

How Acculturation Affects Settlement Intentions of Chinese Rural-Urban Migrants: The Mediating Roles of Socioeconomic Status and Psychological Well-Being

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Abstract

Rural-urban migrants in China inevitably experience a process of acculturation. Existing literature has identified acculturation as a key factor influencing migration and settlement patterns. However, few studies have addressed how acculturation affects settlement intentions of Chinese rural-urban migrants. Using data from a survey of rural-urban migrants in 2015-2016 in Guangdong, China, this paper explores mediating roles of socioeconomic status (SES) and psychological well-being for the link between acculturation and settlement intentions. The study considers acculturation as a multidimensional (including changes of cultural practices, values, and identifications) and bicultural (with orientation towards both the culture of original rural society and the host culture of urban society) process and identifies four categories of acculturation (including two subtypes of integration and two subtypes of separation) by latent class analysis. Results show that migrants in both subtypes of integration were more inclined to settle down in the host city than those in both separation subtypes. The settlement effect of acculturation was partially mediated by socioeconomic status (assessed by perceived SES and income) and psychological well-being (assessed by life satisfaction). Integrated migrants generally enjoyed higher levels of socioeconomic status and psychological well-being, through which acculturation increases their likelihood of settling in cities.

Keywords

Acculturation, settlement intentions, rural-urban migrants, internal migration

1. Introduction

Settlement has always been a crucial and indispensable process of migration. Over the past four decades, China has been witnessing a dramatic and steady increase in rural-urban migration. By the end of 2023, the size of rural-urban migrants had reached to 176.58 million (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2024). As the largest rural-urban migration in human history, they account for 12.53% of China's population in 2023. Rural-urban migrants have gradually become the majority labor force of manufacturing and service industries in China and have been even considered as “the lifeblood of China's economic boom” (Kuhn & Kaye, 1994). However, China had strong institutional barriers that hindered rural-urban migration and settlement, especially the household registration system and its variants (e.g., the residence permit). Most rural-urban migrants did low-paid 3Ds (dirty, demanding, and dangerous) jobs in the informal sector that urban local residents generally eschew (Liang, 2016). And it was also full of obstacles for them to get access to public services, such as medical care, pension benefits, and children's education. Under such circumstances, most of them found it difficult to stay in cities and had to return to their home villages once they got unemployed or elderly.

In recent years, the settlement of rural-urban migrants has faced fewer institutional barriers and exhibits greater freedom and autonomy. First, the government has consistently relaxed household registration restrictions, equalized access to basic public services, and made great efforts to grant permanent local *hukou* to rural-urban migrants who met some requirements for settling down. These measures not only increase the opportunities for rural-urban migrants to achieve their urban aspirations but also ensure a sufficient labor supply for urban areas, thereby supporting the urbanization process. Second, researchers (Ma, 1999; Zhu, 2003, 2007) have found some intense trends that most rural-urban migrants still identify themselves as members of their original rural communities, and would like to bring back capital, skills and experiences, and entrepreneurship to their home villages. Additionally, since 2017, China has initiated numerous policies and reforms in implementing the Rural Revitalization strategy and developing rural areas. Returning home is increasingly viewed not as a failure to integrate into urban society, but as a rational decision that supports family development and contributes to rural advancement. Finally, China has implemented tax reduction policies, adjusted the grain price formation mechanism, and improved agricultural support and protection policies to enhance farmers' resilience to natural and market risks (State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, 2019). These measures may encourage rural-urban migrants to return to their home villages and engage in farming, thereby

contributing to food security.

Overall, Chinese government policies on migration and settlement have evolved from being restrictive to more relaxed, with a primary focus on socioeconomic factors such as employment opportunities and access to public services. Similarly, existing studies (e.g., Liu et al., 2017; Zhu & Lin, 2019; Liu et al., 2019) have delved into socioeconomic determinants on rural-urban migrants' settlement intentions, including factors like income, living conditions, and social insurance. However, few studies have well examined the impact of cultural factors on settlement intentions. An exception is the study by Xie et al. (2023), which explored the strength of cultural influences. Nevertheless, their research did not further disentangle the mechanisms through which acculturation affects settlement intentions.

Rural-urban migrants who circulate between rural and urban areas are inevitably influenced by both urban and rural cultural orientations, requiring them to continually adjust to the intercultural contact. Such process is called acculturation (Hunt et al., 2004; Berry, 2005). It cannot be neglected that rural areas are important fields where rural-urban migrants are born and live for a long time and their attachment to rural culture plays a significant role in settlement intentions (Chen & Liu, 2016). Yue et al.'s (2020) seminal study shows that acculturation of rural–urban migrants is multidimensional (in terms of cultural practices, values, and identifications) and bicultural (with orientation towards both the culture of rural areas and the host culture of urban society). Their framework for acculturation echoes the push-pull theory well and provides a theoretical basis for exploring the impact of urban and rural cultures on settlement intentions of rural-urban migrants in China. Existing research (e.g., Inkeles & Smith, 1974; Yue et al., 2013, 2020, 2021) indicates that acculturation affects rural-urban migrants' socioeconomic status (SES) and psychological well-being. Additionally, some studies (e.g., Liu et al., 2021; Wang & Shen, 2023) suggest that subjective SES also impacts rural-urban migrants' subjective well-being. The factors mentioned above play a crucial role in shaping settlement intentions. We anticipate that there are unexplored potential pathways underlying the relationship between acculturation and settlement intentions. But research in this area remains limited.

In view of the above facts, this paper contributes to related studies from two aspects. First, based on a multidimensional and bicultural framework for acculturation (Yue et al., 2020), we transcend the traditional assimilation perspective by reintegrating the influence of rural origin culture into our examination of the relationship between acculturation and settlement intentions among rural-urban migrants. Second, we further disentangle the mechanisms that underlie the connection between

acculturation and settlement intentions by examining the mediating roles of SES and psychological well-being. Clarifying the internal mechanisms can help us to further understand the settlement intentions and behaviors of rural-urban migrants in the context of China.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Settlement intentions of rural-urban migrants in China

The push-pull theory suggests that migration is determined by factors associated with both origin and destination areas, intervening factors, and personal factors (Lee, 1966). Migrant settlement is a crucial and dispensable part of the migration process and is also affected by the above factors. Theories from assimilation perspective often assume that the ultimate goal of international migrants is to settle permanently in the destination (Lee, 1966). Returnees or remigrants may be regarded as having failed to adapt to the way of life in the host society (Gmelch, 1980). In contrast to international migrants, rural-urban migrants in China often migrate without settling down, circulating between rural and urban areas. Most of them more or less maintain some economic, social, and cultural ties with their hometown, which have important impacts on their settlement intentions.

In general, rural-urban migrants' personal factors often serve as control variables in previous research, such as age, gender, education, marital status, migration distance, and duration of stay (Yue et al., 2010; Tang & Hao, 2018; Li et al., 2014; Zhu & Lin, 2019; Liu et al., 2019). The young, female, highly educated, unmarried, and intra-provincial rural-urban migrants with longer duration in urban areas tend to exhibit higher intention to settle in cities.

Existing literature predominantly focuses on socioeconomic factors in both origin and destination areas, while giving limited attention to cultural factors. In the economic dimension, numerous studies suggest that objective SES, such as income and housing conditions, are closely related to rural-urban migrants' settlement intentions ((Liu et al., 2017; Zhu & Lin, 2019; Liu et al., 2019). Additionally, it has been proved that perceived SES also affects their subjective well-being. Those migrants with higher subjective SES tend to exhibit higher subjective well-being in most cases (Liu et al., 2021), which further improves their urban-settlement intention (Wang & Shen, 2023). Meanwhile, rural-urban migrants have a heavy reliance on the insurance function of the land in their hometown. Retaining contracted rural land and homesteads in their hometown can serve as a safety net in case of unemployment or old age (Zhu, 2007). Additionally, contracted rural land can enhance urban-settlement intention of rural-urban migrants

through guaranteeing their basic income which allows them to live and work in urban areas at ease (Liu et al., 2019).

In the social dimension, social support represented by social networks and community support can increase rural-urban migrants' inclination to settle in cities. For instance, newly developed social networks may lead to higher income and improved working conditions, thereby enhancing their urban-settlement intention (Yue et al., 2021). On the contrary, social attachment that rural-urban migrants feel towards their hometown, such as having family or children in rural areas, can strengthen their intention to return home (Chen & Liu, 2016). Besides, many rural-urban migrants suffer great stress and psychological discomfort from persistent social discrimination and stigma, especially when the origin culture conflict with the host culture (Yue et al., 2010, 2020, 2021). These experiences can push them away from urban areas. In the cultural dimension, rural-urban migrants who are proficient in local dialect and identify themselves as urban residents tend to exhibit higher urban-settlement intention (Liu et al., 2017).

Some studies discuss the importance of the above dimensions. Chen and Liu (2016) suggest that both the sociocultural conditions and the economic incentives equally play an important role in determining settlement intentions of rural-urban migrants. Liu et al. (2017) consider that the impact of economic factors has declined gradually, while factors such as social interaction with local urbanites and psychological attachment play an increasingly crucial role. However, the determinants of settlement intentions are mainly explored from socioeconomic perspective in existing literature. Further investigating the role of acculturation in settlement intentions of rural-urban migrants can provide the related research with additional cultural perspective.

2.2 Acculturation of rural-urban migrants

Acculturation refers to a process of cultural changes resulting from contact between two or more cultures (Hunt et al., 2004; Berry, 2005). Previous literature on acculturation has gone through a process from using unidirectional model to bidirectional model. Acculturation was once dominated by the assimilation perspective, which argues that migrants acquire the culture of host society at the expense of rejecting the culture of hometown (Gordon, 1964). While Berry (2005) proposed a bicultural theory, which suggests that acculturation is a dual process and is jointly shaped by orientations towards one's heritage culture and those towards the mainstream culture in places of destination. Based on the intersection of positive or negative orientations, Berry (2005) used priori values (e.g. the median of the

sample or the midpoint on the range of possible score) and defined the following four acculturation strategies: integration (acquisition of the host culture and maintenance of the heritage culture), assimilation (acquisition of the host culture, but rejection of the heritage culture), separation (rejection of the host culture, but maintenance of the heritage culture), and marginalization (rejection of both the host and heritage cultures).

The use of priori values assumes that all four strategies exist and are equally valid (Rudmin, 2003). But a growing body of literature finds that acculturation strategies are not the same across migrant groups and acculturation environments. It is not necessarily the case that all types of acculturation strategies in Berry's model coexist in a given sample or population, researchers also found that some strategies may have multiple subtypes (Fox et al., 2013; Schwartz & Zamboanga, 2008). Especially, marginalization may not even exist. Some researchers (Fang et al., 2017) measure each acculturation strategy directly by adopting four distinct scales and overcome some disadvantages of traditional scales successfully. Nevertheless, this approach suffers from some psychometric limitations, such as low score reliabilities and lack of scale independence (Rudmin, 2003). To address the above deficiencies, an increasing number researchers prefer to use latent class analysis (LCA), which is more objective than traditional cluster analysis (DiStefano & Kamphaus, 2006) and does not assume any priori theoretical model when analyzing acculturation (Fox et al., 2013; Rudmin, 2003; Schwartz et al., 2010).

A few studies confirm that both adult rural-urban migrants and their children in China also experience an acculturation process (Fang et al., 2017; Gui et al., 2012; Yue et al., 2020, 2021). Acculturation requires at least four basic elements: cultural difference, identifiable groups, cultural contact, and cultural change. Yue et al. (2020) illustrated such process of rural-urban migrants in terms of the above four aspects. Drawing upon studies on acculturation of international migrants, they constructed a multidimensional and bicultural acculturation framework for rural-urban migrants in China, including two cultures (i.e., rural culture and urban culture) and three cultural dimensions (i.e., practices, values, and identifications). Using LCA, their research shows that only two subtypes of integration and two subtypes of separation exist in the acculturation strategies of rural-urban migrants in China.

2.3 The impact of acculturation on settlement intentions

Building on Yue et al.'s (2020) study, acculturation is a multidimensional (including practices, values, and identifications) and bicultural (including both rural and urban orientations) process. However, limited research has systematically examined the impacts of acculturation on settlement intentions, and

even fewer studies have explored the underlying mechanisms of this relationship. Some studies (e.g., Yue et al., 2010) have provided only preliminary evidence regarding the effect of acculturation on rural-urban migrants' settlement intentions. Since acculturation of rural-urban migrants in China is multidimensional, we will review the literature in terms of practices, values, and identifications, respectively.

In the dimension of practices, both dialect proficiency and social networks have significant impacts on urban-settlement intention of rural-urban migrants (Yue et al., 2010; Yao et al., 2015; Zhao et al., 2016). In the dimension of values, urban cultural values represented by individual modernity significantly affect urban-settlement intention of rural-urban migrants (Yao et al., 2015). While returnees are usually influenced by the attachment to rural cultures (Li, 2003). In the dimension of identifications, gradual identification to host culture can narrow the distance between the rural-urban migrants and local citizens, thus significantly improving their urban-settlement intention (Li et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2018). It has been revealed that both the weakening of rural identity and the acquisition and strengthening of urban identity could enhance rural-urban migrants' intention to permanently settle in cities (Cai & Wang, 2007; Liu et al., 2019).

As an exception, using a bidirectional model of Berry (2005), Xie et al (2023) have investigated the impact of the four acculturation strategies on migrants' urban-settlement intention. They find that the impact of acculturation on urban-settlement intention is moderated by the period of urban stay and migration patterns of the migrants. As migrants spend more time in cities, they become increasingly capable of coping with cultural maladjustment and accumulating more social capital. This process can remedy migrants' low urban-settlement intention that arise from disadvantages in acculturation. Except for migrants who adopt an assimilation strategy, migration patterns greatly change the association between acculturation and migrants' settlement intentions because their origin culture would conflict with the host culture. Despite of using a bidirectional model, they neglect the multidimensional nature of culture when identifying acculturation strategies. And further exploration is needed to understand the mechanisms through which acculturation affects the settlement intentions of rural-urban migrants.

To summarize, two gaps are needed to be addressed. First, cultural factors play an increasingly crucial role in explaining settlement intentions (Chen & Liu, 2016; Liu et al., 2017), and each cultural factor in the various dimensions of both urban and rural areas represents either a pushing force or a pulling force. The impact of acculturation on rural-urban migrants' settlement intentions is shaped by the

combination of these pushing and pulling forces. To fully understand this relationship, it is essential to transcend the traditional assimilation perspective by bringing the influence of rural origin culture back into our examination. Second, it should be noted that the factors influencing settlement intentions across various dimensions are not independent but interact with one another. Since few studies have explored how acculturation affects settlement intentions, there is an urgent need for further studies that aim to disentangle the mechanisms underlying the connection between acculturation and settlement intentions.

3. Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

To date, the influence of socioeconomic factors in host societies on settlement intentions of rural-urban migrants in China has been extensively studied (e.g., Yue et al., 2010; Li et al., 2014; Liu et al., 2019; Zhu & Lin, 2019). Cultural factors, however, have increasingly been recognized as crucial (Chen & Liu, 2016; Liu et al., 2017). Researchers have addressed the role that acculturation plays in rural-urban migrants’ urban-settlement intention, as well as the moderating effects of migration patterns and period of urban stay (Xie et al., 2023). Nevertheless, few studies have further investigated the mechanisms underlying the relationship between acculturation and settlement intentions. Our research aims to clarify how acculturation affects the settlement intentions of rural-urban migrants by considering socioeconomic status and psychological well-being as mediators (see Figure 1).

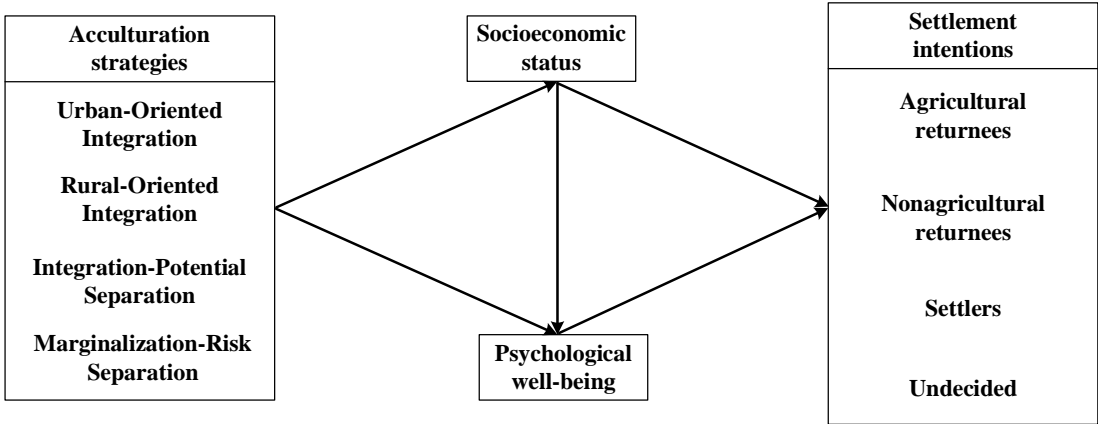


Figure 1 Theoretical framework

As shown in Figure 1, using a multidimensional and bicultural acculturation framework (Yue et al., 2020), the acculturation strategies of Chinese rural-urban migrants can be classified into four categories, including two subtypes of integration (i.e. urban-oriented integration and rural-oriented integration) and two subtypes of separation (i.e. integration-potential separation and marginalization-risk separation). We also identify four categories of settlement intentions in our theoretical framework, and further distinguish

those migrants intending to return home into two groups based on their willingness to engage in nonagricultural work. Rural-urban migrants circulate between rural and urban areas and are inevitably influenced by urban and rural cultural orientations. Following the push-pull theory (Lee, 1966), the effects of urban and rural cultures on settlement intentions can be further divided into the pushing and pulling forces. Several studies reveal that rural-urban migrants who adopt different acculturation strategies could exhibit different socioeconomic and psychological outcomes (Yue et al., 2021), which significantly affect their settlement intentions (e.g., Yue et al., 2010; Li et al., 2014; Liu et al., 2019; Zhu & Lin, 2019). Overall, we propose three potential pathways linking acculturation to settlement intentions.

The first pathway is mediated by socioeconomic status (SES), a widely examined determinant of settlement intentions (e.g., Liu et al., 2019; Zhu & Lin, 2019). Acculturation cultivates the instrumental skills needed for rural-urban migrants to live a better life and enhances their socioeconomic adaptation, which is closely associated with settlement intentions. First, cultural practices, such as proficiency in the local urban dialect, can provide rural-urban migrants with greater job opportunities. In contrast, it is difficult for those who lack proficiency in the urban dialect to find jobs, especially well-paid jobs. Second, maintaining connections with fellow relatives and friends in urban areas can support rural-urban migrants in job seeking and status attainment (Yue et al., 2021). Beyond such ties, newly constructed social ties by rural-urban migrants with local urbanites enrich their social source that can facilitate their socioeconomic adaptation in the urban areas (Yue et al., 2013). Third, rural-urban migrants experience a process of late socialization while living and working in cities, which helps them adopt modern values and behaviors (Inkeles & Smith, 1974). A higher level of individual modernity—such as valuing punctuality, planning, and novelty—can enhance their job competence, increase earnings, and accelerate job promotions (Yue et al., 2013). Dialect proficiency, social ties and values are essential components of acculturation for rural-urban migrants (Yue et al., 2020). Accordingly, we assume that rural-urban migrants who adopt bicultural strategies (i.e., the two subtypes of integration in Figure 1) have advantages of acquiring higher SES, making them more inclined to settle in cities or voluntarily return to their home villages for non-agricultural employment. In comparison, those who exhibit separated strategies (i.e., the two subtypes of separation in Figure 1) may struggle to adapt to urban labor markets and achieve socioeconomic integration, increasing the likelihood to be compelled to return home.

The second pathway is mediated by psychological well-being, which is also a crucial factor of settlement intentions (Wang & Shen, 2023). On the one hand, apart from cultivating instrumental skills,

culture assumes the function of socialization (Bourdieu, 1983). Rural-urban migrants straddling urban and rural areas inevitably experience a process of resocialization such as factory work in cities. Such process comes with acculturative stress and the risk of role conflict or role strain (Goffman, 1959). For those migrants who only maintain their original culture, the resocialization process therefore reduces their psychological well-being and finally make them more reluctant to settle in cities. By contrast, bicultural migrants exhibit positive attitude toward both urban and rural cultures, and can deal with the conflict between their urban and rural roles well. On the other hand, acculturation process shapes how rural-urban migrants manage their old social connections and construct new ones, both of which are important sources of social support and have positive association with their mental health and psychological well-being (Yue et al., 2021). Bicultural migrants are more likely to maintain connection with fellow villagers and migrants, and meanwhile build new ties with urban citizens. With adequate social support, they may be more satisfied with their urban lives, which promote their intention to stay in cities. Thus, we propose that bicultural migrants, compared with separated ones, exhibit higher level of psychological well-being, so that they will express a stronger urban-settlement intention.

The third pathway is a serial mediating process, first through SES and then via psychological well-being. As mentioned above, rural-urban migrants who adopt different acculturation strategies may exhibit different socioeconomic outcomes. Bicultural migrants are better positioned to invest their cultural capital—such as bicultural practices and values—into the urban labor market and convert it into economic capital (Bourdieu, 1983), thereby achieving higher SES. Meanwhile, many previous studies (e.g., Yue et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2021) have confirmed that both objective and subjective SES plays an important role in psychological well-being of rural-urban migrants. Rural-urban migrants with higher subjective SES tend to exhibit higher subjective well-being, which further enhance their intention to settle in cities (Wang & Shen, 2023). We therefore expect that bicultural migrants are more likely to obtain higher SES and thus have better psychological well-being. It follows that they are more inclined to become urban settlers than separated ones.

4. Data and Methods

4.1 Sample

The data used in this paper draw from a social survey of rural-urban migrants conducted by Xi'an Jiaotong University, Shaanxi Normal University, and Sun Yat-Sen University in Guangzhou, from late

December 2015 to March 2016. With its strong industrial base and well-developed tertiary sector, Guangzhou is one of the primary receiving cities for rural-urban migrants in China. By the end of 2023, there were 8.26 million migrants in Guangzhou, the majority of whom were rural-urban migrants (Guangzhou Statistics Bureau, 2024). Due to the lack of a sampling frame for migrants, the survey adopted a quota sampling method. The survey was conducted in five districts (i.e., Baiyun, Tianhe, Panyu, Haizhu, and Huangpu), in which 79.4% of the migrants in Guangzhou resided at the end of 2015 (Guangzhou Statistics Bureau, 2016). The smallest sampling unit of the survey was street. According to the distribution of migrants in the five districts, 15 streets in total were selected randomly, and about 100 respondents were investigated in each street. By referring to a National Migrant Population Dynamic Monitoring Survey in Guangzhou, the survey sampled migrants in accordance with the distribution of industries (such as construction, catering, retail, security, cleaning, and manufacturing industry etc.) in which rural-urban migrants were employed. Besides, an even gender distribution was maintained in each street. For more details about the survey, please refer to Yue et al. (2019). Respondents were rural-urban migrants over 15 years old who did not possess a Guangzhou hukou. After excluding the ineligible samples, the final sample size for the survey is 1621. While the use of quota sampling produces potential bias, which may limit the ability to generalize our findings, the relatively large and diverse sample still provides valuable insights into the relationship between acculturation and settlement intentions among rural-urban migrants in China.

4.2 Measures

4.2.1 Dependent variable: settlement intentions

In this paper, we measure settlement intentions of rural-urban migrants through the question “where do you plan to develop your career or settle down for a long time in the future”. According to respondents’ answers and drawing upon the research of Yue et al. (2010), rural-urban migrants can be divided into four categories: agricultural returnees (those migrants who return to continue farming), non-agricultural returnees (those migrants who return to seek non-agricultural jobs), settlers (those migrants who plan to settle in cities with nonagricultural jobs), and undecided (those migrants who have not thought about their settlement intentions or have no idea).

4.2.2 Independent variable: acculturation

According to the multidimensional and bicultural acculturation framework (Yue et al., 2020), we measure acculturation through practices, values and identities of both urban and rural cultures. Cultural

practices of urban and rural areas are measured by Cantonese proficiency (1=cannot understand, 2=can understand some Cantonese but cannot speak, 3=can both understand and speak some Cantonese, 4=proficient in Cantonese), the use of native dialect or Mandarin Chinese when talking with urbanites in Guangzhou (1=speak Cantonese, 2=bilingual, 3=speak native dialect or Mandarin), and social ties with local urbanites or non-urbanites.

Cultural values of urban and rural areas are operationalized by “individual modernity” and “attitudes toward culture maintenance”, respectively. Drawing upon the research by Yue et al. (2013), this study used the concept of individual modernity to assess the extent to which rural-urban migrants have acculturated to urban values. One sample of the qualities, which are essential components of individual modernity, is “showing an interest in carefully planning one’s affairs in advance” (Inkeles & Smith, 1974). For this study, the final scale of individual modernity adopted only one item to reflect four qualities from the Inkeles and Smith’s scale, and could fit the Chinese context after some minor modifications by Yue et al. (2020). We assess rural-urban migrants’ individual modernity using four qualitative aspects, but such measure is acknowledged to be less refined compared to the scale of Inkeles and Smith. We use four qualitative aspects to assess rural-urban migrants’ individual modernity, but such measure is admittedly cruder than Inkeles and Smith’s. An example of the question is “to what extent are you willing to plan and organize your work and personal life in advance”. “Attitudes toward culture maintenance” is assessed using a five-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree) with four items adapted from Zagefka and Brown’s (2002) scale. A sample item is “it is more important for me to observe the customs of my hometown”. The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale is 0.785, indicating acceptable reliability.

Cultural identities of both urban and rural areas are assessed using “urban identity” and “rural identity”. Following the research of Yue et al. (2013), “urban identity” is measured with four items adapted from Bollen and Hoyle’s (1990) scale of sense of belonging. One sample is “I think that I am a member of cities” (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree). Cronbach’s alpha for this scale is 0.862. By modifying the term “cities” to “hometown”, we derive the “rural identity” scale from the original “urban identity” scale. Cronbach’s alpha is 0.832.

4.2.3 Mediators: perceived SES, income and life satisfaction

Previous studies (e.g., Zhu & Lin, 2019; Liu et al., 2021; Wang & Shen, 2023) have suggested that both objective and subjective SES significantly influence the settlement intentions of rural-urban

migrants. Accordingly, we measure our first mediator, SES of rural-urban migrants, using two indicators: perceived SES, assessed by asking respondents to rate their social status on a scale of 1 to 10, and income, operationalized as the common logarithm of monthly income plus one. Our second mediator, psychological well-being, is assessed by life satisfaction. The satisfaction with life scale (SWLS), well developed by Diener et al. (1985), has been used in a Chinese sample (e.g., Liu et al., 2017) and has demonstrated reliability and validity (Bai et al., 2011). Five items rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) comprises the SWLS. A sample item is “my life is close to my ideal in most ways”. In this study, Cronbach’s alpha for this scale is 0.784.

4.2.4 Covariates

Following previous studies, to explore the net effect of acculturation on settlement intentions, we categorize the potential determinants into three groups: individual characteristics, migration patterns, and working status.

Variables of individual characteristics include age in years, education attainment (1=primary school or below, the reference group, 2=junior high school, 3=senior high school, vocational school, or technical secondary school, 4= college or university), gender (1=male, 0=female), ethnic (1=Han Chinese, 0=Minority ethnicity), marital status (1=married, 0=unmarried), and possession of plow land (1=yes, 2=no). Variables of migration patterns include duration of stay in years and migration distance (1=interprovincial migration, 0=intra-provincial migration). Working status is measured by the natural logarithm of number of weekly working hours, types of occupation (1=manual workers, 2=semi-manual workers, 3=non-manual workers), and employment status (1=self-employed, 0=employee).

Table 1 describes all the variables.

Table 1. Descriptive information about variables (N=1267)

Variable	Mean / Percentage	SD	Range
Settlement intentions			
Agricultural returnees	12.71%	/	0, 1
Non-agricultural returnees	24.23%	/	0, 1
Settlers	33.23%	/	0, 1
Undecided	29.83%	/	0, 1
Acculturation			
<i>Rural culture</i>			
Using of native dialect/Mandarin			
Speak Cantonese	27.62%	/	0, 1
Bilingual	12.71%	/	0, 1
Speak native dialect or Mandarin	59.67%	/	0, 1
Number of non-urbanite ties	8.85	10.08	0-159

Cultural maintenance	3.70	0.66	1-5
Rural identity	4.04	0.61	1-5
Urban culture			
Cantonese proficiency			
Cannot understand	21.55%	/	0, 1
Can understand some Cantonese but cannot speak	23.60%	/	0, 1
Can both understand and speak some Cantonese	22.65%	/	0, 1
Proficient in Cantonese	32.20%	/	0, 1
Number of ties with local urbanites	1.52	3.35	0-45
Individual modernity	2.46	0.35	1-3
Urban identity	3.04	0.80	1-5
Socioeconomic status			
Perceived SES	4.20	1.62	1-10
Income logged	3.55	0.27	0.00-4.60
Psychological well-being			
Life satisfaction	2.88	0.70	1-5
Characteristics of rural migrants			
Individual characteristics			
Age	33.62	10.67	15.67-69.08
Education attainment (ref. primary school or below)			
Junior high school	42.07%	/	0, 1
Senior high school, vocational school, or technical secondary school	29.99%	/	0, 1
College or university	14.21%	/	0, 1
Male (ref. female)	53.20%	/	0, 1
Han Chinese (ref. Minority ethnicity)	96.53%	/	0, 1
Married (ref. unmarried)	65.46%	/	0, 1
Having plow land (ref. no)	83.19%	/	0, 1
Migration patterns			
Duration of stay in years (natural logarithm)	1.82	0.82	0.08-3.65
Interprovincial migration (ref. intra-provincial migration)	58.80%	/	0, 1
Working status			
Number of weekly working hours (natural logarithm)	4.07	0.35	1.61-4.99
Type of occupation (ref. manual workers)			
Semi-manual workers	53.43%	/	0, 1
Non-manual workers	30.39%	/	0, 1
Self-employed (ref. employee)	28.41%	/	0, 1

4.3 Analytical strategies

First, based on all the measures of acculturation, we use latent class analysis (LCA) to identify categories of rural-urban migrants who exhibit similar scoring patterns on their multidimensional and bicultural acculturation in the software Mplus 8.0. Second, utilizing ANOVA and post-hoc t-test, we compare settlement intentions, SES, and psychological well-being among rural-urban migrants by acculturation cluster. Subsequently, we use OLS regression and multinomial logistic regression to

explore the mediating effects of socioeconomic status and psychological well-being. After excluding cases with missing data for any of the 23 variables we used, there remained a sample of 1267 for our analyses.

Since the dependent variable (i.e., settlement intentions) is multi-categorical, its association with the independent variable and mediators needs to be analyzed using logistic regression models. Because the mediators are continuous variables, their association with the independent variables should be analyzed by Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression models. However, the coefficients of the two regression equations differ in scale. Neither regression coefficients a and b , nor standardized regression coefficients a^{std} and b^{std} , are on the same scale and comparable. Thus, both ab and $a^{std}b^{std}$ could not test the size and significance of the indirect effect very well (Fang et al., 2017). Taking the case of a binary dependent variable, Iacobucci (2012) points out in OLS regression, the significance test of coefficients adopts t-test, and the statistic of the test is $t = a/SE(a)$. When the sample size is increased to which degrees of freedom equal or exceed 30, the t-statistic can be viewed as a z-test and can be written as $Z_a = a/SE(a)$. In logistic regression models, the significance of coefficients is evaluated via Wald's $\chi^2 = (b/SE(b))^2$. The square root of the χ^2 is a t-statistics on the same degrees of freedom as the χ^2 had been. When the degrees of freedom exceed 30, we can refer to the t-test as a z-test ($Z_b = b/SE(b)$). Hence, Z_a and Z_b are of the same class and may be compared head-to-head. We can replace $a \times b$, the indirect effect, with $Z_a \times Z_b$ and test its significance. Accordingly, we use the RMediation (Tofighi & MacKinnon, 2011), an R package for mediation analysis, to build confidence intervals and test the significance of the indirect effects.

5. Results

5.1 Acculturation strategies of rural-urban migrants

After considering the goodness of fit statistics including AIC, BIC, aBIC, Entropy, LMR LRT p-values, and ALMR LRT p-values, the four-class acculturation model was the best fit for the data. As shown in Table 3, C1, C2, C3 and C4 accounted for 26.68%, 23.44%, 20.28% and 29.60% of the total sample, respectively. In order to distinguish and label these four classes, we calculated range score (RS) for each indicator or scale of both urban and rural cultures. Based on the RS, we calculated a composite rural RS and a composite urban RS (see Table 2). For more detailed calculations, please see Yue et al. (2020).

Table 2. Composite rural RS and composite urban RS of acculturation clusters (N = 1267)

	Composite rural RS	Composite urban RS
C1: Integration-potential separation (N=338, 26.68%)	0.52	-0.06
C2: Rural-oriented integration (N=297, 23.44%)	0.42	0.05
C3: Marginalization-risk separation (N=257, 20.28%)	0.30	-0.26
C4: Urban-oriented integration (N=375, 29.60%)	0.13	0.17

Following Yue et al. (2020), we define Berry's (2005) four categories of acculturation based on the composite rural RSs and composite urban RSs. Since both C1 and C3 have negative composite urban RS and positive composite rural RS, they are two subtypes of the separation category: C1 has the highest composite rural RS, and its composite urban RS is negative but small in absolute value; C3 has the lowest composite urban RS and the second lowest but positive composite rural RS. C1 has more potential to move to the integration category, while C3 is at greater risk of falling into marginalization. Thus, we define C1 and C3 respectively as "integration-potential separation" and "marginalization-risk separation". There are also two subtypes of the integration category: C2, with higher composite rural RS and lower composite urban RS, is labeled as "rural-oriented integration"; C4, with higher composite urban RS and a lower composite rural RS, thus is labeled as "urban-oriented integration". Rural-urban migrants in C2 and C4 are bicultural migrants, and those in C1 and C3 are separated ones.

5.2 Results of Bivariate analyses

We compared settlement intentions and mediators by acculturation cluster in Table 3. The Pearson chi-square test shows that settlement intentions are significantly related to acculturation cluster. Rural-urban migrants in C4 were most likely to become "settlers", while those in C3 were least likely to settle in cities. By contrast, rural-urban migrants in C1 exhibited the highest intention to return to their home villages to continue farming, while it seems that those in C2 were more likely to have not thought or have no idea about their settlement intentions.

Among the mediators, ANOVAs show that perceived SES, income and life satisfaction are significantly associated with acculturation cluster. Rural-urban migrants in C4 enjoyed the highest score of perceived SES among four acculturation strategies. In terms of income, rural-urban migrants in C3 had the lowest level of income, and there is no significant difference among C1, C2, and C4. The level of life satisfaction for C2 is significantly higher than that for C1, C3, and C4. While rural-urban migrants

in C1 and C4 enjoyed the second highest and similar level of life satisfaction. Generally speaking, bicultural rural-urban migrants from either C2 or C4 enjoyed higher socioeconomic status and better psychological well-being than separated ones.

Table 3. Settlement intention, perceived SES, income and life satisfaction by acculturation cluster.

	C1: Integration- potential separation		C2: Rural-oriented integration		C3: Marginalization- risk separation		C4: Urban-oriented integration		ANOVA or chi-squared test
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	F/Pearson chi-squared
Settlement intentions									93.574***
Agricultural returnees	0.183	/	0.135	/	0.167	/	0.043	/	
Nonagricultural returnees	0.251	/	0.259	/	0.292	/	0.187	/	
Settlers	0.307	/	0.253	/	0.218	/	0.496	/	
Undecided	0.257	/	0.354	/	0.323	/	0.275	/	
Socioeconomic status									
Perceived SES	3.917	1.670	4.387	1.415	3.501	1.623	4.776	1.485	39.011***
Income (RMB, Yuan)	4118.737 ^a	3398.992	4103.697 ^{ab}	2554.020	3782.140 ^{ac}	1843.783	4433.453 ^{abc}	3295.627	3.572*
Psychological well-being									
Life satisfaction	2.857 ^d	0.745	3.114	0.664	2.616	0.653	2.910 ^d	0.657	26.608***

Note. “/” denotes not applicable. Within each row, means with the same superscript letter a-d are not significantly different from one another. *p<0. 05, **p<0. 01, ***p<0. 001.

5.3 Results of Multivariate analyses

Table 4 presents the results of Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression models on the mediators (i.e., perceived SES, income, life satisfaction) and Z_a calculated by the coefficient and standard error. The results show that rural-urban migrants in C1, C2, and C3 had lower perceived SES than those in C4, and those in C2 enjoyed the highest level of life satisfaction. By and large, bicultural migrants were better off than separated ones in terms of socioeconomic status and psychological well-being.

Table 4. Results of OLS regression models on perceived SES, income and life satisfaction.

Variable	Perceived SES		Income logged		Life satisfaction	
	B(SE)	Z_a	B(SE)	Z_a	B(SE)	Z_a
Acculturation strategies (ref. C4: Urban-oriented integration)						
C1: Integration-potential separation	-0.715*** (0.121)	-5.909	-0.018 (0.020)	-0.900	0.032 (0.052)	0.615
C2: Rural-oriented integration	-0.297* (0.124)	-2.395	-0.007 (0.021)	-0.333	0.207*** (0.052)	3.981
C3: Marginalization-risk separation	-1.118*** (0.130)	-8.600	-0.032 (0.022)	-1.455	-0.174** (0.057)	-3.053
Perceived SES					0.093*** (0.012)	7.750
Income					0.331*** (0.071)	4.662
Covariates	Controlled					
Constant	4.033***		3.088***		1.748***	
Observation	1267		1267		1267	
R ²	0.110		0.099		0.157	
Adjusted R ²	0.100		0.088		0.147	

Note. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 5 provides the results of the multinomial logistic regression model on settlement intentions. It has been revealed that acculturation has a significant direct effect on settlement intentions. For example, in comparison to rural-urban migrants in C4, migrants in C3 are 3.54 ($e^{1.264}$) times more likely to become “agricultural returnees” rather than “settlers”. Additionally, socioeconomic and psychological mediators are also significantly associated with settlement intentions. One example is, for every unit increase in life satisfaction, the odds ratio of becoming “nonagricultural returnees” rather than “settlers” decreases by 32.43% ($1 - e^{-0.392}$).

Table 5. Results of multinomial logistic regression models on settlement intentions (ref. settlers)

Variable	Agricultural returnees		Non-agricultural returnees		Undecided	
	Logit (SE)	Z _b	Logit (SE)	Z _b	Logit (SE)	Z _b
Acculturation strategies (ref. C4: Urban-oriented integration)						
C1: Integration-potential separation	1.093** (0.341)	3.205	0.510* (0.219)	2.329	0.145 (0.205)	0.707
C2: Rural-oriented integration	1.201** (0.354)	3.393	0.811*** (0.228)	3.561	0.741*** (0.207)	3.580
C3: Marginalization-risk separation	1.264** (0.368)	3.435	0.777** (0.243)	3.184	0.523* (0.230)	2.274
Socioeconomic status						
Perceived SES	-0.135 (0.071)	-1.901	-0.066 (0.053)	-1.245	-0.131** (0.050)	-2.620
income	-1.100** (0.403)	-2.730	-0.003 (0.357)	-0.008	-0.572 (0.314)	-1.822
Psychological well-being						
Life satisfaction	-0.381* (0.162)	-2.352	-0.392** (0.124)	-3.161	-0.154 (0.116)	-1.328
Covariates			Controlled			
Constant	-0.343 (2.190)		2.189 (1.665)		4.536** (1.505)	
Observation			1267			
Pseudo R2			0.102			
Chi-square			345.5***			

Note. * p<0. 05, ** p<0. 01, *** p<0. 001.

Figure 2 summarizes the regression coefficients for the link between acculturation and settlement intentions. Our results of multivariate analyses show that rural-urban migrants in C3 are the most vulnerable group in terms of both perceived SES and life satisfaction. Those migrants in C1 also exhibited statistically significant lower level of perceived SES and life satisfaction. As expected, both perceived and income are positively related to rural-urban migrants' life satisfaction (see Figure 2).

The results for the relative total effects, direct effects and indirect effects are shown in Table 6. Drawing upon the study of Tofighi & MacKinnon (2011), we built the 95% confidence intervals (CIs) to test the significance of the total, direct, and indirect effects. Significant total effects show: rural-urban migrants in C3 were the most likely to become “agricultural returnees” rather than “settlers”, followed by migrants in C1, C2 and C4; compared with rural-urban migrants in C4, those in C3 exhibited higher possibility to return to their home village to do nonagricultural work, and those in C2 seemed to have no idea about their settlement mostly.

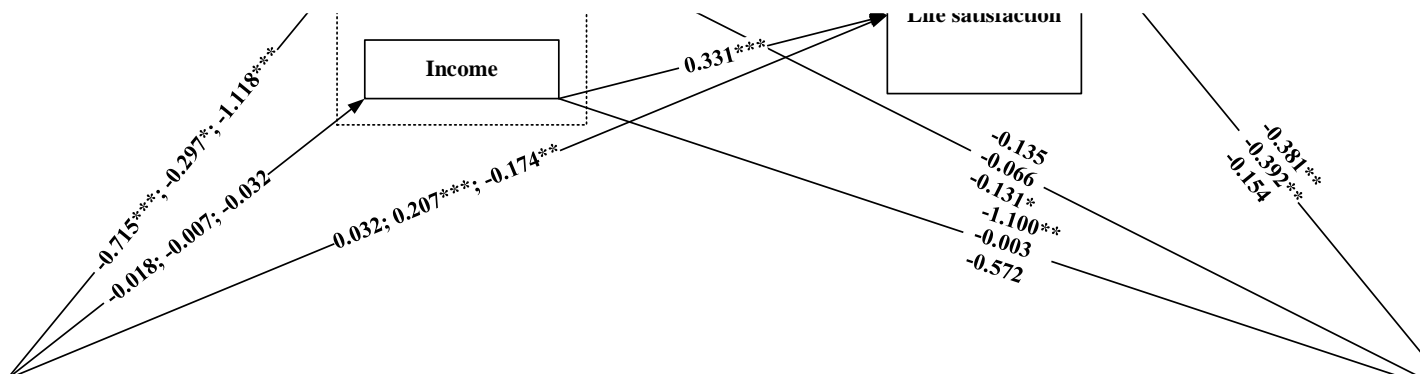


Figure 2 Regression coefficients for the link between acculturation and settlement intention

Note. The coefficients for C1, C2, and C3 in each path are shown in order. The coefficients between acculturation and each mediating variables are standardized regression coefficients, derived from OLS regressions; the coefficients between acculturation and settlement intention and between each mediating variables and settlement intention are logit values, derived from multinomial logit regressions. Numbers in parentheses are the direct effects of acculturation affecting settlement intention, controlling for all mediating variables. The coefficients at the top, middle, and bottom of each path correspond to the three categories of settlement intention in addition to the reference group, respectively.

Table 6. Significant direct and indirect effects of acculturation on settlement intentions and percentage of the total effects.

	Agricultural returnees		Non-agricultural returnees		Undecided	
	Effects [95% CI]	percentage	Effects [95% CI]	percentage	Effects [95% CI]	percentage
Relative total effects						
C1	1.477 [0.025, 0.113]	100.00	0.831 [-0.007, 0.125]	100.00	0.357 [-0.084, 0.054]	100.00
C2	1.286 [-0.015, 0.067]	100.00	0.870 [-0.005, 0.124]	100.00	0.799 [0.007, 0.153]	100.00
C3	1.954 [0.014, 0.118]	100.00	1.370 [0.012, 0.159]	100.00	0.891 [-0.038, 0.109]	100.00
Relative direct effects						
C1	1.093 [0.425, 1.761]	74.00	0.510 [0.080, 0.940]	61.37	0.145 [-0.257, 0.546]	40.62
C2	1.201 [0.507, 1.895]	93.39	0.812 [0.365, 1.258]	93.33	0.741 [0.334, 1.148]	92.74
C3	1.264 [0.543, 1.985]	64.69	0.777 [0.299, 1.255]	56.72	0.523 [0.074, 0.973]	58.70
Relative indirect effects through preceived SES						
C1	0.097 [-0.003, 0.210]	6.57	0.047 [-0.027, 0.128]	5.66	0.094 [0.022, 0.178]	26.33
C2	0.040 [-0.003, 0.106]	3.11	0.020 [-0.011, 0.063]	2.30	0.039 [0.003, 0.091]	4.88
C3	0.151 [-0.005, 0.317]	7.73	0.074 [-0.042, 0.195]	5.40	0.146 [0.036, 0.267]	16.39
Relative indirect effects through life satisfaction						
C1	-0.012 [-0.062, 0.029]	-0.81	-0.013 [-0.059, 0.029]	-1.56	-0.005 [-0.031, 0.014]	-1.40
C2	-0.079 [-0.167, -0.011]	-6.14	-0.081 [-0.155, -0.025]	-9.31	-0.032 [-0.088, 0.015]	-4.01
C3	0.066 [0.007, 0.150]	3.38	0.068 [0.027, 0.116]	4.96	0.027 [-0.012, 0.078]	3.03
Relative indirect effects through perceived and life satisfaction						
C1	0.272 [0.043, 0.539]	18.42	0.280 [0.099, 0.497]	33.69	0.110 [-0.052, 0.289]	30.81
C2	0.113 [0.005, 0.275]	8.79	0.116 [0.015, 0.258]	13.33	0.046 [-0.021, 0.144]	5.76
C3	0.426 [0.070, 0.813]	21.80	0.438 [0.161, 0.745]	31.97	0.172 [-0.082, 0.439]	19.30

Note. 95% bootstrapped confidence intervals (CIs) were reported in bootstrapping procedures for total effects. CIs of multinomial logistic regression results were reported for direct effects. CIs built by the RMediation package were reported for indirect effects. If the above CIs not include 0, the respective effect is statistically significant at least at the level of $p < 0.05$. C4 forms the reference group. To save space, insignificant results of indirect effects through income are not reported in the table.

Specifically, there are three significant mediating pathways through which acculturation affects settlement intentions of rural-urban migrants (see Figure 2 and Table 6). The first one is through socioeconomic status, assessed by perceived SES and income. In contrast to C4, rural-urban migrants in both C2 and C3 enjoyed a lower level of perceived SES, so that they are more likely to have not thought or have no idea about their settlement intentions. These paths account for 4.88 % and 16.39% of the total effect respectively. None of the indirect effects through income was statistically significant. The mediating role of perceived SES is partially supported.

The second mediating pathway is through life satisfaction. Compared with C4, separated migrants in C2 exhibited a lower level of life satisfaction, through which their intentions to return home to continue farming or seek nonagricultural jobs were significantly increased. These paths account for 4.88 % and 16.39% of the total effect respectively. In addition, bicultural migrants who are more oriented to rural culture (i.e., C2) enjoyed a higher level of life satisfaction than those in C4, which weakened their intentions to return to their home villages. The mechanism concerned life satisfaction is supported.

The last one is a serial mediating path, first through perceived SES and then via life satisfaction. Taking the indirect effects of C3 for example, compared with C4, rural-urban migrants in C3 enjoyed a significant lower level of perceived SES, affected by which their life satisfaction was worse than those in C4 at the same time. Through such serial mediating path, they were significantly more inclined to return to their home villages and continue farming or seek nonagricultural jobs rather than settle in cities, accounting for 21.80 % and 31.97% of the total effect respectively. These results prove that the third pathway is supported. In sum, among the three mechanisms, the serial mediating pathway first through perceived SES and then via life satisfaction accounts for the largest proportion. Namely, such process plays the most important mediating role in the relationship between acculturation and settlement intentions among rural-urban migrants.

6. Conclusions and discussion

Existing studies have extensively examined the socioeconomic factors that influence settlement intentions among rural-urban migrants (e.g., Zhu & Lin, 2019; Liu et al., 2021). Meanwhile, cultural factors have been proved to be an increasingly important role in shaping settlement intentions (Chen & Liu, 2016; Liu et al., 2017). Some researchers have identified that Chinese rural-urban migrants undergo a process of acculturation (e.g., Gui et al., 2012; Yue et al., 2020). Xie et al. (2023) have explored the

role that acculturation plays in urban-settlement intention, as well as the moderating effects of migration patterns and period of urban stay. However, there is still limited research on the mechanisms through which acculturation affects settlement intentions among Chinese rural-urban migrants.

Acculturation has been identified as a key predictor of rural-urban migrants' socioeconomic status and psychological well-being (e.g., Inkeles & Smith, 1974; Liu et al., 2017; Yue et al., 2013, 2020, 2021), both of which significantly influence their settlement intentions. Therefore, understanding the role of acculturation is essential for explaining the settlement intentions of Chinese rural-urban migrants, particularly through potential mediating pathways. Using a multidimensional and bicultural framework (Yue et al., 2020), this paper is among the few to explore how acculturation affects settlement intentions by considering socioeconomic status and psychological well-being as mediators.

Four acculturation strategies of rural-urban migrants were identified using latent class analysis. Our results show that acculturation, perceived SES, and life satisfaction have significant impact on settlement intentions. Rural-urban migrants in the urban-oriented integration group (C4) exhibited the highest intention to settle in cities than those in other groups. Consistent with previous studies (e.g., Wang & Shen, 2023), every unit increase in perceived SES and life satisfaction can weaken their intentions to return home rather than settle in cities. Also, we found that perceived SES is positively related to life satisfaction. Rural-urban migrants with higher perceived SES tend to exhibit higher life satisfaction.

The paper goes beyond examination of the link, and further disentangles the specific mechanisms that underlie the connection between acculturation and settlement intentions in terms of perceived SES, and life satisfaction. It is interesting when we compare the possibility of exhibiting different settlement intentions among acculturation clusters in terms of indirect effects through perceived SES and life satisfaction. As we expected, in comparison to C2 and C4, rural-urban migrants in C1 and C3 who experienced double disadvantages in terms of perceived SES and life satisfaction exhibited lower intention to settle in cities. Meanwhile, rural-urban migrants in the rural-oriented integration group (C2) enjoyed a lower level of perceived SES, but a higher level of life satisfaction than migrants in the urban-oriented integration group (C4). In comparison to C4, perceived SES played a positive mediating role (4.88% of the total effect, see Table 6) in the link between acculturation and the intention to have not thought about their settlement rather than settle in cities for migrants in C2. However, life satisfaction of migrants in C2 played a significantly negative role (-6.14% and -9.31% of the total effects, respectively) in the link between acculturation and the intentions to return home to continue farming or seek

nonagricultural jobs rather than settle in cities. Our analyses also show that perceived SES had a significantly positive impact on life satisfaction, and the mediating pathway first through perceived SES and then via life satisfaction was verified to be effective and significant. Namely, compared with C4, rural-urban migrants in other acculturation categories enjoyed a respectively lower level of perceived SES, affected by which they also exhibited a lower level of life satisfaction, thereby decreasing their intention to settle in cities.

Based on the above findings, we propose a bold but reasonable inference. As mentioned above, keeping contracted rural land can make up for the lack of social insurance in urban areas through guaranteeing rural-urban migrants' basic income, so that they are more inclined to settle in cities (Liu et al., 2019). Similarly, the rural culture not only plays a role that attracts rural-urban migrants to return home, but also exhibits an important insurance function that could guarantee their work and living in the urban areas. Especially for bicultural migrants, maintaining more rural culture could make them enjoy psychological well-being to a certain extent in enhancing their urban-settlement intention, in which process rural culture plays an instrumental role of social support. If rural-urban migrants move from C2 to C4, they would enjoy higher perceived SES at the cost of reducing their life satisfaction, so that their urban-settlement intention is weakened. As for urban governments and societies, it is necessary to create a friendly and inclusive cultural environment to make rural-urban migrants feel at home in cities. On the other hand, urban governments should further perfect the social security system for rural-urban migrants, so as to compensate for the loss of social support when they move into urban areas to seek a better life or attempt to settle in cities.

Admittedly, our study has several limitations. First, the cross-sectional data used in this paper cannot further discuss the changes of acculturation strategies and settlement intentions among rural-urban migrants, and more robust conclusions need longitudinal data to justify. Second, rural-urban migrants move and stay in the urban areas, at the same time, there might be constant return migration that cause sample bias in current studies. It follows that the respondents in the survey could not represent the original migrants to cities.

Despite the above limitations, this study is one of the few that reveals the power of culture, and disentangles three mechanisms linking acculturation and settlement intentions of rural-urban migrants in China. This paper is an important theoretical and empirical supplement and extension of the studies on the determinants of settlement intentions.

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