



University of Pennsylvania  
ScholarlyCommons

Asia-Pacific Education, Language Minorities and  
Migration (ELMM) Network Working Paper Series

Population Studies Center

2-18-2013

# It's Not Just About the Money: Motivations for Youth Migration in Rural China

Yilin Chiang

University of Pennsylvania, [yilinc@sas.upenn.edu](mailto:yilinc@sas.upenn.edu)


Emily C. Hannum

University of Pennsylvania, [hannumem@soc.upenn.edu](mailto:hannumem@soc.upenn.edu)

Grace Kao

University of Pennsylvania, [grace2@pop.upenn.edu](mailto:grace2@pop.upenn.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <http://repository.upenn.edu/elmm>

 Part of the [Asian Studies Commons](#), [Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education Commons](#), [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), [Demography, Population, and Ecology Commons](#), [Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Commons](#), [Educational Sociology Commons](#), [First and Second Language Acquisition Commons](#), [International and Comparative Education Commons](#), and the [Race and Ethnicity Commons](#)

Chiang, Yilin; Hannum, Emily C.; and Kao, Grace, "It's Not Just About the Money: Motivations for Youth Migration in Rural China" (2013). *Asia-Pacific Education, Language Minorities and Migration (ELMM) Network Working Paper Series*. 6.  
<http://repository.upenn.edu/elmm/6>

This paper is posted at ScholarlyCommons. <http://repository.upenn.edu/elmm/6>  
For more information, please contact [libraryrepository@pobox.upenn.edu](mailto:libraryrepository@pobox.upenn.edu).

---

# It's Not Just About the Money: Motivations for Youth Migration in Rural China

## **Abstract**

This study investigates the incentives for labor migration of youth in rural China using panel data from the Gansu Survey of Children and Families, a longitudinal study of youth in rural Gansu Province of China. We investigate the individual and altruistic economic motivations featured prominently in demographic and economic research on migration. However, we propose that the non-economic goal of personal development, a motivation suggested in numerous qualitative studies of women migrants in China and elsewhere, is also important, especially for young migrants. Analyzes indicate that, while young men and young women hold different motivations for migration, the desire for personal development is a common motivator for young migrants. Results suggest that non-economic incentives may play an important role in youth migration in rural China and that positioning in family structures shapes the susceptibility of individuals to migrate due to altruistic economic motivations.

## **Keywords**

migration, youth, China, motivations, incentives

## **Disciplines**

Asian Studies | Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education | Curriculum and Instruction | Demography, Population, and Ecology | Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Research | Educational Sociology | First and Second Language Acquisition | International and Comparative Education | Linguistics | Race and Ethnicity

**It's not just about the Money:  
Motivations for Youth Migration in Rural China**

Abstract

This study investigates the incentives for labor migration of youth in rural China using panel data from the Gansu Survey of Children and Families, a longitudinal study of youth in rural Gansu Province of China. We investigate the individual and altruistic economic motivations featured prominently in demographic and economic research on migration. However, we propose that the non-economic goal of personal development, a motivation suggested in numerous qualitative studies of women migrants in China and elsewhere, is also important, especially for young migrants. Analyzes indicate that, while young men and young women hold different motivations for migration, the desire for personal development is a common motivator for young migrants. Results suggest that non-economic incentives may play an important role in youth migration in rural China and that positioning in family structures shapes the susceptibility of individuals to migrate due to altruistic economic motivations.

Keywords: internal migration, rural youth, gender, migration motivations, personal development

## Introduction

According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2012), internal migration in China has continued to grow since the 1980s and there were as many as 158 million rural-urban migrants in China in 2011. Young migrants are a quantitatively important part of the current migration patterns. For example, the National Bureau of Statistics (2011) estimates that over half of rural youth have left the countryside and that most migrant workers in urban areas were born after 1980. Further, the current wave of migration in China differs from previous ones through its shift from being dominated by male migrants to one that is increasingly gender-balanced (Ibid.).

To better understand the current wave of migration in China, it is vital to investigate the how rural youth arrived at the decision to leave home and school for work. Studies of migration outside of China suggest that individuals' decisions to migrate are motivated by multiple economic and family incentives that co-exist with one another (Massey 1987; Salt 1992). It is not surprising that migrants hope to improve their individual and family's economic opportunities, but it is likely that there are other non-economic motivating factors behind the decision to migrate.

Research on both international and Chinese internal migration indicates that migrants, especially young women, pursue non-economic personal gains through migration decisions (He and Gober 2003; Liang and Chen 2004; Mills 1997). Qualitative literature suggests that non-economic desires include the pursuit for cosmopolitanism, urban experience, modernity, and gaining new knowledge (Jacka 2006; Ma and Jacobs 2010; Mills 1997; Wong and He 2008; Zhang 1999). We refer to such non-economic motivations broadly as "personal development" (*ziwo fazhan*, 自我发展). In the Chinese dictionary definition, *ziwo* means ego; *fazhan* denotes to grow or expand (Xia and Chen 2002). The term *ziwo fazhan* is translated as ego development

and entails growth in personal ability or developing ideal characteristics.<sup>i</sup> Although the particular interpretation of the phrase likely varies across individuals, personal development in daily use has a similar connotation with concepts of non-economic migration motivations employed in field-based studies and implies the acquisition of desirable experience.

While non-economic incentives coexist with economic calculations, relatively few studies on Chinese internal migration examine economic and non-economic reasons simultaneously among young migrants of both genders. Most quantitative studies that analyze both migrant men and women's motivations focus on economic incentives, both individual and altruistic (See Giles and Mu 2007; Qian 1996; Zhao 1999). Among the few that compare economic with non-economic motivations, non-economic reasons are often narrowly defined as family-related reasons, such as marriage, joining friends/relatives, or moving with family, and dwell less on the possibility of non-monetary individualistic goals (see Gui and Liu 1992; He and Gober 2003). On the other hand, some qualitative studies do pay attention to non-economic personal aspirations that motivate migration (see Ma and Jacobs 2010; Zhang 1999). Yet, these studies do not compare women and men's migration motivations, since the focus is most often on female migration. As a result, whether young men and women are similarly motivated by financial and non-financial incentives remains a question to be explored.

Motivations for migration offer potential explanations for the current population movement in China and provide implications for migration outcomes. Migrants who are motivated by non-economic incentives likely differ from the economically motivated migrants with regard to migration behavior (Hu 2012). Young men and women may hold different reasons for migration due to specific gender norms in the sociocultural context that affect men and women's migration incentives and behavior (Murphy 2008). This study investigates the

migration motivations among rural youth. Examining economic and non-economic incentives, we use a longitudinal study of rural youth in Gansu Province. We pay particular attention to gender differences in reasons for migration. Moreover, we consider contextual characteristics, including sibship structure and family socioeconomic status, which shape resource availability and obligation towards other family members.

This paper proceeds as follows. We first outline Chinese government policies that affect patterns of internal migration. Next, we examine characteristics of young migrant workers in order to examine youth motivations for migration. We then discuss existing research on personal development, individual economic incentives, and family-support motivations for migration, in both international and Chinese contexts. Finally, we analyze migration decisions among rural youth and migration motivations among young migrants.

### **Internal Migration in China**

One factor that affects population movement in China is the household registration system, or the *hukou* system. Established in the 1950s, the Chinese government designated individuals in terms of their rural/urban localities and agricultural/ non-agricultural labor under this system (Chan and Zhang 1999). Before the relaxation of *hukou* control in the 2000s, the *hukou* system strongly affected migration by tying individuals' social security and welfare benefits with individual localities (Cheng and Selden 1994; Wan 1995). Urban residents did not have land rights, nor could migrants from rural areas access social security or welfare benefits in urban areas (Chan and Zhang 1999; Liang and Ma 2004; Wong et al. 2007). Since 2001, however, the Chinese government has relaxed its control over *hukou* and local governments now have greater control over the quotas and the criteria under which individuals can shift their *hukou*

(Chan and Buckingham 2008; Whitehouse 2006). Despite local governments' responsibility in providing migrants access to social security in destination areas, the benefit of the localization of *hukou* for migrant workers is debatable. Some scholars claim that the relaxation and localized policies have increased, rather than diminished, the obstacles that prevent permanent rural-urban migration due to both the diversification of local regulations and the local government's prioritizing the interest of local residents (Chan and Buckingham 2008; Wong et al. 2007).

In addition to the *hukou* policy, other forces contributed to the rise in migration in China in recent decades. Since the economic reform in 1978, agricultural decollectivization and the implementation of a form of family farming promoted greater efficiency in agriculture (Fang et al. 2009). This shift created a large surplus rural labor force, many of whom migrated. In the ensuing years, persistent urban-rural income gaps continued to create strong incentives for rural-urban migration (Akay et al. 2011; Li 1996; Liang and White 1996; Solinger 1999). Together, these factors have created strong economic incentives for migration in the reform era dating from the 1980s. Such economic incentives are often viewed, implicitly or explicitly, as dominant factors in migration decisions (Wan 1995; Liang and White 1999).<sup>ii</sup>

While economic reasons may be an important driving force of migration, changes in the composition of migrant population point to shifts in migration motivations. Statistics on migrants from rural China suggest that they are predominantly single and of working-age (Rozelle et al. 1999). The gender composition of migrants, once skewed toward men, is feminizing. As of 2009, women accounted for approximately 35 per cent of the total migrant population. However, among the younger migrants, 41 per cent of the migrants born after 1980 are female and the proportion is even higher for migrants under 20 years-old (National Bureau of Statistics of China 2011). Young, single migrants without dependent children may be susceptible to migrate for

non-economic considerations because they likely have fewer family obligations and are not the expected family provider. Young women may also emphasize different migration motivations from both younger and older men. The gradual change in migrant's age and gender composition suggests that not only economic incentives, but non-economic reasons may affect migration decisions.

### **Framework and Research Questions**

In this paper, we argue that although economic incentives are important, they do not fully explain migration decisions among rural youth. Non-economic considerations are also important. As groundwork for our argument, we differentiate between three kinds of migration motivations: First, *individual economic motivation* is simply the desire of individuals who migrate to improve their economic position. Second, *family-support* is an altruistic economic motivation in which individuals migrate to provide for family members. Finally, *personal development* encompasses non-economic incentives and suggests the pursuit of self-cultivation through the act of migration. We discuss literature pertaining to each of these motivations below and present corresponding research questions for this paper.

#### *Individual Economic Motivation*

The economic framework is a prominent approach in migration research. Studies often employ market mechanisms to explain migration decisions and regard migration as a product of cost-benefit calculation (See Borjas 1994; Massey et al. 1993). Because migration in China since the 1980s closely relates to the transition to a market economy (Liang and White 1996), studies on internal migration in China often adopt an economic framework and situate migrant workers in diverse market mechanisms (see Otis 2008). Zhao, for instance, employs an economic



framework to examine migration decisions and finds that rural households in Sichuan Province base their migration decisions over calculations of returns to farming versus other forms of income (Zhao 1999).

There is little debate that most Chinese internal migrants are motivated by the promise of higher earnings in the city. Quantitative studies employ different indicators related to job assignment, job transfer or business and industry to measure economic reasons for migration (Fan 1999; He and Gober 2003). Qualitative studies also emphasize the significance of economic incentives in shaping migration decisions and provide examples of different aspects of economic reasons for migration, such as leaving home to escape poverty and unemployment or to raise funds for starting local businesses in the future (Jacka 2006; Lee 1998; Pun 2005).

Recent findings, however, disagree on the extent to which economic motivations influence migration decisions of men and women. Researchers sometimes suggest that men and women differ in the kinds of economic motivations that shape migration decisions. Using the 1990 Census to analyze gender patterns of migration in China, He and Gober (2003) show that migrant men emphasize the importance of business-related economic incentives more than women. In contrast, Liang and Chen (2004) indicate that migrant women and men alike migrated primarily for economic reasons— among migrants of both genders in Shenzhen, over 95 per cent of the floating migrants and over 70 per cent of the permanent migrants reported “job transfers” or “business or factory work” as their reason for migration. To address this lack of agreement, our first research question contains two parts: *(1a) To what extent does pursuing personal economic gain, or escaping low resource home environments, motivate rural-urban youth migration in Gansu? (1b) Does the importance of personal economic gain vary between young men and young women?*

### *Altruistic family-support motivations*

In addition to self-interested economic incentives, some migrants migrate to help family members. While this type of altruistic behavior is motivated by money-making aspirations, it is different from individual economic motivations because remittances do not directly benefit the migrant but rather his/her family members, such as siblings or extended family members. Studies of international migration indicate the importance of altruistic motivations of providing for family members as strong influences on both male and female migrants, particularly for married adults with dependent children (Lan 2006; Massey 1987; Parreñas 2001; Rodriguez 2010). Some studies in China support this conclusion; others contest the direction of the effect of young children's educational opportunity on their parents' decisions to migrate.

Seeking to understand migration determinants among rural women, Song et al. (2009) find that rural women from the Yangtze River Delta are significantly more likely to migrate if they have young children. The authors interpret that these women have higher tendency to migrate due to their hopes of providing better educational opportunities for children.

Interviewing Filipino domestic workers in three Southeast Asian countries, Paul (2011) mentions that workers often consider providing for children's education and supporting household funds as the main reasons to work overseas. In contrast to Song et al. and Paul, Yang and Guo (1999) use data from Hubei and Sichuan Provinces to demonstrate that having school-age children slightly negatively affects parents' likelihood of migration. Highlighting the importance of child's gender on mother's migration behavior, Connelly et al. (2012) find that rural women are less likely to migrate if they gave birth to sons and highly likely to return when children reach school age.

Among young, single, and childless migrants, siblings and parents are the potential beneficiaries of altruistic family support. Siblings often need money to support tuition payments.

Migrants may demonstrate acts of altruism by working away from home to support sibling's tuition expenses. Ma and Jacobs report roughly half of their young migrant women interviewees expect to support the education of their younger siblings (and sibling's children) in the family (Ma and Jacobs 2010). Greenhalgh (1988) also documents that Taiwanese women demonstrate acts of filial piety through sending remittances to finance their brothers' education. While studies suggest young women work to provide for siblings, whether men do so for younger siblings, however, is less clear.

Parents' health conditions may also affect migration decisions, and the desire to support parents may produce opposite effects on altruistic migration decisions, compared to the desire to support siblings or children. Elderly parents with poor health conditions require adult children to stay home and take care of them. Using combined data from the Research Center for the Rural Economy and the China Health and Nutrition Survey, Giles and Mu (2007) attribute the negative effect of elderly parents in poor health on the odds of their male adult children's migration to the more traditional cultural norms of the responsibility for caring for their parents. While familial duties may account for altruistic migration incentives, scholars argue that the obligation of adult children to their family members may vary according to their sibship structure and gender. For example, Giles and Mu (Ibid.) point out that positioning in sibship structure matters in influencing the relationship between ill parental health and children's migration decisions. Specifically, the negative impact of parental health on work migration is reduced when the adult child has siblings who can care for their parents. Similarly, Logan and Bian (2003) consider it a norm in China for children to provide for their parents but note that children feel less obligated if other siblings co-share the responsibility. Examining sibling relationships, Cicirelli (1994) contends that among the same generation, in China and in other countries, older siblings take on

heavy responsibilities of caring for younger siblings. In terms of educational opportunity in rural China, sons (especially eldest sons) are endowed with greater access to limited family resources and thus often benefit from having better educational opportunities compared to their sisters (Brown and Park 2002).

In short, research suggests that daughters, socialized in patriarchal family norms, may be more likely to assume altruistic roles by becoming migrant workers to provide for sibling's well-being and educational expenses. Younger siblings in rural Chinese families may also depend on older migrant siblings for educational support. Hence, our second and third research questions explore altruistic motivations as reported by youth and as reflected in migration decisions in the context of sibship structure: *(2a) Do altruistic economic incentives shape migration decisions in rural Gansu? (2b) Does the answer differ for young men and women? (3a) Does sibship structure (the presence of older and younger sisters and brothers, implying sources of support and family obligations) shape migration decisions? (3b) Does the answer differ for young men and women?*

#### *Personal development*

The desire for personal development, while potentially related to economic aspirations, is not primarily an economic motivation. Field studies among migrant women have emphasized the pursuit of modernity, urban experience, cosmopolitanism, and new knowledge as a goal of migration (Ma and Jacobs 2010; Zhang 1999). Documenting factory workers' developmental trajectories, Ma and Jacobs interview 12 young women and find that some migrated to "see the outside world" or to learn new knowledge and skills (Ma and Jacobs 2010). Zhang (1999) examines the experiences and motivations of migrant women to Tianjin and records that some women migrated in order to "see the wider world and gain new knowledge and experience in the

city” (Zhang 1999: 26). Jacka’s (2006) ethnography on the identity and experiences of migrant women in Beijing indicates that some women left home because there was little to do or they were lonely. Interviewing 200 migrant men and women, Hu (2012) finds that migrants migrated to experience “the excitement of the city life” and many attributed to their leaving the village to the attractions of city life, curiosity, and pursuing freedom.

The idea of personal development is prominent in research on migration trends in other Asian contexts as well. For example, one objective of female migrants from rural Thailand is to achieve *thansamay* femininity, i.e. to become beautiful, independent, and modern (Mills 1999). Modernity and beauty also served as a rationale for why Filipino and Indonesian domestic workers in Taiwan wanted to become immigrant workers (Lan 2006).

In short, qualitative research discusses non-economic motivations among young women in urban work places. We refer to these incentives as personal development. Yet, while personal development may be an important motivation for migrant women, the extent to which personal development operates as an important motivator for migration for men is less clear. Our fourth set of research question thus asks: *(4a) Does personal development motivate migration decisions among rural Gansu youth? (4b) Are there gender differences in personal development as a rationale for migration?*

## **Data and Methods**

### *Gansu Survey of Children and Families*

We use data from the Gansu Survey of Children and Families (GSCF), a longitudinal survey in Gansu with four waves of data collected between 2000 and 2009 to examine the reasons given for migration among youth (See Appendix 1 for map of Gansu). The sample was

drawn from children ages nine to twelve at 2000 (Wave 1), when most of these individuals were too young to be at risk of becoming migrant workers. As of 2009 (Wave 4), the participants were between 18-21 years old and 37 per cent had participated in work migration.

This dataset is particularly well-suited to our research questions because of the longitudinal design of the GSCF that allows us to control for migrant's family background prior to migration. The 2004 survey contained questions directed to the children, their mothers, and the heads of households; the 2009 survey only interviewed the children. A total of 1851 young adults were kept in the dataset after excluding those who provided no information on residential location in 2009. Some non-response items include parental education, subjective and objective economic well-being. The final sample used in this paper consists of 1606 participants who answered all questions on the variables employed in this paper.

The respondents personally answered the 2004 survey. By 2009, however, many sample members had become migrants. For migrants who were not present during the time of the survey, proxy respondents, mostly family members, completed the survey on behalf of those who were not present in the villages. Proxy respondents only answered objective measures (workplace and educational background) but not subjective questions such as migration motivations. In analyzes that include proxy responses, we use a dummy variable to control for proxy status (see appendix 2 for logistic regression on determinants of becoming proxy respondents).

### *Measurements*

It is essential to examine the characteristics of migrant workers and separate them from non-migrant workers prior to examining their motivations of migration since certain migrant characteristics may be associated with particular motivations for migration. We define migrant workers as migrants who have lived and continue to live in other counties for more than three

months prior to the 2009 survey. Our primary focus is migrant workers, but we distinguish migrant students as well because migrant students likely come from families of different means and the motivations for migration are clearly distinct from those of migrant workers.

We extract subjective and objective measures of family economic background from the 2004 survey (Wave 2) to control for family's economic well-being prior to migration. Subjective family economic situation is measured by the index child's mother's perception of family economic well-being, using the question, "are you satisfied with the economic situation of your family?" Responses are coded into three categories: 1=unsatisfied, 2=neutral, and 3=satisfied. Objective family economic background is measured as the sum of agricultural and non-agricultural income in the household answered by the household head. We divide household income into quintiles to allow for the possibility of a non-linear effect of family background, as non-linear effects are sometimes present in the findings of previous scholars. All other variables come from the 2009 survey. Table 1 presents the descriptive tabulations for the sampled youth.

(Table 1 about here)

We use four questions to measure the importance of migration incentives. To measure individual economic incentives, we ask, "how important is starting a business for you to migrate?" We employ this question for two reasons. First, studies show that the most important individual economic motivation for both men and women is "industry/business" (He and Gober 2003). Two questions measure altruistic family support motivations: "how important is supporting family members' tuition for you to migrate?" and "how important is supporting family members' medical expenses for you to migrate?" These two questions directly assess the association of educational support and parental health condition with migration decisions, as suggested by research on migration to China reviewed earlier. Personal development is measured

by the question “how important is personal development ( *自我发展*, *ziwo fazhan*) in the decision for you to migrate?”

### *Methods*

Youth who migrate for work may have different characteristics from their counterparts who stay in the village. To examine whether and how migrants differ from non-migrants, we not only analyze the significance of gender, but also examine the association between family socioeconomic status, and sibship composition with migration status. In our first set of analyzes, the dependent variable is migrant status. We divide participants’ status into three categories: non-migrants (reference group), migrant students, and migrant workers. We estimate models using multinomial logistic regression because it allows us to distinguish between migrant students, migrant workers and non-migrants. However, our analytic focus is on the comparison between migrant workers and non-migrants.

The second set of analyzes examines migration motivations and the discussion focuses on migrant workers. We test the first through fourth sets of research questions on motivations for migration, leaving out proxy respondents who did not answer questions on migration incentives. We use ordered logit models because participants were asked to choose from “not important, somewhat important, or very important” for the questions regarding reasons to migrate (0=not important, 1=somewhat important, 2=very important).

### **Results**

As suggested before, knowing *who* migrates is a first step towards answering the question of *why* individuals migrate. Migrants may hold varying attributes from non-migrant counterparts. Differences between migrants may be associated with diverse motivations for migration. For



example, migrants with many younger siblings may attach higher value to tuition support, as compared to migrants without younger siblings. More important, migrant characteristics provide the context in which we can derive interpretation of motivations for migration that are more meaningful. Thus, we provide an overview of characteristics of young migrants from Gansu before analyzing their motivations for migration.

### *Family Characteristics and Migration*

We first examine migrant characteristics and assess similarities and differences between migrants and non-migrants. Table 2 presents the determinants of migration status in multinomial logit models. Model 1 shows that prior to controlling for background factors, women are marginally significantly less likely to leave home for school than men, but gender is not significantly associated to the likelihood of work migration. This result is similar to the findings reported by the National Bureau of Statistics of China (2011), that the gender ratio is relatively balanced for young workers born after 1980.

(Table 2 about here)

Model 2 controls for background characteristics. Model 2a shows the logit results for all migrants, Model 2b focuses on men, and Model 2c on women. In Model 2a, father's education and sibship structure are significantly associated with work migration decisions. Having better educated fathers is negatively associated with the likelihood of work migration. Youth with more elder brothers are marginally more likely to migrate for work, while those with more elder sisters are significantly less likely to become migrant workers. This pattern of findings suggests that older sisters are more likely than older brothers to support their siblings, which alleviates youth from work migration. With regard to educational migration, father's education is positively related to youth's chances of becoming migrant students and children from wealthier households

are more likely to be migrant students.

Comparing Model 2b and Model 2c, we find that father's education is negatively related to son's work migration, but is not significantly associated with that of daughters. The relation of sibship structure with work migration differs by gender. Men are less likely to become migrant workers if they have elder sisters in the family, while women are more likely to become migrant workers if they have more elder brothers. One possible explanation of the importance of sibship structure is son preference. It is not uncommon for young women to work and support their siblings in other Chinese societies (Parish et al. 1993). Given that son preference may operate strongly in rural China, daughters may be compelled to migrate for work in order to provide for their brothers.

Concerning migrant student status, both father and mother's education are positively associated with daughter's chances of educational migration. Family economic background is positively related to both men and women's likelihood of studying away from home. Compared to their less well-off counterparts, sons from the fourth quintile are more likely to participate in educational migration, while daughters from the wealthiest families are more likely to leave home for more schooling.

As suggested previously, migrant background may be relevant to motivations for migration. We find that rural youth who participate in work migration likely come from families with fewer resources and have more elder brothers but fewer elder sisters. Coming from less advantaged families, economic incentives likely serves as strong motivating factors for rural youth. The association between migration decisions and number and type of elder siblings implies that altruistic motivations for migration varies by sibship structure and one's relative position within the family.

### *Self-Reported Motivations for Migration*

We turn next to motivations for migration and use ordered logit models to test our research questions. Figure 1 shows the percentage distribution of importance assigned to each motivation for migration by gender. Table 3 presents the results of the ordered logit models of motivations for migration. Model 1 in Table 3 examines gender alone. Model 2 controls for personal background except for sibship structure. Model 3 examines all factors including sibship structure.

(Figure 1 about here)

(Table 3 about here)

#### Individual economic motivation

In response to the first set of research questions, results show that, not surprisingly, migrant youth are motivated to migrate by personal economic gains. Moreover, young men are higher motivated by personal gains compared to young women. Figure 1 shows that 68 per cent of men consider starting a business very important, while 45 per cent of women do so. We test this gender difference in Table 3. The results confirm those found in Figure 1 and show that men place greater emphasis on the individual economic incentive than do women (Model 1). The gender disparity found in Model 1 remains when controlling for background characteristics (Model 2 and 3).

In addition to gender differences, other significant factors include father's education and mother's subjective well-being. Father's education is marginally positively associated with the importance assigned to starting a business. Mother's subjective economic well-being is marginally significant and negatively related to the individual economic motivation. The respondents may regard starting a business as a means to achieve social mobility.

Better-educated fathers in rural Gansu may not only encourage children to receive more education, as shown in Table 2, but also stress the importance of economic achievement. Mothers who feel economically satisfied may less pressure children to earn more money than the economically unsatisfied mothers.

### Altruistic family-support motivations

We revisit Figure 1 and the models in Table 3 to address our research questions regarding altruistic motivations and the association between migration decisions and sibship structure. Figure 1 indicates that, while altruistic reasons shape migration decisions in rural Gansu, the percentage of youth who consider family support motivations important is lower than that of individualistic motivations. In Figure 1, 51 per cent of migrant men take tuition support as not important, compared to 40 per cent of migrant women. In contrast, 15 per cent of migrant men consider tuition support as very important, while one-third of the women think the same.

Table 3 illustrates migrants' consideration of family-support motivations. Consistent with Figure 1, we find significant gender differences with regard to tuition support. Young women emphasize the importance of supporting family members' tuition more than do young men and the results do not change after controlling for background characteristics. The results in Model 3 point to the importance of sibship structure. Tuition support is strongly related to sibship structure in the family. Controlling for other characteristics, each type of sibling is differently associated with the importance assigned to tuition expenses. The number of younger siblings, not only younger brothers but also younger sisters, is positively related to the importance assigned to tuition support. Having more elder sisters, on the other hand, is negatively associated to assigning importance to supporting family members' tuition as a reason for migration.

It should be pointed out that sibship structure in China is not exogenous, but rather

reflects the gender preferences of parents. Figure 2 depicts the sibship structure of migrant workers and shows women are more likely to have younger brothers than men. This is because, in rural Gansu, parents often will have more children after having one or more daughters in the hopes of having a son. Girls thus tend to have more siblings and are more likely to have younger brothers, as parents often continue to have children until they have a boy (Hannum et al. 2009). In addition, more migrants (of both genders) have younger brothers than younger sisters. Although younger siblings of both genders influence tuition support, the higher proportion of younger brothers than younger sisters in the sibship structures implies that the primary beneficiaries of remittances are more likely to be younger brothers. Recall that in Table 2, we found that men are less likely to migrate if they have elder sisters. In other words, although younger sisters' tuition may be important for migrant workers from Gansu, the greater likelihood of female migrant workers having younger brothers and the slighter chances for men to migrate for every elder sister they have suggests a migration pattern of elder sisters working away from home to support younger brothers.

(Figure 2 about here)

The other measurement we employ to investigate altruistic motivations is whether rural youths work to support family members' medical expenses. Figure 1 shows approximately one-third of men and women consider supporting family member's medical expenses to be very important. We do not find significant gender disparities in medical support as a motivator for migration in Table 3. Having mothers who are neutral towards the family's economic well-being is the only factor significantly related to migrants' emphasis over supporting family members' medical bills. Although one-third of the migrants consider medical support highly important, few migrant workers reported parental illness in the 2004 survey.<sup>iii</sup> Given the low number of youth

who report parental illness, some young migrants may consider this question a hypothetical one and not an important reason to migrate.

In sum, although neither gender nor sibship structure is strongly related to the importance of medical expenses, gender and sibship structure are significantly associated with tuition support. This result demonstrates that, when controlling for other characteristics, young migrant women assign higher importance to paying for family member's tuition than migrant men. In addition to gender, sibship structure is also significantly associated with altruistic migration decisions. The number of elder sisters is negatively associated to the importance assigned to supporting family members' tuition expenses, while having younger siblings is significantly and positively related. Because women are more likely to have younger brothers than men, the results points to the possibility of daughters working away from home to support their brothers' education.

#### Personal development

Our fourth set of research question regards the role of personal development in motivating migration. Results in Figure 1 indicate that migrants are highly motivated by personal development and consider it very important. In total, 60 per cent of migrant workers report personal development to be a "very important" reason to migrate. The gender distribution of the personal development reason is especially interesting. Approximately 67 per cent of men consider personal development very important reason to migrate. This percentage is higher than the 52 per cent of women who think likewise and the difference in chi-square test is statistically significant.

That women are less likely to emphasize personal development than are men is found in ordered logit results in Table 3 as well. This finding is especially important given that existing

qualitative studies do not draw much attention to men's concern with personal development. Results clearly show that not only women, but also men consider personal development highly important. Other factors that are associated with the importance of personal development are father's education, family wealth, and the number of elder brothers. Having better-educated fathers is positively associated with the importance children assign to personal development. Belonging to the third and fifth quintile of family wealth is marginally significant, but we do not find a clear relationship between family wealth and the importance of personal development. Having more elder brothers is marginally associated with greater emphasis on personal development. One possible explanation for this result is that, under sociocultural contexts that urge families to devote more resources to elder sons, younger siblings may receive less parental attention and become highly interested in personal development.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

The objective of this study is to examine motivations for youth migration, to provide better understanding of the circumstances of this important component of the vast population movements underway in China. We explored three types of migration motivations (individual economic reasons, altruistic family support, and personal development) and considered whether the weight given to these motivations differs between young men and women. We also examined the importance of sibship structure in shaping migration decisions, given its potential importance for altruistic motivations.

Several key findings emerged. First, although gender is not strongly associated with the likelihood of work migration, gender and motivations for migration are significantly related. Our results can be interpreted to suggest that young men are more individualistic than young women

in Gansu, in that larger proportions of men than women consider starting a business and personal development very important migration motivations. In contrast, when compared to men, young women give greater emphasis to the importance of supporting family members' tuition expenses. We find that sibship structure is significantly associated with altruistic migration motivation in the form of tuition support after controlling for gender. The existence of younger siblings is significantly related to a greater emphasis on tuition support, while elder sisters are negatively associated with the importance migrants assign to tuition support.

Both young men and women emphasize the importance of personal development as a reason to migrate. While it is well established in qualitative studies that the desire for personal development motivates female migration, most studies on this topic are field-based research that focus on women and do not discuss the importance of personal development perceived by men (Jacka 2006; Lan 2006; Ma and Jacobs 2010; Mills 1999; Zhang 1999). Our results show personal development is not only important for migrant women, but is even more so for migrant men. Existing studies have highlighted women's desires for cosmopolitanism, acquiring new knowledge, and city life experiences. Some of these goals may carry over to male migrants, while others may not. We know little about the specific nature of personal development goals for young males coming to the cities. Further work is needed to identify young male migrants' non-economic personal goals for migration.

Why does understanding motivations for migration matter? Differentiating between individual and altruistic motivations as well as between economic and non-economic incentives carries implications for migrant's choice of destination. In recent years, certain coastal areas, such as Fujian and Zhejiang provinces, have suffered insufficient migrant work force despite the growth of internal migration at the national level (Diyi Caijing Ribao 2005; Zhongguo Cingnian



Bao 2010). One possible explanation for the lack of migrant labour in specific areas may be due to the mismatch between the local image and migrant motivations. Migrants who desire economic prosperity may be highly responsive to the demands of labour markets, but those who value non-economic experiences likely prefer other popular destinations.

Migration from rural areas to cities is increasingly commonplace in China and is closely connected to the country's economic growth. On the surface, it seems obvious that individuals migrate from the countryside to the urban areas to earn cash. While youth migration is indeed partially motivated by the desire for economic mobility and the need to support families at home, the desire for personal development is also a substantial motivator and one that appears to carry implications. Incorporating non-economic incentives into existing models could enable scholars to approach migration from an alternative and more holistic standpoint that differs from pure economic considerations. In particular, our findings call for additional examination of non-economic motivations, especially among young migrant men, to better understand youth migration choices and patterns.

## References

- Akay, Alpaslan, Olivier Bargain, and Klaus F. Zimmermann. 2011. "Relative Concerns of Rural-to-Urban Migrants in China." CEPS/INSTEAD Working Paper Series 2011-2012, CEPS/INSTEAD.
- Borjas, George J. 1994. "The Economic of Immigration." *Journal of Economic Literature* 32 (4): 1667-1717.
- Brown, Philip H. and Albert Park. 2002. "Education and Poverty in Rural China." *Economics of Education Review* 21 (6): 523-541.
- Chan, Kam Wing and Will Buckingham. 2008. "Is China Abolishing the Hukou System?" *The China Quarterly* 195: 582-606.
- Chan, Kam Wing and Li Zhang. 1999. "The Hukou System and Rural-Urban Migration in China: Processes and Changes." *The China Quarterly* 160: 818-855.
- Cheng, Tiejun and Mark Selden. 1994. "The Origins and Social Consequences of China's Hukou System." *The China Quarterly* 139: 644-668.
- Cicirelli, Victor G. 1994. "Sibling Relationships in Cross-Cultural Perspective." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 56 (1): 7-20.
- Connelly, Rachel, Kenneth Roberts, and Zhenzhen Zheng. 2012. "The Role of Children in the Migration Decisions of Rural Chinese Women." *Journal of Contemporary China* 21 (73): 93-111.
- Diyi Caijing Ribao. 2005. "Laodongli jiegou shiheng, Fujian zhaogong buzu jinnian que gong jin bai wan" (Labor Structure Imbalance, Fujian Lacks Near One Million Workers), 21 February 2005, <http://finance.sina.com.cn/g/20050221/10091370489.shtml>. Accessed 15 Sep 2011.
- Fan, C. Cindy. 1999. "Migration in a Socialist Transitional Economy: Heterogeneity, Socioeconomic and Spatial Characteristics of Migrants in China and Guangdong Province." *International Migration Review* 33 (4): 954-987.
- Fang, Cai, Du Yang, and Wang Meiyun. 2009. "Migration and Labor Mobility in China." *Human Development Research Paper (HDRP) Series* 9.
- Giles, John and Ren Mu. 2007. "Elderly Parent Health and the Migration Decisions of Adult Children: Evidence from Rural China." *Demography* 44 (2): 265-288.
- Greenhalgh, Susan. 1988. "Intergenerational Contracts: Familial Roots of Sexual Stratification in Taiwan." Pp. 39-70 in *A Home Divided: Women and Income in the Third World*, edited by Daisy Dwyer and Judith Bruce. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

- Gui, Shixun and Xian Liu. 1992. "Urban Migration in Shanghai, 1950-88: Trends and Characteristics." *Population and Development Review* 18 (3): 533-548.
- Hannum, Emily, Peggy Kong, and Yuping Zhang. 2009. "Family Sources of Educational Gender Inequality in Rural China: a Critical Assessment." *International Journal of Educational Development* 29 (5): 474-486.
- He, Canfei and Patricia Gober. 2003. "Gendering Interprovincial Migration in China." *International Migration Review* 37 (3): 1220-1251.
- Hu, Xiaochu. 2012. "China's 'New Generation' Rural-Urban Migrants: Migration Motivation and Migration Patterns." January 2012, <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1978546>. Accessed 16 May 2012.
- Jacka, Tamara. 2006. *Rural Women in Urban China: Gender, Migration and Social Change*. NY: M. E. Sharpe.
- Lan, Pei-Chia. 2006. *Global Cinderellas: Migrant Domestic Workers and Newly Rich Employers in Taiwan*. NC: Duke University Press.
- Lee, Ching Kwan. 1998. *Gender and the South China miracle*. CA: University of California Press.
- Li, Cheng. 1996. "Rural Laborers and Internal Migration in China: Current Status and Future Prospects." *Asian Survey* 36 (11): 1122-1145.
- Liang, Zai. 2001. "The Age of Migration in China," *Population and Development Review* 27 (3): 499-524.
- Liang, Zai and Yiu Por Chen. 2004. "Migration and Gender in China: An Origin-Destination Linked Approach." *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 52 (2): 423-443.
- Liang, Zai and Zhongdong Ma. 2004. "China's Floating Population: New Evidence from the 2000 Census." *Population and Development Review* 30 (3): 467-488.
- Liang, Zai and Michael J. White. 1996. "Internal Migration in China, 1950-1988." *Demography* 33 (3): 375-384.
- Logan, John R. and Fuqin Bian. 2003. "Chengshi laonian renkou yu yihun zinu: tongzhu de guannian yu xianshi" (Parents' Preferences and Reality: Coresiding with Married Children in Urban China). *Zhongguo Renkou Kexue* 95 (4): 46-52.
- Ma, Lang and Francine Jacobs. 2010. "Poor but Not Powerless: Women Workers in Production Chain Factories in China." *Journal of Adolescent Research* 25 (6): 807-838.
- Massey, Douglas S. 1987. "Understanding Mexican Migration to the United States." *The*

*American Journal of Sociology* 92 (6): 1372-1403.

Massey, Douglas S., Joaquin Arango, Graeme Hugo, Ali Kouaouci, Adela Pellegrino, and J. Edward Taylor. 1993. "Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal." *Population and Development Review* 19 (3): 431-466.

Mills, Mary Beth. 1997. "Contesting the Margins of Modernity: Women, Migration and Consumption in Thailand." *American Ethnologist* 24 (1): 37-61.

Mills, Mary Beth. 1999. *Thai Women in The Global Labor Force: Consuming Desires, Contested Selves*. NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Murphy, Rachel. 2008. "The Impact of Socio-Cultural Norms on Women's Experiences of Migration and the Implications for Development." *SSRC Migration & Development Conference Paper No. 17*.

National Bureau of Statistics of China. 2011. "Xinshengdai nongmingong de shuliang, jiegou he tedian" ("Number, Structure, and Characteristics of the New Generation Rural Migrants"), 11 March 2011, [http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjfx/fxbg/t20110310\\_402710032.htm](http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjfx/fxbg/t20110310_402710032.htm). Accessed 11 October 2012.

National Bureau of Statistics of China. 2012. "2011 nian woguo nongmingong diaocha jiance baogao" ("Survey and Monitor Report of Migrant Workers in 2011"), 27 April 2012, [http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjfx/fxbg/t20120427\\_402801903.htm](http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjfx/fxbg/t20120427_402801903.htm). Accessed 11 October 2012.

Otis, Eileen. 2008. "Beyond the Industrial Paradigm: Market-Embedded Labor and the Gender Organization of Global Service Work in China." *American Sociological Review* 73 (1): 15-36.

Parish, William L. and Robert J. Willis. 1993. "Daughters, Education, and Family Budgets: Taiwan Experience." *Journal of Human Resources* 28 (4): 863-898.

Parreñas, Rhacel Salazar. 2001. *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration, and Domestic Work*. CA: Stanford University Press.

Paul, Anju Mary. 2011. "Stepwise International Migration: A Multistage Migration Pattern for the Aspiring Migrant." *American Journal of Sociology* 116 (6): 1842-86.

Pun, Ngai. 2005. *Made in China: Women Factory Workers in a Global Workplace*. NC: Duke University Press.

Qian, Wenbao. 1996. *Rural-Urban Migration and its Impact on Economic Development in China*. UK: Avebury.

Rodriguez, Robyn Magalit. 2010. *Migrants for Export: How the Philippine State Brokers Labor to the World*. MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Rozelle, Scott, Li Guo, Minggao Shen, Amelia Hughart, and John Giles. 1999. "Leaving China's Farms: Survey Results of New Paths and Remaining Hurdles to Rural Migration." *The China Quarterly* 158: 367-393.

Salt, John. 1992. "The Future of International Labor Migration." *International Migration Review* 26 (4): 1077-1111.

Solinger, Dorothy J. 1999. "Citizenship Issues in China's Internal Migration: Comparisons with Germany and Japan." *Political Science Quarterly* 114 (3): 455-478.

Song, Yu, Jianmin Zheng, and Wenrong Qian. 2009. "To Be, or Not to Be: Rural Women's Migration Decisions." *The Chinese Economy* 42 (4): 63-74.

Wan, Guang Hua. 1995. "Peasant Flood in China: Internal Migration and Its Policy Determinants." *Third World Quarterly* 16 (2): 173-196.

Whitehouse, David. 2006. "Chinese Workers and Peasants in Three Phases of Accumulation." Paper delivered at the Colloquium on Economy, Society and Nature, Centre for Civil Society at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2 March 2006.

Wong, Daniel Fu Keung and Xue Song He. 2008. "The Resilience of Migrant Workers in Shanghai China: The Roles of Migration Stress and Meaning of Migration." *International Journal of Social Psychiatry* 54 (2): 131-143.

Wong, Daniel Fu Keung, Chang Ying Li, and He Xue Song. 2007. "Rural Migrant Workers in Urban China: Living a Marginalised Life." *International Journal of Social Welfare* 16 (1): 32-40.

Xia, Zhengnong and Zhili Chen (Eds.). 2002. *Ci Hai* (1st ed., Vols. 1-5). Shanghai: Shanghai Cishu Chubanshe.

Yang, Xiushi and Fei Guo. 1999. "Gender Differences in Determinants of Temporary Labor Migration in China: A Multilevel Analysis." *International Migration Review* 33 (4): 923-953.

Zhang, Heather Xiaoquan. 1999. "Female Migration and Urban Labor Markets in Tianjin." *Development and Change* 30 (1): 21-41.

Zhao, Yaohui. 1999. "Leaving the countryside: Rural-to-Urban Migration Decisions in China." *The American Economic Review* 89 (2): 281-286.

Zhongguo Cingnian Bao. 2010. "Yong gong huang dao bi qiye tisheng nongmingong xinzi fuli" (Lack of Workers Forces Companies to Increase Migrant Worker's Benefits), 25 February 2010, [http://zqb.cyol.com/content/2010-02/25/content\\_3100366.htm](http://zqb.cyol.com/content/2010-02/25/content_3100366.htm). Accessed 15 Sep 2011.

**Table 1. Individual Level Descriptive Statistics (n=1606)**

Variable	Non-migrants (n=660)		Migrant Students (n=345)		Migrant Workers (n=601)	
	Mean or Percent	SD	Mean or Percent	SD	Mean or Percent	SD
<b>Measures in 2009</b>						
Non-migrant workers	36.82	---				
Non-migrant students	63.18	---				
Female	47.42	---	41.45	---	48.25	---
Level of education						
Less than middle school	17.73	---	1.45	---	24.79	---
Middle School	16.52	---	0.29	---	42.76	---
Some high school	45.61	---	38.26	---	10.15	---
High school	16.67	---	10.14	---	19.97	---
Above high school	3.48	---	49.86	---	2.33	---
Father's years of education	7.85	3.29	8.64	3.10	7.16	3.49
Mother's years of education	5.31	3.40	6.05	3.43	4.71	3.57
Number of siblings	1.61	1.34	1.46	1.10	1.54	1.19
Number of younger brothers	0.40	0.70	0.37	0.62	0.45	0.68
Number of younger sisters	0.39	0.75	0.32	0.63	0.34	0.67
Number of elder brothers	0.31	0.52	0.31	0.55	0.35	0.60
Number of elder sisters	0.51	0.83	0.46	0.71	0.40	0.70
Proxy respondents	11.36	---	10.14	---	39.93	---
<b>Measures in 2004</b>						
Subjective economic well-being (reported by mother)						
Unsatisfied	17.73	---	17.10	---	15.47	---
Neutral	38.48	---	40.29	---	44.26	---
Satisfied	43.79	---	42.61	---	40.27	---
Family wealth in 5 quintiles (reported by head of household)						
First quintile (poorest quintile)	20.15	---	12.75	---	20.80	---
Second quintile	20.30	---	18.26	---	21.30	---
Third quintile	20.76	---	18.55	---	20.63	---
Fourth quintile	19.24	---	25.80	---	17.97	---
Fifth quintile (wealthiest quintile)	19.55	---	24.64	---	19.30	---

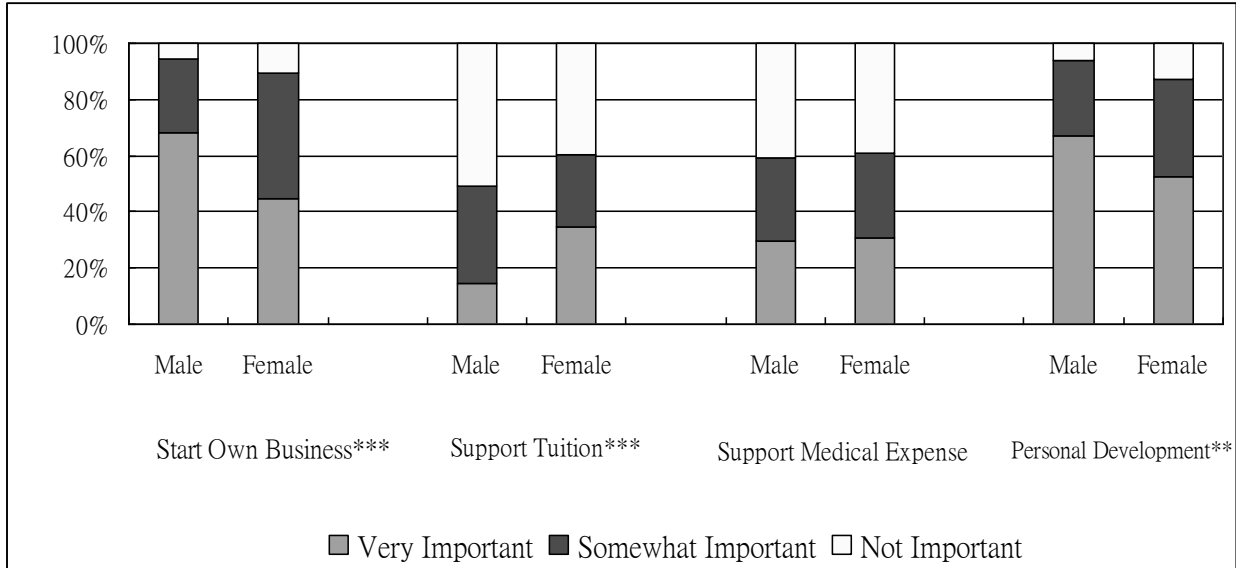
**Table 2. Determinants of Migrant Status in Multinomial Logit Regression Models**

Independent Variable	Model 1		Model 2					
	All		2a. All		2b. Male		2c. Female	
	Migrant Student	Migrant Worker	Migrant Student	Migrant Worker	Migrant Student	Migrant Worker	Migrant Student	Migrant Worker
Female	-0.243*	0.042	-0.218	-0.053				
	(0.134)	(0.119)	(0.144)	(0.126)				
Father's years of education			0.059***	-0.055***	0.048	-0.093***	0.074**	-0.019
			(0.023)	(0.019)	(0.030)	(0.027)	(0.035)	(0.027)
Mother's years of education			0.033	-0.017	0.016	-0.000	0.056*	-0.031
			(0.021)	(0.019)	(0.028)	(0.027)	(0.033)	(0.027)
Subjective economic well-being (base: unsatisfied)								
Neutral			-0.071	0.326*	-0.051	0.447*	-0.112	0.240
			(0.197)	(0.178)	(0.274)	(0.262)	(0.289)	(0.246)
Satisfied			-0.131	0.162	-0.086	0.315	-0.202	0.057
			(0.196)	(0.178)	(0.271)	(0.259)	(0.289)	(0.248)
Wealth in five quintiles (base: 1st quintile)								
2nd quintile			0.309	-0.068	0.439	0.220	0.164	-0.353
			(0.234)	(0.188)	(0.320)	(0.270)	(0.347)	(0.269)
3rd quintile			0.264	-0.063	0.194	0.004	0.324	-0.113
			(0.236)	(0.189)	(0.328)	(0.274)	(0.341)	(0.264)
4th quintile			0.645***	-0.159	0.926***	-0.120	0.223	-0.226
			(0.229)	(0.196)	(0.309)	(0.285)	(0.351)	(0.273)
5th quintile			0.544**	-0.024	0.429	-0.007	0.690**	0.028
			(0.232)	(0.196)	(0.316)	(0.277)	(0.344)	(0.285)
Number of younger brothers			-0.036	0.147	-0.192	0.204	0.033	0.138
			(0.118)	(0.097)	(0.201)	(0.159)	(0.152)	(0.125)
Number of younger sisters			-0.055	-0.098	-0.142	-0.088	0.005	-0.085
			(0.104)	(0.090)	(0.147)	(0.131)	(0.152)	(0.124)
Number of elder brothers			-0.003	0.204*	-0.004	0.041	0.018	0.329**
			(0.140)	(0.116)	(0.184)	(0.164)	(0.215)	(0.167)
Number of elder sisters			-0.086	-0.177**	-0.035	-0.233**	-0.217	-0.127
			(0.094)	(0.084)	(0.114)	(0.108)	(0.178)	(0.138)
Proxy Respondent	-0.129	1.646***	-0.095	1.637***	0.127	1.720***	-0.363	1.573***
	(0.217)	(0.148)	(0.219)	(0.151)	(0.286)	(0.215)	(0.352)	(0.215)
Constant	-0.527***	-0.503***	-1.429***	-0.115	-1.328***	-0.067	-1.791***	-0.275
	(0.091)	(0.088)	(0.312)	(0.250)	(0.417)	(0.354)	(0.461)	(0.342)
Observations	1,606	1,606	1,606	1,606	860	860	746	746

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses.

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

**Figure 1. Motivations for Migration: Reasons for Migrant Workers to Leave Home by Gender (Excluding Proxy Respondents)**



Note: Gender differences are tested by Chi-square probabilities.  
 \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1



**Table 3. Migration Motivation of Migrant Workers in Ordered Logistic Regression Models**

Independent Variable	Start Own Business			Support Tuition		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Female	-0.948 *** (0.214)	-1.011 *** (0.220)	-1.116 *** (0.233)	0.687 *** (0.199)	0.687 *** (0.203)	0.552 *** (0.211)
Father's years of education		0.065 * (0.034)	0.063 * (0.034)		0.029 (0.031)	0.024 (0.032)
Mother's years of education		-0.046 (0.033)	-0.040 (0.033)		-0.037 (0.030)	-0.037 (0.031)
Subjective economic well-being (base: unsatisfied)						
Neutral		-0.030 (0.344)	-0.048 (0.348)		0.221 (0.319)	0.248 (0.325)
Satisfied		-0.628 * (0.342)	-0.656* (0.345)		0.327 (0.320)	0.333 (0.324)
Wealth in 5 quintiles (base: 1st quintile)						
2nd quintile		0.239 (0.326)	0.260 (0.328)		-0.097 (0.305)	-0.033 (0.313)
3rd quintile		0.002 (0.324)	0.099 (0.331)		-0.283 (0.303)	-0.234 (0.314)
4th quintile		-0.122 (0.344)	-0.045 (0.349)		-0.456 (0.322)	-0.356 (0.328)
5th quintile		0.448 (0.350)	0.499 (0.355)		-0.325 (0.316)	-0.320 (0.325)
Number of younger brothers			0.254 (0.189)			0.454 *** (0.171)
Number of younger sisters			0.249 (0.185)			0.397 ** (0.165)
Number of elder brothers			0.212 (0.218)			0.069 (0.206)
Number of elder sisters			0.051 (0.170)			-0.398 ** (0.158)
cut1						
Constant	-2.772 *** (0.485)	-3.000 *** (0.238)	-3.032 *** (0.456)	0.131 (0.141)	0.173 (0.402)	0.320 (0.439)
cut2						
Constant	-0.441 (0.454)	-0.748 *** (0.157)	-0.72 * (0.419)	1.483 (0.163)	1.542 *** (0.411)	1.766 *** (0.449)
Observations	362	362	362	361	361	361

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses.

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

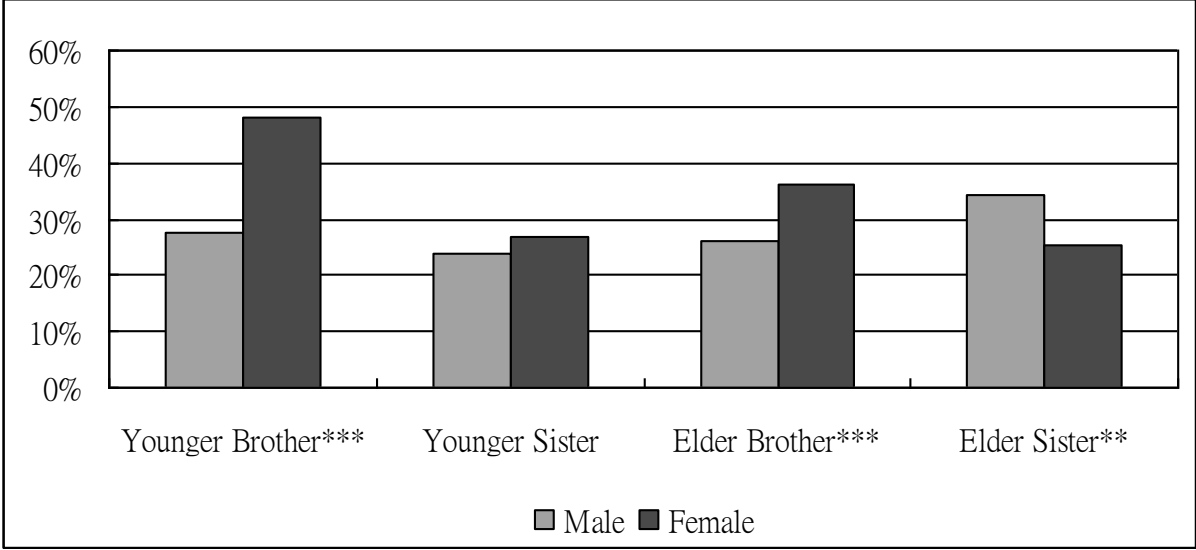
**Table 3. (cont.) Migration Motivation of Migrant Workers in Ordered Logistic Regression Models**

Independent Variable	Support Medical Bills			Personal Development		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Female	0.066 (0.194)	0.048 (0.199)	-0.003 (0.208)	-0.650 *** (0.213)	-0.659 *** (0.219)	-0.709 *** (0.227)
Father's years of education		0.007 (0.031)	0.005 (0.031)		0.087 ** (0.034)	0.084 ** (0.034)
Mother's years of education		-0.026 (0.030)	-0.023 (0.031)		-0.031 (0.033)	-0.024 (0.034)
Subjective economic well-being (base: unsatisfied)						
Neutral		0.606 ** (0.305)	0.632 ** (0.308)		-0.231 (0.328)	-0.243 (0.332)
Satisfied		0.240 (0.306)	0.230 (0.307)		0.005 (0.334)	-0.023 (0.336)
Wealth in 5 quintiles (base: 1st quintile)						
2nd quintile		-0.058 (0.297)	-0.074 (0.298)		0.368 (0.322)	0.342 (0.324)
3rd quintile		-0.295 (0.298)	-0.297 (0.305)		0.506 (0.325)	0.594 * (0.334)
4th quintile		-0.316 (0.319)	-0.338 (0.323)		0.518 (0.350)	0.526 (0.357)
5th quintile		-0.348 (0.314)	-0.385 (0.317)		0.555 (0.340)	0.57 * (0.343)
Number of younger brothers			0.164 (0.166)			0.072 (0.178)
Number of younger sisters			-0.104 (0.159)			0.015 (0.173)
Number of elder brothers			0.206 (0.197)			0.371 * (0.222)
Number of elder sisters			0.123 (0.143)			0.174 (0.164)
cut1						
Constant	-0.378 *** (0.143)	-0.294 (0.384)	-0.168 (0.412)	-2.62 *** (0.219)	-1.945 *** (0.434)	-1.733 *** (0.466)
cut2						
Constant	0.483 (0.422)	0.99 ** (0.387)	1.123 *** (0.416)	-0.723 *** (0.155)	-0.003 (0.414)	0.225 (0.450)
Observations	361	361	361	361	361	361

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses.

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

**Figure 2. Proportion of Migrant Workers with Each Type of Sibling**



*Note:* Gender differences are tested by Chi-square probabilities.

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

**Appendix 1. Map of Gansu, China**



(Source: [http://0.tqn.com/d/gochina/1/0/N/B/-/-/Gansu\\_Province.jpg](http://0.tqn.com/d/gochina/1/0/N/B/-/-/Gansu_Province.jpg))

**Appendix 2. Determinants of Proxy and Non-Proxy Migrant Worker in Logistic Regression**

Independent Variable	Proxy Migrant Worker
Female	-0.076 (0.177)
Father's years of education	0.050* (0.027)
Mother's years of education	-0.056** (0.027)
Subjective economic well-being (base: unsatisfied)	
Neutral	-0.233 (0.250)
Satisfied	-0.307 (0.253)
Wealth in five quintiles (base: 1st quintile)	
2 <sup>nd</sup> quintile	0.160 (0.237)
3 <sup>rd</sup> quintile	0.104 (0.230)
4 <sup>th</sup> quintile	0.154 (0.249)
5 <sup>th</sup> quintile	0.084 (0.069)
Number of younger brothers	0.088 (0.140)
Number of younger sisters	-0.042 (0.130)
Number of elder brothers	-0.068 (0.157)
Number of elder sisters	0.033 (0.124)
Constant	-0.595 (0.368)
Observations	601

*Note:* Standard errors are in parentheses.

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

<sup>i</sup> The term *ziwo* also suggests self-approval, as used in *Haoshifuxu*, written by Lu Ji in the Jin Dynasty.

<sup>ii</sup> Others also point to non-economic motivations in the history of Chinese internal migration, see Gui and Liu 1992; Liang 2001.

<sup>iii</sup> In the survey, 86 migrant workers reported having at least one family member with poor health.