Unrealised aspiration: Migrants' intergroup relations in China

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Although migrants wish to make friends with local urbanites, they may not eventually realise their aspirations. This paper considers the mismatch between migrants' intention and intergroup relations in China to reveal the gap between aspirations and outcomes. The instrumental variable results suggest that residing in migrant-concentrated neighbourhoods can lead to a gap between migrants' aspired and real intergroup relations. This confirms the negative role of neighbourhood ethnic concentration in a domestic migrant context. Moreover, having a rural hukou indirectly hinders migrants from bridging the gap by lowering their socioeconomic status, demonstrating the disadvantage of rural migrants in the socialisation field. We highlight that migrants in China continue to face the challenges to achieving their integration aspirations.

1. Introduction

As the largest-scale human migration in history is taking place in China, citizenisation (*shiminhua*) of migrants has become a major concern for the Chinese government. Citizenisation refers to a process where migrants integrate into host cities not only in the legal sense but also in economic and social senses (Mobrand, 2015). It has become popular in the urbanisation discourse over the past decade. In the 2014 New Urbanisation Plan, promoting citizenisation was identified as one of the major national strategies of China. According to this plan, an important principle of promoting citizenisation was to respect migrants' own willingness. Based on respecting migrants' willingness, hukou reforms and the measures for improving the equalisation of basic public services would be implemented to achieve the goal of citizenisation. Therefore, it is important to understand to what extent migrants realise their integration aspirations and what may impede this process. The citizenisation policies were aimed at removing the barriers to integration and helping migrants to realise their integration aspirations rather than forcing everyone to integrate. Acknowledging migrants' own aspirations for integration and supporting those who are willing to integrate to achieve integration empowers migrants, motives them to pursue integration and helps them develop a higher level of trust towards the government.

Adaptation theories have increasingly looked beyond immigrants' integration outcomes to their integration aspirations and recognised that immigrants may not realise their aspirations (Alba & Nee, 2003; Esser, 2004). New assimilation theory attempts to describe how immigrants contemplate whether or not to assimilate (Alba & Nee, 2003; Nee & Alba, 2013). It also hints that there may be a gap between their assimilation aspirations and outcomes. According to this theory, immigrants face uncertainty as a result of the incomplete information and the risk of opportunism in the institutional environment. The model of intergenerational integration, in a similar vein, provides an account of how immigrants decide whether to assimilate (Esser, 2004, 2010). More importantly, it clearly admits the possible gap between immigrants' assimilation aspirations and outcomes by comparing their decisions on assimilation to the investments which may not pay off. If few opportunities are available for the assimilation into destinations, immigrants' investments in assimilation can hardly succeed – in other words, immigrants can hardly realise their aspirations for assimilation.

However, few efforts have been made to empirically investigate whether migrants achieve their integration aspirations. Most empirical studies have merely focused on the integration outcomes migrants have achieved without considering their aspirations. It is often found that some structural factors, such as ethnicity or hukou status and residential contexts, and some personal resources, such as socioeconomic status and acculturation skills, may account for migrants' lack of integration (Barker & McMillan, 2017; Chen & Wang, 2015; Havekes, Coenders, &

Dekker, 2014; Lin, Wu, & Li, 2020). In fact, the integration outcomes per se may not accurately reflect how disadvantaged migrants are. Those migrants who are well integrated into the host society could still be considered marginal when their ideal level of integration is much higher than the reality, while those who are unwilling to integrate and lack integration at the same time may actually be empowered.

This study addresses the above research omission by investigating the gap between migrants' aspirations for and outcomes of intergroup relations in China. Specifically, the 2014 China Migrants Dynamic Survey (CMDS) will be employed to answer the following research questions: 1. To what extent do migrants in the Chinese cities realise their aspirations for intergroup relations? 2. What may hinder them from realising such aspirations? We focus on intergroup relations, the socialising dimension of integration, instead of other dimensions mainly because the gap between aspirations and outcomes may be more common in this dimension. Compared with other integration dimensions, intergroup relations also require the involvement of local residents and thus are more difficult to achieve even if migrants wish to.

The contribution of this study is threefold. First, although the model of intergenerational integration suggests that immigrants may not realise their integration aspirations, the existing empirical literature has rarely discussed it. This study aims to test whether this idea can be applied to the internal migrants in China. Second, whilst the majority of the existing integration research has dealt with the integration outcomes, this study investigates the gap between migrants' integration aspirations and outcomes. By considering both aspects simultaneously, this study can reflect the marginality of migrants more accurately. Third, the results of this study could demonstrate the efficacy of current citizenisation policies in China. These policies are aimed at reducing the barriers to integration instead of integrating all the migrants regardless of their willingness, so recognising whether migrants who wish to integrate can actually integrate is more important than figuring out to what extent migrants are integrated.

This study proceeds as follows. The next section reviews the literature on the possible gap between migrants' aspirations for and outcomes of intergroup relations and proposes research hypotheses. Then the research design is introduced, and the empirical results are exhibited. The final section concludes with a discussion of the research results.

2. Literature review

2.1. The gap between the aspirations for and the outcomes of intergroup relations

As social adaptation theories evolve, there is a trend to look beyond immigrants' integration outcomes to their integration aspirations. New assimilation theory views assimilation as 'a contingent outcome stemming from the cumulative effect of individual choices and collective action in close-knit groups, occurring at different rates both within and across ethnic groups' (Alba & Nee, 2003: 65–66), highlighting the significance of migrants' own deliberate choices of whether to assimilate. According to this theory, immigrants actively choose the adaptation options which are perceived to be beneficial in the given institutional structure (Alba & Nee, 2003; Nee & Alba, 2013). It also admits that immigrants are confronted with uncertainty which results from the incomplete information and the risk of opportunism in the institutional environment when they make choices during the adaptation process. This implies that assimilation cannot be ensured even if immigrants wish and choose to assimilate. Nevertheless, this theory has not explicitly clarified the possible gap between what immigrants strive for and what they actually achieve. The model of intergenerational integration (Esser, 2004, 2010) serves as a general model for explaining various structural outcomes of the process of intergenerational integration through setting certain model specifications, and assimilation is merely a special case of these outcomes. Similar to new assimilation theory, it interprets the structural outcomes such as assimilation as an aggregated result of

immigrants' choices of whether or not to assimilate. In this model, immigrants' decisions on certain adaptation activities are considered as investments. Similar to making investments, immigrants pick up the adaptation options which are expected to be most rewarding, and they may also take risks. When they decide to assimilate, they may not successfully achieve assimilation due to the limited assimilation opportunities. Whether they can realise their aspirations for assimilation depends on the opportunities available in the mainstream society.

However, both new assimilation theory and the model of intergenerational integration are only concerned with immigrants. Whether the ideas of these two theories can be applied to the internal migrants in China remains an open question that needs more analysis on the existing literature and empirical data. Moreover, the existing integration studies have often focused on migrants' integration outcomes (Barker & McMillan, 2017; Chen & Wang, 2015; Martinovic, Van Tubergen, & Maas, 2009; Xu, Wu, & Li, 2022). Few integration studies have taken into account migrants' own aspirations for integration and investigated their realisation of such aspirations. Compared with migrants who lack integration, migrants who fail to fulfil their aspirations for integration are more likely to be at a disadvantage. For example, when migrants are well integrated but wish to achieve higher level of integration, they are still marginal in spite of their actual integration achievements. When migrants refuse to integrate and experience poor integration, they are not necessarily marginal as their integration outcomes could be their deliberate choices. Therefore, it is important to study whether migrants realise their integration aspirations and why they may fail to realise such aspirations.

As indicated by the model of intergenerational integration (Esser, 2010), the limited assimilation opportunities may hinder immigrants from realising their aspirations for assimilation. Accordingly, when it comes to the intergroup relations, the socialising dimension of integration, we expect that migrants who wish to contact natives may fail to develop positive contact with natives if there are few opportunities for this type of social contacts. The previous intergroup relations literature has identified three sets of opportunities to contact outgroup members.

First, the opportunities are available in the residential place where ethnic concentration plays a vital role. There has been a large amount of evidence showing that neighbourhood ethnic concentration lowers minority residents' chance to make cross-group contact (Martinovic et al., 2009; Van der Laan Bouma-Doff, 2007; Vervoort, Flap, & Dagevos, 2011). In the ethnically concentrated areas, few majority group members are available for social contact. Besides the spatial segregation, the majority group may refuse to engage in intergroup contact as the rising number of ethnic minority group members in the residential contexts threatens their economic and social privilege (Blalock, 1967; Oliver & Wong, 2003). The development of intergroup relations requires the involvement of both minority group members and majority group members. Ethnic minorities can hardly form friendly intergroup relations when outgroup members are unwilling to interact with them. Moreover, the ethnic community empowered by the concentration of co-ethnics would discourage its members from contacting outgroup members (Vervoort et al., 2011). The intergroup relations are not only affected by both parties of the relations but also influenced by the third parties, who are not directly involved in the development of intergroup relations but put pressure on one party of the relations to intervene. The strong ethnic community in the ethnically concentrated areas can be regarded as the third party. Considering that living in ethnically concentrated areas provides few opportunities for intergroup contact, it may impede minority group members from realising their aspirations for intergroup relations.

The second set of opportunities are related to minority group members' socioeconomic status. It has been found that those who achieve higher socioeconomic status tend to face fewer barriers to intergroup contact (Martinovic et al., 2009, 2015; Muttarak, 2014; Vervoort & Dagevos, 2011). Since that majority group members disproportionately concentrate in higher education institutes and better-paid occupations,

minority group members with similar social positions have a higher likelihood of meeting outgroup members by chance and thus may find it easier to realise their aspirations for intergroup relations.

The third set of opportunities are related to minority group members' level of acculturation. The existing intergroup relations research has shown that deeper acculturation is positively associated with intergroup contact (Martinovic et al., 2009, 2015; Muttarak, 2014; Vervoort & Dagevos, 2011). Minority group members who are more acculturated to the host societies are more likely to stay in the same physical space with majority group members. It is also easier for these minority group members to achieve their aspired intergroup relations.

2.2. Understanding migrants in China: defined by hukou

Both new assimilation theory and the model of intergenerational integration are only concerned with immigrants, who are often different from natives in their ethnicities. Different from the immigrants in multi-ethnic countries, internal migrants in China share the national identity with and often belong to the same ethnicity as locals (Wang, Zhang, & Wu, 2017b). In the Chinese context, what distinguishes migrants from natives is hukou instead of ethnicities. While ethnicity is based on shared culture, hukou is institutionally constructed. Hukou is the household registration system which stipulates the resources available to individuals based on their hukou type (rural vs urban) and hukou location (Chan, 2009; Chen & Fan, 2016). Only local urban hukou holders are eligible for the full access to the local urban welfare system. Hukou type and hukou location would not change as individuals migrate to a new place. Despite the differences between immigrants in multi-ethnic countries and migrants in China, both groups are marginalised in the host cities or countries. In China, the differentiated access to local welfare based on hukou and the associated prejudice make it difficult for migrants to realise their aspirations for integration. Therefore, the ideas of the model of intergenerational integration may also apply to the Chinese context. Migrants in China may also face a gap between their integration aspirations and outcomes.

The model of intergenerational integration suggests that immigrants may not realise their aspirations for integration when there are limited opportunities in the host societies. When we apply this idea to the Chinese context, it is important to take into account the context-specific differences. In China, the opportunities that hinder migrants from achieving their aspirations for integration may be different from those integration opportunities in the multi-ethnic contexts because of the unique hukou institution and the cultural similarity between migrants and natives. Hukou determines migrants' access to the welfare, and the institutional discrimination is deeply associated with the informal prejudice against migrants in everyday life. Therefore, hukou may restrict the integration opportunities available to migrants in the Chinese context and hamper them from realising their aspirations for integration. Migrants in China often come from the same ethnicity as locals and thus do not face the ethnic cultural differences. The cultural similarities between migrants and natives may provide more opportunities for migrant integration and help migrants realise their aspirations for integration.

2.3. Migrants' aspirations for and outcomes of intergroup relations in China

There has been a surge of academic interest in the intergroup relations of migrants in China. The extant literature has indicated that intergroup contact is not uncommon in the Chinese context but it is still limited compared with ingroup contact for migrants (Liu, Li, & Breitung, 2012; Nielsen & Smyth, 2011; Yue, Li, Jin, & Feldman, 2013). Nielsen and Smyth (2011), for instance, found that only one-third of migrants reported no interaction with local urbanites. Yue et al. (2013) made a comparison between migrants' intergroup contact and ingroup contact. Their results revealed that migrants averagely had less than 2 non-kin ties with local residents and about 20 ties with co-migrants. Despite the surge of interest in migrants' intergroup relations in China, few studies have investigated migrants' own aspirations for intergroup relations. Wang, Zhang, and Wu (2016) reckoned that migrants generally have a strong willingness to engage in intergroup contact because they understand the possible benefits of a diverse social network. Extensive integration studies in the Chinese context have indeed demonstrated that social contact with urban locals can help migrants achieve better economic performance, improved housing conditions and a sense of belonging to the receiving cities (Chang, Wen, & Wang, 2011; Liu, Wang, & Tao, 2013; Yue et al., 2013).

Hukou institution has often been blamed for the poor relationship between migrants and locals (Du, Song, & Li, 2021; Wang et al., 2016). As the local welfare and public services in the Chinese cities are provided according to the hukou registration place, migrants, who are non-local hukou holders, are manually constructed as the underclass. This forms the basis of natives' discrimination against migrants. A considerable proportion of local residents associate migrants with certain urban problems such as the decreasing safety of cities (Liu, Huang, & Zhang, 2018; Nielsen, Nyland, Smyth, Zhang, & Zhu, 2006). Furthermore, migrants can be divided into urban migrants and rural migrants based on their hukou status. Most extant literature on the intergroup relations of migrants in China has either viewed migrants as a whole or focused solely on rural migrants (Nielsen & Smyth, 2011; Wang et al., 2016; Yue et al., 2013). In fact, the differences between urban migrants and rural migrants cannot be ignored. Whilst urban migrants could still access the welfare system and public services in their hometowns, rural migrants have to largely rely on themselves. Rural migrants are also degraded in the cultural aspect as rural culture is usually viewed as inferior to urban culture in the Chinese context (Du et al., 2021; Qian & He, 2012). The institutional inequality and the cultural degradation result in more severe prejudice against rural migrants and thus reduce their opportunities for intergroup contact. Therefore, this study hypothesises that:

1. Holding a rural hukou may hinder migrants from achieving their aspirations for intergroup relations.

The role of residential migrant concentration has also gained increasing attention in the intergroup relations literature in the Chinese context (Wang, Zhang, & Wu, 2017a, 2017b; Liu et al., 2018; Shen, 2017). Liu et al. (2018) revealed a positive relationship between the size of migrant population in the living environment and migrants' likelihood of perceiving exclusion from native residents. Shen (2017) also suggested that residing in suburbs hindered migrants from developing cross-group friendships due to the migrant concentration in the suburban areas. Wang et al. (2017a), in contrast, found that residents embedded in neighbourhoods with a higher migrant presence interacted with their outgroup neighbours more frequently, which further brought about stronger intergroup trust and care. However, their research samples included both natives and migrants. Whilst a higher level of migrant concentration curtails migrants' opportunities to contact local residents, it allows local residents to be physically proximate to more migrants and thus provides more intergroup contact opportunities for local residents. Neighbourhood migrant concentration determines the opportunities for intergroup contact in China, so it may influence whether migrants could achieve their aspirations for intergroup relations. Thus, this study hypothesises that:

2. Living in migrant-concentrated neighbourhoods may lead to the gap between migrants' aspirations for and outcomes of intergroup relations.

In addition, socioeconomic status may affect migrants' relations with local residents. Higher education and the occupations of self-employed and non-manual labour are found to be positively associated with the intergroup ties (Shen, 2017; Yue et al., 2013). The opportunity

mechanism is one of the ways by which socioeconomic status could influence migrants' intergroup relations. Those migrants who are more socioeconomically advanced may have more opportunities to contact natives. These opportunities may enable migrants to achieve their aspirations for intergroup relations. Therefore, this study hypothesises that:

3. Migrants who have higher socioeconomic status are more likely to realise their aspirations for intergroup relations.

The role of acculturation has been understudied in the intergroup relations research in the Chinese context. As mentioned in the section of understanding migrants in China, migrants in China share more cultural similarities with natives compared with immigrants in the multi-ethnic contexts. Therefore, it may be easier for migrants in China to acculturate to the host cities. There is some evidence about the association between the duration of stay in the host city and migrants' intergroup relations. It has been found that the longer duration of stay in the current city is beneficial to the development of intergroup social ties (Shen, 2017; Yue et al., 2013). This suggests that a higher level of acculturation to local societies can generate positive effects on migrants' cross-group contact since migrants tend to acculturate over time. The opportunity mechanism is also one of the ways that acculturation may affect migrants' intergroup relations. When migrants have a higher level of acculturation, they may have more opportunities to contact natives and accordingly realise their aspirations for intergroup relations. Thus, this study hypothesises that:

4. Acculturation may help migrants bridge the gap between their aspirations for and outcomes of intergroup relations.

3. Research design

3.1. Data

This study employs the special sub-survey of 2014 China Migrants Dynamic Survey (CMDS), which was conducted by the National Population and Family Planning Committee to collect information about migrants' social integration and mental health. Drawing upon a multi-stage stratified probability proportionate to size (PPS) sampling method, the sub-survey selected migrant respondents from eight cities which are located in different regions of China and develop at different levels, i.e. Beijing, Jiaxing, Xiamen, Qingdao, Zhengzhou, Shenzhen, Zhongshan and Chengdu. The interviewed migrants had been in the receiving cities for over one month and were at the age between 15 and 59. A sample of 2000 migrants was collected in each city, and the whole sample of this sub-survey includes 16000 migrants.

3.2. Measuring the gap between the aspirations for and the outcomes of intergroup relations

The dependent variable of this study is the gap between migrants' aspirations for and outcomes of intergroup relations. This is a binary variable which equals 1 when there is a gap and equals 0 when there is no gap. Here we draw upon Tselios, McCann, and Van Dijk's (2017) method of measuring the gap between the desired and the real local social engagement and thus calculate the gap variable based on the difference between the level of aspired intergroup relations and the level of real intergroup relations. If the level of real intergroup relations is lower than that of aspired intergroup relations, then we believe that there is a gap between aspirations and outcomes. Otherwise, there is no gap. The level of real intergroup relations is measured with a question 'To what extent do you or your family get on well with locals'. There are five responses including 'little interaction', 'not well', 'just so-so', 'relatively well' and 'very well'. The level of aspired intergroup relations is measured by the degree that respondents agree with the statement 'I

am willing to make friends with natives'. Respondents were given a four-point scale '1. Totally disagree; 2. Disagree; 3. Basically agree; 4. Totally agree'. Due to the low frequency of the first two categories, we combine them into one category '1. Totally disagree or disagree'. To ensure the categories of the real intergroup relations variable and the aspired intergroup relations variable consistent with each other, we also combine the first three categories of the real intergroup relations variable. In this way, the real intergroup relations variable and the aspired intergroup relations variable are respectively measured by the three-point scale '1. No interaction, not well or just so-so (For simplicity, we call it 'not well'); 2. Relatively well; 3. Very well' and '1. Totally disagree or disagree (i.e. not willing); 2. Basically agree (i.e. basically willing); 3. Totally agree (i.e. totally willing)'. The meanings of the categories of these two variables are consistent with each other. Not getting along well and being not willing are both negative. Getting along relatively well and being basically willing are both a bit but not very positive. Getting along very well and being totally willing are both very positive. Drawing upon Tselios et al.'s (2017) as well as Tselios, Noback, McCann, and Van Dijk's (2015) research, this study considers both the real intergroup relations variable and the aspired intergroup relations variable as ratio variables to make them comparable. For example, individuals who do not get along well have the lowest level of real intergroup relations, and individuals who get along very well with locals have the highest level of real intergroup relations. Similarly, individuals who totally disagree or disagree that they are willing to make friends with natives have the lowest level of aspired intergroup relations, and individuals who totally agree with this statement have the highest level of aspired intergroup relations.

It may be simplistic to measure the gap based on a binary categorisation, so this study also measures the gap using a ratio variable as a robustness check. In the same way as above, we consider the real intergroup relations variable and the aspired intergroup relations variable as ratio variables and compare them. When the level of real intergroup relations is lower than that of aspired intergroup relations, the gap variable equals the absolute difference between them. Otherwise, the gap variable takes the value 0.

It is important to note that while the measure of real intergroup relations asked migrants to comment on their or their family's real intergroup relations, the measure of aspired intergroup relations asked migrants to comment on their own willingness to develop intergroup relations. Despite this difference in the subject, we believe these two variables are comparable. There are two reasons why this difference would not substantially lower the comparability between the real intergroup relations variable and the aspired intergroup relations variable. First, according to the false consensus theory, individuals tend to consider their behaviours and values to be common (Ross, Greene, & House, 1977). Their perceptions of others' behaviours and values often reflect their own ones. Therefore, when migrants were asked about how they or their family get along with locals, they tend to comment based on their own real intergroup relations. Second, family members tend to share similarities. The homophily principle suggests that individuals prefer to marry similar others (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). There is also evidence that the intergroup relations of parents and children are related (Degner & Dalege, 2013). Therefore, migrants and their family members may have similar real intergroup relations. Moreover, individuals' perceptions of others' intergroup relations have been used as an efficacious proxy for individuals' own intergroup relations in the existing literature. For example, Laurence (2014) employed individuals' perceptions of the interethnic relations in their community to measure their own interethnic relations with their neighbours and provided justification for this measure.

In addition, the categories of the real intergroup relations variable and the aspired intergroup relations variable were originally different and are combined to be consistent with each other, so there may be inconsistencies between these two variables. To relieve this problem, we avoid directly calculating the differences between these two variables

and run multinomial probit regression on the real intergroup relations by aspiration groups to indirectly understand the underlying dynamics of migrants' realisation of their aspirations for intergroup relations as a robustness check. More specific ways to run the models and explanation for what these models reflect will be shown in the section of analytical strategies.

3.3. Measuring predictors

There are four sets of predictors, including hukou status, neighbourhood migrant concentration, socioeconomic status and the level of acculturation.

First, hukou status is classified into two categories, rural hukou and urban hukou.

Second, neighbourhood migrant concentration is captured by a question 'Who are your neighbours' with four choices, 'mainly migrants', 'mainly local residents', 'roughly an equal number of migrants and local residents' and 'unsure'. Such self-report measures of neighbourhood composition could also be found in the previous intergroup relations research (Kouvo & Lockmer, 2013; Laurence & Bentley, 2018). As we will discuss in the section of analytical strategies, this variable is endogenous, and the instrumental variable method will be used to deal with this issue. In the instrumental variable model, this multinomial neighbourhood composition variable is transformed into a binary one with 0 representing living in the neighbourhoods where most residents are locals and 1 representing living in the neighbourhoods where half or more of residents are migrants for the convenience of estimation.

Third, socioeconomic status variables include educational attainments, employment status and family income. The educational attainments are categorised into three levels, namely primary and below, junior secondary and senior secondary and above. The employment status is a dichotomous variable which equals 0 when respondents are employed and equals 1 when they are unemployed. For the monthly income, respondents were asked about how much their families monthly earn in the current cities. This monthly income variable is log transformed.

Fourth, acculturation variables include local dialect proficiency, cultural proximity and the length of residence. According to the proficiency in local dialects, respondents can be divided into three categories, 'not understand', 'partly understand' and 'totally understand'. The cultural proximity is measured by respondents' opinions on whether following the hometown customs, keeping the hometown habits, making children learn the hometown dialects and living a hometown lifestyle are respectively important to themselves and whether they are different from local residents respectively in terms of hygiene habits, dressing, ideas of education or elderly support and views on some social issues. Respondents' comments on these eight statements are measured by a scale from 1 (totally agree) to 5 (totally disagree), and the average score of these statements is used to measure the cultural proximity. With respect to the length of residence in the current city, it is measured in units of years. As migrants tend to acculturate to host cities over time, the length of residence can reflect their level of acculturation.

Besides, some other variables are also controlled in this study, including age, gender, marital status and city dummies.

3.4. Analytical strategies

First, this study uses probit models based on the binary gap variable to explore how hukou status, neighbourhood composition, socioeconomic status and acculturation may affect migrants' realisation of aspirations for intergroup relations.

Second, the instrumental variable method is employed to relieve the endogeneity problems related to neighbourhood composition. Although living in migrant-concentrated neighbourhoods may increase migrants' likelihood of experiencing a gap between their aspirations for and outcomes of intergroup relations, migrants who experience such a gap are also more likely to choose migrant-concentrated neighbourhoods. This could lead to the estimation bias.

To address this issue, this study uses the instrumental variable method. Following the existing research on neighbourhood effects which has used the ethnic composition of a larger geographic unit as the instrumental variable for neighbourhood ethnic composition (Dustmann & Preston, 2001; Wu, Hou, Schimmele, & Carmichael, 2018), this study chooses district-level neighbourhood composition as the instrumental variable for neighbourhood composition. This instrumental variable is measured by the most common neighbourhood composition in the district. As explained in the construction of neighbourhood composition variable, each respondent was asked to report their neighbourhood composition. The instrumental variable is constructed using the mode of the answers of all the respondents in each district. If most respondents in a district report living in neighbourhoods where there are mainly natives, then the instrumental variable takes the value 0. If not, then it takes the value 1. From a theoretical point of view, district-level neighbourhood composition meets the relevance and exogeneity requirements of a valid instrumental variable. For the relevance, individuals in a district where native-dominated neighbourhoods are common are more likely to reside in a native-dominated neighbourhood, so district-level neighbourhood composition is closely associated with neighbourhood composition. For the exogeneity, district-level neighbourhood composition would not directly affect or be affected by migrants' experience of the gap between their aspirations for and outcomes of intergroup relations. There are so many different neighbourhoods in a district that individuals do not have to leave the district for certain neighbourhoods. Considering that the dependent variable and the endogenous variable are binary, this study uses Roodman's (2011) conditional mixed-process (CMP) framework to estimate the instrumental variable model.

Third, this study substitutes the binary gap variable with a ratio gap variable as a robustness check. Ordinary least squares regression models are used to investigate the underlying dynamics of the gap between migrants' aspirations for and outcomes of intergroup relations.

Fourth, this study focuses on specific aspiration groups and runs multinomial probit regression on migrants' real intergroup relations to indirectly explore what may affect migrants' realisation of their aspirations for intergroup relations as a robustness check. Specifically, migrants are divided into three groups according to their aspirations for intergroup relations, those who are not willing to develop intergroup relations (not willing group), those who are basically willing to develop intergroup relations (basically willing group) and those who are totally willing to develop intergroup relations (totally willing group). For the two latter aspiration groups, this study respectively runs multinomial probit regression on real intergroup relations and chooses migrants who do not get along well with natives as the base category. The regression results reveal what may help migrants who are basically or even totally willing to develop intergroup relations actually get along relatively well and even very well with natives instead of not getting along well with natives. Although there may be inconsistencies between the real intergroup relations variable and the aspired intergroup relations variable, migrants who are basically or totally willing to develop intergroup relations would almost definitely face a gap between their aspirations for and outcomes of intergroup relations when they do not get along well with natives. No matter for the basically willing group or for the totally willing group, those who get along relatively well or even very well with natives would face a smaller or even no gap between their aspirations for and outcomes of intergroup relations compared with those who do not get along well with natives. Therefore, both the regression results based on the basically willing group and the regression results based on the totally willing group indicate what may help bridge the gap between their aspirations for and outcomes of intergroup relations.

4. Empirical results

4.1. Descriptive findings

Migrants' aspirations for and outcomes of intergroup relations are shown in Fig. 1. This figure indicates that migrants' outcomes of intergroup relations are generally good but still not as good as what they wish to achieve. For the outcomes of intergroup relations, more than 40 percent of migrants in the survey get on relatively well with local residents, and just below 30 percent even get on very well with local residents. This is in accordance with the intergroup relations literature that has found that the social worlds of migrants and natives overlap considerably in Chinese cities (Nielsen et al., 2006; Nielsen & Smyth, 2011; Wang et al., 2016). Compared with outcomes, migrants' aspirations for intergroup relations are much higher. Nearly three-fifths of migrants in the survey totally agree that they are willing to make friends with locals, and another two-fifths basically agree with this statement. Thus, merely focusing on the outcomes of intergroup relations may oversimplify the situation of migrants in China. Comparing what migrants wish to achieve and what they actually achieve can provide more nuanced findings of migrants' integration. There is a need to understand the gap between migrants' aspirations for and outcomes of intergroup relations.

Table 1 exhibits this gap and reveals its prevalence among the migrant samples. Over a half of migrant samples face a gap between their aspirations and outcomes, suggesting migrants' underprivileged status in China. This is in line with the model of intergenerational integration (Esser, 2004, 2010), which suggests that immigrants' investments in assimilation may not pay off. Besides, while over 3 percent of migrant samples with bad intergroup relations actually realise their aspirations, more than a half of migrant samples with relatively good intergroup relations fail to realise their aspirations. This suggests that migrants' outcomes of intergroup relations cannot represent their realisation of aspirations. When migrants meet their aspirations for intergroup relations, their bad intergroup relations could be their deliberate choice. When they fail to realise their aspirations, they are always disadvantaged no matter how well they get along with locals. The results based on the gap between aspirations and outcomes depict a gloomier picture of migrants' relations with locals than the results based on the outcomes. We argue that the gap indicator can better reflect the disadvantage of migrants in the receiving cities.

The descriptive statistics of predictors are summarised in Table 2. Migrants in the survey are often young and married. The majority of them are male. Compared with those without any gap between their aspirations for and outcomes of intergroup relations, migrants who face

Table 1

The gap between migrants' aspirations for and outcomes of intergroup relations.

		Gap				
		0	%	1	%	Total
Real intergroup relations	Not well	154	3.38	4400	96.62	4554
	Relatively well	2987	43.55	3871	56.45	6858
	Very well	4584	100.00	0	0.00	4584
	Total	7725	48.29	8271	51.71	15996

Table 2

Descriptive statistics of predictors (%).

	Gap		
	Total	0	1
Age[a]	32.69	33.02	32.38
Gender			
Male	54.99	54.28	55.66
Female	45.01	45.72	44.34
Marital status			
Unmarried	26.82	24.93	28.58
Married	73.18	75.07	71.42
Hukou status			
Rural hukou	86.00	84.75	87.16
Urban hukou	14.00	15.25	12.84
Neighbourhood composition			
Mostly are migrants	43.46	38.98	47.65
Mostly are natives	20.65	24.66	16.90
Equal	29.46	30.76	28.24
Not sure	6.43	5.61	7.21
Education			
Primary and below	9.40	9.13	9.66
Junior secondary	50.53	48.70	52.24
Senior secondary +	40.07	42.17	38.10
Employment			
Employed	91.69	92.22	91.19
Unemployed	8.31	7.78	8.81
Family income (10000 Yuan)[a]	0.64	0.66	0.62
Dialect			
Not understand	14.89	11.72	17.86
Partly understand	22.98	20.12	25.66
Totally understand	62.13	68.17	56.49
Cultural proximity[a]	2.97	3.01	2.94
Length of residence[a]	4.25	4.46	4.06

Note.
[a] Mean value; city dummies are omitted for simplicity.
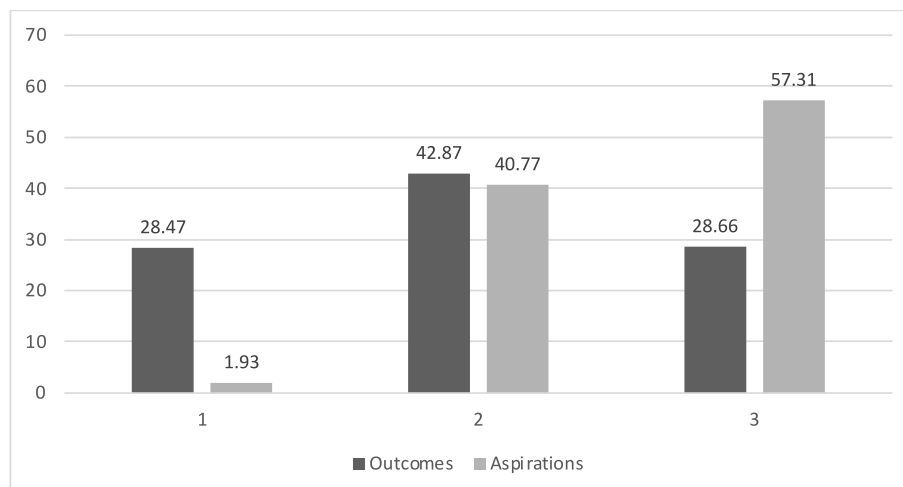
Fig. 1. Migrants' aspirations for and outcomes of intergroup relations (%).

a gap tend to be younger and are more likely to be male and unmarried.

For hukou status, most migrants in the survey are rural hukou holders, which account for 86 percent of the migrant samples. A comparison between different gap categories reveals that the percentage of rural hukou holders is even higher for migrants with unfulfilled wishes for intergroup relations.

In terms of neighbourhood composition, migrant-dominated neighbourhoods (43.46 percent) are more popular than native-dominated neighbourhoods (20.65 percent) and mixed neighbourhoods (29.46 percent). There are noteworthy distinctions between different gap groups in neighbourhood composition. Migrants experiencing the gap between their aspirations for and outcomes of intergroup relations are more likely to reside in migrant-concentrated areas than those without such gap.

With respect to the socioeconomic characteristics, migrants in the survey usually suffer from poor education and low income, but most of them are employed. The education level, monthly income and employment rate are lower for migrants faced with a gap between their aspirations for and outcomes of intergroup relations.

Migrants' overall level of acculturation is not so high although they usually have the same ethnicity as local residents. Approximately 40 percent of migrant samples cannot completely understand the dialects of the current city. The average cultural proximity score is at the medium level. Compared with those who meet their aspirations for intergroup relations, migrants who fail to do so are generally less acculturated to destinations. They are less proficient in local dialects, share fewer cultural similarities with natives and stay in the host cities for a shorter period of time.

4.2. Basic regression results

In this section, binary probit models are utilised to understand the underlying dynamics of the gap between migrants' aspirations for and outcomes of intergroup relations in China. The dependent variable is the binary gap variable. Predictors are entered stepwise. We first include hukou variable and control variables and then add neighbourhood composition variable, socioeconomic variables and acculturation variables step by step. The regression results are shown in Table 3.

Model 1 only includes hukou variable and control variables. According to this model, migrants with urban hukou have lower odds of reporting a gap between their aspirations for and outcomes of intergroup relations. This suggests that rural hukou could hinder migrants from meeting their aspirations for intergroup relations, in line with the first hypothesis. The extant literature on the intergroup relations of migrants in China has rarely discussed the differences between rural migrants and urban migrants (Nielsen & Smyth, 2011; Wang et al., 2016; Yue et al., 2013). In China, rural hukou holders and urban hukou holders have unequal access to welfare systems and public services. Rural residents are also degraded in cultural sense since rural areas are believed to be less modernised than cities (Du et al., 2021; Qian & He, 2012). As a result of the institutional discrimination and the cultural degradation, rural migrants face more prejudice and find it more difficult to realise their wishes for intergroup relations than urban migrants. Furthermore, our result is consistent with the integration research in the Chinese context which has revealed the differences between urban migrants and rural migrants in terms of income, welfare benefits and housing conditions (Wang, Guo, & Cheng, 2015a, 2015b; Chen, 2011; Wei, Liu, He, & Mo, 2020). Although both urban migrants and rural migrants face the inequality related to their non-local hukou, rural migrants tend to be more disadvantaged due to their rural hukou status. For instance, Chen (2011) found that rural migrants were highly possible to get trapped in low-skilled jobs whereas urban migrants were able to match their capabilities to better jobs. Wei et al. (2020) also revealed that unfavourable hukou conditions including both non-local hukou and rural hukou were negatively associated with housing area and housing ownership. Compared with urban migrants, rural migrants were less

Table 3

The regression results of the gap between migrants' aspirations for and outcomes of intergroup relations (the reference group is migrants without any gap).

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
	Gap	Gap	Gap	Gap
Age	−0.002	−0.001	−0.003	−0.002
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)
Female (reference = male)	−0.040[a]	−0.039	−0.055[b]	−0.059[b]
	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.021)	(0.021)
Married (reference = unmarried)	−0.123[c]	−0.115[c]	−0.072[a]	−0.071[a]
	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.031)	(0.031)
Urban hukou (reference = rural hukou)	−0.129[c]	−0.117[c]	−0.049	−0.039
	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.031)	(0.031)
Neighbourhood composition (reference = mostly are migrants)				
Mostly are natives		−0.227[c]	−0.218[c]	−0.187[c]
		(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)
Equal		−0.109[c]	−0.101[c]	−0.080[b]
		(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.025)
Not sure		0.100[a]	0.116[b]	0.122[b]
		(0.043)	(0.043)	(0.043)
Education (reference = primary and below)				
Junior secondary			−0.023	−0.007
			(0.037)	(0.038)
Senior secondary +			−0.140[c]	−0.111[b]
			(0.041)	(0.041)
Unemployed (reference = employed)			0.062	0.064
			(0.037)	(0.038)
Monthly income (logged)			−0.092[c]	−0.080[c]
			(0.019)	(0.019)
Dialect (reference = not understand)				
Partly understand				−0.022
				(0.035)
Totally understand				−0.247[c]
				(0.035)
Cultural proximity				−0.077[c]
				(0.021)
Length of residence				−0.007[b]
				(0.002)
Constant	0.327[c]	0.367[c]	1.217[c]	1.419[c]
	(0.050)	(0.051)	(0.167)	(0.176)
City dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pseudo R^2	0.015	0.019	0.022	0.027
Log likelihood	−10910.484	−10868.355	−10838.094	−10781.654
χ^2	335.556	419.814	480.336	593.216
Sample size (valid cases)	15996	15996	15996	15996

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.
[a] $p < 0.05$.
[b] $p < 0.01$.
[c] $p < 0.001$.

likely to occupy larger housing and own the housing. Our result highlights that the marginalisation of migrants with rural hukou exists not only in the labour market and housing market but also in their daily contact with others. Hukou has far-reaching effects. It can influence almost all the aspects of individuals' everyday life.

Model 2 further includes the neighbourhood composition variable, and the results lend support to our second hypothesis. Compared with those who live in migrant-dominated neighbourhoods, migrants who live in native-dominated neighbourhoods or mixed neighbourhoods are more likely to achieve their ideal intergroup relations. This conforms to the intergroup relations literature that has demonstrated how neighbourhood ethnic concentration hinders minority residents' contact with majority group members (Martinovic et al., 2009; Van der Laan Bouma-Doff, 2007; Vervoort et al., 2011). This is also in accordance with the intergroup relations literature in the Chinese context which has demonstrated the devastating impacts of the residential contexts with migrant concentration (Liu et al., 2018; Shen, 2017). When living in the neighbourhoods dominated by co-migrants, migrant individuals have

few locals in the physical proximity to contact. At the same time, local neighbours may refuse cross-group contact due to their threatened privilege in the migrant-dominated contexts. The migrant community empowered by co-migrants could also impede the social contact with outgroup members. In this way, it is more difficult for migrants who live in neighbourhoods with a higher percentage of migrant concentration to realise their aspirations for intergroup relations.

Socioeconomic status variables are added to model 3. This model shows that migrants who achieve higher educational attainments and have higher income are less likely to experience the gap between their aspirations for and outcomes of intergroup relations, suggesting that socioeconomic achievements can help migrants meet their aspirations for intergroup relations. This verifies our third hypothesis. It is also in line with the previous intergroup relations studies in both multi-ethnic contexts (Martinovic et al., 2009; Muttarak, 2014; Vervoort & Dagevos, 2011) and the Chinese context (Shen, 2017; Yue et al., 2013). These studies have revealed a positive relationship between migrants' socioeconomic status and their outcomes of intergroup relations. Natives are often socioeconomically more advanced than migrants, so migrants who have higher socioeconomic status tend to have more chance to meet natives in their daily lives. When these migrants aspire to socialise across groups, they are more capable of developing friendly intergroup relations.

Finally, acculturation variables are entered in model 4, and the results verify the fourth hypothesis. As the model shows, proficiency in local dialects, cultural proximity and length of residence are negatively related to the odds of having a gap between migrants' aspirations for and outcomes of intergroup relations, which indicates that deeper acculturation to host cities can assist migrants in developing the intergroup relations that they wish to have. This echoes the intergroup relations studies in the multi-ethnic societies (Martinovic et al., 2009, 2015; Muttarak, 2014; Vervoort & Dagevos, 2011). These studies have found that mastering local language, sharing similar ethnic and religious backgrounds and being born in or migrating to destinations at young ages are conducive to social contact with outgroup members. Although migrants and natives in China usually come from the same ethnicity and have few religious conflicts, there is some degree of cultural difference between them such as dialects, customs and habits (Wang & Fan, 2012; Yue, Fong, Li, & Feldman, 2020). The level of acculturation to receiving cities is still essential to eliminating the gap between migrants' aspirations for and outcomes of intergroup relations in the Chinese context.

It is interesting to note that hukou variable is no longer significant after the inclusion of socioeconomic variables. Table 4 also shows that rural hukou significantly lowers migrants' socioeconomic status. Migrants with rural hukou tend to have lower educational attainments and earn less income. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), the mediation exists if the independent variable affects the mediator, the mediator affects the dependent variable, and the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable would reduce by a significant amount (partial mediation) or to 0 (complete mediation) after the mediator is controlled. Therefore, our empirical results suggest that socioeconomic status completely mediates the relationship between hukou and the gap between migrants' aspirations for and outcomes of intergroup relations. This means that holding a rural hukou generates adverse effects on migrants' realisation of their aspirations for intergroup relations through lowering their socioeconomic status. The rural hukou cannot directly affect such realisation. In other words, it is not the rural hukou per se but the low socioeconomic status caused by the rural hukou that makes migrants fail to meet their aspirations for intergroup relations. Although the rural hukou is often associated with the entitlements of farmland and rural housing land, its economic value largely lies in the potential compensation caused by the expropriation of rural land and, in some cases, the revenues of leasing the land (Hao & Tang, 2015). The revenues may be relatively low when the land is not around the urban areas. Agriculture plays a limited role in providing a livelihood for rural migrants because of its low income. However, the rural hukou often leads to the unfair treatment towards migrants in the urban labour market and thus a lower socioeconomic status of rural migrants. The previous integration research has found that rural migrants are less economically advanced than urban migrants (Chen, 2011; Wang & Fan, 2012; Wang et al., 2015a). In comparison with urban migrants, rural migrants tend to occupy low-skilled jobs and earn lower income. Our study goes a step further by pointing out that the hukou-based socioeconomic inequality can further lead to the disadvantage in the socialisation field. As Chen and Wang (2015) emphasised, it is impossible to help migrants achieve a significantly higher level of social integration by simply dissolving the hukou institution unless their access to opportunities and resources can be improved. The poor social economic resources which impede rural migrants' realisation of their aspirations for intergroup relations stem from structural and institutional constraints. Even if the division between urban hukou and rural hukou is abolished, the unequal treatment towards rural migrants may not disappear in the labour market, and the unequal treatment at work can further become barriers to the development of cross-group relations.

Table 4
The regression results of socioeconomic status.

	Model 5		Model 6	Model 7
	Education (reference = primary and below) Junior secondary	Education (reference = primary and below) Senior secondary +	Unemployed (reference = employed)	Monthly income (logged)
Age	−0.076[b]	−0.105[b]	−0.012[b]	−0.002[b]
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.001)
Female (reference = male)	−0.400[b]	−0.490[b]	0.710[b]	−0.038[b]
	(0.042)	(0.044)	(0.031)	(0.009)
Married (reference = unmarried)	0.191[a]	−0.281[b]	0.508[b]	0.637[b]
	(0.068)	(0.068)	(0.044)	(0.012)
Urban hukou (reference = rural hukou)	0.121	1.772[b]	0.055	0.255[b]
	(0.083)	(0.081)	(0.043)	(0.012)
Constant	4.040[b]	4.923[b]	−1.821[b]	8.158[b]
	(0.100)	(0.104)	(0.064)	(0.017)
R^2				0.217
Pseudo R^2			0.082	
Log likelihood	−12979.907		−4204.728	−12894.970
χ^2	3236.444		752.606	
Sample size (valid cases)	15996		15996	15996

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.
[a] $p < 0.01$.
[b] $p < 0.001$.

4.3. Instrumental variable regression results

This section employs the instrumental variable method to address the endogeneity issue related to neighbourhood composition. We introduce the district-level neighbourhood composition as the instrumental variable for the endogenous variable, neighbourhood composition. In Table 5, model 8 uses the binary neighbourhood composition variable, and model 9 adds the district-level neighbourhood composition to the original model to check its exogeneity. The regression results show that the neighbourhood composition variable is significant whilst the district-level neighbourhood composition variable is insignificant. This indicates that the district-level neighbourhood composition is not directly associated with the gap between migrants' aspirations for and outcomes of intergroup relations, which is in line with our assumption that the instrumental variable is exogeneous. Model 10 is the instrumental variable model including two equations. In one equation, neighbourhood composition is regressed on the district-level neighbourhood composition and all the exogeneous independent variables. The regression results suggest that district-level neighbourhood composition is significantly related to neighbourhood composition. This provides evidence for the relevance of the instrumental variable. In another equation, the gap is regressed on neighbourhood composition and all the exogeneous independent variables. The regression results show the significance of neighbourhood composition, implying that neighbourhood migrant concentration can significantly impede migrants' realisation of their aspirations for intergroup relations after controlling the potential endogeneity.

4.4. Regression results based on an alternative measure of dependent variable

This section substitutes the binary gap variable with a ratio gap variable. Ordinary Least Squares models are employed to understand the underlying dynamics of the gap between migrants' aspirations for and outcomes of intergroup relations. Key independent variables, hukou variable, neighbourhood composition variable, socioeconomic status variables and acculturation variables are entered stepwise. Table 6

Table 5
The regression results aimed at dealing with the issue of endogeneity.

	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10	
	Gap	Gap	Neighbourhood composition	Gap
Neighbourhood composition (reference = most residents are natives)	0.149[b] (0.027)	0.141[b] (0.027)		0.266[a] (0.118)
District-level neighbourhood composition (reference = most neighbourhoods are native-dominated)		0.067 (0.045)	0.902[b] (0.046)	
Constant	1.288[b] (0.188)	1.229[b] (0.192)	1.290[b] (0.229)	1.157[b] (0.228)
Other independent variables	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
City dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pseudo R^2	0.025	0.026		
Log likelihood	−10051.166	−10050.054	−16697.912	
χ^2	524.083	526.308	2782.955	
Sample size (valid cases)	14887	14887	14887	

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.
[a] $p < 0.05$.
[b] $p < 0.001$.

Table 6
The regression results based on an alternative measure of gap variable.

	Model 11	Model 12	Model 13	Model 14
	Gap	Gap	Gap	Gap
Age	−0.002[a] (0.001)	−0.001 (0.001)	−0.002[b] (0.001)	−0.002[a] (0.001)
Female (reference = male)	−0.027[a] (0.011)	−0.027[a] (0.011)	−0.036[c] (0.011)	−0.038[c] (0.011)
Married (reference = unmarried)	−0.065[c] (0.015)	−0.060[c] (0.015)	−0.029 (0.016)	−0.029 (0.016)
Urban hukou (reference = rural hukou)	−0.057[c] (0.016)	−0.052[c] (0.016)	−0.012 (0.016)	−0.007 (0.016)
Neighbourhood composition (reference = mostly are migrants)				
Mostly are natives		−0.110[c] (0.015)	−0.105[c] (0.015)	−0.087[c] (0.015)
Equal		−0.074[c] (0.013)	−0.068[c] (0.013)	−0.056[c] (0.013)
Not sure		0.074[b] (0.023)	0.083[c] (0.023)	0.087[c] (0.023)
Education (reference = primary and below)				
Junior secondary			−0.025 (0.020)	−0.016 (0.020)
Senior secondary +			−0.088[c] (0.021)	−0.072[c] (0.021)
Unemployed (reference = employed)			0.029 (0.020)	0.030 (0.020)
Monthly income (logged)			−0.061[c] (0.010)	−0.054[c] (0.010)
Dialect (reference = not understand)				
Partly understand				−0.024 (0.018)
Totally understand				−0.148[c] (0.018)
Cultural proximity				−0.039[c] (0.011)
Length of residence				−0.003[a] (0.001)
Constant	0.807[c] (0.027)	0.831[c] (0.027)	1.394[c] (0.087)	1.504[c] (0.092)
City dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
R^2	0.021	0.027	0.032	0.039
Log likelihood	−16217.771	−16171.039	−16130.915	−16067.268
Sample size (valid cases)	15996	15996	15996	15996

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.
[a] $p < 0.05$.
[b] $p < 0.01$.
[c] $p < 0.001$.

shows the regression results. The results suggest that although rural hukou does not directly affect migrants' realisation of their aspirations for intergroup relations, it may generate indirect negative effects by lowering their socioeconomic status. Migrants who live in migrant-concentrated neighbourhoods have a higher possibility of experiencing a gap between their aspirations for and outcomes of intergroup relations. Migrants with higher socioeconomic status and deeper acculturation tend to achieve their aspirations for intergroup relations. These findings are consistent with those in the section of basic regression results, suggesting that the research findings are robust when the gap is measured in a scaled manner.

4.5. Regression results by aspiration groups

To deal with the possible inconsistency between the real intergroup relations variable and the aspired intergroup relations variable, this section avoids comparing these two variables and runs multinomial probit regression on migrants' real intergroup relations by aspiration groups to indirectly indicate the underlying dynamics of the gap between the aspirations for and the outcomes of intergroup relations.

Based on the aspirations, migrant samples are categorised into three groups, not willing group, basically willing group and totally willing group. This section focuses on migrants who are totally willing to develop intergroup relations at first and then focuses on migrants who are basically willing to develop intergroup relations. For each group, multinomial probit regression analysis is conducted with the real intergroup relations as the dependent variable, and migrants who do not get along well with natives are chosen as the base category.

Table 7 reports the regression results for the totally willing group. Among migrants who are totally willing to develop intergroup relations, urban hukou holders are more likely to get along very well in comparison with not getting along well with natives, implying that holding a rural hukou may lead to the gap between migrants' aspirations for and outcomes of intergroup relations. The hukou variable is no longer significant after socioeconomic status variables are added to the model, which suggests that rural hukou can hinder migrants' realisation of their aspirations for intergroup relations through lowering their socioeconomic status. For migrants who are totally willing to develop intergroup relations, living in less migrant-concentrated neighbourhoods means a higher probability of getting along relatively well or very well with natives and thus a higher probability of narrowing the gap between their aspirations for and outcomes of intergroup relations. Among this totally willing group, migrants with higher educational attainments and

income have a higher likelihood of getting along relatively well or very well with natives in comparison with not getting along well with natives. This suggests that higher socioeconomic status may help migrants achieve their aspirations for intergroup relations. Both local dialect proficiency and cultural proximity are positively associated with the likelihood of getting along relatively well or very well with natives for migrants who are totally willing to develop intergroup relations, implying the conducive effects of acculturation on migrants' realisation of their aspirations for intergroup relations.

Table 8 reports the regression results for the basically willing group. What the regression results for the basically willing group reflects is similar to the findings for the totally willing group. For the basically willing group, urban hukou significantly improves migrants' likelihood of getting along relatively well or very well with natives in comparison with not getting along well with natives through improving their socioeconomic status. This indicates the negative indirect impacts of rural hukou on migrants' realisation of their aspirations for intergroup relations. Among migrants who are basically willing to develop intergroup relations, those who reside in neighbourhoods with a higher percentage of natives, have higher socioeconomic status and acculturate to the host cities are more likely to report getting along relatively well or very well with natives instead of not getting along well with natives and thus are more likely to achieve their aspirations for intergroup relations.

Table 7
The multinomial probit regression results of the real intergroup relations for the totally willing group (The reference group is migrants who do not get along well with natives).

	Model 15		Model 16		Model 17		Model 18	
	Relatively well	Very well	Relatively well	Very well	Relatively well	Very well	Relatively well	Very well
Age	0.006	0.008[b]	0.006	0.007[a]	0.009[b]	0.011[c]	0.009[a]	0.008[a]
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Female (reference = male)	0.079	0.104[a]	0.080	0.103[a]	0.100[a]	0.149[b]	0.102[a]	0.159[c]
	(0.044)	(0.045)	(0.044)	(0.045)	(0.046)	(0.046)	(0.046)	(0.047)
Married (reference = unmarried)	0.170[b]	0.221[c]	0.153[a]	0.202[b]	0.020	0.035	0.021	0.032
	(0.061)	(0.062)	(0.061)	(0.062)	(0.067)	(0.069)	(0.067)	(0.069)
Urban hukou (reference = rural hukou)	0.085	0.295[c]	0.080	0.275[c]	−0.030	0.124	−0.047	0.098
	(0.064)	(0.064)	(0.065)	(0.065)	(0.069)	(0.069)	(0.069)	(0.069)
Neighbourhood composition (reference = mostly are migrants)								
Mostly are natives			0.132[a]	0.447[c]	0.109	0.417[c]	0.060	0.341[c]
			(0.064)	(0.063)	(0.064)	(0.064)	(0.065)	(0.065)
Equal			0.335[c]	0.305[c]	0.316[c]	0.281[c]	0.272[c]	0.221[c]
			(0.054)	(0.056)	(0.055)	(0.056)	(0.055)	(0.057)
Not sure			−0.326[c]	−0.482[c]	−0.355[c]	−0.516[c]	−0.353[c]	−0.515[c]
			(0.093)	(0.097)	(0.094)	(0.098)	(0.094)	(0.099)
Education (reference = primary and below)								
Junior secondary					0.135	0.113	0.099	0.069
					(0.081)	(0.083)	(0.082)	(0.084)
Senior secondary +					0.273[b]	0.326[c]	0.207[a]	0.245[b]
					(0.089)	(0.091)	(0.090)	(0.092)
Unemployed (reference = employed)					0.023	−0.158	0.023	−0.161
					(0.081)	(0.085)	(0.082)	(0.086)
Monthly income (logged)					0.235[c]	0.313[c]	0.212[c]	0.272[c]
					(0.043)	(0.043)	(0.043)	(0.044)
Dialect (reference = not understand)								
Partly understand							0.249[c]	0.136
							(0.073)	(0.078)
Totally understand							0.460[c]	0.673[c]
							(0.075)	(0.079)
Cultural proximity							0.241[c]	0.252[c]
							(0.045)	(0.046)
Length of residence							0.004	0.023[c]
							(0.006)	(0.006)
Constant	0.113	−0.438[c]	0.037	−0.519[c]	−2.123[c]	−3.348[c]	−2.860[c]	−3.990[c]
	(0.110)	(0.114)	(0.112)	(0.116)	(0.373)	(0.380)	(0.395)	(0.403)
City dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Log likelihood	−9326.434		−9248.886		−9201.542		−9107.732	
χ^2	557.261		703.757		787.794		951.829	
Sample size (valid cases)	9167		9167		9167		9167	

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.
[a] $p < 0.05$.
[b] $p < 0.01$.
[c] $p < 0.001$.

Table 8
The multinomial probit regression results of the real intergroup relations for the basically willing group (The reference group is migrants who do not get along well with natives).

	Model 19		Model 20		Model 21		Model 22	
	Relatively well	Very well	Relatively well	Very well	Relatively well	Very well	Relatively well	Very well
Age	−0.001	0.000	−0.002	−0.000	0.002	0.003	0.003	0.003
	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Female (reference = male)	0.062	−0.022	0.057	−0.027	0.072	0.004	0.066	0.004
	(0.046)	(0.055)	(0.046)	(0.055)	(0.047)	(0.057)	(0.048)	(0.057)
Married (reference = unmarried)	0.224[c]	0.455[c]	0.211[c]	0.443[c]	0.153[a]	0.331[c]	0.147[a]	0.328[c]
	(0.064)	(0.078)	(0.064)	(0.078)	(0.070)	(0.085)	(0.070)	(0.086)
Urban hukou (reference = rural hukou)	0.274[c]	0.297[c]	0.263[c]	0.293[c]	0.135	0.122	0.082	0.083
	(0.072)	(0.085)	(0.073)	(0.087)	(0.076)	(0.091)	(0.077)	(0.092)
Neighbourhood composition (reference = mostly are migrants)								
Mostly are natives			0.421[c]	0.528[c]	0.418[c]	0.526[c]	0.360[c]	0.469[c]
			(0.071)	(0.082)	(0.071)	(0.082)	(0.072)	(0.083)
Equal			0.407[c]	0.339[c]	0.394[c]	0.322[c]	0.353[c]	0.283[c]
			(0.056)	(0.067)	(0.056)	(0.067)	(0.057)	(0.068)
Not sure			−0.058	−0.265[a]	−0.096	−0.317[b]	−0.121	−0.348[b]
			(0.091)	(0.116)	(0.091)	(0.117)	(0.092)	(0.118)
Education (reference = primary and below)								
Junior secondary					0.113	0.054	0.034	−0.015
					(0.087)	(0.103)	(0.088)	(0.104)
Senior secondary +					0.353[c]	0.341[b]	0.229[a]	0.240[a]
					(0.095)	(0.112)	(0.096)	(0.113)
Unemployed (reference = employed)					0.037	−0.060	0.065	−0.056
					(0.085)	(0.104)	(0.086)	(0.105)
Monthly income (logged)					0.126[b]	0.240[c]	0.104[a]	0.215[c]
					(0.043)	(0.054)	(0.044)	(0.055)
Dialect (reference = not understand)								
Partly understand							0.182[a]	0.033
							(0.077)	(0.095)
Totally understand							0.425[c]	0.491[c]
							(0.079)	(0.095)
Cultural proximity							0.551[c]	0.411[c]
							(0.050)	(0.059)
Length of residence							0.006	0.012
							(0.006)	(0.007)
Constant	−0.071	−1.231[c]	−0.210	−1.348[c]	−1.517[c]	−3.533[c]	−3.098[c]	−4.654[c]
	(0.112)	(0.136)	(0.115)	(0.140)	(0.376)	(0.470)	(0.407)	(0.502)
City dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Log likelihood	−6430.969		−6378.102		−6348.434		−6248.177	
χ^2	320.131		419.797		473.275		651.060	
Sample size (valid cases)	6521		6521		6521		6521	

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.
[a] $p < 0.05$.
[b] $p < 0.01$.
[c] $p < 0.001$.

Therefore, this section shows that the main findings of the underlying dynamics of the gap between migrants' aspirations for and outcomes of intergroup relations are robust when the inconsistencies between the real intergroup relations variable and the aspired intergroup relations variable are taken into account.

5. Conclusion

This study analyses whether migrants in China can realise their aspirations for good intergroup relations and what might hinder this process. Using 2014 CMDS data, this study demonstrates the prevalence of the gap between migrants' aspirations for and outcomes of intergroup relations. Although most migrants in the survey have at least relatively good intergroup relations, over a half fail to achieve their aspirations for intergroup relations. This means that more complicated situations may hide behind the integration outcomes. The existing integration research has mostly focused on migrants' integration outcomes (Barker & McMillan, 2017; Chen & Wang, 2015; Martinovic et al., 2009; Xu et al., 2022). However, taking into account migrants' integration aspirations and outcomes at the same time may reflect migrants' situation more accurately and provide a more nuanced understanding of migrants' integration. Our research emphasises the need to consider migrants' own integration aspirations and study their realisation of integration

aspirations.

We argue that the gap between migrants' aspirations for and outcomes of intergroup relations can be explained by migrants' neighbourhood composition, socioeconomic status and acculturation level. First, the analysis suggests that migrants who live in migrant-concentrated neighbourhoods are more likely to face such gap. According to the extant intergroup relations literature, ethnically concentrated residential settings are harmful to minority group members' intergroup relations (Martinovic et al., 2009; Van der Laan Bouma-Doff, 2007; Vervoort & Dagevos, 2011). We extend this strand of literature in two ways. One is to confirm the negative role of neighbourhood migrant concentration in a domestic migrant context. Another is to look beyond migrants' outcomes of intergroup relations to their realisation of aspirations for intergroup relations.

Second, the results reveal that socioeconomic achievements and acculturation to host cities can help migrants bridge the gap between their aspirations for and outcomes of intergroup relations. This echoes the intergroup relations literature in the multi-ethnic societies which has found the positive effects of socioeconomic status and acculturation (Martinovic et al., 2009, 2015; Muttarak, 2014; Vervoort & Dagevos, 2011). Our research verifies the positive role of acculturation in the Chinese context, where migrants usually have the same ethnicity as natives. In spite of the common ethnic backgrounds, there may be

inter-region cultural differences and urban-rural cultural conflicts (Wang & Fan, 2012; Yue et al., 2020). Culturally adapting to the receiving cities can help migrants better navigate their social life.

Third, this study shows that holding a rural hukou may indirectly hinder migrants from realising their aspirations for intergroup relations by lowering their socioeconomic status. The previous intergroup relations studies have rarely discussed the difference between urban migrants and rural migrants (Nielsen & Smyth, 2011; Wang et al., 2016; Yue et al., 2013). This study addresses this omission by showing the marginality of rural migrants in the socialisation field compared with urban migrants. More importantly, our analysis reflects that the hukou-based disadvantages in socioeconomic domain can further marginalise rural migrants in the socialisation domain. The existing integration research in China has revealed the hukou-based inequality in different domains of migrant integration (Chen, 2011; Wang & Fan, 2012; Wang et al., 2015a; Wei et al., 2020). Our results contribute to this strand of literature by pointing out the possibility that the hukou-based inequality in different domains may enhance each other and exacerbate rural migrants' underprivileged position in the Chinese cities. Such indirect effects of hukou are less noticeable but still important to migrant integration. There is a need to understand how hukou may indirectly affect migrant integration.

Our findings are generally in line with the model of intergenerational integration (Esser, 2004, 2010), which suggests that immigrants' active investments in assimilation may not pay off. This model focuses on immigrants, who are often distinguished from natives by their ethnicities. Our research based on the eight Chinese cities shows that a large proportion of migrants in the survey cannot achieve their aspired intergroup relations. For these internal migrants in China, their strong wish for intergroup relations is often accompanied by less satisfying outcomes. In the Chinese context, migrants are distinguished from natives by their hukou instead of ethnicity but may still have difficulties in realising their aspirations for integration. Moreover, the model of intergenerational integration indicates that the probability that immigrants' investments in assimilation would succeed depends on the opportunities available in the mainstream societies. This study makes theoretical contributions by recognising the possible opportunities that may hinder migrants from socially integrating into the host cities in China and highlighting the context-specific opportunities based on hukou. Our results show that holding a rural hukou indirectly leads to the gap between migrants' aspirations for and outcomes of intergroup relations by lowering migrants' socioeconomic status. This suggests that there may be links between different types of integration opportunities. Our research is among the first attempts to explore the gap between migrants' integration aspirations and outcomes. More research could be done in the future to further discuss what factors may hinder migrants or immigrants from realising their aspirations for integration and how these different factors may influence each other.

Our findings have some policy implications. Compared with migrants' integration outcomes, the gap between their integration aspirations and outcomes can reflect their marginality more accurately. When assessing the efficacy of integration policies, understanding whether and why migrants fail to realise their aspirations for integration is more meaningful than focusing on their integration outcomes alone. No matter how well migrants are integrated, they may still be at a disadvantage if they cannot achieve their ideal level of integration. It is important to take into account both what migrants strive for and what they actually achieve. Besides, migrant-concentrated residential environment can hinder migrants from achieving their ideal intergroup relations, so neighbourhood social mix should be encouraged in Chinese cities. Migrants usually concentrate in urban villages and dormitories provided by employers because of the low accommodation cost. Housing subsidies may make it possible for migrants to choose more expensive housing in neighbourhoods with a higher percentage of natives. Furthermore, hukou status has long been blamed for its detrimental impacts on individuals' integration, but merely abolishing hukou system

cannot solve all the problems. This system is so deeply rooted that the disadvantage of rural hukou holders can be found in every aspect of daily life. Sometimes it might not be the hukou status per se but the unequal opportunities and resources related to hukou status that hamper migrants' integration. Therefore, more efforts should be devoted to improving the equal access to resources and opportunities for everyone during the process of hukou reforms. The data of this study were collected in 2014 since when continuous hukou reforms have been launched. The restrictions on hukou acquirement in most cities have been relaxed, and there are almost no barriers to hukou acquirement in many small and medium-sized cities. The distinction between urban hukou and rural hukou has been basically eliminated. The central housing policy has become inclusive of migrants, improving their access to subsidised housing and thus relieving residential segregation. Increasing attention has also been paid to vocational training for migrants, which may help improve migrants' socioeconomic status. These changes may enable more migrants to realise their aspirations for intergroup relations. However, more radical hukou reforms are still needed now because migrants still face profound exclusion. The hukou attainment is still difficult in mega cities and many large cities which are popular destinations for migrants (Liu & Shi, 2020). Although the central government promotes inclusive housing policies, local governments largely restrict migrants' access to subsidised housing (Huang & Ren, 2022), and migrants still tend to experience residential segregation (Owen et al., 2023; Shen & Luo, 2023). Hukou-based discrimination is still common in the labour market (Dulleck, Fooken, & He, 2020), so migrants' socioeconomic status remains relatively low.

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Mengran Xu: Writing – original draft, Conceptualization. **Fulong Wu:** Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Funding acquisition. **Zhigang Li:** Writing – review & editing.

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