

## **The Determinants of Job Choice by Rural Labor Migrants in Shanghai**

*China Economic Review*, 12:1, 2001

Kenneth Roberts  
Southwestern University  
robertsk@southwestern.edu

### **The migration debate in China**

By increasing the demand for labor in urban areas and its supply from agriculture, China's economic reforms have resulted in rural-to-urban labor migration that is unprecedented in scale. An estimated 45 million of some 80 million rural labor migrants are working in the cities (Ministry of Labor, 1997), and urban surveys show that the "floating population" in Shanghai and Beijing, which includes both rural labor migrants and others away from their place of official residence, were respectively one-fourth and one-third of those cities' registered population (Control, 1994; Zhu, 1995).<sup>1</sup>

These migrants have transformed the cities of China. They build skyscrapers, sell vegetables, clothes and a variety of other commodities in markets that previously did not exist, prepare and serve food sold in sidewalk stands and fine restaurants, fix bicycles and plumbing, and do the hard and dirty work in factories, transport and sanitation. In these ways, they greatly ease the lives of official urban residents. Yet they also crowd the subways and busses and congregate in groups while waiting for work in street-side labor markets. To residents they appear as foreigners in their midst (Roberts, 2000) : they are blamed for crime, and most recently, for taking jobs that could otherwise be filled by those laid off from failing state industries. A survey in the mid-1990s found that 74

percent of Shanghai residents held migrants responsible for at least three of the following four problems: crime, transport, employment and environmental degradation (Solinger, 1999: 101).<sup>2</sup>

It is against this background that issues surrounding the employment of migrants are debated.<sup>3</sup> On one side are those that think that rural labor migrants are “blind”: that they are pushed off their farms and wander about looking for a job.<sup>4</sup> More rational procedures are thought necessary to guide them, including not only labor recruitment through official channels but also proscriptions against their employment in occupations that might hire laid-off state workers. On the other side are those who think that the channels by which migrants are employed operate efficiently and that their jobs are not likely to be sought by residents, even when the alternative is unemployment

The first position has a long history: in 1954 – another period of rapid rural-to-urban migration – the Ministries of Labor and the Interior issued a “Joint Directive to Control Blind Influx of Peasants to the Cities,” which said that employment and labor flows would be henceforth be regulated by the state. A year later a full-blown household registration (*hukou*) system was initiated that required all residents to obtain permission to move (Cheng and Selden, 1994).

The use of the term “blind” to describe rural-to-urban migration has been revived in the current period: after the initial surge of rural labor migration in the 1980s, the Minister of Public Security said:

Why must we legislate in this way? Because ... it is clear that over the last few years the phenomenon of rural migration blindly flowing into the cities has become a comparatively serious problem ... It is not acceptable to allow the city labor force to

increase blindly or to allow the rural work force to move away blindly ... The rural population that blindly drifts into the city is unable to find work and consequently suffers great difficulties (Zhang, 1988: 73).

According to this view, rural labor migrants are perceived as blind in two ways. The first is that they move away in response to rural conditions, without properly assessing the alternatives. Mallee (2000: 54) observes, “the view of migrants as ‘blind vagrants’ is heavily based on the perception that rural ‘push’ is the main cause of their mobility.” The second is that they come to the city without jobs or contacts and, if they find jobs, are indiscriminately sorted among occupations and sectors. The Minister of Labor said, “most rural workers on blind job-hunting trips find themselves going here and there for nothing. Some of them cannot find any work and have nothing to live on for a long time” (Huang, 1996).

If migrants come on blind job-hunting trips and are indiscriminately sorted among occupations and sectors, then their removal could create jobs for residents displaced by the reform in state enterprises. A quote from a national conference on rising urban unemployment illustrates the logic supporting this argument:

According to statistics of relevant departments, registered unemployed people in urban areas throughout the country numbered over 5 million, and laid-off personnel over 8 million by the end of September this year. In the meantime, in the state-owned and urban collective enterprises throughout the country, nearly 11 million staff and workers were plunged into difficulty due to poor production and mismanagement of enterprises, and more than 9 million staff and workers were laid off due to bankruptcy, partial or total suspension of production ... Because, according

to statistics of relevant departments, there are more than 45 million peasants working in cities now, all of these enterprises' redundant workers can be placed if the work these peasants are doing is done by urban people (Ministry of Labor, 1997).

Shanghai and Beijing have restricted the types of jobs in which migrants can legally work, and the state newspaper *People's Daily* exhorted laid-off women to work as maids, an occupation generally denigrated as suitable only for young and uneducated peasants: stating, "domestic help is a new route for solving the re-employment problem of laid-off women ... You only need to open your mind, get active guidance and a new job is at your side" (Unemployed, 1996).

The alternative view – that migrants and the market in which they operate are rational, if not relatively efficient – prevails within the academic community. Their opinions are usually based upon survey research. Rural surveys paint a consistent picture of migrants as rationale actors who find jobs through relatives and friends in occupations that pay significantly more than they would have earned at home (Mallee, 1996; Parish, Zhe and Li, 1995). They rarely 'wander about' between different destinations: three-fourths of the migrants in a 1995 survey in Henan province returned to the same destination of their first post-1985 trip (Hare, 1997). Unemployment among migrants is the exception – the saying in rural areas is "East, west, south, north, center; to find a job, go to Pudong," Shanghai's new development zone (*Dong, xi, nan, bei, zhong; da gong, dao Pudong*) (White, 1998: 419).

Research in urban areas confirms the importance of native place as the basis of networks that efficiently channel migrant flows into jobs and housing. A study of Beijing's "Zhejiang Village" concluded, "rural migrants in China, confident of finding

jobs in the cities, are channeled to specific destinations by native-place ties. This challenges the widely-held view that migrants, guided by nothing more than an expectation of finding urban employment, tend to ‘flow blindly’ to the cities – a view which implies that migrants are somehow irrational and their movement haphazard” (Ma and Xiang, 1998: 560). A 1995 survey of the organization of migrant labor flows to Suzhou, Wuxi, Changzhou and Shanghai spoke directly to the policy implications of the study : “Rural labor mobility ... makes use of resources from social networks as the main channel for self-organization. It is, therefore, rational and not blind behavior ... Attempting to replace it by something ‘organized’ is in fact a manifestation of a planned economy interfering in labor mobility. It is not only unjustifiable but is also not feasible” (Zhao, 2000: 241).

Urban surveys also cast doubt on the hypothesis that unemployed residents will replace migrants, who are usually working in the “Three-D” jobs – those that are dirty, dangerous and demeaning. Two-thirds of the managers of enterprises in a four-city survey said they hire migrants because “they can bear hardship and are easily manageable” (Knight , Song and Jia, 1999: 91). In the Shanghai No. 9 Textile Mill, migrant workers were used in the spinning workshop because locals wanted more pay for the hard and dirty work (Qian, 1996). A wealth of anecdotal evidence supports these studies: a manager of a Shanghai construction project says “Shanghai people don’t want to do this kind of work” (O’Neill, 1996). Service jobs are shunned by Beijing residents: “Beijingers are traditionally not interested in business,” said one labor official. “They don’t want to work in jobs which they do not consider honorable” (Laidoff Workers, 1998). Despite a shortage of women textile workers, nurses, sanitation and service

personnel in Shanghai, 40 percent of laid-off female employees remained without work: “the majority of suspended female workers would regard such work with contempt” and “would rather remain unemployed at home than take on a hard and poorly remunerated job” (Chang, 1998: 39). One permanent worker complaining about a shop manager pushing overly high quotas said, “he treats us like we were migrant workers” (Lee, 1999: 61).

While rich in detail, these surveys and reports lack the context of an overall demographic and occupational profile of rural labor migrants in urban areas. Rural surveys can confirm that migrants from a particular region concentrate in particular occupations and destinations, but the size of these occupational groups in each destination is not sufficient to lend statistical significance to their conclusions. Urban surveys usually concentrate on migrants in a particular industry or type of residence, such as textile workers in Zhejiang Village (Ma and Xiang, 1998), garbage workers from Henan (Béja, et al., 1999), or migrants living in residents’ households in Shanghai (Goldstein, Goldstein and Guo, 1991). But without a sample survey of the entire urban population, it is difficult to construct a sampling frame that captures the varieties of migrant experience. Residence is particularly inappropriate in China unless all types are included, but because construction of squatter settlements where migrants might congregate is prohibited, there are few areas of high migrant concentrations from which representative samples might be drawn. Different types of migrants live in very different accommodations – construction workers at their job site, factory workers in dormitories, vendors in their market stalls – and others rent accommodations from residents. A survey

concentrating on a particular type of residence will necessarily oversample a particular type of migrant.

The most comprehensive study of the occupational status of rural labor migrants in urban areas of China was based on the one percent sample of the 1990 census (Yang and Guo, 1996). The advantage of the census is that it allows comparison of the occupational categories of migrants with those of residents. Its disadvantage is that, by including only those temporary migrants who have resided a least one year in their destination, it excludes a significant proportion of all temporary migrants; we will later see that only one-fourth of Shanghai's rural labor migrants have been in the city for more than one year.

It is for this reason that the Fifth Sampling Survey of the Floating Population of Shanghai, upon which this paper is based, is such a valuable addition to our knowledge of migration in China: it was the first in a large city to systematically sample the different types of residences where migrants live, including all those who have resided away from their place of permanent residence for any length of time, and so to accurately profile the overall dimensions of this population. Previous analysis of data from this and subsequent surveys of the floating populations of Shanghai and Beijing has been limited to a broad categorization of migrants as "economic," "social" and "other." This paper will segregate from the larger group of economic migrants a relatively homogeneous group of "rural labor migrants," whose household registration is agricultural and whose previous employment was in agriculture. More importantly, it will go beyond the standard tabulations of migrants' characteristics within occupational categories and relate through

logistic regression an individual's demographic and regional characteristics to the occupations and sectors in which he or she works.

The strength of the Fifth Sampling Survey of the Floating Population of Shanghai is its breadth and sample size; its weakness is its depth. Only the most basic data were collected from each respondent – age, sex, education, marital status, *hukou* status, place of permanent residence, relation to the household head, previous occupation, reason for coming to Shanghai, type of employer, and duration of stay. The occupational categories are very broad, and no data was collected on income. Nevertheless, because of the sample size and the resulting ability to relate migrants with specific characteristics to specific occupations, what emerges from the data is a profile of rural labor migrants in a large city of China that is considerably richer than has existed previously, and which can provide the context in which to place more detailed studies of smaller samples of workers.

In addition to providing this context, the data permit examination of the first of the two major issues in the migration debate, that migration is “blind,” and shed light on the second, that migrants are taking jobs from residents. If migration is indeed “blind,” with migrants indiscriminately sorted among occupations and sectors, then we should expect to find that the coefficients on migrants' individual characteristics are insignificant in determining the occupations and sectors in which they work. If, on the other hand, particular characteristics are associated with particular occupations and sectors, then there is a selection process at work that undermines the “blind migrant” hypothesis.

Determination of the likelihood that migrants are taking jobs from residents is considerably more difficult – witness the lack of closure on the same debate concerning immigration in the United States. However, the data can provide hints at what may be

happening. If the overall demographic characteristics of migrants are significantly different from those of residents, and the jobs in which they work favor those characteristics as shown by the signs of the coefficients, then their labor would probably be a complement rather than a substitute for residents' labor in those jobs. For instance, if literacy is shown to be significant and negatively related to working in a particular job, then it is unlikely that highly-educated residents would find that job appealing.

The following sections of this paper will describe Shanghai and the survey data, the characteristics of rural labor migrants, and the determinants of their employment in different occupations and sectors.

### **Economy and employment in Shanghai**

Shanghai is China's largest city, one of the three centrally-administered cities that stand at the top of the pyramidal hierarchy that defines the structure of rural-urban relations in China (Chan, 1994). China's "premier industrial metropolis" has a city core 300 km<sup>2</sup> with 8.9 million residents out of a municipal total of 6,341 km<sup>2</sup> with 13 million residents, and from there extends into Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces to form a "lower-Yangtze prosperity zone" that includes 45 of the 100 richest small towns in China (Yusuf and Wu, 1997). Per capita income of urban households in Shanghai was 4,297 yuan in 1993, the year of the Fifth Sampling Survey of the Floating Population of Shanghai, compared to a national average of 2,577 yuan for urban households and 922 yuan for rural households (State Statistical Bureau, 1994). Among China's cities, it is first in investment, output, retail sales, imports and exports, financial revenue, and many other

measures. With the development of the multi-billion dollar Pudong area across the Huangpu River from the city center, Shanghai is destined to be the commercial and industrial hub of China. Multinational corporations have rushed into the region, with contracted foreign investment growing from \$3.5 billion in 1992 to \$10 billion in 1994 (Vasuki, 1995). An article in the *Wall Street Journal* (December 10, 1993) exclaimed “what’s going on in Shanghai, and up and down the China coast, might be the biggest construction project the planet has ever seen.” Figure 1 shows the phenomenal growth of some of Shanghai’s key economic indicators since 1978.

#### FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

What Figure 1 also demonstrates is that Shanghai has accomplished this remarkable economic growth with little change in its official population. The physical labor entailed in transforming Shanghai from the stately but moribund queen of the China coast to a modern metropolis, whether in construction, manufacturing, sanitation, vending or transport, has been done by migrants. Shanghai’s registered population remained constant from the end of the 1950s until the reform period, and grew slowly from that point on, as shown in Table 1. Low fertility and an aging population caused natural increase to stagnate and then turn negative in the early 1990s, while official migration was held to less than one-half of 1 percent per year by highly restrictive regulations. However, these official migration figures significantly understate population mobility into Shanghai during the period: based upon the 1988 2/1000 Fertility Survey, which defined migrants as persons away from their province of registration for any length of

time, the net migration rate for persons migrating to Shanghai from 1983 until 1988 was 7.4 percent, second only to Beijing (Liang and White, 1997). Moreover, the official employment figures in Table 1, by failing to include most migrant laborers, obviously ignore the large increases in the labor force necessary to create the economic boom shown in Figure 1.

#### TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Shanghai has surveyed its floating population five times, and each survey estimated the total number of unregistered persons in the city. According to these estimates, reproduced in Table 1, the floating population in Shanghai grew 14.9 percent per year during the decade beginning in 1984 (although unevenly, because the 1988-89 economic retrenchment greatly reduced migrants' employment). This increase in the floating population closely corresponds to the 14.5 percent increase in Shanghai's economic output during the same period. By 1993, the proportion of Shanghai's floating population who were employed had increased its labor force by more than two million workers, or 27 percent. Thus it appears that temporary migration, by providing the labor force for Shanghai's expanding economy, has been instrumental in its remarkable growth.

#### **Description of the data**

The Fifth Sampling Survey of the Floating Population of Shanghai was conducted by the Shanghai Bureau of Public Security and the Shanghai Bureau of Statistics, with

survey design by the Population Institutes of Fudan University and East China Normal University and the Institute of Population and Development Research of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences. It was administered to approximately 2 percent of Shanghai's floating population, defined as those people (with the exception of daily commuters) in Shanghai on December 10, 1993 who were not registered as permanent residents. The entire municipality, which includes 14 urban districts and 6 rural counties, was used as the area of reference; by the most generally-accepted definition that yielded 26.2 percent of China's population as urban in the 1990 census, just over two-thirds of Shanghai's population was urban in 1993 (Yao and Yin, 1994).

Residences of the floating population were divided into five types: (1) family and collective households; (2) inns and hotels; (3) boats; (4) enterprises and institutes; (5) free markets, railway and bus stations, and other places that migrants and transients congregate temporarily. A stratified cluster sample was used for migrants living in households: from each of six strata (defined according to the locale's position in the urban hierarchy, from central subdistrict to rural village), 2 percent of the neighborhood and village committees were randomly sampled, yielding a total sample size of 259,138 persons. Similar care was taken to derive the samples from other types of residences: an enumeration of the floating population in hotels, enterprises, marketplaces and other sites was conducted and a sample of approximately 2 percent drawn, and 2 percent of the boats were sampled. This methodology yielded a sample of 54,372 migrants, and resulted in an estimate of 2,810,000 as the size of Shanghai's floating population as of this date.

Each migrant was asked his or her primary reason for migration: 41,084 (75.6 percent) chose “economic”; 12,022 (22.1 percent) chose “social”; and the remainder, 1,266 migrants, came for study, training, or to attend a meeting. Under each of these three motives, migrants further selected from among six to nine categories.<sup>5</sup> Previous analysis of this data (Wang, et al., 1995) lumped together all economic migrants, which included occupations as diverse as farming and stock market trading. This study re-categorizes the sample population into “rural labor migrants,” “social migrants” and “other migrants.”

“Rural labor migrants” were the 32,967 economic migrants who held an agricultural *hukou* (household registration), whose main occupation prior to migration was in agriculture, and who came to Shanghai to engage in manual labor, construction, handicrafts, housekeeping, commerce or farming, rather than for a job assignment. The rationale for omitting the 7 percent of economic migrants with an agricultural *hukou* but whose previous occupation was not farming from the category of rural labor migrants is that holding an agricultural *hukou* no longer says much about one’s occupation or whether he or she is from an urban or rural locale. By this procedure, there are undoubtedly omitted from the category of rural labor migrants some people who should logically belong within it: for instance, there were 807 migrants with an agricultural *hukou* whose previous job was in manufacturing, some of whom might have been workers in small-scale village enterprises who exhibit few differences from migrant neighbors whose main occupation was farming. However, it is felt that the gain in explanatory power through segregation of this homogeneous group of migrants will more than compensate for the exclusion of some portion of the total number of economic

migrants who might have come under similar circumstances. Moreover, the occupational composition of migrants prior to their arrival in Shanghai has increasingly converged towards agriculture, from just one-fourth of the total floating population in 1985 to over two-thirds in 1993 (Wang et al., 1995).

The remaining migrants were divided into two categories, “social” and “other.” The social category is the same as in the questionnaire, and includes those 12,022 sampled individuals who came to Shanghai to visit family and friends, for reasons related to marriage, for retirement, tourism, health care, or who were in transit. Of the remaining 9,383 migrants who were classified as “other,” two-thirds held a non-agricultural *hukou*, two-thirds listed their previous position as a teacher, student, professional, clerical, or a related occupation, and about one-third were living in a hotel. Further analysis shows that more than half were professionals or business people on a short-term assignment in Shanghai. Since the focus of this paper is on rural labor migrants, neither this heterogeneous group nor the social migrants are considered in the analysis that follows. Table 2 compares these three categories of migrants on some basic variables.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

### **Demographic profile and place of origin of rural labor migrants**

Like rural labor migrants in most parts of the world, and consistent with the stereotype, migrants in our category of rural laborers were predominantly young males: Table 2 shows that three-fourths were from 18 to 34 years old, and that almost three-fourths were men. The contribution of these young workers to the economy was implicit

in the previous comparison of Shanghai's stagnant registered population growth with its vibrant economy. This is shown even more clearly by the complementarity of the population pyramids for Shanghai's permanent residents and its floating population, shown in Figures 2 and 3. The small age cohorts of Shanghai residents below the age of 35 reflect both the effectiveness of government birth control campaigns beginning in urban areas in the early 1960s and voluntary fertility control by educated urban elites (Lavelly and Freedman, 1990), which reduced Shanghai's total fertility rate to 2.5 by the mid-1960's, compared to over 6 nationally (Gu, 1995). The result is an unusually vertical population pyramid and few persons in their twenties, the preferred ages for factory and construction workers that have created Shanghai's economic prosperity.

FIGURES 2 AND 3 ABOUT HERE, TOGETHER IF POSSIBLE

Figure 3 also reveals that female rural labor migrants were even more concentrated in their young working ages than males: there were more women ages 20 to 24 than any other, while men were more evenly distributed throughout their young working ages. Table 3, which provides a detailed description of the characteristics of rural labor migrants by gender, shows almost half of the female labor migrants were 18 to 24 years old, while less than a third of the males fall in this age bracket.

Table 3 also shows that more women than men were single. This is mainly a function of women's younger ages: within the 18-24 age group 85 percent of both men and women were single, while 80 percent of the men and 87 percent of the women ages 25 to 34 were married. The number of single female labor migrants approximately

halved every year after the age of 21, until by the age of 30 there were fewer than 10 single women. The number of married female labor migrants rose over the same range of ages, but more slowly, so that by the age of 30 the total number of women migrants was half its previous peak. The total number of male labor migrants, by contrast, did not fall as the proportion married rose. Thus it appears that many women stopped migrating after marriage, while marital status was not as big a factor as age for male labor migrants, a finding that is supported by other studies (Parish , Zhe and Li, 1995; Mallee, 1996; Zhao, 1999; Yang and Guo, 1999).

#### TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

Why the significant decline in female labor migration with age and marriage? Important factors include not only women's greater familial responsibility, lower educational levels, and social and cultural norms concerning appropriate behavior for married women (Yang and Guo, 1999), but also the fact that young, unmarried women are preferred by the factories and workshops that employ them because they are cheaper. Solinger (1995: 139) says, "textile factory managers openly acknowledge the savings they can garner by not having, for instance, to provide day care centers, paid pregnancy leave, nursing allowances, or housing for workers' families when they hire young single peasant women from the countryside and house ten to twenty in a room on bunk beds. In fact, being single is a precondition for peasant women to work in these firms; there was never any such rule for urban women." The authors of the book based upon the 1993 survey concur: "in the textile industry, using young and skillful women is the best choice

for enterprises, and because the use value of these women decreases with their age, enterprises may replace them with younger workers” (Wang et al., 1995: 183).

The educational level of rural labor migrants was lower than that of residents, with only 7.1 percent having graduated from high school compared to 32 percent of Shanghai’s residents ages 6 and above (Yao and Yin, 1994). However, comparison with surveys in other parts of China suggest that rural labor migrants to Shanghai were better educated than both non-migrant farmers and intra-provincial migrants: just 7.5 percent were illiterate and only 28.8 percent stopped their formal education after primary school, while in Sichuan province 19.4 percent of the non-migrant farmers were illiterate and a further 44.2 percent dropped out after primary school. Nonfarm workers in this study, by contrast, had much higher levels of education (Zhao, 1999). This finding was confirmed in Hubei province, where “the highest probability of temporary labor migration is found to be among people with some intermediate level of education” (Yang and Guo, 1999: 943). The type of destination also matters: half of the migrants to inland cities and towns in a 50-city Public Security Sample were either illiterate or had only a primary school education, compared to 28 percent of migrants to coastal cities and towns (Zhang, 1994). These findings suggest a hierarchy of educational status and migration, with non-migrant farmers at the bottom, followed by intra-provincial migrants, migrants who cross provincial boundaries, and finally non-migrants who work outside agriculture. Formal education, even at a low level, equips migrants who customarily speak a local dialect with the ability to speak Mandarin (*putonghua*) and contend with life outside their region of origin.

Three-fourths of the rural labor migrants to Shanghai came from the neighboring provinces of Jiangsu, Anhui, and Zhejiang, followed in order by Sichuan, Jiangxi, Henan, Shandong, Fujian and Hubei.<sup>6</sup> No other province or autonomous region contributed more than 1 percent of the sample of rural laborers. Anhui, known as a source of domestic help in Shanghai since as far back as the Ming dynasty (Solinger, 1998), contributed 36.1 percent of the women migrants vs. only 24.6 percent of the males (although only 5.9 percent of the women from Anhui were actually working as maids). Younger migrants came from further away than older migrants: 7.1 percent of those whose age was equal or less than the median come from Sichuan vs. 3.9 percent of the older migrants, and 57.1 percent of the older migrants came from neighboring Jiangsu and Zhejiang vs. only 40.7 percent of the younger migrants.

### **Employment by occupation and sector**

Table 3 shows the most important occupations for rural labor migrants in Shanghai were manual labor (39.5 percent), which included jobs in manufacturing as well as cleaning streets and transporting goods, construction (26.8 percent), commerce (17.5 percent), which included street peddlers, small vendors and service personnel, handicrafts (8.8 percent), which encompassed low-technology production processes such weaving straw mats, knitting sweaters or painting lacquerware, farming in Shanghai's rural counties (3.8 percent), and domestic service (1.4 percent). The most common occupations for men were manual labor (36.2 percent), construction (35.3 percent) and

commerce (17.1 percent); for women they were manual labor (48.3 percent), commerce (18.6 percent) and handicrafts (16.3 percent).

The occupational categories of the survey are too broad to afford a direct comparison of these estimates with Shanghai's official employment statistics, with one exception: the construction industry. The 1993 survey identified 9,810 construction workers; if these workers represent 2 percent of the total, then there would be about 490,500 migrants working in construction. Official employment figures listed only 435,000 construction workers in 1993 (Shanghai Statistical Yearbook, 1995), but this total would not include migrants who have not registered their employment with the labor bureaus that collect these statistics. While construction teams from outside "were subject to the supervision of an exhausting lengthy list of urban bureaucracies" (Solinger, 1999: 209) which make it more likely that they would be registered than migrants in less-regulated occupations, there exists a hierarchy of relationships between construction teams and urban employers through subcontracting, with those at the lower levels much less likely to be registered. Solinger (1999: 208) estimated that about half of the city's construction workers were migrants in 1988; the 1993 survey suggests their proportion had risen to anywhere from 53 percent to 100 percent, depending upon the number registered. If, for instance, the same proportion of migrant construction workers who did not hold a certificate of temporary residence were also unregistered in the employment statistics (one out of four), then 88 percent of the workers in construction would be migrants ( $490,500 / (435,000 + (490,500 \div 4))$ ).

TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

Table 4 presents the breakdown of migrant occupations by the sector in which they are employed. Township and village enterprises (TVEs) provided 31.3 percent of the jobs for rural labor migrants, followed by self employment (21.4 percent) and state enterprises (17.6 percent). TVEs have been the most dynamic sector of China's economy, and this is particularly true in the Yangtze River delta around Shanghai. Run by local governments so that residents could "leave the land but not the country" (*li tu bu li xiang*), the success of many of these enterprises has exhausted the local labor supply, allowing locals their choice of the most desirable jobs and filling the vacancies created by their upward mobility with migrants (Byrd and Lin, 1990). In neighboring Jiangsu, "only after the supply of local workers was exhausted did TVEs hire workers from outside the community, first from neighboring villages and townships and then from other counties and provinces" (Ho, 1994: 146).

State enterprises, on the other hand, are laying off workers and hiring younger migrants, who are willing to do harder work for less pay. In Shanghai, the government reported that 150,000 women were fired from textile factories in 1994 (Davis, 1999: 30), while a 1996 survey of four urban areas of China found the average urban enterprise hired migrants for one-fourth of its labor force, and that these migrants comprised half of the workers under the age of 25 (Knight, Song and Jia, 1999). When regular workers in the spinning workshop of the Shanghai's No. 9 Textile Mill wanted more pay for the hard work, they were shifted to other duties and replaced by contract workers. When these also became dissatisfied with the conditions, migrant girls were hired in their place (Qian, 1996: 14). Migrant workers at the Shanghai No. 21 Textile Mill earned half the average

level of wages of regular workers and did almost all the work on the production line, leading the authors of the book based upon the 1993 survey to conclude, “it is no exaggeration to say that these enterprises may hardly maintain their normal production activities without the use of outside workers (Wang et al., 1995: 218). Thus, while the use of migrant labor in the TVEs is a sign of their success, in the state firms it is a symptom of their distress. The commonality in both cases is that migrants do the hardest work for the least pay.

### **Determinants of occupation**

How do the individual characteristics of migrants influence the occupations in which they work? Table 5 presents the results of a multinomial logit regression of migrants’ occupations on characteristics such as their sex, age, education and province of origin. The sample is limited to rural labor migrants whose duration of stay in Shanghai was more than three days and who were not living in a hotel, thus eliminating the most temporary of migrants who may not yet be employed. The null hypothesis is that demographic and regional characteristics don’t matter – that migrants are “blindly” sorted among occupations – so that the coefficients on these characteristics will be statistically insignificant.

The dependent variable in multinomial logit regression models is categorical, with the odds ratios in Table 5 reflecting the effect of each of the independent variables on the probability of being in that occupation relative to the reference occupation, manual labor. Thus, the odds ratio of 8.87 for males in construction means males were about nine times more likely than females to choose construction over manual labor, while the

ratio of .50 for handicrafts means males were only about half as likely as females to choose handicrafts, the only occupation where there were more women than men, instead of manual labor. Clearly, gender matters in determining the occupational distribution of rural labor migrants.

#### TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE

Education is reflected in two variables: whether the migrant was illiterate, and if not whether he or she was educated beyond junior-middle school, when most rural labor migrants terminate their education. Illiterate migrants were more likely to be in the occupations of farming, “other,” and commerce, and less likely to be in construction. Farming is an occupation where literacy is not an important qualification, and Table 4 shows that the majority of migrants working in commerce and “other” were self employed, where there is no screening for literacy.

Education beyond junior middle school was insignificant for all occupations except farming. This could be a result of the similarity of educational levels among rural labor migrants or the generality of the occupational categories in the survey, for better-educated migrants were only 65 percent as likely to choose farming, an occupation without skill/pay gradations, and education was found to significantly affect the income of migrants to Shanghai *within* occupational categories (Wang and Zuo, forthcoming). Or it could be that “education is little rewarded,” as was concluded from analysis of data collected in the 1996 survey of rural migrants working in urban enterprises in four cities

(Knight , Song and Jia, 1999: 79), so that it was not an important factor in determining where migrants work.

Married migrants were more likely to choose any occupation other than manual labor. There are two possible explanations for this finding: the first is that there might exist different networks for married and unmarried migrants because, for instance, married men are older than unmarried men or they are connected through their wives to networks in other villages.<sup>7</sup> A more compelling explanation is that a significant proportion of married migrants have their spouse in Shanghai, and that these migrant couples work in occupations that differ from those of unmarried migrants.

While we do not know directly the proportion of migrants in the sample who are accompanied by a spouse, the total number of married female migrants can provide some clues. Married women in China do not usually migrate alone: a 1994 survey of 400 married migrant women in Beijing found that 84 percent migrated with their husbands or other family members (Hoy, 1996). If we apply this percentage to the 4,659 married female labor migrants in the sample, there would be 3,913 married migrant couples in Shanghai, or about 40 percent of the total number of married migrants.<sup>8</sup> This proportion corresponds to that found in a survey of migrants in Beijing, Shenzhen, Wuhan and Suzhou, where 36 percent of married migrants were accompanied by a spouse (Knight , Song and Jia, 1999), as well as that in another survey of labor migrants to Shanghai, where 30 percent of married migrants were accompanied by a spouse (Wang and Zuo, forthcoming).

Given that a significant proportion of married rural labor migrants, especially women, were accompanied by a spouse, the hypothesis that marriage affects occupational

choice mainly for migrant couples can be examined by the data on migrant women in the sample. A separate logistic regression on female rural labor migrants, more of whom would be accompanied by a spouse than male labor migrants, shows even higher values of the coefficients on marriage for farming and commerce than in the overall sample, indicating that married women are far more likely than unmarried women to work in these occupations than in manual laborer. More married women working in these occupations are illiterate than are women in the overall sample. While female manual laborers were young – two-thirds were less than 25 – three-fourths of the women working in commerce were above this age. Few women working in commerce lived in a dormitory, where it would be difficult to cohabit with a spouse. If these women are indeed accompanying male labor migrants, then it appears that migration by couples is selective of different characteristics than migration by individuals, a result that is supported by data from a survey of Hubei province that found “family migration is not influenced by age or educational attainment, but both these factors significantly affect intention to migrate as an individual” (Yang, 2000: 781).

The magnitudes and high levels of significance of the provincial coefficients indicate that province of origin was an important factor in job choice. The reference category was composed of migrants from all the provinces other than those listed as the major sending provinces for rural labor migrants to Shanghai. Migrants from Shanghai and neighboring Jiangsu and Zhejiang were much more likely than those in the reference category to have worked in construction, and less likely to have chosen any other occupation, especially handicrafts and commerce, over manual labor. Solinger (1998: 7) found the same situation in Shanghai’s construction industry a few years earlier: “that so

many of the peasants working in this trade are neighbors lays a foundation for the informal, ascriptively based ties that characterize much of the business in this sector.”

Zhejiang is the only province from which migrants were more likely to work in handicrafts and commerce, a reflection of a long tradition of specialization in petty trading (Li, 1991).<sup>9</sup> Only migrants from Zhejiang and Anhui were more likely to work as farmers than manual laborers, and migrants from Anhui were more likely to be engaged in farming than in any other occupation. Again, this confirms the results of rural surveys: migrants from Lihuan prefecture in Anhui contributed 200,000 agricultural laborers to Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Shanghai (Mallee, 1996).

That these coefficients differ so markedly among provinces supports the hypothesis that village-based networks are important in directing Chinese labor migrants to specific locations and occupations, just as they did in Shanghai prior to 1949 (Honig, 1992b; Goodman, 1995), and as they currently do in other developing countries (Massey, 1990). A study of Chinese rural labor migrants on their first trip found that 76 percent had obtained their jobs through informal networks of friends and relatives, 14 percent through labor contractors, and only 7 percent on their own (Zhao, 2000: 247). Mallee (1996: 122), in a review of migration studies in China, concludes that “much of rural mobility takes place through chains based on kinship and native place ties, and as a result, migrants often find jobs in specific niches in the labor market at their destinations.”

Interpretation of multinomial logit regression coefficients is somewhat difficult when the independent variable is also categorical, as it is with province of origin. For instance, the odds ratio of 1.37 for Sichuanese working in construction means that

migrants from Sichuan are 37 percent more likely to choose construction over manual labor than are migrants from the group of reference provinces. A more intuitive grasp of the data can be attained by examination of Table 6, which presents the probability of a migrant with selected characteristics working in each occupation, generated by plugging these characteristics back into the estimated equation.

#### TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE

The first row of Table 6 shows the probability of a typical migrant working in each of the six occupations, where this individual is one who exhibits the most common value of each of the variables used in the multinomial logit regression. Our typical migrant was a 27-year old married male from Jiangsu province who had a junior-middle school education and held a temporary residence permit. Each consecutive row varies one of these characteristics and presents the effect of this change upon occupational probabilities: male to female, married to single, etc. Age is adjusted upward or downward one standard deviation (nine years) from the median age for male migrants.

The probabilities that a typical rural labor migrant was working in construction, manual labor and commerce were about 40, 30, and 20 percent respectively. If he were a she, construction is dropped and the ranking changes to manual labor, commerce and handicrafts. Being single increased the probability of working in manual labor for reasons discussed earlier, while being illiterate made commerce the most likely occupation.

Table 6 demonstrates clearly the importance of province of origin on occupation. A married male from Shanghai had a 62 percent probability of working in construction and only a 7 percent probability of working in commerce, while a migrant with the same characteristics from Zhejiang had a 32 percent probability of working in commerce.

What Table 6 cannot explore is the interactions among variables, for each row reflects only the effect of changing one variable while holding the rest constant. We know from Table 5 that the probability of choosing farming increases not only by being from Anhui but also by being older, illiterate and married. Putting these characteristics together, we find that 37-year old married male from Anhui who is illiterate had a 27 percent probability of working as a farmer, the most likely occupation for a migrant with these characteristics. Single young women from Sichuan had a 65 percent probability of working in manual labor, which rose to 70 percent if they are from Jiangxi and 74 percent if from Shanghai, while single young women from Zhejiang had less than a 40 percent probability of being manual laborers. The probability of working in commerce doubled, from 22 to 44 percent, for women from Zhejiang when they were married.

What these examples illustrate is the selectivity of migration flows by region, gender, and other characteristics. Certain types of jobs are done mainly by women, others by men. Married couples may work together in some forms of commerce, and literacy is important in some jobs. Village-based networks are critical in channeling migrants into particular destinations and occupations. Were our occupational categories less broad and our regions of origin at the county rather than the provincial level, these occupational links would probably become even clearer; just three counties were found to have contributed all of the Sichuanese migrants working in TVEs in a village outside

Shanghai (Oshima, 1990), and in Shanghai before 1949, “although ... non-Subei people associated all Subei people (from northern Jiangsu) with coolie labor, Subei people themselves were aware of a much more complex division of labor in which migrants from each Subei district concentrated in particular jobs” (Honig, 1992b: 257). Even at this level of aggregation, however, we see that rural labor migrants are not a homogeneous group of “blind” migrants who are indiscriminately sorted among occupations, but are instead differentiated by age, gender, literacy, marital status and, especially, place of origin. The high level of significance for most of these variables supports anecdotal and survey evidence that demographic and regional characteristics are important determinants of the occupations in which migrants work.

### **Determinants of sector of employment**

The argument that migration is blind presumes that formal institutions like the state play little role in directing migrant flows, and that informal institutions like migrants networks do not function well. This view is challenged by Solinger, who traces the complex interactions among state institutions, labor contractors and migrant networks. She concludes that “recruitment often drew upon and was the product of networks knit one way or another by the state and its agents,” particularly in nearby rural counties or inland regions like Sichuan with strong linkages to state firms (Solinger, 1999: 177). Migrants from nearby Zhejiang and southern Jiangsu, on the other hand, “were most likely to bank on ascriptive linkages and to rely on their fellows and on their area’s skills or products to become private entrepreneurs or their employees.” (Solinger, 1999: 201).

If her view is correct, we should expect to see the odds of migrants working in different sectors vary significantly across regions.

Table 7 presents the results of a multinomial logit regression of sector of employment on migrants' characteristics, with the odds ratios reflecting the effect of each of the independent variables on the probability of working in that sector relative to the reference sector, TVEs. Solinger's hypothesis is strongly supported by the data for migrants from other parts of Shanghai, who were much more likely to work in the state and collective sectors and much less likely to be self employed.<sup>10</sup> Migrants from the inland provinces of Sichuan, Henan and Shandong were also more likely to work for the state and much less likely to be employed in any other sector.

#### TABLE 7 ABOUT HERE

The odds ratios on Zhejiang also support Solinger's hypothesis that migrants from these areas rely upon ascriptive linkages to self employment in entrepreneurial activities. Only Zhejiang migrants are more likely to work in the private sector or be self employed than to work in TVEs. That migrants from Zhejiang and Jiangsu are also more likely to work in state and collective enterprises might seem to undermine Solinger's hypothesis. Instead, it should be noted that the provincial level is really too broad to specify network effects: migrants in Beijing's Zhejiang Village come mainly from a few counties in Wenzhou prefecture (Ma and Xiang, 1998), and northern and southern Jiangsu are very different regions which have long sent different types of migrants to Shanghai (Honig, 1992a). Migrants from one county of Zhejiang might choose self employment in a trade,

while those from a county abutting Shanghai might be well-connected to construction in state enterprises. Migrants from the poor provinces of Anhui and Jiangxi do not seem to be particularly well-connected to either the state or to regionally-based enterprise networks, and are significantly more likely to work in TVEs than in any other sector.

Migrants' personal characteristics also affect the types of enterprises in which they work. The contrast between working for the state and being self employed is particularly sharp: migrant workers in state enterprises are more likely to be single, male, older, and literate; self-employed migrants to be married, uneducated and illiterate. As was discussed in the previous section, these self-employed workers appear to be able to create positions for themselves selling products and services where they can work together as married couples, and where their low levels of education and literacy are not a burden. These findings are supported by data from Tianjin, where women migrants working in the tertiary sector had less education than those working in factories (Davis, 1999).

## **Discussion**

Analysis of the data provided by the Fifth Sampling Survey of the Floating Population of Shanghai provides evidence that is strongly at odds with the notion that rural labor migrants are "blindly" flowing to the city. Instead, personal characteristics and regionally-based networks appear to be channeling these migrants into distinct occupations and sectors. Migrants from nearby tend to be literate males working in construction and for state enterprises, reflecting long standing links between these enterprises and local administrations. Those self employed in commerce are more likely

to be illiterate, married and from Zhejiang province. Anhui contributes farmers, while Sichuan workers are employed in construction and manual labor linked to state enterprises and TVEs. These are broad generalizations, but they are familiar to scholars who have studied the operation of migrant networks in China in greater depth, and strongly supportive of their conclusions.

This is not to deny a role to the state in guiding these flows; in fact, the recruitment policies of state and TVE enterprises have played a crucial role in the formation of existing networks. Instead, the state should recognize and work with these networks. It could even facilitate the establishment new networks to meet specific goals, such as poverty alleviation in poor rural areas, by matching the qualifications of persons from these areas with those of migrants already working in specific occupations.

Can residents laid off from jobs in state enterprises replace migrants, alleviating urban unemployment? The data show that the state and collective sectors attract better-educated workers from nearby, while self-employed and private sector workers tend to be illiterate and operate within strong regionally-based networks. Were educated urban residents who have been laid off from state enterprises to try to replace migrants, they would be unlikely to effectively compete in the occupations that are dominated by regionally-based networks of semi-literate peasants, nor would they be likely to consider such stigmatized occupations desirable. Instead, because their qualifications more closely match those of migrants already employed in state enterprises, they would compete with them in the “formal” state, collective, and TVE sectors, the same sectors from which they were laid off in the first place. And because the reason they were laid off was to lower costs and increase efficiency, the goal of the reemployment of residents

in migrants' jobs would be in direct conflict with the goal of restructuring state industry. In the competitive global marketplace in which China hopes to play a major role, the latter goal is likely to take precedence, while only lip service is paid to the former: "the state's public policy has often called for migrants' expulsion back to the countryside (and) official sermons with this theme please state-sector workers ... the police can publicize their expulsion of relatively few unregistered migrants – while allowing most to stay, because of the benefits these newcomers bring to state enterprises" (White, 1996: 93). One unemployed resident summed it up: "It is very hard for us to compete with migrant laborers ... Don't believe what you read in the newspapers. There are no jobs for us" (Unemployed, 1996).

## REFERENCES

- Béja, J. P., M. Bonnin, X. Feng, and C. Tang, 1999, Social Differentiation among the Migrant Peasants of Henan Village in Peking, Part I: How Social Strata Come to be Formed, *China Perspectives* 23, 29-41.
- Byrd, W. A., and Q. Lin eds., 1990, *China's Rural Industry: Structure, Development and Reform* (The World Bank, Washington D.C.).
- Chan, K. W., 1994, *Cities with Invisible Walls: Reinterpreting Urbanization in Post-1949 China* (Oxford University Press, Hong Kong).
- Chang, K., 1998, A Survey and Investigation of Unemployment and Reemployment of Female Employees in State-Owned Enterprises, *Chinese Sociology and Anthropology* 30, 28-51.
- Chen, B., 1998, To Be Defined a *Liumang*, in: M. Dutton, ed. *Streetlife China* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, England) 63-64.
- Cheng, T., and M. Selden, 1994, The Origins and Social Consequences of China's *Hukou* System, *The China Quarterly* 139, 644-668.
- Control, 1994, Shanghai Attempting to Control Floating Population, from *Fazhi Ribao* (Beijing), December 23. Cited in Lexis/Nexis December 26, Available from <http://www.lexis-nexis.com>.
- Davin, D., 1999, *Internal Migration in Contemporary China* (St. Martin's Press, New York).
- Davis, D. S., 1999, Self-employment in Shanghai: A Research Note, *The China Quarterly* 158, 22-43.
- Flower Vendors, 2000, Misery Behind the Migration, *The Economist*, November 18, 52-53.
- Goldstein, A., S. Goldstein, and S. Guo, 1991, Temporary Migrants in Shanghai Households in 1984, *Demography* 28, 275-292.
- Goodman, B., 1995, *Native Place, City, and Nation: Regional Networks and Identities in Shanghai, 1853-1937* (University of California Press, Berkeley).

- Gu, B., 1995, Shanghai: A Case Study in Negative Population Growth, *Chinese Journal of Population Science* 7, 267-276.
- Hare, D., 1997, *The Effects of Job Location on Migrants' Wages: Evidence from Rural China*, Reed College, unpublished manuscript.
- Ho, S. P. S., 1994, *Rural China in Transition: Non-Agricultural Development in Rural Jiangsu, 1978-1990* (Oxford University Press, New York).
- Honig, E., 1992a, *Creating Chinese Ethnicity: Subei People in Shanghai 1850-1980* (Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut).
- Honig, E., 1992b, Migrant Culture in Shanghai: In Search of Subei Identity, in: F. Wakeman Jr. and W. H. Yeh, eds., *Shanghai Sojourners* (Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley) 239-265.
- Hoy, C., 1996, *Women, Migration and Current Urban Dynamics in China: Fertility and Family Planning*, School of Geography, University of Leeds, Working Paper No. 96/7.
- Huang, H., 1996, How to Ensure Orderly Flow of Rural Labor Force: Interview with Labor Minister Li Boyong. From *Liaowang* (Beijing) March 25, Cited in Foreign Broadcast Information Service, FBIS-CHI-96-109, June 5.
- Knight, J., L. Song, and H. Jia, 1999, Chinese Rural Migrants in Urban Enterprises: Three Perspectives, *The Journal of Development Studies* 35, 73-104.
- Laidoff Workers, 1998, Face or Money, That's the Question for Laidoff Beijing Workers, from *Agence France Presse*. Cited in China News Digest (News Global), March 18. Available from [cnd-info@cnd.org](mailto:cnd-info@cnd.org).
- Lavelly, W., and R. Freedman, 1990, The Origins of the Chinese Fertility Decline, *Demography* 27, 357-368.
- Lee, C. K., 1999, From Organized Dependence to Disorganized Despotism: Changing Labour Regimes in Chinese Factories, *The China Quarterly* 157, 44-71.

- Li, S., 1991, The Growth of Household Industry in Rural Wenzhou, in: P. Nolan and D. Fureng, eds., *Market Forces in China: Competition and Small Business - the Wenzhou Debate* (Zed Press, Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey) 108-125.
- Liang, Z., 1998, The Age of Migration in China, paper presented at the Annual Meetings of the American Sociological Association, San Francisco, CA.
- Liang, Z., and M. J. White, 1997, Market Transition, Government Policies, and Interprovincial Migration in China, 1983-1988, *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 45, 19-37.
- Ma, L. J. C., and B. Xiang, 1998, Native Place, Migration and the Emergence of Peasant Enclaves in Beijing, *The China Quarterly* 155, 546-581.
- Mallee, H., 1996, In Defense of Migration: Recent Chinese Studies on Rural Population Mobility, *China Information* 10, 108-140.
- Mallee, H., 2000, Agricultural Labor and Rural Population Mobility: Some Observations, in: L. A. West and Y. Zhao, eds., *Rural Labor Flows in China* (Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley)
- Massey, D. S., 1990, Social Structure, Household Strategies, and the Cumulative Causation of Migration, *Population Index* 56, 3-26.
- Ministry of Labor, 1997, Ministry of Labor Plans to Resolve Re-employment of 10 Million Laid-off Workers. From *Ming Bao* (Hong Kong) December 19, Cited in Foreign Broadcast Information Service, FBIS-CHI-97-353, December 20.
- Naughton, B., 1996, *Growing Out of the Plan: Chinese Economic Reform 1978-1993* (Cambridge University Press, New York).
- O'Neill, M., 1996, Shanghai Projects No Growth in Unemployment, from *The Reuters Asia-Pacific Business Report* *The Reuters Asia-Pacific Business Report*, June 19. Cited in Lexis/Nexis June 19, Available from <http://www.lexis-nexis.com>.

- Oshima, K., 1990, The Present Condition of Inter-Regional Movements of the Labor Force in Rural Jiangsu Province, China, *The Developing Economies* 28, 202-220.
- Parish, W. L., X. Zhe, and F. Li, 1995, Nonfarm Work and Marketization of the Chinese Countryside, *The China Quarterly* 143, 698-730.
- Pye, L. W., 1991, The State and the Individual: An Overview Interpretation, *The China Quarterly* 127, 443-466.
- Qian, W., 1996, *Rural-Urban Migration and its Impact on Economic Development in China* (Avebury, Aldershot, England).
- Roberts, K. D., 2000, Chinese Labor Migration: Insights from Mexican Undocumented Migration to the United States, in: L. A. West and Y. Zhao, eds., *Rural Labor Flows in China* (Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley) 179-230.
- Roberts, K. D., forthcoming 2002, Female Labor Migrants to Shanghai: Temporary 'Floaters' or Settlers?, *International Migration Review* 36.
- Rozelle, S., et. al., 1999, Leaving China's Farms: Survey Results of New Paths and Remaining Hurdles to Rural Migration, *The China Quarterly* 158, 367-393.
- Shanghai Statistical Yearbook, 1995, *Shanghai Tongji Nianjian* (China Statistical Publishing House, Beijing).
- Solinger, D., 1998, Job Categories and Employment Channels Among the 'Floating Population', in: G. O'Leary, ed. *Adjusting to Capitalism: Chinese Workers and the State* (M. E. Sharpe, Armonk, NY) 2-47.
- Solinger, D., 1999, *Contesting Citizenship in Urban China: Peasant Migrants, the State, and the Logic of the Market* (University of California Press, Berkeley).
- Solinger, D. J., 1995, China's Urban Transients in the Transition from Socialism and the Collapse of the Communist 'Urban Public Goods Regime', *Comparative Politics* 27, 127-146.
- State Statistical Bureau, 1994, *Statistical Yearbook of China* (China Statistical Publishing House, Beijing).

- Sun, L. H., 1994, The Dragon Within: As Millions of Underclass Migrants March Into the Cities, Will China's System Collapse?, *The Washington Post*, October 9.
- Unemployed, 1996, China Tells Unemployed to Work as Domestic Help, from *People's Daily* (Shanghai), September 3. Cited in Lexis/Nexis September 3, Available from <http://www.lexis-nexis.com>.
- Vasuki, S. N., 1995, Shanghai: Jewel of the East Regains its Brilliance, *Business Times*, May 26.
- Wang, F., and X. Zuo, forthcoming, Rural Migrants in Shanghai: Living Under the Shadow of Socialism, *International Migration Review*.
- Wang, W., et. al., 1995, *Jiushi Niandai Shanghai Liudong Renkou (The Floating Population of Shanghai in the 1990s)* (East China Normal University Press, Shanghai).
- White, L. T., 1996, Migration and Politics on the Shanghai Delta, *Issues and Studies* 30, 63-94.
- White, L. T., 1998, *Unstately Power: Local Causes of China's Economic Reforms* Vol. I. (M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, NY).
- Yang, Q., and F. Guo, 1996, Occupational Attainments of Rural to Urban Temporary Economic Migrants in China, 1985-1990, *International Migration Review* 30, 771-787.
- Yang, X., 2000, Determinants of Migration Intentions in Hubei Province, China: Individual vs. Family Migration, *Environment and Planning* 32, 769-787.
- Yang, X., and F. Guo, 1999, Gender Differences in Determinants of Temporary Labor Migration in China: A Multilevel Analysis, *International Migration Review* 33, 929-953.
- Yao, X., and H. Yin, 1994, *Basic Data of China's Population Data Users Services Series No. 1* (China Population and Information Research Center, Beijing).
- Yi, Z., 1998, The Work Unit: 'Face' and Place, in: M. Dutton, ed. *Streetlife China* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, England) 58-61.

- Yuan, Y., 1995, *Luoren – Beijing Liumin Di Zuzhijia Zhuangkuang Yanjiu Baogao (The Exposed – A Research Report on the Condition of the Organization of Migrants in Beijing)* (Horizon Market Research and Analysis, Beijing).
- Yusuf, S., and W. Wu, 1997, *The Dynamics of Urban Growth in Three Chinese Cities* (Oxford University Press, New York).
- Zhang, Q., 1988, Basic Facts on the Household Registration System, *Chinese Economic Studies* 22, 1-106.
- Zhang, Q., 1994, *Zhongguo 50 Xiangzhen Liudong Renkou Diaocha Yanjiu (China 50 Town and Village Floating Population Survey)* (Chinese Public Security University Press, Beijing).
- Zhao, S., 2000, Organizational Characteristics of Rural Labor Mobility in China, in: L. A. West and Y. Zhao, eds., *Rural Labor Flows in China* (Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley) 231-250.
- Zhao, Y., 1999, Labor Migration and Earnings Differences: The Case of Rural China, *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 47, 767-782.
- Zhu, H., 1995, Major Findings from Survey of Floating Population in Beijing, *China Population Today*, December, 29.

## NOTES

- 
1. For careful estimates of the number of migrants, see Liang (1998) and Rozelle et al. (1999).
  2. Knowledgeable observers think migrants are scapegoats : “the ills associated with incipient markets – competitive labor markets, inflation, crowded transport vehicles, crime, and scarcer water and electricity – not surprisingly became linked to migrants as well” (Solinger, 1999: 102). This has caused “a sense of alarm in much of what is written about migrants, and, as in other reactions to social change, a sense of nostalgia for a more ordered past” (Davin, 1999: 2). A related explanation emphasizes their relative disconnectedness to state institutions: “it is understandable that not only the authorities but citizens in general have been frightened by such an influx of unaffiliated people and suspect that they are criminally inclined. It is assumed that without the constraints of a bonding group people will act in anti-social ways” (Pye, 1991: 462).
  3. For discussion of the positions of the various interest groups concerned with migration, see Solinger (1999).
  4. While a dictionary definition of a “blind migrant flow” – *mangliu* – is “country to city migrant without definite prospects,” the word takes on a variety of meanings that reinforce the migrant’s disconnectedness from the guiding influence of family, work unit, society, and state. The character for “blind” (*mang*) is the same used to describe “blind optimism” or “blindly” following a leader. In this context, the migrant is “blind to the realities of the city,” but is either irrationally lured by its prospects or has no other options. It also takes on the meaning of “blind to the interests of the people,” or selfish, such as when the Minister of Public Security explained the 1958 *hukou* regulations by saying they affect only those who “think only of themselves and blindly migrate without the slightest consideration for what is beneficial to both state and collective interests” (Cheng and Selden, 1994: 664). Yi (1998: 59) explains the etymology of the character *liu* in the traditional Chinese expression *liuli shisuo*, meaning to ‘wander about without a home’: “*Liu*, which means to ‘flow’, actually means *liushi*, ‘to drop out or drain away’. That is to say, the individual breaks away from the group.” The characters are combined in *mangliu*, a reverse homophone of *liumang*, which literally means hooligan but originally meant “to leave or be forced to leave one’s land,” a drifter or

---

vagrant (Chen, 1998: 63). This term and its negative connotation have been picked up and magnified in the foreign press: an article in the *Washington Post* opines that the “teeming underclass enclave of migrant laborers on the outskirts of the capital may portend the future of China – a China of chaotic instability and social disintegration resulting from an uncontrolled ‘blind’ flow of millions of rural workers into the cities” (Sun, 1994).

5. Based upon the migrant’s intention, every migrant was assigned to a category, or in the case of economic migrants, an occupation. Unemployment is not a category that was considered, for no person that came to Shanghai for economic reasons intending to be unemployed. If the proportion of rural labor migrants in the sample who were unemployed at the time of the survey were large, this would be a potentially serious weakness of the data for addressing the question whether migration is “blind.” In general, this is not the case with migrants in China: in Beijing “very few first enter the city and then look for work” (Yuan, 1995: 25, ), and in Shanghai, 60 percent came with an arranged job. Of the remaining migrants who came looking for work, half were working within a month and another third within two months (Wang and Zuo, forthcoming).

6. Shanghai is listed as a place origin in Table 3 because persons from Shanghai living outside the county or district of their official residence are considered members of the floating population.

7. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for this suggestion.

8. For a more complete discussion of female migrants (including “social” migrants) in the sample and their likelihood of having migrated with their spouse, see Roberts (forthcoming).

9. For centuries specific localities in China have specialized in the production and sale of particular goods, and these have formed the basis of some migrant networks. The specialization of one county in Wenzhou prefecture of Zhejiang province in clothing formed the basis of Beijing’s Zhejiang Village. Young women from Wuwei county in Anhui have been a source of domestic help in Shanghai since the Ming dynasty (Solinger, 1998), and local foods from around China are sold as delicacies by migrants in urban areas.

While migrant networks use and reinforce these traditions, they exist independently of these networks. For other specialties, such as garbage collection in Beijing by migrants from a particular region of Henan (Béja et al., 1999) or flower vending in urban areas by children from flowerless You county in Hunan (Flower

---

Vendors, 2000), the networks themselves are the basis of the specialization. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for emphasizing that many networks are based upon market traditions.

10. Collective enterprises were formed in the 1970s to employ dependents of state enterprises in urban areas (Naughton, 1996). For this reason they might be more likely to employ Shanghai residents, although in other ways they are more like private than state enterprises.