URBAN CHANGE, INDIVIDUAL MOBILITY, AND TRUST IN CHINA

By

Eric Fong (Chinese University of Hong Kong and University of Toronto)
And
Guo Hua (Chinese University of Hong Kong)

One of the central arguments in the study of social change is that rapid social change leads to the weakening of social bonds in society. This argument was popularized by Durkheim's classic study on Suicide (1951), in which he argued that suicide rates increase and social bonding declines when there is a rise in normlessness as society experiences rapid change. However, the question of how social bonds are weakened has launched major debates over the mechanisms that contribute to the weakening of social bonds (Fischer 1972; Fischer 2011; Fukuyama 1995; Hardin 1993; Putnam 2000).

The study of the relationship between societal change and social bonds in current societies has focused on a North American context, especially the effect of the increase in racial and ethnic diversity (Paxton 1999; Putnam 1995; Robinson and Jackson 2001). Less is known about the ways in which demographic and economic changes are related to social bonds in Asian countries. Such research has become particularly urgent as China, the world's second largest economy and most populated country, has experienced rapid economic and social change in the last few decades. Chinese news media frequently report stories lamenting the decline of social bonds, such as trust and reciprocity, among Chinese citizens. For example, there was a story reported in 2011 that a bleeding two-year-old girl hit by a van in Foshan, Guangdong Province (south China), was ignored by no fewer than 18 people who passed by. The incident was recorded by a nearby closed circuit television camera. Even the state-owned

newspaper, China Daily, reported in February 2013 that trust among Chinese had dropped to an all-time low, according to a survey conducted by the Institute of Sociology at the Chinese Academy of Social Science .

Most quantitative studies of the relationship between social change and social bonds tend to rely on a few indicators of social change. They do not differentiate between changes at the individual level and changes at the community level in relation to individuals' social bonding, specifically trust and reciprocity. Changes at different levels could have different roles in shaping the strength of trust and reciprocity. Moreover, although social changes usually are accompanied by human migration, research has rarely examined or compared the ways in which local residents and migrants respond to trust and reciprocity under circumstances of rapid societal change. It is commonly agreed in the migration literature that migrants are likely to take the time and make the effort to adjust to their new environment (Alba and Nee 2003). Evidence from a considerable number of studies suggests that migrants usually cluster (Iceland and Scopilliti 2008) in communities that may have physical and social amenities that differ from those of the larger society . It seems to imply that migrants who stay in a migrant community may be able to shelter from the weakening of social bonds that occurs at times of rapid change in the larger society (Portes and Bach 1985; Sampson 1988). However, research has not systematically compared how changes at individual and community levels are related to the level of trust and reciprocity experienced by local residents and migrants.

We address these research gaps by incorporating research on social change and social bonds with literature on migration. We draw from the China Labor Income Dynamic Survey (CLID), which comprises newly national collected represented survey data, and combined it

with census data to explore how changes at the individual, community, and societal levels are related to levels of trust and reciprocity among local residents and migrants in China. The CLID has a unique feature that includes information at the community level. We believe that this is the first time such data have been available on a national scale in China.

Data and Methods

The analysis is drawn from a recently collected data set, the China Labor Income Dynamic Survey (CLID). Our study is based on the 2012 first wave of the data collection. Our analysis includes only respondents residing in urban areas. We differentiate urban houkou population and rural houkou population. We suggest respondents who have urban hukou (household registration) as mostly local population. Individuals who hold rural hukou in the city are mostly migrant population. The latter group cannot enjoy many of the facilities and services provided by the government, such as health facilities and public schools for their children. Therefore, their view of trust and reciprocal relations may be affected.

The key variables of our study are intended to measure social bonding. We include two variables: trust and reciprocity, both obtained directly from the survey. The first question asks respondents whether they trust their neighbors and residents of their community. The second question asks whether their neighbors and residents of the community help one another. The set-up of the questions has two distinct features. First, the questions are not asking about generalized trust in society; they ask for the respondents' perceptions of trust and reciprocity in their own communities. Trust and reciprocal relations with different groups may vary substantially as society experiences rapid change. Thus, our analysis focuses on trust and reciprocal relations in the respondent's community. Second, the focus on community trust and

reciprocal relations is strategic for understanding social change. Most studies in North America suggest that informal contacts and relationships with others in the community are crucial to facilitating various social and economic outcomes, such as job search and intergroup understanding.

We included three sets of variables to capture the changes in China. The first set consists of respondents' individual socioeconomic and demographic characteristics. We are particularly interested in their migration history (i.e., number of cities to which they have moved, and how long they spent in the last location) and job history (i.e., number of jobs, and how long they spent in the last job). These variables indicate changes in location and changes in job. We expect that respondents who have migrated more often and changed jobs more often will be more likely to have developed less trust and fewer reciprocal relations with community members.

The second set of variables is at the community level, including the proportion of migrants in the community, the physical environment, the level of safety, number of party members, and the government transfer to the community. The physical environment is based on the interviewer's evaluation, i.e., whether the community has odors, public light on the street, many people wandering in the street, public physical exercise groups in the park, uncovered manholes, noise. The safety level is evaluated by an official of the community. We expect that a community with a larger proportion of migrants will experience more changes. We included a variable to indicate the physical environment and the safety of the community, as some research has suggested that trust and reciprocal relations are related to those characteristics in the community. Finally, the number of party members, and the government

transfer to the community are the proxy of promotion of social support among residents. We also included a set of variables to indicate large, medium, and small cities. In addition, we include variables to indicate whether the city is located in the west, east, and north. .

Results

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Table 1 shows the distribution of levels of perceived trust and reciprocal relations of respondents. Results suggest that most respondents in this rapidly changing society still perceive relatively high levels of trust in the community. Close to 40% consider the community to have a high level of trust. However, many fewer respondents see a high level of reciprocal relations in the community. Only 26% perceive people in their communities to have higher levels of reciprocal relations. Both urban and rural hukou residents perceive similar patterns of trust and reciprocity.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of the variables included in the multi-level analysis. As expected, the results show that those with rural hukou have moved to more cities than have urban houkou residents, and have spent less time in the current location. Migrants have experienced more job changes, and have spent less time in their current jobs, which may be related to their frequent migration. However, it is not clear how these changes are related to their perceptions of trust and reciprocal relations in the community.

TABLE 3 and TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

Table 3 shows the ordered logit result of perceived trust and reciprocal relations. We also ran separate analyses for urban and rural hukou residents. The results show that the trust

levels of respondents are related to their individual migration history, job history, and living in larger cities. However, the relationships are different between respondents with urban and rural hukou.

Table 4 shows the ordered logit result of perceived reciprocal relations. We ran separate analyses for urban and rural hukou. The results also show that individual migration history, job history, and living in larger cities are related to perceptions of reciprocal relations. Similarly, the relationships are different between respondents with urban and rural hukou.

TABLE 5 AND TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE

Table 5 presents the multi-level random-intercept analysis of perceived trust. We also ran separate analyses for local residents and migrants. The results show that the trust levels of respondents are related to their individual migration and job history, but not to community characteristics. The results are similar to the analysis of having perceived reciprocal relations.

Conclusion

This paper explores social bonding in a rapidly changing society. We utilized a unique large-scale national data set collected in 2012 that included community level data to explore the respondents' perception of trust and reciprocal relations. Our analysis identifies how individual level variables, but marginally community level variables, are related to the perception of trust and reciprocal relations in the community. The results suggest that individual level factors are significantly related to the perception of trust and reciprocal relations. Implications will be discussed.

References

Alba, Richard, and Victor Nee. 2003. *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

China Daily, 2013. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-02/18/content_16230755.htm

Durkheim, Emile. 1951. *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.

Fischer, Claude S. 1972. "Urbanism as a Way of Life." *Sociological Methods & Research* 1(2):187-242.

Fischer, Claude S. 2011. *Still Connected: Family and Friends in America Since 1970*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Fukuyama, Francis. 1995. *Trust: The social virtues and the creation of prosperity*. New York: Free Press.

Hardin, Russell. 1993. "The Street-Level Epostemology of Trust." *Politics and Society* 21:505-29.

Iceland, John, and Melissa. Scopilliti. 2008. "Immigrant Residential Segregation in U.S. Metropolitan Areas, 1990–2000." *Demography* 45(1):79-94.

Paxton, Pamela. 1999. "Is Social Capital Declining in the United States? A Multiple Indicator Assessment." *American Journal of Sociology* 105(1):88-127.

Portes, Alejandro, and Robert Bach. 1985. *Latin Journey: Cuban and Mexican Immigrants in the Uniited States*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Putnam, Robert D. 1995. "Tuning In, Tuning Out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 28(4):664-83.

Putnam, Robert D. 2000. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Robinson, Robert V., and Elton F. Jackson. 2001. "Is Trust in Others Declining in America? An Age–Period–Cohort Analysis." *Social Science Research* 30(1):117-45.

Sampson, Robert J. 1988. "Local Friendship Ties and Community Attachment in Mass Society: A Multilevel Systemic Model." *American Sociological Review* 53(5):766-79.

Table 1:Level of Perceived Trust and Reciprocal Relations in Urban Area by Urban and Rural Hukou Holders, 2012

	Trust				Reciprocity			
Degree	Urban Hukou		Rural Hukou		Urban Hukou		Rural Hukou	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
None	56%	49	44%	38	64%	515	36%	293
Very little	60%	346	40%	229	69%	915	31%	406
Little	72%	2124	28%	820	73%	1673	27%	630
Some	73%	1294	27%	475	71%	788	29%	316
A lot	56%	233	44%	183	61%	155	39%	100
N	70%	4046	30%	1745	70%	4046	30%	1745

Source: 2012 China Labor Income Dynamic Survey

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Included Variables

	Urban Hukou			Rural Hukou		
	Mean	S.D.	N	Mean	S.D.	N
Degree of Trust (1-5)	3.33	0.76	4046	3.31	0.90	1745
Degree of Reciprocity (1-5)	2.79	1.02	4046	2.73	1.11	1745
At Least One Move after 1983	0.10	0.30	4046	0.37	0.48	1745
Number of Move to Another City	0.14	0.47	4046	0.54	0.82	1745
Duration in the Last Settled City	39.89	15.89	4046	28.58	18.25	1745
Number of Job Change	1.45	1.20	4046	1.06	1.38	1745
Duration Working for Last Job	16.36	14.20	4046	12.41	13.60	1745
Male	0.47	0.50	4046	0.46	0.50	1745
Age	42.30	13.27	3987	37.54	12.87	1734
Highest Level of Education						
College and Above	0.27	0.45	4046	0.07	0.26	1745
High School and Vocational School	0.32	0.47	4046	0.19	0.40	1745
Less than High School	0.25	0.43	4046	0.38	0.49	1745
Primary Education	0.09	0.29	4046	0.18	0.39	1745
No Formal Education	0.07	0.25	4046	0.17	0.38	1745
Comunist Party Member	0.18	0.39	4046	0.05	0.21	1745
Occupation						
Government	0.01	0.10	4046	0.01	0.08	1745
Professionals	0.14	0.35	4046	0.04	0.20	1745
Clerical	0.10	0.30	4046	0.04	0.19	1745
Service	0.15	0.36	4046	0.20	0.40	1745
Agricultural Related	0.01	0.10	4046	0.06	0.23	1745
Manufacturing	0.12	0.32	4046	0.24	0.43	1745
Self-Employed	0.03	0.19	4046	0.06	0.24	1745
Others	0.04	0.19	4046	0.03	0.17	1745
Unemployed	0.40	0.49	4046	0.32	0.47	1745
Marital Status						
Single	0.16	0.36	4046	0.19	0.39	1745
Married	0.84	0.36	4046	0.81	0.39	1745
Full-Time Student						
Non-Student	0.97	0.18	4046	0.97	0.16	1745
Student	0.03	0.18	4046	0.03	0.16	1745
Community Migrant Proportion (0-1)	0.24	0.24	3311	0.32	0.28	1452
Community Physical Environemnt (0-5)	4.40	0.91	4046	4.33	0.98	1745
Community Safety (1-4)	3.18	0.74	4046	3.25	0.75	1745
Number of Community CCP members	172.51	147.33	4046	121.87	117.53	1745
Govt. Transfer in Community Budget	0.89	0.35	4046	0.74	0.51	1745

Source: 2012 China Labor Income Dynamic Survey

Table 3: Ordinal Logistic Regression of Interpersonal Trust on Selected Individual Characteristics by Urban and Rural Hukou Holders with Robust Standard Errors Adjusted for Cities, 2012

	Urban Hukou		Rural Hukou		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
At Least One Move after 1983	-0.45 ***		-0.26 *		
Number of Move to Another City				-0.06	
Duration in the Last Settled City				0.01	
Number of Job Change		-0.10 **			-0.18 ***
Duration Working for the Last Job		0.00			0.00
Male	-0.01	-0.02	0.14	0.15	0.12
Age	0.02 ***	0.02 ***	0.03 ***	0.02 *	0.03 ***
Highest Level of Education					
College and Above	0.07	0.06	0.28 *	0.26 *	0.31 *
High School and Vocational School	0.02	0.03	0.26 *	0.24 *	0.35 **
Less Than High School	0.15	0.17	0.27	0.25	0.40 *
Primary School	0.02	0.03	0.49 *	0.47 *	0.57 **
No Formal Education					
Communist Party Member	0.33 **	0.31 **	0.16	0.15	0.14
Occupation					
Government	-0.14	-0.06	0.85 **	0.88 **	1.02 ***
Professional	0.19 *	0.24 *	-0.03	-0.03	0.03
Clerical	0.26 *	0.33 *	-0.17	-0.15	-0.03
Service	-0.10	-0.01	-0.25 *	-0.24	-0.13
Agricultural Related	0.11	0.15	0.85 **	0.84 **	0.80 **
Manufacturing	0.19 *	0.24 *	-0.16	-0.14	-0.08
Self-Employed	0.40 *	0.47 *	0.24	0.26	0.28
Others	0.18	0.26	-0.11	-0.08	-0.06
Unemployed					
Marital Status: Married	0.04	0.04	0.21 *	0.21 *	0.21 *
Full-Time Student	0.29 *	0.28 *	0.54 *	0.54 *	0.49 *
Wald Chi2	152.1 ***	161.71 ***	202.00 ***	213.30 ***	266.19 ***
Pseudo R2	0.01	0.01	0.03	0.03	0.03
Degree of Freedom	18	19	18	19	19
N	3987	3987	1734	1734	1734

Note:* p<0.10 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001

Source: 2012 China Labor Income Dynamic Survey

Table 4: Ordinal Logistic Regression of Reciprocity on Selected Individual Characteristics by Urban and Rural Hukou Holders with Robust Standard Errors Adjusted for Cities

	Urban Hukou		Rural Hukou		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
At Least One Move after 1983	-0.35 **		-0.40 ***		
Number of Move to Another City				-0.04	
Duration in the Last Settled City				0.01 *	
Number of Job Change		-0.07 *			-0.21 ***
Duration Working for the Last Job		0.00			0.00
Male	-0.19 ***	-0.20 ***	-0.06	-0.06	-0.08
Age	0.02 ***	0.01 ***	0.02 ***	0.01 *	0.03 ***
Highest Level of Education					
College and Above	-0.18	-0.18	0.70 **	0.67 **	0.79 **
High School and Vocational School	0.08	0.08	0.50 **	0.48 *	0.66 ***
Less Than High School	0.15	0.15	0.41 *	0.40 *	0.53 ***
Primary School	0.17	0.15	0.41 *	0.39 *	0.45 **
No Formal Education					
Communist Party Member	0.21 *	0.19 *	-0.24	-0.25	-0.28
Occupation					
Government	0.01	0.07	0.22	0.22	0.44
Professional	0.18 *	0.22 *	-0.13	-0.13	-0.08
Clerical	0.39 ***	0.45 ***	-0.19	-0.18	-0.03
Service	-0.11	-0.03	-0.11	-0.10	0.02
Agricultural Related	0.52 *	0.54 *	0.86 ***	0.84 ***	0.83 ***
Manufacturing	0.34 **	0.38 **	0.13	0.14	0.20
Self-Employed	0.46 **	0.52 **	0.19	0.18	0.19
Others	0.32 *	0.39 *	-0.13	-0.11	-0.05
Unemployed					
Marital Status: Married	0.07	0.07	0.43 **	0.43 **	0.44 **
Full-Time Student	0.02	0.02	0.60	0.63	0.57
Wald Chi2	139.15 ***	140.46 ***	148.99 ***	167.91 ***	186 ***
Pseudo R2	0.01	0.01	0.03	0.03	0.03
Degree of Freedom	18	19	18	19	19
N	3987	3987	1734	1734	1734

Note: * p<0.10 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001

Source: 2012 China Labor Income Dynamic Survey

Table 5: Regression of Interpersonal Trust on Selected Individual and Community Characteristics by Urban and Rural Hukou Holders in Urban Areas, 2012

	Urban Hukou		Rural Hukou		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
At Least One Move after 1983	-0.39 ***		-0.12		
Number of Move to Another City				-0.03	
Duration in the Last Settled City				0.01	
Number of Job Change		-0.06 *			-0.06
Duration Working for the Last Job		0.00			0.00
Male	0.01	0.01	0.12	0.13	0.11
Age	0.02 ***	0.02 ***	0.02 ***	0.02 *	0.02 ***
Highest Level of Education					
College and Above	0.07	0.06	0.31	0.30	0.33
High School and Vocational School	0.14	0.14	0.24	0.22	0.27
Less Than High School	0.00	0.00	0.29 *	0.28 *	0.31 *
Primary School	0.01	0.00	0.34 *	0.33 *	0.35 *
No Formal Education					
Communist Party Member	0.29 **	0.28 **	0.25	0.25	0.24
Occupation					
Government	-0.13	-0.10	0.66	0.69	0.71
Professional	0.12	0.15	0.03	0.03	0.05
Clerical	0.17	0.22 *	-0.09	-0.09	-0.06
Service	-0.15	-0.09	-0.04	-0.03	-0.01
Agricultural Related	0.01	0.03	0.59 *	0.58 *	0.53 *
Manufacturing	0.14	0.16	-0.06	-0.05	-0.05
Self-Employed	0.28	0.33 *	0.45 *	0.47 *	0.46 *
Others	0.16	0.21	0.16	0.17	0.16
Unemployed					
Marital Status: Married	0.01	0.01	0.11	0.11	0.11
Full-Time Student	0.39 *	0.39 *	0.84 *	0.83 *	0.82 *
Natural log. of Community Migrant Proportion	-0.02	-0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02
Community Physical Environemnt	-0.01	-0.01	0.07	0.07	0.07
Community Safety	0.10	0.09	0.16	0.17	0.16
Number of Community CCP members	0.00	0.00	0.00 *	0.00 *	0.00 *
Govt. Transfer in Community Budget	-0.26	-0.26	-0.25	-0.24	-0.28
Wald Chi2	104.72 ***	96.82 ***	71.22 ***	74.15 ***	73.26 ***
Degree of Freedom	23	24	23	24	24
Chi2 Test for Multilevel Model	128.78 ***	124.40 ***	155.39 ***	152.22 ***	128.53 ***
N	3987	3987	1734	1734	1734

Note: * p<0.10 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001

Source: 2012 China Labor Income Dynamic Survey

Table 6: Regression of Reciprocity on Selected Individual and Community Characteristics by Urban and Rural Hukou Holders in Urban Areas

	Urban Hukou		Rural Hukou		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
At Least One Move after 1983	-0.31 **		-0.19 *		
Number of Move to Another City				-0.01	
Duration in the Last Settled City				0.01	
Number of Job Change		-0.06 *			-0.11 *
Duration Working for the Last Job		0.00			0.00
Male	-0.19 **	-0.19 **	-0.10	-0.10	-0.12
Age	0.02 ***	0.02 ***	0.02 ***	0.02 *	0.02 ***
Highest Level of Education					
College and Above	-0.04	-0.05	0.71 **	0.70 **	0.73 **
High School and Vocational School	0.11	0.10	0.59 ***	0.58 ***	0.65 ***
Less Than High School	0.17	0.16	0.49 ***	0.49 **	0.54 ***
Primary School	0.15	0.13	0.50 **	0.49 **	0.52 **
No Formal Education					
Communist Party Member	0.16 *	0.15 *	-0.12	-0.12	-0.14
Occupation					
Government	-0.09	-0.05	-0.16	-0.16	-0.04
Professional	0.13	0.16	-0.06	-0.06	0.00
Clerical	0.35 **	0.40 ***	-0.13	-0.12	-0.05
Service	-0.13	-0.07	0.08	0.08	0.14
Agricultural Related	0.34	0.36	0.57 *	0.56 *	0.57 *
Manufacturing	0.28 **	0.30 **	0.15	0.15	0.19
Self-Employed	0.36 *	0.42 *	0.44 *	0.44 *	0.46 *
Others	0.35 *	0.41 *	-0.08	-0.07	-0.03
Unemployed					
Marital Status: Married	0.02	0.02	0.26 *	0.26 *	0.27 *
Full-Time Student	0.05	0.06	0.77 *	0.78 *	0.73 *
Natural log. of Community Migrant Proportion	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.01
Community Physical Environemnt	-0.09	-0.09	0.02	0.02	0.02
Community Safety	-0.01	-0.02	0.16	0.16	0.15
Number of Community CCP members	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Govt. Transfer in Community Budget	-0.19	-0.20	-0.36 *	-0.36 *	-0.40 *
Wald Chi2	115.65 ***	113.47 ***	66.16 ***	66.90 ***	69.63 *
Degree of Freedom	23	24	23	24	24
Chi2 Test for Multilevel Model	186.66 ***	183.36 ***	163.70 ***	161.60 ***	132.18 ***
N	3987	3987	1734	1734	1734

* p<0.10 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001

Source: 2012 China Labor Income Dynamic Survey