the city and the region. This mentality of development-first and Nimbyism has meshed with the Chinese national discourse of state-directed development, as Deng Xiaoping's words go "let some people get richer first" while the last part of the quotation 'and those who get rich first to help the other' is left to neglect (Kohli, 2004). Meanwhile, it has been strengthened by increasing intensity of Chinese cities' competition, not only according to economic development but also soft power and modern lifestyle. With the prevalence of globalisation after the 2000s, Chinese cities are involved in competition beyond the local geographical region nationally and globally, (Pang, 2012). As a result, cheap labour is firstly absorbed, then deserted and covered up with the city's governance mechanism. The mechanism has evolved to be more and more subtle and effective in order to catch up with the trend of inter-city competition.

Saying that, it does not imply that city branding and city competition intrinsically oppose to *shiminhua* by nature. When appropriately deployed, they could be utilised to facilitate *shiminhua* by urban administrators and regional policymakers. This could be further elaborated at global, national, regional, household, and individual level.

At the global level, since China has evolved from "the world's factory" to new roles in the global chain of production and logistics (Feng, 2017, p. 1). The population bonus of cheap labour is now fading out compared to other emerging economies such as

ASEAN countries, India, or Nigeria (ASEAN Secretariat, 2022). In addition, globalization together with global human mobility has spread the ideology of 'free movement, 'global citizen', 'human rights' and so on (Sen, 2001). Given this spatial-economic agglomeration effect, Chinese cities have become the studios of production, providing higher wages and more attractions to the rural resident. This development pattern can also be observed in the historical trajectories of western cities like London or New York. Whereas Chinese cities have evolved at a much faster rate in recent decades, compressing, as it were, a century's development period into a couple of decades. In short, the rising and flourishing of GBA cities cannot be detached from a global socio-economic backdrop (Choi et al., 2021). In order to fit into the trend of industrial upgrading, programmes to facilitate *shiminhua* can be collaborated with skill-improvement schemes and focus on nurturing the next generation of high-skill labours or even talents, resonating the discussion on rural-urban gap and labour-talent gap.

At the national level, the state government has a strong intention to balance the development interests of different regions and major cities. Certain regions have gained development bonuses from the Opening-up Policy and subsequent establishment of the free market. This prosperity mainly occurs in areas that have managed to attract labour from elsewhere and have enjoyed so-called 'economic miracles'; prominent examples include cities in the Yangtze River Delta region and the GBA. Meanwhile, other regions have been deprived by the brain drain and loss of state support in certain industries, for instance, the old industrial area in Northeast China



where even major cities have experienced stagnation and deprivation. To achieve regional convergence by reclaiming benefits for the deprived areas, the state government is paying more attention to supporting the left-behind, with frequent reference to the Poverty Alleviation Goals announced in the 13<sup>th</sup> National Five-Year Plan (National People's Congress of China, 2016). By attracting migrants to the city and matching them with more concentrated resources to complete the *shiminhua* process, there could be a better distribution of resources and converge the disparity.

At the regional and city level, despite emphasizing the fast-paced urban life and economic opportunities, a re-branded *shiminhua* process can be linked to, a pleasing environment, comfortable lifestyle, and a flourishing social and cultural ambience (Pang, 2012). This also resonates with the aspiration of second-generation rural-urban migrants at the individual level. The new generation, particularly those born in the 2000s has been raised in an era of relative material affluence, compared to the last two generations (C. Liu & Cheng, 2008). They do not expect a trade-off between a good life in the city and adopting the attitude towards hardworking as their parents (Leng et al., 2020). Together with the improvement in the educational level of the new generation of rural-urban migrants, they are more likely to switch jobs in different cities than ever before - several of the participants in this research were observed to move to the other tier 1 and tier 2 cities soon after the interviews. Since the new generation of rural-urban migrants has more options in career trajectory and personal growth in general, the city is required to have new branding to attract and keep them

as labour and new urban dwellers (C. Liu & Cheng, 2008; Xiong, 2017; Leng et al., 2020), Additionally, based on the discussion in sub-sections on education of the next generation, culture and education activities that facilitate strategic planning and life skills for younger generation of migrants can be organised or supported by city or regional level administration, for example, education on family, intimate relationship and parenthood will reduce the confusion for balance career and life in the city.

Apart from all the urges for change at different levels to achieve a better *shiminhua* future, reform on a national level, particularly on *hukou* system, has been conducted since 1987 (J. Y. Lin, 1987). Guangdong and the GBA pioneered institutional change at the early stage of the Reform and Opening-up Strategy (Gittings, 2006). The establishment of the GBA itself was considered a national vision and a strategical benchmark in coordinating infrastructure construction, resource allocation, and policy implementation within the region.<sup>129</sup> Although it remains unlikely that *hukou* system would be abolished in the coming decade, it could be helpful to alleviate limitations within region. Moreover, strategies of urban governance can be adjusted, firstly to reconcile with the perception of *shiminhua* by rural-urban migrants, and secondly working on the most important factors that affected *shiminhua* level, e.g. homeownership and social circle, to support the migrants in purchasing a local

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<sup>129</sup> See Chapter 2 sub-section Cities, Urbanisation, and Migration in the GBA.

property and integrated into the social circle of urban natives, if a high level of *shiminhua* is to be achieved.

In this sub-section, analysis has been conducted on different levels of governance and administration, with the acknowledgement of ongoing institutional changes and potential improvement of various aspects in facilitating *shiminhua*.

In this chapter, findings from the quantitative and qualitative analysis have been first triangulated separately and then combined with literature. Three strands of views looking at the rural-urban gap and skill level, reproduction of labour through current schooling and education system, as well as new urban governance strategies to cope with the increasing mobility have been presented, based on the findings of the *shiminhua* process in this thesis. It concludes that an individual's understanding of *shiminhua* is rather different from the government's perception, particularly regarding the pathways in which the process of *shiminhua* result is achieved. Individual migrants emphasize on education and personally striving as a major pathway to achieving *shiminhua* for themselves, which could be of limited effects due to institutional constraints. The discussion also challenges the myth that personal education achievement solely as an effective pathway in achieving a good *shiminhua* result and securing a well-established urban status – as a good education is essentially depending on many other factors like parents' planning and culture level, the social capital that could ensure good school seat... Ironically, those who managed to success

through this pathway with favourable policy environment and social economic assets of the family find themselves out of the realm of *shiminhua*, once categories as 'talent' despite the rural heritage and background. The final chapter concludes the research project, followed by evaluations of research limitations, and indicating possible future research directions.

## Chapter 7 Conclusion: A Better *Shiminhua* Future

This chapter concludes the study by summarising the key research findings in each chapter, in response to the research questions. After that, the theoretical and practical contribution thereof are evaluated. Based on the contribution, opportunities, and directions for future research projects are proposed. The last section is devoted to the discussion of the theoretical and methodological limitations of this study to provide insights for future research.

### 7.1 Research Findings

Based on the identification of existing research gaps and research questions in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 analytically reviewed the literature on *shiminhua* by drawing upon theories of migration, theories of urbanisation, and theories of acculturation. The Chapter was based on the historical genesis of development studies and urban studies, while focusing upon contextual knowledge in the Chinese GBA. Chapter 3 presented the analytical framework of *shiminhua* and justifies the three-phase mixed research method, comprising the research tool of FGDs, surveys, and semi-structured interviews. Chapters 1 to 3 laid solid foundations for findings in the following chapters.

Chapter 4 presented qualitative analysis that reveal the compounding nature of *shiminhua* process. Drivers of *shiminhua* in GBA are identified, with the *shiminhua* process coined as a process of “internalised urban identity” and “negotiated place

attachments". Four alternative indicators were proposed to serve as potential measurement the *shiminhua* level. This chapter further unfold the impacts, policy intervention, and personal strategies of *shiminhua*.

Chapter 5 analysed the quantitative data. It first assessed the data set and established the validity. The potential of the four alternative indicators to infer *shiminhua* level are then testified. The OLR statistical models also demonstrated that homeownership and social circle were the two most important factors correlated with *shiminhua* level based on the sample, it further suggested that local *hukou*, ability in Cantonese and children's education were potentially impactful factors to *shiminhua* process in the GBA context. Other factors, e.g. city tier, gender, etc. seem to have less obvious correlation, and were considered as not impactful for *shiminhua* in the thesis. The mechanism of *shiminhua* in GBA can be represented in the diagram in Figure 7.1:

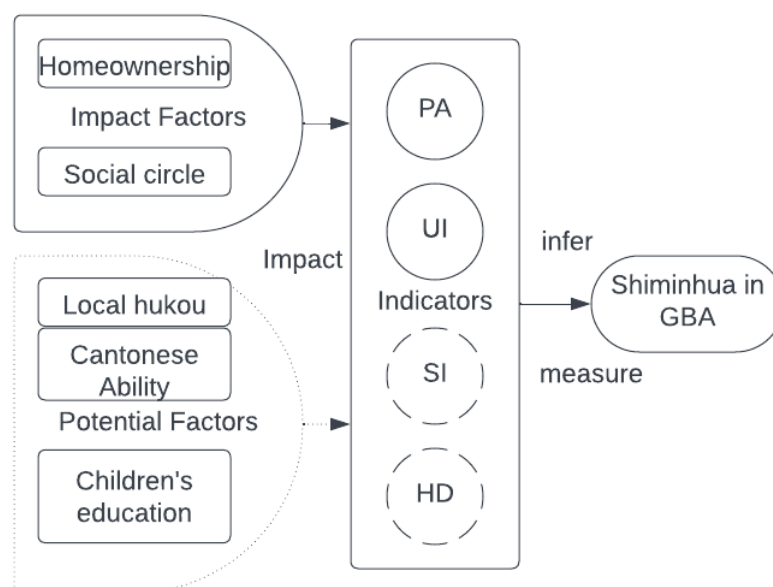


Figure 7.1 Mechanisms of impact factors in the *shiminhua* process in GBA

Source: Author-own.

In Figure 7.1, homeownership and social circle with locals are the two most impactful factors that could positively influence *shiminhua* level by impacts on 2 to 3 dimensions, mainly PA, UI or SI. Having a local *hukou*, good speaking ability of Cantonese, and anticipation to send children to local state schools will potentially contribute to *shiminhua* level of migrant individuals, given their significant positive correlation with one aspect among PA, UI, SI or HD. The four alternative indicators will then infer and potentially measure *shiminhua* level, which formed the simplified mechanism of *shiminhua* in GBA context.

Based on the factors mentioned in Figure 7.1, Chapter 6 triangulated the qualitative and quantitative data as well as corroborated the findings with the literature. The *shiminhua* process in GBA was understood by in-depth discussion and triangulation on the dynamics of findings by scrutinising each individual variable. Chapter 6 then addressed the counter-intuitive findings after corroboration by exploring entangled impacts of tertiary education on *shiminhua*, second generation of rural-urban migrants, and contrasting interpretation of *shiminhua's* nature from urban governance and migrant individual's perspectives. Chapter 6 further explored the theme of education in migrants' *shiminhua* process and provided an explanation that education could ultimately waive the migrant from the necessity to undergo *shiminhua* process by elevating them into a recognised talent. It also argued that education for second-generation of migrants had been adopted as a policy tool by city managers to push

away some unwanted migrants, to some extent, leading to the reproduction of low-skilled workers of tomorrow. Based on the findings, this chapter also proposes that both the political and cultural-psychological perceptions of *shiminhua* should be reconciled.

Overall, the research questions have been effectively addressed by the findings from Chapter 4 to Chapter 6, as presented in Table 7.1:

*Table 7.1 Recapture of Research Questions*

Sub-research questions		Finding Generalization
<b>KRQ</b>	How does the phenomenon of <i>shiminhua</i> (urbanisation of rural-urban migrants) unfold in Chinese cities?	Potentially generalization to Chinese cities
<b>SRQ1</b>	What are suitable indicators for measuring the level of <i>shiminhua</i> ?	Potentially generalization to Chinese cities
<b>SRQ2</b>	What are the features that facilitate or prevent the process of <i>shiminhua</i> ?	In GBA region

*Source: Author-own.*

To match Table 7.1 with findings from the Chapter 4 to Chapter 6, all three research questions had been answered - to different extents. In direct response to the Key Research Questions, the *shiminhua* phenomenon is understood as an incremental process in developing compromised place attachment and internalised urban identity. The migrant's perception on *shiminhua* contrast vastly with the government's interpretation. The government's view is result-driven, government-led, abstract, and rigid; while the migrants' perception is contextual, ground-based, inferable, and fluid. Thus, this conclusion essentially responds to the research questions by adopting an alternative view of the *shiminhua* process.



For sub-research question 1, in GBA, Place Attachment (PA) and Urban Identity (UI) are the two suitable indicators used to measure the *shiminhua* level, and the indicator of Settlement Intention (SI) and *Hukou* Desire (HD) to a less extent. As for the features in response to sub-research question 2, obtained home ownership in receiving city as well as a maintained social circle comprised of a majority of urban natives facilitate the *shiminhua* process in GBA significantly.

Noting in Table 7.1 under the column of "Finding Generalisation", the answers to the two sub-research questions and the key research question might have different capacities to generalise. For the factors identified that have impacts on *shiminhua*, they are mostly applicable in the GBA region, while for the understanding of *shiminhua* phenomenon and measurement indicators could potentially be generalised to other Chinese city regions but might not be as effective when comes to studying acculturation and integration processes in other societies.

As for the research output and documentation, data, and materials in Phases I to III fieldwork were documented and drafted into three papers that are suitable for publication in academic journals. Qualitative interviews have been recorded and rendered as transcripts stored in NVivo. Notes before, during, and after fieldwork have been re-arranged into a collection of field notes to provide a further reference for conducting fieldwork in the Chinese GBA region.

## 7.2 Research Contribution

This thesis has achieved the basic aim to understand the dynamic of urbanisation of rural-urban migrants with the concept of *shiminhua*, coined in Chinese context, with substantial efforts to bridge the research gaps identified in Chapter 1 from the geographical, conceptual, and methodological dimensions.

The major theoretical contributions of the thesis resonate to research gaps identified in Chapter 1.

At the geographical level, the thesis investigates *shiminhua* - the dynamics of urbanisation of people in a specific geographical context of GBA. It first developed a set of alternative indicators that are specifically effective in measuring the *shiminhua* level in GBA. While exploring some locational-based factors' correlation with *shiminhua* level, e.g. ability in Cantonese. It further provides perceptions that could contribute to the regional development strategies, urban planning, and urban governance for GBA. Both major city of Guangzhou and the lower-tier cities Dongguan and Zhongshan have been selected for sampling. This will potentially contribute to cross-geographical regional comparison of the *shiminhua* phenomenon.

At the conceptual level, this thesis attested that cultural-psychological aspects of people should be emphasized and incorporated into the studies of urbanisation, alongside with the spatial dimension. Furthermore, a bottom-up initiated perception

can challenge the dominating discourse on *shiminhua* process by the national and regional discourse from the government, making the understanding of *shiminhua* as an analytical concept of urbanisation and migration more comprehensives. The thesis verified that attempts to establish a measurement of a relative abstract concept similar but nuanced to the process of acculturation or integration can be inferred by a set of alternative indicators.

At the methodological level, this study challenge the orthodoxically practice where “theories from Global North while data from Global South” by generating grounded theories directly from a Global South field based on rural-urban migrants’ urbanisation experience (Haelewaters et al., 2021). Whilst this study does testify the effective implications of several classic and economic models of migration in Chinese cities, though argue they are not adequate in explaining the phenomenon of *shinminhua* in China (Lewis, 1954; Lee, 1966; Ravenstein, 1885, 1889; Alba & Nee, 1997). For the methods, the thesis proved the feasibility of mixed research method is plausible in studying an incremental, abstract acculturation process using empirical data of statistical models interpreted by constructivism based on FGDs and interviews. The research also utilised FGDs as a method of reconciling inconsistencies that can emerge in individual level interviews on group level concerns.

The thesis examines relatively advanced, large cities in a developing country, and moved away from the approach undertaken in studies of large cities in the developed

world deploying classic Urban Studies theories. It therefore veered away from the heavy influence of the Chicago School of Urban Ecology and adopted a corpus of knowledge closer to that of studies of the Global South region using theories from Development Studies.

Apart from the theoretical contributions, this thesis also shed light on regional policymaking urban governance, as well as individual strategies to *shiminhua* process. The thesis suggested that regional policymakers adopt a long-term, holistic, and bottom-up perspective on *shiminhua*. The key to sustainable regional development for the cities in the GBA is to maintain the long-lasting ability to attract and keep migrants so that the cities and GBA as a region can compete with emerging new migration centres such as *Jing-Jin-Ji* or the Yangtze River Delta. Taking effective measures to facilitate *shiminhua* is a determining step in attracting labour and talent, and a foundation in facilitating intra-regional mobility in the long run. To smooth the *shiminhua* process, a more balanced regional development needs to be achieved in order to cater to the full spectrum of social, cultural, and psychological needs.

As for the practical aspects of urban governance, based on the analysis of the two divergent interpretations on *shiminhua*, the findings suggest that urban planners and managers could devise more innovative planning and administrative approaches to guide rural-urban migrants through the *shiminhua* process. The approaches comprise establishing infrastructures that support the purchase of affordable housing and

helping to build integrated communities, providing high-quality schools of smaller size that cater for the local needs for both migrant and urban native communities, organising language and cultural workshops targeting rural-urban migrants in promoting Cantonese language learning and introducing local cultures, as well as building a high-quality city brand of lifestyles that is friendly to mobility and entrepreneurial, etc.

This thesis also sheds light on rural-urban migrant individuals' *shiminhua* strategies. To effectively achieve a high *shiminhua* level, actions could be taken proactively and after moving to the city by the migrants. Before migrating, potential migrants to GBA could assess themselves according to migration motivation, economic capacity in buying an apartment in the cities, as well as awareness of the barriers of *shiminhua* in the city. After moved to the city, migrants are encouraged to locate in local communities consisting decent proportion of the urban natives' population. The new urban dwellers are encouraged to actively reach out to local friends and colleagues and join communal activities, to start to build up their local connections. Starting to learn Cantonese and local culture would be a good entry-point to develop social connections with urban native friends and colleagues. Finally, upgrading work-related skills and continuing education whenever possible, would potentially elevate them into the category of talents, preventing migrants from being low-skill and facing more institutional barriers from local and city level.

### 7.3 Future Research Directions

After assessing the research contributions, the study also elucidates future research directions. Noting that this thesis is positioned within the discipline of Urban Studies while also drawing upon theories and methods from Development Studies and Migration Studies. It adopted a comprehensive scope to understand the urbanisation process extended from spatial elements to the human-being in the built environment. While this project does not explain native residents' impacts on *shiminhua* at a local community level, it does serve as a steppingstone for further studies in understanding the need, motivation, and inspiration of individuals of distinctive demographic characteristics in urbanization processes. It would be helpful to have a closer look at micro-scale district-level dynamics on how local governance rural-urban migrants' communities and urban native communities interact in the entangled process of *shiminhua*. For instance, in fieldwork in Guangzhou, the community of Xinqiao village at the urban fringe of Panyu District, Guangzhou, is characterised by interesting dynamics. Local villagers and immigrants develop the community together led by social workers, with the support of local and international NGOs, which could be a starting point for this direction.

The second proposed research direction is to combine studies of migrants in sending and receiving areas. Studying migration from the perspective of the receiving area reveals the inadequacy of understanding regional migration policy without thorough understanding of the migrant's place of origin - the rural areas (Murphy, 2000).

Therefore, more in-depth studies of migrants in Chinese rural areas are proposed to delve into diversity of background hence heterogeneous experience in *shiminhua*. More specifically, investigations of rural place attachment might potentially further explain the negotiating process of place attachment and urban identities of migration and provide a different view on the migrant's attraction to the city (Gui, 2010).

The third research direction is to introduce further critical theories - other than development economic theories and acculturation theories, to broaden the discussion of *shiminhua*, and urbanisation in general.

These three new research directions aside, this study also attempts to challenge the Anglo-American-Centric lens in regional studies, with potential to promote the decolonisation agenda in development research. In this research, the GBA was adopted as a geographical framework though not bounded by the GBA's administrative borders, as approximately more than two-thirds of the migrants in GBA are originated from places out of GBA (Statistic Bureau of Guangdong Province, 2019).,Therefore, a larger backdrop is set up with a rural-urban nexus connecting the GBA and its hinterland. By applying qualitative methods including FGDs and interviews, the methods tease out narrations on people's basic needs, individual experience, and personal stories which could avoid the de-humanization tendency inherited from the tradition of regarding migrants as numbers on statistical sheet.

Reflectively promoting the decolonisation agenda also means that the researcher is aware of his research positionality when designing and conducting the research, particularly the pitfall of using global theories to be testified by regional data. The result of such methods can be severe since the theories are not developed directly from the region. If the data does not match the theories, rarely the theories are thoroughly revised; rather, either supplementary remarks are made in addition to the current theory or reasons are identified to explain the incommensurability. For example, a common reason for explaining China's lack of fit to the model will also lead to the discussion of attribution to the authoritarian or socialist regime (Gittings, 2006). Whilst generating grounded theories is likely to reduce the possibility of unconscious bias that is deeply rooted in the current arena of Chinese development discourse. This reflectiveness and intention to promote de-colonisation in the research agenda of Chinese migration could be integrated to the three proposed research directions, based on this thesis.

## **7.4 Research Limitations**

Last but not least, three research limitations are acknowledged in this thesis.

The first limitation is in the sampling process for the quantitative survey data collection, since participants are recruited and asked to fill questions for children's education plan regardless of whether they have children or not; The design of the question potentially containing significant measurement errors, which may lead to biased estimates for the



education variable, this needs to be acknowledged as a major limitation.<sup>130</sup> This is partly due to the nature of the 3-year PhD project with limited resources and budgets, a circumstance exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic during intensive fieldwork, plus the reluctance of revealing marital and family status of the informants. Questions on the basic information could be designed more tactically so that to tease out more accurate information on children' education.

As addressed in the second future research direction, the second limitation is that the thesis focuses upon the migration receiving area – urban context exclusively. Sending area or their rural origin, as well as past migration experience may hugely influence their perception, aptitude, and strategies towards *shiminhua*, as revealed by qualitative data and discussed by previous literature on migration (Sjaastad, 1962; Murphy, 2000; Connelly et al., 2011).

The third limitation is the blurred boundaries of categories within the rural-urban migrant community. As migration literature has demonstrated that the Chinese "rural-urban migrants" is not a homogenous group, similar categorisation may not capture all the individual difference, for example skill level: migrants can be categorized into unskilled labour, semi-skilled worker, and high skilled professional but the criterion can be blurred. As mentioned in Section 2.3 Theories of Acculturation, educational

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<sup>130</sup> See Chapter 5.

achievement is generally regarded as the mark of skilled and professional labour, or 'talents' in the Chinese context (J. B. Knight & Song, 2005; L. Zhao & Zhu, 2009). Apart from the skill level, social class based on income level and lifestyle choices become another factor influencing the migrants' *shiminhua* process that has not been fully explored - migrants may have experienced a divergent *shiminhua* process due to belonging to different social classes (Wu & Zheng, 2018).

Apart from the research limitations the research did manage to reveal a practice gap in the national, regional, and city-level planning and development policies, the thesis implies that for a better *shiminhua* future, further work national policy and *hukou* reform need to be carried on, regional and local governments may need some coordination among themselves in matching more flexible policies and administrative mechanisms to migration, be more agile in responding to the rapid circumstantial change while adopting a long-term planning vision. Whilst as some of the informants show unfamiliarity with the word GBA, some scholars have also argued that the concept GBA is merely a central government-initiated, top-down command (Sharif & Chandra, 2022), policy innovation space exists for city administrators to take advantage of these regional spatial initiatives when it comes to issues related to *shiminhua*, which can also be further looked into.

In conclusion, nearly a century ago, Fei Xiaotong has imagined the impacts of rapid urbanisation and its impacts on Chinese people's life (Fei, 1943). Ten years ago, Biao

Xiang has studied the Zhejiang Urban Village and its dynamics at the fringe of Beijing city (Xiang, 2018; Xiang & Wu, 2020). Five years ago, Dr Dan Meng's work shifted the focus from the economic contributions of migrants to the individual's well-being measured by happiness using a global theory framework and Chinese sources and migrant data (Meng, 2017).

At a time of unprecedented scale of urban development, combined with inevitable uncertainties, caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and city-wide lockdowns in Chinese cities, I envisage this work will serve as an intellectual inquiry into human engagements with built environments, institutions, and wider realm of socio-political dynamics. Essentially, the urban future that comprises economic development, social support and cultural diversity is for people, and it is the people that make a brighter urban future achievable.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1 Survey Questionnaire

#### English Version

Research on the Rural-Urban Migrant's Urbanization Experience  
In the Greater Bay Area of China

Dear Friend:

Hello!

This research is conducted jointly by School of Geographical Science and Planning, Sun Yat-Sen University as well as Department of Land Economy, University of Cambridge. The main aim is to investigate the urbanization situation of rural-urban migrants in the Greater Bay Area, shedding lights on local urban management and policy. Thank you so much for completing this questionnaire.

This research project will not reveal your name and other related information. We will keep them strictly confidential and only entered your answers in coded format. Please fill the questionnaire with the most authentic answer since there is no right or wrong choices.

We thank you so much for your support in our research project.

Joseph Hongsheng Zhao  
January 2021

No:	Researcher:
Date:	Location:

Please choose the one answer that best represents your views or current conditions by placing tick on the appropriate number box (✓) ; for Question 6 and 8, please fill in the blank with number.

#### Part I Shiminhua Questions

1. MY CURRENT HOUSING TYPE IS:
  - (1) SELF-OWNED
  - (2) RENTAL
  - (3) DORMITORIES PROVIDED BY WORK-UNIT OR LIVE WITH FAMILIES
  - (4) SELF-BUILT SHELTERS OR WITHOUT SETTLED HOUSING
  - (5) OTHER
2. MY CONDITIONS OR PLANS TO OWN A HOUSE/APARTMENT IN THIS CITY IS:
  - (1) I HAVE ALREADY BOUGHT A HOUSE/APARTMENT
  - (2) PLAN TO BUY
  - (3) NOT NOW, MAYBE IN THE FUTURE
  - (4) NOT BUYING A HOUSE/APARTMENT UNTIL NEEDED
  - (5) I do not have such plans at all
3. I AM SATISFIED WITH MY LIVING ENVIRONMENT.
  - (1) STRONGLY AGREE
  - (2) AGREE
  - (3) UNDECIDED
  - (4) DISAGREE
  - (5) STRONGLY DISAGREE
4. COMPARED TO WITH LOCALS, I HAVE RECEIVED ADEQUATE SUPPORT IN HOUSING.

- (1) STRONGLY AGREE
  - (2) AGREE
  - (3) UNDECIDED
  - (4) DISAGREE
  - (5) STRONGLY DISAGREE
5. I THINK THE LOCAL HOUSING-PURCHASE POLICY IS SENSIBLE AND EASY TO UNDERSTAND FOR RURAL-URBAN MIGRANTS:
- (1) Strongly agree
  - (2) AGREE
  - (3) UNDECIDED
  - (4) DISAGREE
  - (5) STRONGLY DISAGREE
6. MY AVERAGE INCOME PER MONTH IS \_\_\_\_\_ RMB YUAN (HOUSEHOLD TOTAL DIVIDED BY HOUSEHOLD HEADAGE NUMBER, IF APPLICABLE) .
7. MY SELF-PERCEIVED INCOME LEVEL, COMPARED TO THE URBAN LOCAL AVERAGE, IS:
- (1) HIGHER (2) SIMILAR (3) LOWER
8. MY AVERAGE EXPENDITURE PER MONTH IS \_\_\_\_\_ RMB YUAN (HOUSEHOLD TOTAL DIVIDED BY HOUSEHOLD HEADAGE NUMBER, IF APPLICABLE) .
9. MY SELF-PERCEIVED EXPENDITURE LEVEL, COMPARED THE URBAN LOCAL AVERAGE, IS:
- (1) HIGHER (2) SIMILAR (3) LOWER
10. I THINK THIS CITY (GUANGZHOU/DONGGUAN/ZHONGSHAN) HAS PROMISING DEVELOPMENT FUTURE.
- (1) STRONGLY AGREE
  - (2) AGREE
  - (3) UNDECIDED
  - (4) DISAGREE
  - (5) STRONGLY DISAGREE
11. I PLAN TO STAY AT GUANGZHOU/DONGGUAN/ZHONGSHAN IN A LONG RUN:
- (1) YES
  - (2) MAYBE, IT DEPENDS
  - (3) No
12. MOST OF MY FRIENDS HERE ARE LOCALS.
- (1) STRONGLY AGREE
  - (2) AGREE
  - (3) UNDECIDED
  - (4) DISAGREE
  - (5) STRONGLY DISAGREE
13. I ANTICIPATE MY CHILDREN TO GET EDUCATION HERE AND SETTLE IN GUANGZHOU/DONGGUAN/ZHONGSHAN IN THE FURTHER:
- (1) YES
  - (2) MAYBE, IT DEPENDS
  - (3) No
14. THE (FUTURE) EDUCATION PLAN FOR MY CHILDREN IS:
- (1) ATTENDING LOCAL STATE SCHOOL
  - (2) ATTENDING LOCAL PRIVATE SCHOOL
  - (3) I HAVE NO CHILDREN, NEVER CONSIDERED/ UNCERTAIN
  - (4) ATTENDING LOCAL SCHOOL FIRST, MAY CONSIDERING TRANSFERRING TO SCHOOL AT HOMETOWN LATER TO SIT COLLEGE-ENTRANCE EXAM AT HOMETOWN
  - (5) GOING BACK TO HOMETOWN TO RECEIVE EDUCATION

15. I HAVE NOT EXPERIENCED DISCRIMINATION BY THE URBAN LOCALS IN DAILY SOCIAL INTERACTIONS.  
 (1) Strongly agree  
 (2) AGREE  
 (3) UNDECIDED  
 (4) DISAGREE  
 (5) STRONGLY DISAGREE
16. I BELONG TO/I AM PART OF THE CITY THAT I CURRENTLY LIVE IN.  
 STRONGLY AGREE  
 AGREE  
 UNDECIDED  
 DISAGREE  
 STRONGLY DISAGREE
17. I WANT TO HAVE GUANGZHOU/DONGGUAN/ZHONGSHAN LOCAL HUKOU :  
 (1) ALREADY HAVE ONE OR APPLIED  
 (2) PLANNING TO GET ONE  
 (3) WOULD LIKE TO HAVE ONE BUT YET PLANNED  
 (4) MAY CONSIDER IN THE FUTURE  
 (5) NOT AT ALL
18. I IDENTIFY MYSELF AS AN URBAN PERSON.  
 (1) Strongly agree  
 (2) AGREE  
 (3) UNDECIDED  
 (4) DISAGREE  
 (5) STRONGLY DISAGREE
19. COMPARED TO THE URBAN LOCAL, MY STATUS IN THIS SOCIETY IS HIGHER.  
 (1) Strongly agree  
 (2) AGREE  
 (3) UNDECIDED  
 (4) DISAGREE  
 (5) STRONGLY DISAGREE
20. I PREFER TO GO BACK TO HOMETOWN IN THE FUTURE WHEN GETTING OLDER.  
 (1) Strongly agree  
 (2) AGREE  
 (3) UNDECIDED  
 (4) DISAGREE  
 (5) STRONGLY DISAGREE

## Part II Basic Information

1. WHERE IS YOUR HOMETOWN\_\_\_\_\_
  2. WHAT IS YOUR OCCUPATION\_\_\_\_\_
  3. WHERE IS YOUR HUKOU REGISTRATION\_\_\_\_\_
  4. HAVE YOU EVER CHANGED HUKOU BEFORE? IF SO, FROM WHERE TO WHERE?  
 \_\_\_\_\_
  5. YOUR EDUCATION LEVEL \_\_\_\_\_
  6. HAVE YOU GOT A LABOUR CONTRACT
- (1) YES  
 (2) NO  
 (3) NOT SURE OR OTHERS
7. HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN TO GUANGZHOU/DONGGUAN/ZHONGSHAN \_\_\_\_\_
  8. GENDER (1) MALE (2) FEMALE
  9. AGE\_\_\_\_\_
  10. DO YOU SPEAK CANTONESE (1) YES (2) NO (3) A LITTLE BIT

11. SIGNATURE: I GIVE PERMISSION FOR THE INFORMATION TO BE COLLECTED AND USED IN THIS  
RESEARCH \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*THIS IS THE END THANKS FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION! \*\*\*\*\*

### Chinese Version

## 中国大湾区城乡流动人口市民化研究

尊敬的朋友：

您好！这次调查是由中山大学地理科学与规划学院及剑桥大学土地经济系联合组织实施的问卷调查，主要究旨是考察大湾区城乡流动人口的市民化状况，为中国城乡人口流动政策和城市治理提供参考。这次调研工作采取无记名方式进行，我们保证对您所提供的信息严格保密，每份问卷收集的信息将以数据编码形式输入。您的回答不涉及是非对错，请按照实际情况逐一作答。

对您的合作和支持，我们表示衷心的感谢！

2021 年 2 月

方框内由调研员填写：

问卷编号：	调研人员：
调研日期：	问卷地点：

## Appendix 2 Selected Sites for Fieldwork

Site No	Site Name	Site Name in Chinese	Participants
1	Guodi Technology Co. Guangzhou	广州市国地规划	6
2	China Rail No. 10 Bureau	广州市中铁十局	6
3	Tianhe District, Guangzhou	广州市天河区	5
4	South Campus of Sun Yat-sen University, Haizhu District, Guangzhou	广州市中山大学南校区康乐园	5
5	Guangzhou textile retailing city	广州轻纺城	3
6	Haizhu District, Guangzhou	广州市海珠区	5
7	Panyu District, Guangzhou	广州市番禺区	5
8	Haizhu District, Guangzhou	广州市海珠区	5
9	Tianhe District, Guangzhou	广州市天河区	5
10	Haizhu District, Guangzhou	广州市海珠区	5
11	Tianhe District, Guangzhou	广州市天河区	4
12	Tianhe District, Guangzhou	广州市天河区	4
13	Panyu District, Guangzhou	广州市番禺区	5
14	Yuexiu District, Guangzhou	广州市越秀区	5
15	Haizhu District, Guangzhou	广州市海珠区	5
16	Zengcheng District, Guangzhou	广州市增城区	5
17	Conghua District	广州市从化区	5
18	Huadu District, Guangzhou	广州市花都区	5
19	Panyu District, Guangzhou	广州市番禺区	5
20	Nansha District, Guangzhou	广州市南沙区	5
21	Huanpu District, Guangzhou	广州市黄埔区	5
22	Oanyu District, Guangzhou	广州市番禺区	5
23	Liaobu Town, Dongguan	东莞市寮步镇	5
24	Liaobu Town, Dongguan	东莞市寮步镇	5
25	Huangjiang Town, Dongguan	东莞市黄江镇	5
26	Zhangmutou Town, Dongguan	东莞市樟木头镇	5
27	Dalang Town, Dongguan	东莞市大朗镇	5
28	Gaobu Town, Dongguan	东莞市高埗镇	4
29	Daojia Town, Dongguan	东莞市道滘镇	5
30	Gaobu Town Gongguan	东莞市高埗镇	5
31	Humen Town, Dongguan	东莞市虎门镇	4
32	Chashan Town, Dongguan	东莞市茶山镇	5
33	Houjie Town, Dongguan	东莞市厚街镇	5
34	Dongkeng, Dongguan	东莞市东坑镇	5
35	Dongkeng, Dongguan	东莞市东坑镇	5
36	Dongkeng, Dongguan	东莞市东坑镇	5
37	Songshanhu, Dongguan	东莞市松山湖镇	5
38	Dalingsha, Dongguan	东莞市大岭山镇	5
39	Dalingshan, Dongguan	东莞市大岭山镇	5
40	Chashan, Dongguan	东莞市茶山镇	5
41	Shangtang Village Archway, South District, Zhongshan	中山市南区上塘牌坊	5



42	Shiqi, Zhongshan	中山市石岐区	5
43	Xiaolan Station, Dongsheng Town, Zhongshan	中山市小榄站周边/东升镇	5
44	Baldwin Factory, Zhongshan	中山市东升镇鲍德温工厂	5
45	Huoju New District, East Distcit of City Centre, Zhongshan	中山市火炬区/东区市中心	5

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## Appendix 3 FGDs Participants and Interviewees

### FGDs Participants

City	Group	Location	Code	Gender
Guangzhou	A	Guodi Planning and Consultant Co.	Participant 1	Male
			Participant 2	Female
			Participant 3	Male
			Participant 4	Male
	B	China Metro No.10 Bureau Dashadong Station Construction Site	Participant 1	Male
			Participant 2	Male
			Participant 3	Male
			Participant 4	Male
	C	Fuai Early Education and Nunnery	Participant 1	Female
			Participant 2	Female
			Participant 3	Female
			Participant 4	Female
	D	MacDonald Near Guangzhou Textile City	Participant 1	Male
			Participant 2	Male
			Participant 3	Male
			Participant 4	Male
	E	Jubao House Delivery Dispatch Dentre, Sun Yat-sen University South Campus	Participant 1	Female
			Participant 2	Male
			Participant 3	Male
			Participant 4	Male
Dongguan	F	706 Zhujiang Dijing Youth Hostle and Co-living Space	Participant 1	Female
			Participant 2	Female
			Participant 3	Female
			Participant 4	Male
			Participant 5	Male
			Participant 6	Male
	A	Jibao Factory, Liaobu, Dongguan	Participant 1	Male
			Participant 2	Male
			Participant 3	Female
			Participant 4	Female
	B	Construction Site near Shangdi Village, Liaobu Town, Dongguan	Participant 1	Male
			Participant 2	Male
			Participant 3	Male
			Participant 4	Male
	C	Ruiyang Paper Company Office, Huangjiang Town, Dongguan	Participant 1	Male
			Participant 2	Male
			Participant 3	Male
	D	Jiadi Rubber Shixin Industrial Zone, Zhangmutou Town	Participant 1	Male
			Participant 2	Male
			Participant 3	Female
	E	Yonghang Factoory, Songbailang Village, Dalang Town, Dongguan	Participant 1	Male
			Participant 2	Male
			Participant 3	Female
			Participant 4	Female
			Participant 5	Female
			Participant 6	Female
Zhongshan	A	Shangtang Arch near garment factory, Zhongshan	Participant 1	Female
			Participant 2	Female
			Participant 3	Female

B	Construction Site near Huajie, Shiqi Town, Zhongshan	Participant 4	Female
		Participant 1	Male
		Participant 2	Male
		Participant 3	Male
		Participant 4	Male

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## Interviewees

Interview No.	City	Occupation	Gender
Interview 1	Zhongshan	Private Business Owner	Female
Interview 2	Zhongshan	Construction Worker	Female
Interview 3	Zhongshan	Production Worker	Male
Interview 4	Zhongshan	Production Worker	Female
Interview 5	Zhongshan	Production Manager	Male
Interview 6	Guangzhou	Private Education Tutor	Male
Interview 7	Guangzhou	Private Education Tutor	Female
Interview 8	Guangzhou	Project Manager	Male
Interview 9	Guangzhou	Junior Programmer	Male
Interview 10	Guangzhou	Buyer	Female
Interview 11	Guangzhou	Web Community Manager	Female
Interview 12	Guangzhou	NGO Worker	Female
Interview 13	Guangzhou	NGO Assistant Librarian	Female
Interview 14	Guangzhou	Warehouse Worker	Female
Interview 15	Dongguan	Clerk	Male
Interview 16	Dongguan	Clerk	Female
Interview 17	Dongguan	Real Estate Clerk	Male
Interview 18	Guangzhou	Freelancer	Male
Interview 19	Guangzhou	Freelancer	Female
Interview 20	Dongguan	Construction Worker	Male
Interview 21	Dongguan	Construction Worker	Male
Interview 22	Dongguan	Factory Worker	Female
Interview 23	Dongguan	Construction Worker	Male
Interview 24	Dongguan	Worker	Female
Interview 25	Guangzhou	Salesperson	Female
Interview 26	Guangzhou	Kindergarten Teacher	Female
Interview 27	Guangzhou	Primary School Teacher	Female
Interview 28	Dongguan	Worker	Unknown
Interview 29	Guangzhou	Middle School Teacher	Female
Interview 30	Guangzhou	Freelancer	Male

## Appendix 4 Selected Sample Transcripts

### Sample Semi-structured Interview Transcript (Translated English Version)

**Label:** Interview 20 (Guangzhou)

**Location:** Jincui Garden Estate, Yunlong Rd, Baiyun District, Guangzhou

**Date:** 6 April 2021 (Tuesday)

**Interviewer:** Researcher (R)

**Participants:**

Ms X from Mianyang, Sichuan, 45, housewife and freelancer, migrated to Guangzhou for 20 years, changed *hukou* from Mianyang to Guangzhou, mother, achieved college diploma.

R: Well, let's start the interview. This interview is for academic purposes only, but we will keep a recording, ok? What is the difference between the city and your hometown?

X: Eh, here it's a city and my hometown is a village, so the difference must be the rural-urban difference.

R: What are the differences between here and Zhangdian?

X: One urban and one rural. The rural area has its characteristics, in the city people are with urban characteristics, in the rural area the life pace is slow, plus the fact that the scenery is idyllic. In the city, people are busy at any time and the building environment is full of skyscrapers.

R: Then do you think it is more convenient in Guangzhou or more convenient back in your hometown?

X: Living in Guangzhou, I enjoyed the life of a global city, back in my hometown, I enjoyed the village relaxing life, it really depends on how you choose. If you are ok with the simple, thrifty life, then life is happy. If you live in Guangdong, then you are eligible to choose high, middle or low style of life, you have multifarious choices, life is indeed colourful, and you can enjoy everything that you can imagine. It depends on what kind of life you want to live.

R: Then how do you view labels like rural-urban migrants or non-locals?

X: When I just arrived in Guangzhou to thrive, the locals are discriminating and very xenophobic. But with Guangzhou's status as an international hub being established, the tolerance and flexibility increased, and we start to feel more accepted. And the locals start to get used to us, during festivals or the lunar new year, they feel the silence when there are no rural-urban migrants, that's to say they are integrated into us. In the meantime, we integrated into the local cultures in Guangzhou and we absorbed some localities. They also learned from us, the non-locals, absorbing our cultural characteristics. I think with the deepening of this communication, all the labels will fade out, and the tolerance to the differences in this city will increase.

R: Then do you feel the local Guangzhou people have some unique characteristics?

X: Oh they have maintained the locals' lifestyle of drinking morning tea, and they are rather traditional in that every first and middle day of the lunar calendar they do their worship, enjoying their Cantonese-style food - get accustomed to drinking morning tea and walk in parks, they are very proud of their local culture but not exclusive to other culture, they get along well with non-locals, enjoying exotic food, and they respect the culture of the people from other provinces.

R: What are the differences between you and a local?

X: At first, I felt that I am an outsider, a non-local, but after several years, with... my integration into Guangzhou's life, I felt that in the future I will be living in Guangzhou, Guangzhou is indeed part of my life, and I will finally become part of the city.

R: Then in daily life, what are the differences between you and a local person born and brought up in Guangzhou?

X: There are differences, for example, they have local relatives and friends, as we have relatives and friends back home--- when it's the festival we pay visits to our friends and relatives. While as a migrant here, we have fewer interactions with relatives, near zero interaction. Whereas the locals pay emphasis on family, they have the ancestral halls, possessing the atmosphere of family. We are more like atom individuals, not as closely connected as them.

R: Will you say Guangzhou is your home?

X: I am taking it gradually as my home, particularly in these years. As I think where you go, you need to feel stable, as long as your heart is placed there, that place is your home. Some of us may have the idea of once getting old, we will go back to hometown. But there are uncertainties, we are still seeing what will happen, wandering, and watching, but we gradually accept the Guangzhou local culture here.

R: Eh, then for what reason did you come to Guangzhou?

X: At that time, I was young, I wanted to go out to have a look at the world, since I have been living in the rural area for a far longer time, I want to live the urban people's life. To witness the colourful life by my own eyes. To see how large on earth are the world outside, and to experience.

R: Why choose Guangzhou rather than Wuhan or other nearby cities?

X: There was a trend, during the 1990s, the political background is the Reform and Opening up, all the people, most people going down to the South to try out their luck, since the salary here is relatively higher in the South.

R: Did you come by yourself or together with friends, or introduced by relatives?

X: It's my cousin, my cousin introduced me here.

R: When you were here for the first time, have the local government and community taken any measures to help you integrated in Guangzhou.

X: Not at all, that is quite early, nearly no support from the government, we all depended on ourselves. Just ourselves. The government, if we could say that, they may played some roles. If you want to find a job, they have operated some Employment Agencies. But you may get cheated in some Employment Agencies as well, it's like that.

R: Are those Employment Agencies operated by the government?

X: The agencies? Those agencies are operated by some institutions. You pay 50 or 100 RMB first and she will help you. If you didn't get a job successfully, they won't return the money back, it's all depended on your luck. Some people find their job there, some failed to do so, then you need to continue your job-seeking sojourn in that case, you try to find job through all possible channels--- newspaper, the human resources market, everything.

R: What was the time approximately?

X: 1993, before 1995, during the period between 1993 and 1995, these two years I was looking for a job.

R: Then after coming to Guangzhou, have there been any changes to your life? Maybe living conditions, lifestyles, and ways of thinking.

X: When I first came to Guangzhou, as it is South China and it was the time of Reform and Opening-Up, everyone is sparing no efforts to earn money, compared to the inner land, we had a large income gap, the inner land I earn 150 RMB per month and here

my salary reached 550 per month, you can see there was a large income gap, then as for people--- though some people have the attitude of xenophobia, since there were many people from outside by that time. As far as I know, most migrants have high education attainment, and they have a relative high level of culture, compared with the locals. Some locals could not even speak Mandarin, and they are low in educational level as well. But it is because the Reform and Opening-Up started here, Guangdong is first developed and those local people earn much more than people back in my hometown. During that time, all Chinese come to the South, it's a trend to going down to the south, coming here, and migrating in. When I went back home, coming back from Guangzhou to rural hometown, my family saw me turning from a rural person to an urban person, from the way I dressed up they see us with envious eyesight, that's a huge change for me. But here, even though I am working--- because I was young and inexperienced, I had tasted much bitterness, for example, being excluded and discriminated, at first the Canton locals even curse us, cursed us in their local language - that had happened before.

R: Then if you were given a second chance, will you still come to Guangzhou to work?

X: Er, coming to Guangzhou for work or life...both are possible, with us growing up and getting mature, I think the adjustment of attitude is important, no matter where you go--- when you decide to do something, going to somewhere, and decide what you want to do, then you should put your heart there.

R: Then which ground of friends do you think are more like urban people?

X: Do you regard those in Guangzhou or back home?

R: In Guangzhou.

X: More like urban people?

R: It's like the sense of urban-ness, just by a glimpse you know he or she is from the city.

X: Just by a glimpse and you know the urban-ness...to be fair I don't know much about the differences between urban or rural people. But most of my friends here are attached with rural backgrounds. If you say there is a group that is more urban, that should be my collegemates, they are like locals since they grew up here, but if you trace back their roots to the last generation, they were also from the rural roots. More like urban people--- what do you think urban people are like?

R: You have already mentioned some aspects of it as you went to work in the city and when you went back home, people see you in a different way, people may think that no wonder you are from a big city, when you look very different. Do you have friends here who you can have the sense of feeling that he or she grow up here?

X: More like an urban person. To be fair to be an urban person you need to reach a high standard. By now I yet to have ideas on who is more like an urban person.

R: Ok... then do you think one day you could become a local?

X: Shall I become a local. How do you determine it? Do you mean by I moved my *hukou* to Guangzhou?

R: Maybe not only *hukou*, but the whole person also gets integrated, like that feeling, it's like lifestyle, the language...

X: I should be able to once I want.

R: And compared to the past, what aspect of you became more like an urban person or Guangzhou person?

X: Having morning tea, as I enjoyed morning tea very much. And I learnt from the locals to wear shoes with flat heels, work out, avoid heavy making-up, no formal dress code at all. Cooking in Cantonese style--- I think the locals enjoyed light food, I can do this

as well. I think it's related to the climate here, it's just not suitable to have a heavy flavour like in other provinces.

R: You think that Guangzhou people have no dressing code, right?

X: Yes, at least they don't focus too much on that, they are pragmatic. They have special requirements towards food though, they are famous for having special tastes for high-quality food.

R: What aspects do you think you are not like an urban person?

X: I think something in the blood cannot be changed easily. For example, I am too frugal and thrifty sometimes, like... not like urban people, I would put my part of being frugal and thrifty, lure for getting back to the rural area and get connected to the nature, like that...

R: Would you say getting a local *hukou* will help you better integrate here?

X: I don't think so, just sometimes whether having a local *hukou* or not, it's just institutional discrimination by the local government.

R: There would be some inconvenience, right?

X: Plus, by handing a similar amount of social insurance, according to them, the locals have more pensions after retirement. For other people like rural-urban migrants, we have less.

R: Then despite *hukou*, what other factors could help you integrate here in urban life better?

X: Do you refer to those methods by the government?

R: Not limited to the government, like all bodies, including your friends, your work here, all aspects, in spite of *hukou*.

X: Then you should live with the locals, eating, drinking, and sleeping with them and you are more likely to integrate.

R: For social circle getting closer to the locals, right?

X: Right, you become the person that you mingle with, making more locals friends and speaking their language can be helpful.

R: What is the discrimination you have faced with the identity of rural-urban migrants?

X: Once the locals open their mouths, they say that we are here to get money lucratively. They call us "*loumei*" and call the guys "*loutau*".

R: Will the manager look down upon you just because you are not local?

X: For sure, once he heard that you speak Mandarin, their eyesight exposed the attitude of discrimination.

R: Would you have a lower salary than the local?

X: We have different payment ranks. But it is depended on educational level---some work units categorised it by degree and your educational experience. As usually we achieve higher level of education than the locals, but if the educational level is similar, once he or she can speak Cantonese, then the salary would be higher than us.

R: Oh I see.

X: Right, there is discrimination, indeed.

R: Let's talk about housing, how's the current housing location you have got?

X: I am very satisfied with it, dining or living are convenient, and the education and healthcare services are good.

R: Is the housing within local school district?

X: Within the local school area, right.

R: What is the determining factor for you to get a house here?

X: The determining factor is that I want to be there, I want to settle down.



R: How do you like the local housing policy towards rural-urban migrants, like housing loans and so on.

X: I paid the mortgage at one time, thus not very clear about this.

R: Are there any potential changes that will facilitate your housing experience? Like from the government or from the community, what efforts could they pay to make it more convenient regarding housing?

X: Regenerate the old building. The government is doing it now, but according to the neighbours and people surrounding me, the construction quality is poor. The contractor is using the government's money but didn't do a good job, their performance didn't get our permission either. No public consultation on the output, it's not transparent at all.

R: What do you think are the current issue of the housing that you want to improve---like having a new elevator or so on or building a metro station nearby?

X: To have a new elevator, that requires the government's sponsorship, you need to pay some money yourself as well. All those public facilities and the amelioration of housing are essential. I heard that in nearby regions, there would be some new stations, and the government will put more efforts into this public career. I am satisfied with it.

R: Ok.

X: Just I don't know what the result is.

R: You've indicated in the questionnaire that you are satisfied with Guangzhou's economic performance, and wish that your children could develop here as well, but why when you get older you will get back home?

X: Because according to the Chinese tradition, "fallen leaves get back to the root", I have this sense and I am eager to go back to my hometown from the bottom of my heart, on the day I died, I should be buried there. It's a matter of life and death.

R: Do you think the hometown is a good place for retirement and aging.

X: For retirement and spend time in aging you need good friends to talk to, I think in hometown it's fine for me.

R: But your current friends are mainly in Guangzhou?

X: There are some in Guangzhou, but there are friends back in hometown who has grown up with me.

R: No problem, that's basically our questions, that's all for our interviews and thanks for your participation!

X: Well, thank you.

## Appendix 5 Glossary

Pinyin	Simplified Chinese	Meaning
<i>Chengguan</i>	城管	Urban management officer, a kind of civil enforcement officer in China, short for <i>chengshi guanli zhifa</i> , urban management and civil enforcement officer.
<i>Shiminhua</i>	市民化	Citizenization or urbanisation of the people. The translations 'urbanisation' and 'citizenization' are both nuanced from the original meaning, as <i>shimin</i> is closer to <i>citadin</i> in French.
<i>Citoyen</i>	[French]Citizen	Citizen than urbanite in English while <i>citadin</i> indicates the full entitlements of living in a city.
<i>Citadian</i>	[French]City Resident	Urbanite. Urban dweller or urban inhabitant.
<i>Chengshi guihua fa</i>	城乡规划法	Law of Urban and Rural Planning, specifically refers to 2008 Law of Urban and Rural Planning of the People's Republic of China, a replacement of the 1990 Law of Urban and Rural Planning.
<i>Chaoda chengshi</i>	超大城市	Supercity, with an urban resident population larger than 10 million.
<i>Teda chengshi</i>	特大城市	Megacity, with an urban resident population between five and 10 million.
<i>Dacheng shi</i>	大城市	Big city, with an urban resident population between three and five million.
<i>Zhongdeng chengshi</i>	中等城市	Medium city, with an urban resident population between one and three million.
<i>Xiao chengshi</i>	小城市	Small city, with an urban resident population between 0.2 and one million.
<i>Jiating lianchan chengbao zerenzhi</i>	家庭联产承包责任制	Household responsibility system, officially dating in China from 1980.
<i>Ni chengshihua/Qu chengshihua</i>	逆城市化/去城市化	Counter-urbanisation/De-urbanisation
<i>Jiaoqu chengshihua</i>	郊区城市化	Suburbanisation
<i>Zai chengshihua</i>	再城市化	Re-urbanisation
<i>Chengxiang jiehe bu</i>	城乡结(接)合部	The peri-urban area or where rural and urban features co-exist and interweave as a phenomenon of rapid and extensive urbanisation. In China, it particularly refers to areas with mixed rural-urban land use.
<i>Semi-urbanisation</i>	半城市化	Unfinished urbanisation. In the Chinese context, it specifically refers to the failure of the rural-urban migrant's integration into urban life.
<i>Weijianwei</i>	卫健委	National Health Commission, short for <i>guojia weisheng yu jiankang weiyuan hui</i> . A central institute that has conducted several complementary social censuses. Success or to the National Health and Family Planning Commission from 2018.
<i>Qinmin*</i>	亲民	Close to the people, meaning the price is relatively affordable in this context.
<i>Nanmanzi</i>	南蛮子	South barbarian, a mockery slang referring to people from South China.
<i>Guangfu Wenhua</i>	广府文化	Cantonese culture originated from the area in Canton, differs from two other cultures: Chaoshan and Hakka culture, in nearby regions.

<i>Luohu</i>	落户	Settled done, specifically means the transition of household registration to local <i>hukou</i> in this context.
<i>Gongjijin Daikuan</i>	公积金贷款	Provident fund loan.
<i>Shebao</i>	社保	Social insurance, an umbrella term composed of several kinds of insurance.
<i>Yibao</i>	医保	Medical insurance
<i>Beishangguangshen</i>	北上广 (深)	Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, (and Shenzhen); are considered to be the well-established four tier 1 city in China.
<i>Xin shimin</i>	新市民	New residents, a polite word referring to the newly settled migrants to a city, can be emigrated from rural or urban areas.
<i>Xin Guanren</i>	新莞人	New Dongguan-er, a polite word referring to those newly settled migrants to Dongguan, more specifically referred to those who are migrants but managed to settle to Dongguan and have obtained a local <i>hukou</i> . In contrast to the locals.
<i>Lubiantan</i>	路边摊	Street vendors, very prevalent in urban villages and lower tier cities.
<i>Gongzufang</i>	公租房	Public rental housing, provided by the state for lower-income families, new employee without housing or rural-urban migrants who have stable jobs in the city.
<i>Lianzufang</i>	廉租房	Low-cost housing, state and local government provide rent subsidies for those in need, as a part of the social security system.
<i>Daiyu</i>	待遇	Treatment, meaning welfare classification from the company or government policy.
<i>Jingji tequ</i>	经济特区	Special Economic Zone (SEZ), there are 5 SEZs in China, three of them (Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Shantou) are located in Guangdong province.
<i>Gangxu</i>	刚需	Rigid demand, in this context it refers to the demand for housing for self-living purposes.
<i>Yanglao</i>	养老	Living retirement life, due to cultural reasons, children (particularly sons) are supposed to contribute substantially to the elderly's retirement life.
<i>Xiaoqu</i>	小区	Residential community, usually gated or semi-gated.
<i>Chengzhongcun</i>	城中村	Urban village, Guangzhou is famous for being the Tier 1 city with urban villages. Government officials and urban managers usually regard urban villages as problems that affect the landscape of the city.
<i>Tulou</i>	土楼	A Hokkien style castle-residence.
<i>Zhunyixian</i>	“准一线”	Quasi-tier 1 city, refers to those tier 2 cities that have potential to become tier 1.
<i>Xiaochanquan fang</i>	小产权(房)	House with limited property right, buyers might not be able to transfer the property out as the certificate issued by the village committee is not always recognised.
<i>Guohu</i>	过户	Property transfer, an important step of purchasing house in China.
<i>Xiezilou</i>	写字楼	Office building, particularly for business usage.
<i>Pifa shichang</i>	批发市场	Wholesale market.
<i>Cuihun</i>	催婚	Urge marriage, usually conducted by parents to their children as parents perceive themselves.

<i>Chaofang</i>	炒房	Housing speculation, purchasing property for investment rather than self-living.
<i>Juweihui</i>	居委会	Neighbourhood committee, composed of residence of different building blocks near one or several streets, as the basic self-autonomous governance institution at the neighbourhood level.
<i>Cunwei</i>	村委(村民委员会)	Villager's community, the equivalent to urban area's resident community in rural area.
<i>Shangjin</i>	上进	Motivated and ambitious, refers to persons who are positive and proactive in learning and career development.
<i>Shenghuo shiyanshi</i>	生活实验室	Life laboratory, referring to a co-living organization established by a group of young migrants, as a response to high property prices and rentals in tier 1 and tier 2 cities.
<i>Lao youtiao</i>	老油条	Old fritters, a mockery way referring to those experienced migrants who are cunning and sleek.
<i>Gan/mai kuli</i>	干/卖苦力	Very labour-intensive work.
<i>Jinrong weiji</i>	金融危机	Specifically refers to the 2008 crisis.
<i>Dagong</i>	打工	Go out to work, usually refers to migrate to work in bigger cities.
<i>Laoxiang</i>	老乡	Old fellow from hometown, the definition hometown can be flexible, and usually refer to people from the same province or prefecture-level region.
<i>Yaohao</i>	摇号 (买房)	Lottery system (for purchasing property), a mechanism setting quotas for those rural-urban migrants without local household registration.
<i>Youhui</i>	(政策)优惠	Policy benefits, usually refer to exemptions of fees or taxes.
<i>Neixiao</i>	内销	Domestic sales, in contrast to export.
<i>Zhagen</i>	扎根	Rooted, in this context, settled down to a new place.
<i>Yixian/Jiceng</i>	一线/基层	Frontline/Baseline refers to work at grass-root, low-level administrative institutions.
<i>Tamade</i>	他妈的	Chinese foul language also can be mantra in colloquium language.
<i>Laojia</i>	老家	Old hometown, usually the place where the person is originated.
<i>Dier Guxiang</i>	第二故乡	The second hometown, in the context refers to the city that rural-urban migrants' workers have been working and living in for a relatively long while.
<i>Baihua/Bak Wah(Cantonese)</i>	白话	Secular language, refers to Cantonese dialect in comparison to Mandarin Chinese as the national standardized language.
<i>Zhitong</i>	直统	Direct governance, usually between city-level and township-level governance, there is a district level governance, while in Dongguan and Zhongshan, the township-level government directly report to city-level government.
<i>Zhenqu</i>	镇区	Township-district, refers to the more urbanized township, but in a lower administrative status than the districts-level.
<i>Shijing</i>	市井	Folk-style, grass-rooted people or things.
<i>Louxi</i>	陋习	Corrupt customs particularly those non-scientific habits in the village.
<i>Guoying qiye</i>	国营企业	State-owned enterprise, China still claimed that the state-owned enterprise plays an important role in the economics, but less and less in the case.

<i>Waipai</i>	外派	High-skilled professionals in other regions, in planning economics, only excelling staff are sent to position in other regions with locally registered collective <i>hukou</i> .
<i>Jitihu</i>	集体户	Collective household, usually catering for the <i>hukou</i> registration need for fresh graduates and individual migrants.
<i>Louti lou</i>	楼梯楼	Residential building without elevator, usually lower than 7 storeys.
<i>Tiannan haibei</i>	天南海北	From south sky and north sea, in this context, all around China.
<i>Niubi</i>	牛逼	Slang for being brilliant and great.
<i>Buruliu</i>	不入流	Not qualified for ranking or out of ranks.
<i>Shouzude</i>	收租的	People who make money mainly by renting out their property; refers to the landlords or property-owner.
<i>Laoguang</i>	老广	Old Cantonese, refer to the lifestyle of, or nickname of local Cantonese people.
<i>Tusheng tuzhang</i>	土生土长	Locally born and locally raised, describe the authenticity of a local.
<i>Shouxu</i>	手续	Bureaucratic procedure.
<i>Guzili</i>	骨子里	In the bones, meaning deeply embedded.
<i>Diliao</i>	低调	Low-profile, in the context refers to not showing off wealth.
<i>Chiku</i>	吃苦	Literally means eating bitterness, and suffering from hardship.
<i>Dushu</i>	读书	Literally reading books, pursue education.
<i>Yangjia hukou</i>	养家糊口	Feeding family mouths, making a living.
<i>Laozai</i>	捞仔捞妹	Discriminative and mockery names for the migrants to Canton who are lucrative and aims at making fortune.
<i>laomei/Loujai</i>		
<i>loumei (Cantonese)</i>		
<i>Nanxia Laojin</i>	南下捞金	Went to the south for Gold Rush, and migrate to work in the more affluent southern cities, a trend in the 1980s and 1990s.
<i>Shizai</i>	实在	Focus more on utility rather than superficial impression, substantial.
<i>Chi he la sa shui</i>	吃喝拉撒睡	Eating, drinking, shitting, peeing, sleeping, refer to basic life needs.
<i>Wuxianyijin</i>	五险一金	Five insurance and one housing fund, a term for the combined social insurance system for workers in China, including pension, medical insurance, unemployment insurance, injury insurance, maternity insurance and housing provident fund.
<i>Zexiao fei</i>	择校费	School selection fee, or school selection charge; when the parent wants to send their children to schools located out of their school district for senior high school, as it is beyond the 9-year compulsory educational system.
<i>Zhian</i>	治安	Law and order; also refers to the crime rate locally.
<i>Dazhuan</i>	大专	Junior college or polytechnics.
<i>Gaopan buqi</i>	高攀不起	Cannot match due to the other side's high profile, status, or wealth, in the context refers to the unaffordability of the housing price.
<i>Anyi</i>	安逸	Comfort-driven, originally Sichuan dialect refers to the lay-back lifestyle.
<i>Zuoxi</i>	作息	Work and life schedule.

<i>Yin(zao)cha</i>	饮（早）茶	Drinking (morning) tea, a tradition of Canton style brunch with dim sum dishes and tea.
<i>Gongban xuexiao</i>	公办学校	State-run school: in China, state-run school is of better quality than the non-state school.
<i>Renqing wei</i>	人情味	Human touch, good relationships with acquaintances and gestures of kindness as human-beings, usually more expected in rural area as the relationship of people is based on family blood ties.

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*Source: Retrieved from FGDs & interview transcripts*