

Institutional and Non-institutional Path:
Different Processes of Socioeconomic Status Attainment of Migrants
and Non-migrants

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Household registration system (*hukou* system), as one of the most important institutional arrangements in China, has restricted and regulated Chinese population migration. This system has been experiencing severely striking by the huge swim of urban-rural migration since the beginning of the economic reform. So far, it has no longer been a decisive block in geographic population migration. Its impact on labor migration also seems to decrease. However, it has been remaining significant and persistent effect on social mobility which has brought about different processes of socioeconomic status attainment of migrants and non-migrants. This paper tries to examine the effect of institutional segmentation (*hukou* system) on social mobility by comparing the different paths of occupational and economic status attainments of migrants and non-migrants.

Research Background and Argument: Market segmentation and Mobility Path

Some of existing research literatures about Chinese migration had heeded especial figures of migrants' occupational and social mobility. Researchers recently noticed an increasing stratification of occupational and social status among migrants (Research team of the organizing characteristic of rural labor migration 1997). Wang Hanshen (Wang Hanshen et al 1997) divided migrant labor into four groups: employed workers, self-employed proprietors, managerial personnel and hobos. Li Qiang (1999; 2000) and Yuan Yayu (1994) found that floating workers had special pattern of occupational mobility. Their occupational mobilities are not successional and have less opportunities of upward mobility. Early occupational achievements have few positive effect on the attainment of next occupational status. Nevertheless, researchers rarely expand these statements and make further analysis. Most researches focus on the importance of social network in migrants' job mobility. They highlight that social network is more important for migrants' job mobility than non-migrants' mobility.

In the tradition of social mobility study, new structuralism and new institutionalism have been becoming dominant perspectives in the recent decade which have important significance for the study of social mobility of contemporary China. Sociologists extracted some concepts such as "dual economy" and "market segmentation" developed by new institutionalist economists to explain the process of

social stratification. They found, disadvantage socioeconomic status of women and minority not only due to their lack of human capital but also to their location in the secondary labor market. Chinese sociologists have tried to employ these theories to interpret the changes in social stratification and mobility in recent two decades. However, few of them did so in the study of socioeconomic status attainment of migrants.

Market segmentation in China has appeared more complicated than that in western market societies. In most market economy societies, dual economy separates two different labor markets: primary labor market and secondary labor market. Labors in different markets hold different salaries, welfare and promoting opportunities. In China, there have been at least three segmental institutions that caused market segmentation. They are dual social structure, dual economic structure and dual labor market structure. Dual social structure represents the urban-rural separate and regional separate system (Chengxiang fenli) which caused segmentation between labors with local *hukou* status (non-migrants) and labors with foreign *hukou* status (migrants). Dual economic structure represents the public-private section separate system (Tizhi nei wai) which caused segmentation between employees in public section (state-owned work units, Tizhi nei) and employees in private section (private enterprises, Tizhi wai). Dual labor market structure represents the professional-nonprofessional labor market separate system (Rencai shichang and laodongli shichang) which caused segmentation between labors with human capital and labors without human capital. Figure 1 shows labors of seven categories classified by these three segmental institutions.

Figure 1. Labors of Seven Categories in Market Segmentation

	<u>Public Section (Tizhi nei)</u>	<u>Private Section (Tizhi wai)</u>
<u>Non-migrants</u>	① Labors in <u>primary labor market</u> or governmental planning system who with local hukou work in state-owned or collective ownership work units	② Labors in <u>primary labor market</u> who with local hukou and more human capital work in private, hybrid and foreign enterprises ③ Labors in <u>secondary labor market</u> who with local hukou and less human capital work in private, hybrid and foreign enterprises (layoff workers)
<u>Migrants</u>	④ Labors in <u>primary labor market</u> who with foreign hukou and more human capital work in state-owned or collective ownership work units. ⑤ Labors in <u>secondary labor market</u> who with foreign hukou and less human capital work in state-owned or collective ownership work units.	⑥ Labors in <u>primary labor market</u> and <u>secondary labor market</u> who with foreign hukou and more human capital work in private, hybrid and foreign enterprises. ⑦ Labors in <u>secondary labor market</u> who with foreign hukou and less human capital work in private, hybrid and foreign enterprises (layoff workers)

Most migrant labors fall into category ⑦ who are manual or semi-manual workers, self-employed labors and small owners in secondary labor market and private section, holding low salary and instable job. Some of migrant labors have been employed in public section who belong to category ④ and ⑤. Most of them, category ⑤, can not enjoy usual treatments of workers of state-owned and collective ownership work units. Their employment status is similar to that of category ⑦. Only a few with more human capital enter category ④ who are in primary labor market and public section, holding stable job and some welfare. Migrant labors with more human capital usually fall into category ⑥ who have jobs in private section and wander in adjoining area between primary and secondary labor market since they suffer discrimination in primary labor market.

In sum, most of migrant labors share common situation. They remain in secondary labor market and private section, suffering instabilities of job and income, lacking of upward mobility opportunity, relying on social network, and staying at the bottom of social hierarchy. Even so that, a part of migrants have been improving their socioeconomic situation by certain ways, for example, pushing into primary labor market or public section to get a stable professional or managerial position and sometimes gain a local *hukou* status, or acquiring local resident status by developing his business so as to become a middle or big enterpriser and purchasing a luxury house. So, there has inevitably been a socioeconomic stratification among migrants. However, since effect of above-mentioned three segmental institutions, migrants' processes of socioeconomic status and upward mobility have to face special handicaps and track special paths. Comparing with non-migrants whose process are protected and steered by formal institutional rules, migrants adopt very different ways to strive for their upward mobility. Actually, steps they take to upward mobility often imply breaking through existing formal institutions or blaze a new trail beyond the existing formal institutions. By comparing the patterns of socioeconomic status attainment of non-migrants to that of migrants, this paper tries to argue that socioeconomic status attainment of non-migrants follows the institutional path while socioeconomic status attainment of migrants passes along non-institutional path.

Socioeconomic Differences between Non-migrants and migrants

The data for this research is from a national survey that was collected in November 2001 by SSCC project (Social Structure Change of China since 1949) of the Institute of Sociology of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. 6193 valid samples (aged from 16-70) were obtained from 73 cities and counties of 12 provinces through a process of multi-stage stratified random sampling. The distribution of this samples with regard to their gender, age, education, and employment status closely approximate that of the 2001 national census. Hence, the data obtained are fairly representative of the population. In this research, migrants are defined as the people who reside in cities or counties without the local *hukou*. Among 6193 respondents, there are 7.1% who are migrants. The corresponding percentage in national census data is 6.9%.

Table 1 Demographic Characteristic of Migrants and Non-migrants (%)

		SSCC Data		2001 Census (aged from 16-70)
		Non-migrants	Migrants	Migrants
Sex	Male	50.4	51.0	52.0
	Female	49.6	49.0	48.0
Age	16-30	32.0	57.4	55.3
	31-50	45.7	35.3	36.5
	51-70	22.3	7.4	8.2
Household registration				
	Urban	28.2	11.8	23.2
	Rural	71.8	88.2	76.8
Marriage	Single	16.7	29.8	36.3
	Married	79.5	68.1	62.3
	Divorced	0.8	0.6	0.6
	Widower	3.0	0.8	0.9
Employment	Employed	76.3	77.4	78.6
	Unemployed	23.7	22.6	21.4
Education	Illiteracy	8.9	5.4	3.7
	Elementary school	28.9	25.4	21.7
	Junior high school	39.1	46.5	51.9
	Senior high school	13.2	19.1	12.0
	Technical secondary school	4.6	0.5	5.5
	Junior college	3.6	2.6	3.6
	College undergraduate	1.6	0.6	1.5
	College graduate	0.1	0.0	0.1

Table 1 shows demographic characteristics of Migrants and Non-migrants. Comparing with non-migrants, migrants have slightly higher percentage of male, much higher percentages of young and single person, higher percentage of person with rural *hukou*. Among migrants, there are 57.4% of young people under 31 years old, 88.2% of people with rural *hukou* and 29.8% of single people.

Table 2 Class Distribution of Migrants and Non-migrants (%)

Ten Class	Total sample		Sample excluding farmer	
	Non-migrants	Migrants	Non-migrants	Migrants
Leading Cadre	1.2	0.3	2.2	0.3
Manager	1.7	0.8	3.1	0.8
Private Entrepreneur	0.9	2.5	1.7	2.7
Professional	4.8	2.1	8.7	2.4
Clerk	7.8	5.7	14.3	6.3
Self-employed	9.6	28.2	17.7	31.2
Worker in service industry	9.4	30.2	17.1	33.4
Worker in manufacturing industry	14.1	18.0	25.9	19.8
Farmer	45.4	9.6	--	--
Unemployed	5.0	2.6	9.2	2.9
Total	100	100	100	100

Table 2 displays the different class compositions of non-migrants and migrants. Migrants have much lower percentage of farmers than non-migrants. Among non-migrants there are 45.4% of farmers while among migrants there are only 9.6% of farmers. If farmers are excluded from sample, migrants reveal a different stratification from that of non-migrants. Non-migrants have higher percentages of leading cadre, manager, professional, clerk and worker in manufacturing industry while migrants have higher percentages of private entrepreneur, self-employed and worker in service industry. In addition, the percentage of white collar worker of non-migrants (30%) is significant larger than that of migrants (12.5%). At the same time, percentage of private entrepreneur and self-employed of migrants (33.9%) is much larger than that of non-migrants (19.4%). These percentages indicate that migrant population has a different stratification pattern from non-migrants' stratification pattern and higher class positions migrants might attain are also different from non-migrants'.

Table 3 Socioeconomic Characteristic of Migrants and Non-migrants

		Total sample		Excluding farmer Sample	
		Non-migrants	Migrants	Non-migrants	Migrants
What kind of ownership is your work unit?	State-owned	11.1%	9.2%	23.5%	9.5%
	Collective	7.4%	7.9%	15.4%	8.1%
	Mixed	1.3%	4.7%	2.5%	4.8%
	Private and self-employed	79.1%	74.1%	56.3%	73.4%
	Joint venture	0.4%	2.7%	0.8%	2.8%
	Foreign	0.7%	1.3%	1.6%	1.3%
What kind of type is your work unit?	Government agency	1.9%	1.9%	4.1%	2.0%
	Enterprise	17.4%	37.3%	36.1%	38.3%
	State-owned institution	8.2%	4.6%	17.2%	4.7%
	Self-employment	72.4%	56.2%	42.4%	55.0%
Are you Owner?	Yes	10.7%	30.7%	19.6%	33.9%
	No	89.3%	69.3%	80.4%	66.1%
Is your job stable?	Very stable	13.5%	11.4%	13.6%	11.4%
	Relative stable	42.9%	32.3%	43.2%	32.3%
	Not stable	43.5%	56.3%	43.1%	56.3%
Is it easy to find a new job if you are out of work?	Very easy	5.8%	12.4%	5.8%	12.4%
	Relative easy	25.4%	29.4%	25.3%	29.4%
	Relative difficult	52.0%	43.4%	52.1%	43.4%
	Very difficult	16.8%	14.9%	16.7%	14.9%
Does your work unit provide you welfare such as hospitalization insurance, retirement pension or housing subsidy?	No welfare	89.4%	90.3%	80.9%	89.0%
	Less welfare	2.7%	3.2%	5.0%	3.6%
	Part welfare	3.5%	3.9%	6.3%	4.3%
	All welfare	4.3%	2.6%	7.8%	2.8%

Monthly income		422.79	869.24	1282.12	1304.80
Family consumption index		4.95	5.50	6.76	5.72
Socioeconomic index		52.12	55.62	57.64	55.86
What you think about your social status?	Upper	1.4%	0.8%	2.0%	0.9%
	Upper middle	8.2%	3.4%	11.5%	3.7%
	Middle	41.9%	47.5%	48.2%	48.1%
	Under middle	25.4%	27.1%	23.7%	28.2%
	Under	23.0%	21.2%	14.6%	19.1%

Table 3 shows the difference in socioeconomic situations of non-migrants and migrants. Non-migrants are more likely to be employed in state-owned or collective work units than migrants while migrants are more likely to be employed by private enterprises or self-employed. Excluding farmer sample, there are 23.5% non-migrants who are employed in state-owned work units and 15.4% in collective work units. The counterpart percentages of migrants are 9.5% and 8.1%. The percentage of migrants in private or self-employed enterprises is 73.4%. Non-migrants' percentage is 56.3%. Migrants' jobs have less stability than non-migrants' jobs, but they seem to be easier to find new jobs than non-migrants. That is partly because non-migrants usually want to get permanent jobs with high salaries while migrants may accept temporary jobs with low income. In addition, migrant employees enjoy less welfare from work units than non-migrants.

It is surprising that average income of migrants is higher than that of non-migrants in whole sample and sample without farmers. Among whole sample, average monthly income of non-migrants is 422.79 while migrants' average monthly income is 869.24. Among excluding farmer sample, non-migrant is 1282.12 and migrant is 1304.80. Both of X^2 test are significant. This fact is easy to explain. Non-migrants include many low-income farmers so that their average income is lower than migrants'. Migrants congregate in large and middle cities and non-migrants include large population in small towns and countryside. Employees in large and middle cities have higher income than ones in small towns and countryside. As a result, average monthly income of migrants is higher than migrants'. Nevertheless, in a same city, migrants' average income is lower than non-migrants'. Table 4 compares average monthly income of classes in non-migrants and migrants in urban areas. Managers, self-employed, workers in service and manufacturing industries of migrants hold higher income than their counterpart of non-migrants but private entrepreneurs, professionals, clerks and farmers of non-migrants have higher income than their counterpart of migrants. This indicates that it is difficult for migrants to become a great entrepreneur or higher income professional or clerk. Comparatively, it is more possible for them to surpass the counterparts of non-migrants in economic situation as managers, self-employed or workers.

Table 3 still indicates that the consumptive standard and social status of migrants are lower than that of non-migrants if farmers are excluded. Family consumption index and socioeconomic index of migrants are both lower than that of non-migrants. In addition, their self-estimation of social status is lower than non-migrants.

Table 4 Average Monthly Incomes of Non-migrants and Migrants in Urban Area

Ten Class	Non-migrants		Migrants	
	Mean	frequency	Mean	frequency
Leading Cadre	966.85	37	--	--
Manager	1540.30	51	1721.91	3
Private Entrepreneur	4880.23	27	1203.35	11
Professional	985.07	128	908.69	7
Clerk	673.03	208	563.86	18
Self-employed	749.49	234	1390.23	114
Worker in service industry	526.33	330	688.63	18
Worker in manufacturing industry	465.25	333	778.89	55
Farmer	110.79	50	29.30	14
Unemployed	--	--	--	--

The data analysis above-mentioned illustrates that migrants endure disadvantaged socioeconomic situation. However, the gap between non-migrants and migrants is not as large as people usually estimate. Comparing with local non-migrants, migrants reveal more disadvantages in socioeconomic status. But comparing with whole non-migrant population, they are not always disadvantageous. In fact, they stand in better socioeconomic conditions than underclass of non-migrants. Migration per se is an upward mobility departing from underclass.

Socioeconomic status attainment of non-migrants and migrants

Migration as a personal choice is a kind of upward mobility endeavor. That means migrants perhaps make more attempts to find an opportunity of upward mobility. The data of table 5 demonstrate it. The frequency of job change of migrants is higher than that of non-migrants. However, upward mobility rate of migrants is lower than that of non-migrants if excluding farmers from the sample. Among whole sample with a large farmer population, upward mobility rate of migrants is certainly higher than that of non-migrants. That is because migration for farmers represents an upward mobility while non-migration represents no mobility. But non-farmer migrants have lower upward mobility rate and downward mobility rate than non-migrants although they have higher frequency of job change. These facts manifest that the mobility process of migrants has to experience more job change and face special handicap and their status attainment has to track special path.

Table 5 Job Mobility and Social Class Mobility of Migrants and Non-migrants

		Total sample		Excluding farmer Sample	
		Non-migrants	Migrants	Non-migrants	Migrants
How much times have you changed your job?	Never	56.8%	32.2%	33.2%	27.4%
	Only one	24.8%	37.1%	38.1%	40.4%
	Less than seven	18.1%	30.5%	28.2%	32.0%

	More than seven	0.2%	0.1%	0.5%	0.1
Social class mobility rate	Upward mobility rate	22.4%	51.7%	42.1%	35.4%
	Not mobility rate	64.5%	40.7%	40.6%	56.4%
	Downward mobility rate	13.1%	7.6%	17.3%	8.2%

Table 6 comparing the influencing factors of occupational status attainment of non-migrants with migrants. Education affects the occupational status attainment of both two groups but its effect on non-migrants' attainment is significant larger than migrants. Family origin has strong effect on occupational status attainment of non-migrants but a little effect on migrants' attainment. Father's occupation, father's education and mother's education all have significant and strong effects on the occupational status attainment of non-migrants. Nevertheless, father's occupation just has a weak effect on migrants' attainment. Father's education has almost no effect on migrants'. Only mother's education has significant effect on migrants' but its effect is smaller than non-migrants'. Family income in 14 years old has significant effect on non-migrants' attainment but no effect on migrants'. *Hukou* in 14 years old has significant effect on both two groups but its effect on non-migrants' is much larger than on migrants'. These results of data analysis seem to manifest that occupational status attainment of non-migrants has been affected significantly by normal influencing factors or follow the institutional regulations but migrants' attainment has not been affected or affected slightly by these normal factors or track the non-institutional regulations. For migrants, family origin, previously hukou status, even education are not very important. The more important factors maybe are endeavor, chance, adventure or social network which are informal institutional regulations.

Table 7 comparing the influencing factors of economic status attainment of non-migrants with migrants. Education has significant effect on the economic status attainment of both two groups but its effect on non-migrants' attainment seem to be larger than migrants'. *Hukou* status has significant effect on non-migrants' attainment but no effect on migrants'. In other words, among non-migrants persons with urban *hukou* have higher income than ones with rural *hukou* while among migrants no such difference between persons with urban *hukou* and rural *hukou*. Similarly, sex has significant effect on non-migrants' attainment but no effect on migrants'. Namely, among non-migrants man's income is higher than woman's but among migrants man's income is not higher than woman's. Ownership has significant effect on the economic status attainment of non-migrants but no effect on migrants'. Namely, among non-migrants employees in state-owned work unit have higher income than ones in other ownerships but among migrants no such difference. Type of work unit has effect on both two groups. However, it has larger effect on non-migrants than migrants. These results indicate that existing institutional arrangements are important causes of economic stratification of non-migrants but it has a little effect on the economic stratification of migrants. That is because that existing institutional arrangements provide certain favor treatments or protects to a part of non-migrants so that these non-migrants enjoying such favor treatments and protects have more advantage

economic situation than other non-migrants. However, migrants usually can not enjoy these favor treatments and protects provided by existing institutional arrangement. Hence, these institutions have not significant effect on the economic status attainment of migrants.

Table 6 Unstandardized OLS Coefficients for the Multiple Linear Regression of Socioeconomic Index (Occupational Status) on Selected Independent Variables

Independent variables	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6		Model 7	
	Non-M	MI	Non-M	MI	Non-M	MI	Non-M	MI	Non-M	MI	Non-M	MI	Non-M	MI
Years of schooling	1.27*	.72*												
	(.04)	(.14)												
Work experience	.05*	.01												
	(.01)	(.04)												
Father's occupation (reference groups: peasants)														
1. Managerial personnel			12.97*	8.67*									7.97*	6.02*
			(.77)	(2.7)									(.82)	(2.81)
2. Professional personnel			10.59*	1.70									6.50*	-.28
			(.67)	2.30									(.71)	(3.09)
3. Clerical personnel			6.68*	-5.34									2.78*	-6.70
			(.64)	(5.01)									(.68)	(5.03)
4. Self-employed			8.09*	2.42									4.50*	1.07
			(1.13)	(3.25)									(1.13)	(3.29)
5. Workers			4.88*	-.93									1.22*	-1.05
			(.35)	(1.04)									(.43)	(1.12)
Father's education (reference: Illiteracy)														
Elementary school					1.52*	1.22								
					(.28)	(1.08)								
Junior high school					3.95*	1.16								
					(.39)	(1.15)								
Senior high school					6.53*	-1.53								
					(.62)	(1.56)								
Technical secondary school					6.18*	2.22								
					(.94)	(3.3)								
Junior college and beyond					10.79*	-6.01*								
					(.90)	(3.02)								
Mather's education (reference: Illiteracy)														
Elementary school							2.26*	2.83*					1.25*	2.65*
							(.30)	(.95)					(.29)	(.96)
Junior high school							6.15*	3.48*					3.10*	2.87*
							(.48)	(1.21)					(.48)	(1.23)
Senior high school and beyond							11.65*	4.39*					4.23*	2.87
							(.73)	(2.13)					(.77)	(2.26)
Hukou status in 14 years old									8.71*	4.39*			5.16*	4.06*
									(.33)	(1.80)			(.45)	(1.95)
Family annual income in 14 years old											.01*	-.01	-.01	.01
											(.00)	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)
Constant	41.73*	49.14*	50.44*	55.56*	50.38*	55.12*	50.80*	54.11	50.78*	55.38*	52.06*	55.70*	49.97*	54.17*
	(.42)	(1.54)	(.14)	(.48)	(.20)	(.83)	(.15)	(.57)	(.13)	(.43)	(.13)	(.49)	(.15)	(.65)
Adjusted R ²	.25	.07	.14	.02	.06	.01	.08	.04	.13	.01	.00	.00	.18	.05

Note: Standard error shown in parentheses. *p<.05

Table 7 Unstandardized OLS Coefficients for the Multiple Linear Regression of Monthly Income Logarithm (Economic Status) on Selected Independent Variables

Independent variables	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5	
	Non-M	MI	Non-M	MI	Non-M	MI	Non-M	MI	Non-M	MI
Years of schooling	.12*	.05*	.07*	.05*	.12*	.05*	.08*	.06*	.06*	.04*
	(.01)	(.02)	(.01)	(.02)	(.01)	(.02)	(.01)	(.02)	(.01)	(.02)
Work experience	.02*	.08*	.03*	.08*	.03*	.08*	.02*	.08*	.03*	.09*
	(.01)	(.01)	(.00)	(.01)	(.01)	(.01)	(.01)	(.01)	(.00)	(.01)
Work experience square x 1000	-.01*	-.01*	-.01*	-.01*	-.01*	-.01*	-.01*	-.01*	-.01*	-.01*
	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)
Hukou status (reference: rural hukou)										
Urban hukou			.87*	.26						
			(.05)	(.17)						
Sex (reference: female)										
Male					.33*	.15	.34*	.16	.31*	.17
					(.03)	(.10)	(.03)	(.09)	(.03)	(.10)
Ownership of work unit (reference: non-state-owned)										
State-owned							.77*	-.17		
							(.06)	(.17)		
Type of work unit (reference: self-employed)										
Enterprise									1.16*	.49*
									(.04)	(.10)
Institution									.93*	.32
									(.08)	(.29)
Government agency									1.09	-.21
									(.12)	(.33)
Constant	4.50*	5.66*	4.65*	5.70*	4.40*	5.64*	4.55*	5.62*	4.44*	5.45*
	(.07)	(.19)	(.07)	(.19)	(.07)	(.19)	(.07)	(.19)	(.07)	(.19)
Adjusted R ²	.16	.15	.22	.15	.18	.15	.21	.15	.30	.21

Note: Standard error shown in parentheses. *p<.05

Conclusion

Ternary segmental institution ---- dual social structure, dual economic structure and dual labor market structure ---- has segregated migrants inside certain social and economic spaces that are out of control and influence of normal institutions. That results the special shape of socioeconomic stratification of migrants. Migrants have been tracking special paths and following informal rules to make upward mobility. These paths and rules have molded non-institutional pattern of socioeconomic status attainment.

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