

**Boundary-Crossing in the Process of Acculturation**  
**-Analysis of the Chinese Non-Permanent Residents in Japan-**

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**ABSTRACT**

In 2007, the Chinese migrants surpassed the Koreans as the largest group of foreign residents and now constitute one third of all foreign migrants in Japan. As we know, during the process of acculturation, migrant people engage in intercultural contact, producing a potential for conflict and need for negotiation, just in order to achieve outcomes that are adaptive for both cultures. It is thus significant to realize that some factors are influencing the acculturation process, and preventing the migrant people from being adapted by the native culture. In this paper, I first wish to provide an overview of literature reviews in acculturation theories; then look at several broad aspects concerning trends in Japanese immigration policy combining with the history of Chinese migrants in Japan. In the second part of the paper, I shall focus on the survey research about the Chinese non-permanent residents in Japan, which in order to examine the real situation during the process of acculturation, to identify how major factors affect their acculturation process, and to investigate what strategies Chinese migrant characters would adapt to deal with acculturation and cope with the acculturative stress in Japan.

**Key words:** acculturation, Chinese non-permanent residents, Japan

## **BACKGROUND**

According to Japanese official statistics from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIS), as of October 2011, the total population of Japan was 127,798,704. Within it, 2,078,508 persons (1.6 percent of the total population) were foreigners registered and permitted to reside for some periods in Japan. The Japanese residency management system largely divides these foreign residents into “permanent residents” (987,525 persons, or 47.5% of the total) and “non-permanent residents” (1,090,983 persons, or 52.5% of the total). The former includes 389,085 Koreans, former colonial migrants and their descendants who have been staying in Japan with the status of residence “special permanent residents”. Strictly speaking, only permanent residence is applicable on the premise that one has lived in Japan for long period of time and established basis for stable life in Japan. Moreover, the status of residence “permanent residents” provides much more advantageous treatments than other statuses of residence, because that it does not limit the status holder's activities or the period of stay. For this reason, the Japanese immigration control authority needs to examine permanent residents’ applicants much more closely than other applicants for merely changing their status of residence. In sharp contrast, non-permanent residents apply for and receive only time-limited residency visas (usually 1 to 3 years), which include the type of visas as spouse or child of Japanese national (181,617), students (188,605), long-term residents (177,983), specialist in humanities / international services (67,854), dependents (119,359), spouses of permanent residents (21,647) etc. For the record, there are more than 674,879 Chinese migrants living in Japan right now. However, only about 28 percent of them registered as permanent residents (186,813 persons). In this paper, I will focus on the other 72 percent about 488,066 Chinese migrants who are regarded as non-permanent residents in Japan.

## **OBJECTIVES**

Quite a number of studies about the acculturation of Chinese migrant people in alien cultures have been conducted. However, most of them are mainly carried out on migrants in the multicultural society in the West, especially in North America (Berry, 2001). Yet, specific research on Chinese migrants from mainland China in Japan is

relatively few and far between, who may have their particular characteristics, are worthy of further study. Besides, the fact that they are experiencing difficulties such as psychological problem, the struggle of the past history, and constantly political disputes, somehow shows that the acculturation of Chinese migrants in Japan may present different traits compared to other countries. There is at present a need to start a research project in order to examine the real situation during the process of acculturation of these Chinese migrants (in this paper we will talk about the Chinese non-permanent residents) in Japan, to identify how major factors affect acculturation process, and to investigate what strategies migrant characters would adapt to deal with acculturation and cope with the acculturative stress.

## **SURVEY RESEARCH**

A total of 102 Chinese non-permanent residents participated in the survey study. Besides, the questionnaire contains altogether 15 questions and separated into two sections to test various constructs related to acculturation. It began with a short introduction seeking the respondent's cooperation and promising confidentiality. Then the first section of the questionnaire is concentrate on the demographic information of the sample participant. Nine questions are developed to obtain background information about the participants, including gender, age, marriage status, occupation, level of Japanese, length of residence in Japan, type of visa, and friends component. All questions in this part are requested single choice responses or answers. The next section, in addition to the questions on participants' background, we also ask another 7 questions in order to get better understanding about the real situation of these Chinese non-permanent residents in Japan. However, questions in the second section are including single choice and multiple choice answers, beside that, three essay questions are included (short simple answer will be ok, participants are requested to answer these questions either in Chinese or in Japanese). The average time to complete the questionnaire is approximately 10 to 15 minutes. Besides, to further increase the response rate and for better understanding, the contents of the questionnaire are made available in Chinese. The Chinese version is developed first, and then translated into English. The items are ordered and used for assessing variables related to acculturation process. After all the data which collected by questionnaires has been organized and

sorted, SPSS was used to do the data analyses.

## **CONCLUSION**

Responses to the questionnaires reveal that female Chinese non-permanent residents are more involved in Japanese society than males; secondly, the younger the age the easier the adaptation to Japan; however, getting complete adaptation to the Japanese society is not that easy to the Chinese non-permanent residents.

It should be noted that Chinese non-permanent residents came to Japan usually because of simple reasons, and their impressions of Japan before arrivals are not bad. However, with the increase of contact, Chinese non-permanent residents will be more and more aware of some problems, such as communication problems, cultural differences, and so on. All these problems will become important factors which will affect the process of acculturation. The findings suggest that by communicating with native Japanese, or using coping strategies toward acculturation, it is possible to improve or change the impressions about Japan, mitigate the problems or stress generated by acculturation process, and eventually result in positive outcomes.