Migration and Inequality in Xinjiang: A Survey of Han and Uyghur Migrants in Urumqi

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Abstract: This paper seeks to contribute to the literature on Han-Uyghur inequality by comparing Han and Uyghur migrants in Urumqi, Xinjiang. Drawing from a survey of 30 sites of service activities and approximately 600 respondents in Urumqi, conducted in 2008, the authors argue that in addition to state-orchestrated migration that has been considered a source of Han-Uyghur inequality, it is also important to pay attention to the role of self-initiated migration. Through descriptive and statistical analyses of migrants' demographic, human-capital, employment, and migration characteristics, they find that Uyghur migrants do not seem disadvantaged compared to Han migrants. The findings underscore the heterogeneity of Urumqi's labor market, the role of economic reforms that motivate migration within and to Xinjiang, and the complexity of Han-minority inequality. *Journal of Economic Literature*, Classification Numbers: J610, O150, O180, R230. 2 figures, 7 tables, 53 references. Key words: China, Xinjiang, migration, Uyghur, Han, Muslims, ethnicity, inequality.

INTRODUCTION

Xinjiang is one of China's most restive regions. Conflicts between Han and Uyghurs are frequent and in some cases deadly. In June 2009, simmering ethnic tensions erupted in the streets of Urumqi, where Uyghurs and Han clashed and resulted in one of the bloodiest outbreaks in Xinjiang since 1949 (Wong, 2009). To many observers, those conflicts are attributable, at least in part, to the rapid influx of Han migrants who are perceived by many Uyghurs as a threat to their livelihoods and ways of life. Between 1949 and 2008, the proportion of Han in Xinjiang rose dramatically, from 6.7 percent (220,000) to 40 percent (8.4 million) (Benson, 1990; SBX, 2010). This represents the largest demographic change ever to occur in a major region of China since the founding of the People's Republic (Iredale et. al., 2001).

A prevailing characterization of Han and Uyghur groups is that the former is privileged and the latter subordinate. In this paper, we seek to examine that characterization for Han and Uyghur migrants to Urumqi. While early Han migration—from the 1950s to the 1970s—was primarily state-orchestrated, recent Han migrants tend to be self-initiated,[2] and they must compete with Uyghurs in the labor market. Through a comparison of Han and Uyghur migrants, this paper highlights the heterogeneity of the Urumqi labor market and

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[2]Self-initiated migrants refer to those who make decision about migration on their own, rather than being directed by the state, and whose most prominent reason for migration is to improve their economic well-being.

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shows that self-initiated Han migrants are not necessarily in a more privileged position than Uyghur migrants who are younger and more highly educated. In the next section, we discuss the research on migration in western China and the literature on Han-minority inequality. We then give a brief account of Han migration to Xinjiang and of Uyghur migration in Xinjiang. This is followed by a description of our survey in Urumqi conducted in 2008, descriptive analyses of the survey data, and finally a binomial logistic model that aims at identifying the major differences between Han and Uyghur migrants.

RESEARCH ON MIGRATION AND HAN-MINORITY INEQUALITY IN CHINA

Two bodies of literature about China—internal migration, and Han-minority inequality—are directly relevant to this research. The large number of studies since the 1990s on migration in China have focused primarily on the floating population, who amounted to 211 million in 2009 (China's Floating Population, 2010).[3] As most of these migrants are Han Chinese—as is the vast majority of the Chinese population— relatively little scholarly attention has been devoted to non-Han migration.[4] In addition, because the major migration flows since the 1980s have been from inland regions to eastern, coastal regions, studies on migration in and into western China are far fewer in number than those that focus on eastern China.

Another reason why researchers on migration have not paid more attention to western China is that until the 1980s the dominant population movements there were state-orchestrated. During the 1950s and 1960s, especially after the falling-out between China and the former Soviet Union, the Chinese government actively relocated Han Chinese to frontier provinces such as Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, and Heilongjiang, in order to consolidate the border in light of possible military threat from the Soviets (Liang and White, 1996; see also Pannell, 2011 in this issue). Han migrants were sent to join the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC), also referred to as the Bingtuan, which is managed directly by the central government (Becquelin, 2000). The XPCC is a paramilitary unit created in 1954 with the mandate to help build farms and cities and to foster state-directed flows of Han Chinese into the area (Raballand and Andrésy, 2007). The unit now largely consists of (Han) retired soldiers of the People's Liberation Army. In addition to joining the XPCC, skilled Han migrants were relocated and strategically placed to develop Xinjiang's infrastructure and natural resource extraction industries, in particular the oil, gas, and cotton industries (Qiang and Xin, 2003). By the end of the 1990s, 95 percent of the technical workers in the Taklamakan Desert oil exploration program were Han Chinese (Sautman, 1998). In short, the history of migration into Xinjiang has reinforced the characterization of Han Chinese as those who joined the XPCC or who obtained government, administrative, or managerial jobs through the state (Iredale et. al., 2001; Bachman, 2005).

As a result, studies that examine migration to Xinjiang tend to focus on state-sponsored Han migrants and their placement in technical and managerial positions, rather than the increasingly large flows of self-initiated migrants, including unskilled workers, who enter and compete in Xinjiang's labor market. The surge in self-initiated migrants to Xinjiang is due in part to the economic reforms and relaxation of migration control and in part to regional

[3]The "floating population" (*liudong renkou*) refers to those not living at their place of household registration (*hukou*). It is a stock measure; that is, regardless of when actual migration occurred, a person is considered as part of the floating population so long as his or her usual place of residence is different from their place of registration. Most of the migrants working in China's cities and towns are "floaters," who lack the formal rights associated with official household registration in a particular city or town. For a more detailed description see Fan (2008) and Chan (2009).

[4]Some of the exceptions are Ma and Xiang (1998), Iredale et. al. (2001), Hu (2003), and Hess (2009).

development policy. First, China's economic reforms, which began in the late 1970s, have created new jobs *en masse* in cities and especially in the eastern, coastal regions. At the same time, changes to the household registration or *hukou* system have removed to a great extent the barriers to temporary migration (e.g., Fan, 2008, pp. 40–53; Chan, 2009; Sun and Fan, 2011).[5] Numerous studies on China's economic reforms and the *hukou* system exist, and we shall not repeat the details here, but it is important to point out that the above changes have encouraged migrants—both Han and non-Han—to move to destinations with job opportunities, including Xinjiang. Second, as part of the 10th Five-Year Plan (2001–2005), the central government implemented the "Western Development" (*xibu dakaifa*) program to accelerate the development of central and western regions and to alleviate regional inequalities (Chaudhuri, 2005; Raballand and Andrésy, 2007). As part of that program, the government has made considerable investment in Xinjiang's infrastructure, creating jobs and in turn attracting migrants (Hettige, 2007). Scholars have noted that Han migrants to Xinjiang still are given priority over minorities in obtaining urban employment, a source of persistent inequality between Han and minorities (Iredale et. al., 2001; Su et. al., 2001; Gladney, 2004; Wiemer, 2004; Pannell and Schmidt, 2006).

Inequality is in fact the theme of the second body of literature that is directly relevant to our research. It is no secret that the development gap between eastern and western China is large and has been increasing (e.g., Fan and Sun, 2008). Scholars have compared the level of inequality in China to that in the former Yugoslavia before its break-up (Tarling and Gomez, 2008). Within western China and autonomous regions, Han-minority inequality is a main source of ethnic discontent. Although Han Chinese play a vital role in Xinjiang's economic development, they are perceived by many Uyghurs as reinforcing a colonial rule, monopolizing local natural resources, and accumulating wealth by exploiting minorities (Mackerras et al., 2001; Bovingdon, 2002, 2004; Moneyhon, 2003; Webber, 2008; Bhattacharji, 2009). Many studies have shown that the Han-Uyghur income gap is large and that Uyghurs' quality of life has risen at a slower rate than that of Han (Mackerras et al., 2001; Su et. al., 2001; Bovingdon, 2002; Yee, 2003; Becquelin, 2004; Gladney, 2004; Toops, 2004; Pannel and Schmidt, 2006). In the labor market, Han are viewed as taking good jobs away from Uyghurs, at the expense of the latter's social mobility and earnings capacity (Iredale et. al., 2001; Beller-Hann, 2002; Pannell and Schmidt, 2006). Hannum and Xie (1998) show that minorities are underrepresented in Xinjiang's high-skill service sector, such as technical, administrative, and professional jobs. Pannell and Schmidt (2006) have observed that Uyghurs are typically excluded from the industrial job market and the energy service sector. They found that Uyghur migrants from less developed southern Xinjiang to the more developed north, including Urumqi, tend to be concentrated in low-paying service jobs, including employment as petty vendors and in the informal sector, thus widening further the income gap between Han and Uyghur groups.

The persistence and perception of Han-Uyghur inequality has fueled ethnic-based conflicts and separatist movements in the region (Bovingdon, 2004). Resurgence of minority-led uprisings in Xinjiang since the 1990s, in particular, has underscored the urgency of reducing regional and ethnic inequality and considering the well-being of minorities as a critical component of China's overall social stability and national security (Koch, 2006).

Informed by the above two bodies of literature, in this paper we use a framework of analysis that focuses on both migration and ethnicity in Urumqi. We examine not only the

[5]The concepts of "temporary migration" and "permanent migration" are related to the household registration system. Migrants who are unable or unwilling to move their registration to where they actually live and work are considered "temporary migrants," and "permanent migrants" refers to those who have changed their registration to the place of residence (see also footnote 3).

native-migrant dichotomy but also the Han-Uyghur cleavage within the migrant community. By doing so, we wish to highlight the heterogeneity among migrants and of the Urumqi labor market, and the mobility of not only Han Chinese but also minorities. In addition, by comparing Han migrants with Uyghur migrants, we introduce migration as a dimension for understanding inequality. Few studies that examine Han-Uyghur inequality break down the two groups by migrant status—Iredale et al.'s (2001) study based on a Han-Uyghur migrant survey in 1998 is one of the exceptions. In this research, we seek to show that a comparison of Han and Uyghur migrants yields findings that may be different from an overall comparison of Han and Uyghurs.

HAN MIGRATION TO XINJIANG

As described in the preceding section, despite Xinjiang's inland location, it has over the past several decades been among the most popular destinations of internal migrants in China, migrants who are overwhelmingly Han Chinese. Migration to Xinjiang peaked in the period 1960–1964, when it represented 8.65 percent of total interprovincial flows in China (Liang and White, 1996). Although the rate of migration to Xinjiang declined in the 1970s, for the period 1953–1983 as a whole Xinjiang was still ranked as the second most popular destination province for interprovincial migrants, behind Heilongjiang (Yuan, 1990). Since the 1980s, the spatial pattern of migration in China has shifted to one dominated by migration from rural to urban areas and from western and central provinces to eastern ones. Nonetheless, migration to Xinjiang has continued to be high, ranking fourth (trailing only Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangdong) in net interprovincial migration rate for the period 1985–1995 (Iredale et al., 2001).[6]

The dominant characterization of Han migration to Xinjiang is that it is an outcome of systematic and orchestrated efforts by the Chinese government to increase the proportion of Han Chinese in a region dominated by Muslim groups, to alleviate ethnic conflicts, and to create a work force comprised of Han peasants, specialists, and militia (Chaudhuri, 2005). Since the 1980s, however, large-scale state-orchestrated migration flows have subsided, although the state has continued to facilitate Han migration into Xinjiang. Instead, over the past two decades a large number of self-initiated migrants have moved to Xinjiang. These migrants are similar to labor migrants elsewhere in China, who are not state-sponsored but who are simply looking for employment and ways to increase their earnings (Toops, 2004). The major push-pull factors that explain their migration include: a large agricultural labor surplus, urban-rural inequality, and pursuit of better opportunities. Because popular destinations such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangdong have already received large numbers of migrants and their labor markets are increasingly competitive, migrants who are less skilled may be attracted to alternative destinations such as Xinjiang. Therefore, despite sporadic ethnic disturbances in Xinjiang, it will likely continue to attract migrants (Becquelin, 2004).

Thanks to the massive Han in-migration as well as minorities' relatively high rate of growth, Xinjiang's population has grown rapidly (Table 1). Between 1945 and 2008, Xinjiang's population increased from 3.6 million to 21.3 million, at an average annual rate of about 2.9 percent, compared to about 1.5 percent for the nation as a whole. Moreover, the ethnic composition and geographic distribution of population have been dramatically altered. In 1945,

[6]The 1990 and 2000 censuses documented the following absolute magnitudes of interprovincial migration to Xinjiang: more than 340,000 for the period 1985–1990 and more than 1.4 million for the period 1995–2000 (SSB, 1993; NBS, 2002).

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Xinjiang

	1945[a]	1982[a]	1996[a]	2008[b]
Total (million)	3.6	13.1	16.8	21.3
Han (percent)	6.2	40.3	41.1	39.2
Uyghur (percent)	82.7	45.7	50.6	46.1
Hui (percent)	2.8	4.3	4.9	4.5
Kazak (percent)	1.1	6.9	8.0	7.1
Other (percent)	7.2	2.8	2.8	3.1

[a]*Source:* Chaudhuri, 2005.
[b]*Source:* Compiled by authors from SBX, 2010.

Han and Uyghurs made up respectively 6.2 and 82.7 percent of Xinjiang's population. Since 1982, the percentages have changed, to ca. 39–41 percent and 46–51 percent, respectively. In other words, for the past three decades the number and proportion of Han in Xinjiang have been comparable to (although still lower than) those of Uyghurs. In 2008, the number of Han and Uyghurs in Xinjiang was, respectively, 8.3 million and 9.8 million. Because Han tend to concentrate in the three largest cities—Urumqi, Karamay, and Shihezi—all of which are in northern Xinjiang, over time the province's demographic center has shifted northward as well. In 1949, 75 percent of Xinjiang's population resided in the southern part of the province. By 1990, the population of northern Xinjiang exceeded that in the south (Chadhuri, 2005).

UYGHUR MIGRATION IN XINJIANG

During the 1950s, the PRC adopted a Stalinist approach to classify ethnic groups, referred to as "nationalities." Uyghurs, 99 percent of whom reside in Xinjiang, are one of the 55 officially recognized minority nationalities. The two cornerstones of China's policy toward minority nationalities are: (1) "areas of minority concentration have the right to autonomy" and (2) an absolute insistence on maintaining "the unity of the nationalities" (Mackerras et al., 2001, p. 225). The former means that minorities have a certain degree of administrative control over their areas and are guaranteed representation in certain government positions. The latter refers in essence to a total ban on secessionist activities. In response to the large Han-minority inequality, the Chinese government enacted preferential policies for minorities with regard to family planning, college admission, and representation in local governmental bodies. However, some scholars argue that as the economic reforms deepen and as market forces play an increasingly important role, minority preferential policies have become largely ineffective or have been abandoned altogether (Sautman, 2002).

Uyghur migrants in Xinjiang are primarily intraprovincial migrants. From 1950 to the mid-1980s, migration rates within Xinjiang were quite low, mainly because of the establishment of communes, the household registration (*hukou*) policy, and the government's tight control on the economy (Iredale et al., 2001). The economic reforms that began in the late 1970s, along with relaxation of migration control, paved way for an increase in Uyghur migration. Hu's (2003) field work revealed that the surge of migration during the 1990s dramatically altered the age and sex distribution of the Uyghur migrant population by increasing the number of young migrants and female migrants.

The Uyghur migrants in Xinjiang tend to move from rural to urban areas and from the south to the north. This pattern reflects a persistent spatial inequality between the Han-dominated north and non-Han settlements in the south. The north-south inequality has been further exacerbated by the massive in-migration of Han to Xinjiang. From 1957 to 1967, about two million Han migrants settled in northern Xinjiang, most of whom had very little contact with the Uyghurs (Hu, 2003). In other words, a government policy that strategically channeled Han migrants to newly constructed settlements in northern Xinjiang has boosted the economic growth there and widened the gap between northern and southern Xinjiang (Liang and White, 1996; Zang, 2002).

Sautman (1998) has highlighted several indicators of the large gaps between Han and Uyghurs and the worsening relative positions of Uyghurs. In 1993, Uyghur peasants' income averaged 732 yuan, compared to Han peasants' 2,680 yuan. Between 1987 and 1994, the GDP of Xinjiang's minority-concentrated counties declined from about 26 percent to about 18 percent of the provincial total. Xinjiang's rural net per capita income for minorities declined from 76.6 percent of the national average in 1994 to 74 percent in 1998. As expected, the spatial and income inequality between Uyghur and Han settlements motivates Uyghurs from southern Xinjiang to pursue economic opportunities in Han-dominated urban areas in northern Xinjiang (Iredale et al., 2001).

In addition, local governments in Uyghur-concentrated areas encourage out-migration as a development strategy. In many rural Uyghur communities, the amount of arable land per capita is as low as 0.12 acres, and it continues to decrease due to the demand for land for construction (Hu, 2003). In that light, remittances by migrants are an important means to augment household income.

In what follows, we focus on a survey conducted in Urumqi in 2008, which enables us to examine the characteristics of migrants in general and to analyze whether and how Han and Uyghur migrants are different. We begin with a description of the survey.

SURVEY SITE AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang, is one of the few cities within the autonomous region that attracts a large number of migrants, who are diverse in terms of ethnicity, intra- and inter-provincial origin, and gender. Unlike cities in eastern China where the ethnic composition is highly homogeneous, Urumqi's population composition as well as the ethnic diversity of its in-migrants makes it an ideal city to examine how and whether migrants of different ethnicities differ.

In 2008, Urumqi's population reached 2.36 million (SBX, 2010). The city consists of seven districts. Of those, we selected four districts—Tianshan, Shayibake, Xinshi, and Shuimogou—for the survey because they contain the largest and most developed commercial areas in Urumqi. Together, the four districts account for 77 percent of Urumqi's total population, 89 percent of its Uyghur population, and 68 percent of its Han population (Table 2).

The three main data sources on minorities in China are: population censuses, ethnic statistical yearbooks, and household surveys such as those undertaken by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (Bhalla and Qiu, 2006). But each source has limitations. Population censuses document demographic but not socioeconomic information, such as income (Lu and Song, 2006). Ethnic statistical yearbooks are published infrequently, but focus on autonomous areas only, which is problematic because a significant number of minorities reside outside these autonomous areas. Household surveys tend to yield many details, but may not disaggregate migration data by ethnicity (Bhalla and Qiu, 2006).

Table 2. Population of Urumqi by Major Ethnicity and District, 2009

District	Total population	Han	Uyghur	Hui	Kazakh	Other
Urumqi City (million)	2.41	1.75	0.31	0.24	0.07	0.04
Tianshan District (percent)	22.8	20.2	40.1	15.4	23.4	29.0
Shayibake District (percent)	21.8	23.0	22.2	15.0	11.9	24.6
Xinshi District (percent)	21.5	24.0	16.4	13.3	7.6	23.9
Shuimogou District (percent)	10.9	12.6	8.5	3.9	4.1	5.4

Source: Compiled by authors from SBX, 2010.

Given the limitations of existing data sources, we conducted our own survey in Urumqi, during July and August of 2008, with the aim of gathering pertinent information relating migration to ethnicity, education, income, gender, and employment. The questionnaire includes questions on earnings (monthly income), demographic characteristics (gender, age, marital status, and education), migration characteristics (reason for migration, place of origin, length of migration, and household registration status), occupation (type of employment, type of firm, and work experience), and social capital (how did you find employment?).

Urumqi is an attractive destination city for both Han and Uyghur migrants, in part because it has an established and vibrant labor market, a direct result of state policy. As part of the 8th and 9th Five-Year Plans, which aimed at accelerating the economic development of western China, Urumqi and other border cities were given the status of open economic zones and received preferential policies similar to those for coastal cities (Pannell and Schmidt, 2006). Under the 10th Five-Year Plan (2001–2005), also described earlier, the "Western Development" program boosted further Urumqi's economic development and brought about a boom in its service sector, drawing migrants from both within the province and other provinces (Pannell and Schmidt, 2006). While most migrant workers in manufacturing are Han, the service sector is well represented by both Han and Uyghur migrants. For the above reasons, our survey focuses on the service sector. Because we surveyed service establishments only, the results are not generalizable to other sectors of Urumqi's economy.

With the aid of local informants at Xinjiang University, we selected survey sites that had a concentration of service activities. In total, we selected 30 sites: 13 in Tianshan District, 10 in Shayibake, 4 in Xinshi, and 3 in Shuimogou. At each of the 30 sites, we selected every tenth store/establishment to administer the questionnaire. The stores/establishments surveyed included a range of service activities, such as indoor/outdoor shopping centers, specialty goods and cultural markets, electronics markets, hospitals, restaurants, banks, offices, telecommunications, karaoke centers, and so forth.

Because Han and Uyghur establishments tend to be segregated, it is important that the survey includes both predominantly Han sites and predominantly Uyghur sites. Of the 30 selected sites, 25 are predominantly Han and five are predominately Uyghur. Because Tianshan and Shayibake have the most notable concentrations of Uyghur commercial activities and account for 64.5 percent of the Uyghur population in Urumqi, we selected three Uyghur sites from Tianshan and two from Shayibake.

We aimed at surveying 15 to 30 establishments at each site. The number of establishments actually surveyed depends on the size and accessibility of the site but is always within the 15–30 range. At each establishment, we sought to interview the store owner or the manager.

If neither was available, we interviewed one of the employees. In the event of failure—for example, our request for interview was refused—we would drop the establishment from the sample and select the next establishment instead. In total, we collected 595 questionnaires, of which seven were discarded due to missing information.

MIGRANT CHARACTERISTICS

In this research, we defined natives as individuals born in Urumqi and migrants as those born outside of Urumqi. This definition of migrants is analogous to that of the floating population, a stock measure that largely ignores the timing of migration (as opposed to census-type definitions that depict flows during a specific period of time). For the purpose of this research, a stock measure is appropriate because we are concerned with whether an individual is a native of Urumqi or not, rather than when he/she arrived in the city. And, we selected place of birth rather than *hukou*—a key dimension of the floating population definition—again because we are interested in whether an individual is a native rather than whether they have obtained *hukou* for the city of Urumqi and have thus become a "permanent migrant" (see footnotes 3 and 5).

Table 3 summarizes the comparison between migrants and natives across three dimensions: demographic, employment, and social capital. Of the 417 migrants, 77.7 percent are Han, 17.9 percent are Uyghur, and the remaining 4.1 percent belong to other ethnic groups such as Hui. As expected, among natives the proportion of Han is smaller while the proportions of Uyghur and other ethnic groups are higher, compared to migrants. Among both migrants and natives, there are more men than women, but the gender imbalance among natives is greater than that of migrants. The average ages of migrants and natives are very similar, at 32.8 and 32.7 respectively. While the proportions of illiterates are small in both groups, migrants are four times more likely than natives to be illiterate. And migrants tend to be less educated than natives; less than 40 percent of the migrants, compared to 68.3 percent of the natives, possess a high school diploma.

In terms of respondents' employment, we inquired about their industry type and employment type. We identified three industry types: retail, services, and professional. Retail refers to the selling of a variety of items, including snacks and beverages, electronics, home appliances, clothes, home furniture, and minority specialty foods or goods (carpets, knives, etc.). Services jobs include telecommunications providers, small electronics repairers, security guards, construction workers, restaurant servers, barbers, taxi and truck drivers, and various informal jobs including fruit vendors, shoe shiners, key makers, and bike repairers, etc. Professional jobs include professors, doctors, engineers, computer technicians, clerical workers, and businesspersons. The overall industry distributions of migrants and natives are similar, but natives are almost three times more likely than migrants to have a professional job. If this is not surprising enough, we will show later in the paper that Uyghur migrants are more likely than Han migrants to hold a professional job.

Employment type consists of three categories: employers, self-employed, and employees. In our survey, no employers hired more than eight people. In other words, most establishments are small. Self-employed are those who own the business but do not employ any workers. Among employees in our survey, the most common jobs are retail, transportation, and clerical. In general, employers are in the highest socioeconomic strata and employees make up the lowest socioeconomic strata. The self-employed tend to be in the middle, but they are a diverse group, including very small businesses such as street vendors who are associated with low socioeconomic status.

Table 3. Summary Statistics by Migrant Status

	Migrants (n = 417)	Natives (n = 171)
Demographic		
Ethnicity (pct.)		
Han	77.7	59.1
Uyghur	17.9	29.8
Other	4.1	13.5
Gender (male pct.)	51.3	54.4
Age (mean years)	32.8	32.7
Illiterate (pct.)	4.8	1.2
Educational attainment (pct.)		
Primary	29.6	9.4
Middle school	31.1	22.2
High school	22.8	35.7
Vocational school	9.3	21.6
College	7.2	11.1
Employment		
Industry (pct.)		
Retail	50.6	49.7
Services	47.2	43.9
Professional	2.2	6.4
Employment type (pct.)		
Employer	12.8	14.6
Employee	49.6	62.6
Self-employed	37.6	22.8
Informal (pct.)	23.5	10.5
Social capital		
Found employment (pct.)		
Friend/family	24.9	22.3
Government-sponsored	5.0	6.4
Self	70.1	71.3

The proportions of migrants and natives who are employers are quite similar, but a higher proportion of migrants (37.6 percent) than natives (22.8 percent) are self-employed, and a higher proportion of natives (62.6 percent) than migrants (49.6 percent) are employees. The discrepancies reflect the fact that a high proportion of migrants are engaged in informal work (23.5 percent), which tends to be associated with self-employment. Most respondents who have informal work are retailers and vendors selling fruits, drinks, handicrafts, used electronics, or they provide services such as shoe cleaning and repair, bike repair, and key making. They conduct their businesses off of the main streets, usually on side streets or back alleys behind major shopping centers.

We suspect that informal jobs might not have been migrants' first choice but were selected because of the difficulty of finding jobs in the formal labor market. Conversations at the survey sites, albeit anecdotal, support our speculation. For example, a self-employed Han fruit vender told us that he was forced into selling fruits out of the back of his cart because he was unable to find any other source of livelihood. Every day, he rode the bike for more than 10 miles in the morning to buy fruits at a wholesale market and then returned to a shopping center to sell the fruits. He complained that the money was not enough, but it was still more than he could make back in his origin province, Gansu. His story resembles many others of the migrant workers we interviewed, namely, migrants ended up doing informal work after failing to secure employment in the formal labor market.

Social capital refers specifically to the means by which respondents found jobs. More than 70 percent of both migrants and natives found their jobs without the aid of friends or family or under the auspices of government programs. The low percentage of migrants—5 percent—who found jobs via government programs is somewhat surprising, given the prevailing assumption that (Han) migration into Xinjiang is heavily led by the government. But this finding supports Toops's (2004) observation that many recent migrants to Xinjiang, unlike earlier ones, are self-initiated rather than government-sponsored. Among the 5 percent government-sponsored migrants are teachers, businesspersons, researchers, dentists, and also street sweepers. All except street sweepers are highly skilled, which supports the notion that the government is still involved in placing skilled migrants into strategic and leadership positions in the labor market.[7]

HAN AND UYGHUR MIGRANTS

We now turn to a comparison of Han and Uyghur migrants. As mentioned earlier, very few studies on migration in China examine the role of ethnicity—because Han constitute the bulk of migrants in the country, because most migration data do not report ethnicity, and because it is assumed that the role of ethnicity is small. At the same time, most studies on Xinjiang focus on the overall inequality between Han and Uyghur and very few examine the differentials between Han and Uyghur migrants.

Of the 417 migrants included in the survey, 324 are Han, 75 are Uyghur, and 18 are of other ethnicities, including Hui, Kazakh, and Tajik. In our analysis, we focus on the 399 migrants who are Han or Uyghur. The vast majority of Han migrants—81.5 percent—are interprovincial migrants. Figure 1 shows their origin provinces, with Henan (15.2 percent), Sichuan (12.7 percent), Gansu (12.1 percent), and Shanxi (9.2 percent) as the leading origin provinces. It appears that distance and level of economic development are among the factors contributing to their migration. For example, Sichuan and Gansu are among the provinces nearest Xinjiang, whereas Henan is among the poorer provinces in China.

All the Uyghur migrants in our survey are from within Xinjiang (i.e., are intraprovincial migrants). Figure 2 highlights the counties of origin in Xinjiang for both Uyghur and Han intraprovincial migrants. About 75 percent of Uyghur migrants are from the southern counties of the province, with Kashgar (41.5 percent), Akesu (13.5 percent), Atushi (9.5 percent), and Hetian (7.8 percent) serving as the leading counties of origin. It is not surprising that more than 40 percent of the Uyghur migrants are from Kashgar, which is economically

[7]The story of the street sweepers is an interesting one. Although they are not highly skilled workers, their jobs reflect their special relationship with the state: all are retired workers of the XPCC. According to one of our respondents, he was given this job so that he could continue to contribute to society after retiring from the XPCC.

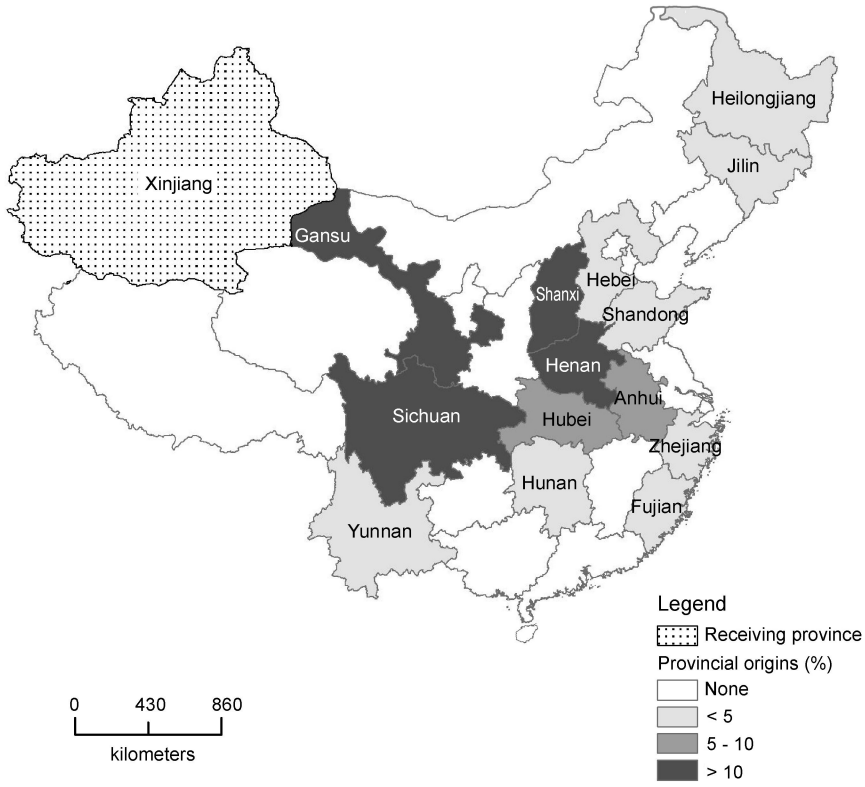

Fig. 1. Origin provinces of Han interprovincial migrants.

more developed than the other predominantly Uyghur counties in southern Xinjiang. The Uyghur migrants included in this survey have likely benefited from policies aimed at advancing Uyghur communities, with explains their relatively high levels of education and mobility compared to Uyghurs in southern counties who remain impoverished.

Of the Han intraprovincial migrants (n =77), 88 percent are from northern and central Xinjiang, with Kuerla (21.5 percent), Yili (14 percent), Shihezi (14 percent), and Tulufan (11.5 percent) being the leading origins. Tulufan, Kuerla, and Yili are the only three origin counties that sent at least 5 percent of both Han and Uyghur migrants, but the proportions from these three counties are much higher for Han migrants than for Uyghur migrants. The above spatial pattern clearly reflects the segregation of the southern Uyghur communities from Han settlements in the central and northern parts of Xinjiang. It shows also that Uyghur migrants, on average, had traveled a greater distance than Han intraprovincial migrants (most of whom are from nearby central counties) to reach Urumqi.

Table 4 summarizes the comparison between Han and Uyghur migrants. The majority (65.3 percent) of Uyghur migrants are male, whereas men account for just less than 50 percent of Han migrants. Han migrants are on average 3.4 years older than Uyghur migrants. This is consistent with studies that find that recent Uyghur migrants are younger than earlier migrants (Hu, 2003). Almost three quarters of Han migrants are single, compared to 60 percent of Uyghur migrants. Thus, we can characterize both groups as being predominately young and single, with the only major difference being the majority of Uyghurs are male.

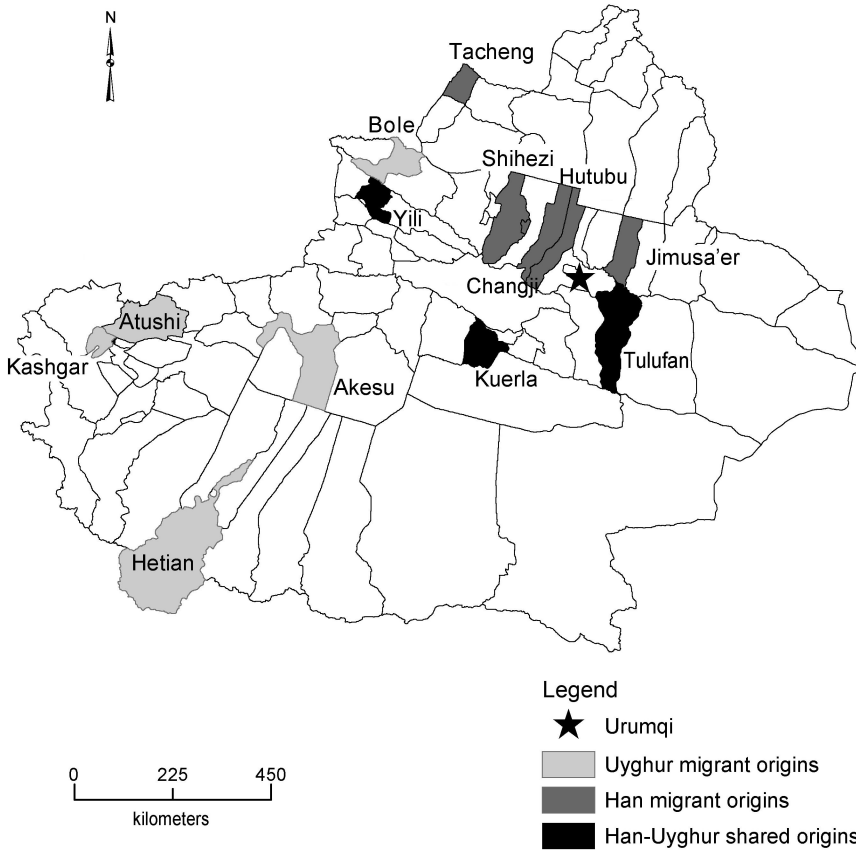

Fig. 2. Origin counties of Han and Uyghur intraprovincial migrants.

In terms of educational attainment, 10.7 percent of Uyghur migrants are illiterate, almost three times as high as Han migrants. Yet, the proportions of Uyghur migrants having completed high school or college are higher (26.4 percent and 13.3 percent) than Han migrants' 22.1 percent and 5.6 percent, respectively. This paradoxical finding suggests that Uyghur migrants have a bipolar educational attainment—they are both more likely to be illiterate and more educated than Han migrants. In the next section we shall examine this pattern in greater detail. Work experience refers to the total number of years migrants have held employment, and the difference between Han (4.2 years) and Uyghur (4.7 years) migrants is small.

Under the category of migrant characteristics, we focus on migrants' origin and their duration of migration. Rural origins refers to having a rural *hukou*, which accounts for 72.8 percent of Han migrants and 76 percent of Uyghur migrants. On average, Han migrants have lived in Urumqi 3.4 years longer than Uyghur migrants. Migration duration is further broken down into three time intervals: less than three years; three to six years; and more than six years. Over half of the Han migrants have lived in Urumqi for more than six years, compared to only 36 percent for Uyghur migrants. And 40 percent of Uyghur migrants and only 16 percent of Han migrants had arrived in Urumqi within the previous three years.

As for the reason for migration, the majority of both Han and Uyghur respondents indicated they first migrated to Urumqi to find work. This is consistent with Hopper and Webber's

Table 4. Migration Characteristics by Ethnicity

	Han (n = 324)	Uyghur (n = 75)
Demographics		
Gender (male pct.)	49.1	65.3
Age (mean years)	33.5	30.1
Single (pct.)	74.1	60.0
Illiterate (pct.)	3.4	10.7
Educational attainment (pct.)		
Primary	34.1	20.0
Middle	31.0	31.8
High school	22.1	26.4
Vocational school	7.2	8.5
College	5.6	13.3
Work experience (mean years)	4.2	4.7
Migrant characteristics		
Rural origins (pct.)	72.8	76.0
Length of migration (mean years)	5.8	9.2
Duration of migration (pct.)		
<3 years	15.7	40.0
3–6 years	32.7	24.0
>6 years	51.6	36.0
Reasons for migration (pct.)		
Find work	77.5	70.1
Education	8.0	21.3
Family	9.5	5.3
Other	5.0	3.3
Employment		
Industry type (pct.)		
Retail	49.7	37.3
Services	43.8	50.7
Professional	6.5	12.0
Employment type (pct.)		
Employer	12.0	13.3
Employee	47.8	56.4
Self-employed	40.2	29.3
Informal (pct.)	25.0	17.3
Social capital		
Found employment (pct.)		
Friends /family	23.9	24.5
Government-sponsored	4.5	6.8
Self	71.6	68.7

(2009) findings, which identify finding work as the primary reason for both Han and Uyghurs to migrate to/within Xinjiang. In addition, Woon (2000) and Webber (2008) also found that Han and Uyghurs migrate to seek an urban lifestyle and in search of greater political and social autonomy (for Uyghurs). In our survey, however, education is the second most important reason and is especially prominent for Uyghur migrants, 21.3 percent of whom chose that as their main reason for migration. This finding indicates that Urumqi attracts migrants not only because of jobs, but also because of its educational institutions. To Uyghurs in Xinjiang, in particular, the educational opportunities in Urumqi are attractive, which explains why higher proportions of Uyghur migrants than Han migrants have had high school or college education. Migrants who have finished education in Urumqi are likely to stay there to find jobs.

Han migrants are more likely than Uyghur migrants to have jobs in retail (49.7 percent versus 37.3 percent), and Uyghur migrants are more likely than Han migrants to be in services (50.7 percent versus 43.8 percent). Uyghur migrants (12.0 percent) are almost twice as likely as Han (6.5 percent) to have a professional job. This can be explained in part by the higher proportion of Uyghur migrants having received college education, as described earlier.

For employment type, both Han and Uyghur migrants are most highly represented in the employee category (47.8 and 56.4 percent, respectively), followed by self-employed and lastly employer. A significant proportion of Han migrants (40.1 percent) are self-employed, compared to 29.4 percent among Uyghur migrants. Also, a higher proportion of Han migrants (25.0 percent versus 17.3 percent) than Uyghurs work in the informal sector. These results suggest that Han migrants are not as resourceful as Uyghur migrants in securing jobs in the formal labor market and are therefore motivated to seek self-employment and jobs in the informal sector.

Our field observations show that Han and Uyghur migrants who work in the informal sector appear to have different niches. Han migrants tend to be engaged in a larger range of work, including selling specialty foods, fruits, appliances, clothing, jewelry, and working as shoe vendors and shiners, key makers, truck drivers, painters, and in construction, bike and electronics repair. Uyghur migrants in the informal sector tend to concentrate in selling foods or goods of higher value in the streets. Examples of the first category are flat bread and roast lamb, and of the second jewelry, electronics (e.g., cell phones and computers), and counterfeit Renminbi (yuan) bills. Those different niches suggest that the labor market is segmented by ethnicity.

With regard to the job search, 23.9 percent of Han migrants and 24.5 percent of Uyghur migrants relied on a friend or family member and 4.5 percent and 6.8 percent, respectively, on the government, to find employment. The majority of both Han and Uyghur migrants—about 70 percent—found their jobs without the help of family or friends, or under the auspices of the government. These proportions are somewhat surprising given the large role of social networks in migrants' job search as reported in the literature on migration in China (e.g., Chan et al., 1999; Rozelle et al., 1999; Solinger, 1999; Meng, 2000; Zhao 2003), and given the prominent role of government sponsorship for Han migrants in earlier periods. These results suggest that the labor market in Urumqi is sufficiently developed and that social networks and government sponsorship are not as important a means of finding jobs as had been expected.

MIGRANT EARNINGS

Table 5 summarizes migrant earnings by Han and Uyghur ethnicity and by three employment types: employer, employee, and self-employed. For both migrant groups, as expected, employees earn the least and employers earn the most. Among employees and the

Table 5. Migrant Earnings by Ethnicity and Employment Type

	Employer		Employee		Self-employed	
	N	Av. monthly earnings[a]	*N*	Av. monthly earnings[a]	*N*	Av. monthly earnings[a]
All migrants	48	2,123	197	1,441	151	1,506
Uyghur migrants	10	1,528	42	1,488	21	1,687
Han migrants	38	2,279	155	1,428	130	1,477

[a]In yuan.

Table 6. Migrant Earnings by Industry/Occupation Type

	Retail		Services		Professional	
	N	Av. monthly earnings[a]	*N*	Av. monthly earnings[a]	*N*	Av. monthly earnings[a]
All migrants	189	1,359	180	1,367	24	2,825
Uyghur migrants	28	971	38	1,502	7	3,560
Han migrants	161	1,427	142	1,437	17	2,485

[a]In yuan.

self-employed, Uyghur migrants have higher income than Han migrants, and among employers Han migrants have higher income than Uyghur migrants. This may seem surprising, as most studies on Xinjiang (and other minority regions in China) show that Uyghurs are economically disadvantaged compared to Han, especially in terms of income (Mackerras, 2001; Becquelin, 2004; Bovingdon, 2004; Toops, 2004).[8] Unlike most studies on Uyghurs, ours highlights a largely unknown perspective, one of comparing Han and Uyghur migrants rather than comparing Han and Uyghurs as a whole.

The income differences between Han and Uyghur migrants point to two possible factors. First, migration is selective. Uyghurs who moved from other parts of Xinjiang to Urumqi might have been more highly skilled than Han migrants that came from other provinces. Second, as described earlier, Uyghur migrants in our survey tend to be more highly educated than their Han counterparts.

Table 6 disaggregates migrants by ethnicity and three occupation/industry types: retail, services, and professional. As expected, migrants holding professional jobs have the highest average earnings. Uyghur migrants employed in professional work earn 43.3 percent more than their Han counterparts. This large difference most likely reflects the success of minority preferential policies in nurturing some Uyghurs into the upper echelons of society. The professionals in our survey include university professors, translators, lawyers, doctors, government workers, and businesspersons. Uyghurs in that group tend to be businesspersons who

[8]Analysis of the entire sample from the Urumqi survey, including migrants and non-migrants, shows that Uyghurs are disproportionately represented in the lower segment of the labor market and earn significantly less income than their Han counterparts (Howell, 2011).

have higher earnings than Han professionals who are more likely to be lawyers, doctors, or government workers.

For retail jobs, however, Uyghur migrants earn significantly (68 percent) less than Han migrants, probably because close to 90 percent of the former sell low-priced cultural items (such as snacks, knives, carpets, and tourist merchandise), whereas Han migrants sell a variety of retail goods (clothing, shoes, small electronics, and high-end electronics) ranging from low- to high-priced items. For services jobs, Uyghur migrants earn more than Han migrants. Our examination of the data shows that 80 percent of Uyghur migrants in services work in restaurants. It is reasonable to expect that because of the popularity of and demand for Uyghur food, Uyghur migrants working in restaurants make a fairly good living. Han migrants, on the other hand, are much more dispersed across different types of services, including low-paying work that brings down the earnings average.

MODELING HAN AND UYGHUR MIGRANTS

Our descriptive analyses thus far have highlighted the univariate differences between Han and Uyghur migrants. In order to assess the statistical significance of the differences, controlling for other relevant variables, we estimate a binomial logistic regression where the dependent variable is coded 0 for Uyghur and 1 for Han. Informed by the summary statistics in the preceding section, we organized the independent variables into three groupings: demographic, employment, and migration (Table 7). Overall the model is successful in predicting the Han migrant versus Uyghur migrant outcome. The Chi square statistic, 67.04, with 16 degrees of freedom, is high and the percent classified correctly is 63 percent. The Nagelkerlke Pseudo R^2 value is 28.32. Nine of the 17 explanatory variables are significant at the .01 level or better.

The coefficient for Gender is significant. The negative coefficient and the odds ratio indicate that male migrants are 89 percent more likely than female migrants to be Uyghur.[9] This confirms that after holding other independent variables constant, Uyghur migrants have a gender imbalance—favoring men—more so than Han migrants. Despite the increase in women among Uyghur migrants, as noted by other scholars (e.g., Hu, 2003), men are still more predominant in the Uyghur migrant community. This likely reflects the patriarchal nature of the Uyghur community, which under Islamic teachings limits the mobility of women. The variable Age is significant and positive: Han migrants are older than Uyghur migrants.

The set of variables for Illiterate and Education depict nonlinearity in educational attainment among Uyghur migrants when compared to Han migrants. On the one hand, Uyghur migrants are more likely than Han migrants to be illiterate. On the other hand, Uyghur migrants are almost five times more likely than Han migrants to have earned a high school diploma and 13 times more likely to have a college diploma. At the same time, Han migrants are more likely than Uyghur migrants to have a primary-level education.

The next set of variables focus on migration. The coefficient for Rural Origin is not significant. The coefficient of <3 Years is significant and the odds ratio indicates that Uyghur migrants are almost three times more likely than Han to have migrated in the three years prior to the survey (between 2005 and 2008). Although the variable >6 Years is not significant, its positive sign is consistent with the summary statistics that show that Han migrants have lived in Urumqi for a longer period of time than the Uyghur migrants. Put together, it is clear that Uyghur migrants, compared to the Han counterparts, have arrived more recently.

[9]The odds of male migrants being Uyghurs are computed as follows: 1/0.53 = 1.89.

Table 7. Binomial Logistic Regression on Uyghur or Han Migrant Outcome

Variable	Estimate	Std. error	Z- value	Odds ratio
(Intercept)	2.76	1.29	2.14 ***	15.90
	Demographic			
Gender (male)	–.63	1.29	–1.87*	.53
Age	.07	.34	3.32***	1.07
Illiterate	–4.44	1.04	–4.28***	.012
Education				
Primary	.31	.10	–2.90***	.73
Middle	–2.08	.83	–2.51**	.12
High School	–1.68	.83	–2.01**	.19
College	–2.59	.89	–2.92***	.08
Vocational (R)				
	Migration			
Rural Origin	–.27	.37	–.73	.76
Duration				
< 3 (years)	–1.17	.41	–2.84***	.31
3–6 (years) (R)				
> 6 (years)	.17	.40	.43	1.19
	Employment			
Work Experience	–.05	.04	–1.45	.97
Formal	–.91	.55	–1.64	.40
Income	–.00	.00	–.80	1.00
Industry/Occupation				
Retail	1.32	.58	2.28**	3.77
Services	.88	.56	1.56	2.40
Professional (R)				
Employment Type				
Self-Employed	.01	.46	.02	1.01
Employer	–.61	.56	–1.10	.54
Employee (R)				

[a]Level of significance: *** = 0.001; ** = 0.01; * = 0.05; R = reference group.

In terms of employment, Han and Uyghur migrants do not differ significantly in Work Experience, Formal, and Income. The negative coefficient for Formal is consistent with the summary statistics that show that Uyghur migrants are more likely than Han migrants to be in the formal sector, but it is not significant. The negative coefficient of Income is also consistent with the summary statistics, but again is not significant. In other words, after holding all other

independent variables constant, the differences between Han and Uyghur migrants in their income and likelihood of holding formal-sector jobs disappear.

It seems that the answer lies in the variables measuring Industry/Occupation. The coefficients for Retail and Services are both positive, and only the one for Retail is significant. Han migrants are 3.77 times more likely than Uyghur migrants to work in retail relative to professional jobs. This difference alone may have removed, in a statistical sense, the difference between them in income and formal-sector jobs. Put in a different way, retail jobs yield the lowest average earnings (Table 6) and there is a strong correlation between retail jobs and informal jobs. The final employment variables—for Employment Type—appear to be similarly affected. The positive coefficient for Self-Employed is consistent with expectation, but is not significant. Once again, even though Han migrants are more likely than Uyghur migrants to be self-employed, the difference is not statistically significant, probably because of the inclusion of the variable Retail in the model.

CONCLUSION

The dominant discourse about ethnic relations in China has focused on the inequality between Han and minorities, which is persistently large. In this discourse, migration is almost always seen as a source of inequality, as in the case of state-orchestrated migration of Han to Xinjiang to join the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps and to take up government, administrative, or managerial jobs. Indeed, such migration flows had dramatically increased the number and proportion of Han in Xinjiang. Han migrants, therefore, often are considered a reason for Uyghurs' disadvantaged positions, including unemployment. In this paper, we have attempted to highlight the role of more recent, self-initiated migration for understanding Han-minority inequality, based on a survey of 30 sites of service activities in Urumqi.

This research contributes to the literature on China's internal migration, which overwhelmingly focuses on migration to eastern and coastal China, by drawing attention to migration to and in western China. It contributes to the literature on Han-minority inequality by highlighting the migration dimension, namely, inequality between Han and Uyghur migrants. Our survey in Urumqi shows that recent Han in-migrants, the vast majority of whom are interprovincial migrants, exhibit characteristics and experiences more similar to self-initiated migrants elsewhere in China than to state-sponsored migrants. The self-initiated migrants are attracted by economic opportunities in Urumqi. The fact that Han interprovincial migrants have relatively low levels of educational attainment suggests that they are not highly skilled, a likely reason for them to choose Xinjiang instead of popular destinations in the eastern, coastal regions. The finding that Han migrants are more highly represented in retail and informal jobs also shows that Urumqi's labor market is segmented by ethnicity and that Han migrants are not among the most competitive. On the other hand, Uyghur migrants, who are predominantly from southern Xinjiang, are younger, tend to be more highly educated, are more likely to hold services or professional jobs, and often have higher average incomes than Han migrants.

Although our survey suggests that Han migrants in Urumqi's service activities do not seem to be better off than their Uyghur counterparts, the results do not diminish or refute the literature that reveals large Han-minority inequalities. Rather, our findings highlight more recent participants in migration—both Han and Uyghur—as different from the previous state-sponsored Han migrants in terms of human capital, motivation for migration, and labor market outcomes. Two additional observations underscore the need to include more seriously self-initiated migrants in the discourse about Han-minority inequality. First, self-initiated migrants, rather than state-sponsored migrants, are increasingly dominant in population

movements in China (Fan, 2008; Sun and Fan, 2011). Second, the mobility of the Chinese population is increasing rapidly, and Uyghurs too are migrating in increasingly large numbers (Iredale et al., 2001).

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