

# XUCHAO GAO

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## POSITION

Postdoctoral Fellow, Southern Methodist University (Supervisor: Daniel L. Millimet) 2025

## EDUCATION

Ph.D., Economics, Boston University, Boston MA, August 2025  
Dissertation Title: *Essays in Labor and Urban Economics*  
Dissertation Committee: Kevin Lang, Daniele Paserman and Benjamin Marx  
  
M.A., Economics, Duke University, Durham, NC, 2018  
  
B.A., Agricultural Economics, Renmin University of China, Beijing, China, 2016  
Study Abroad Program, UC Davis, CA, 2014-2015

## FIELDS OF INTEREST

Labor Economics, Urban Economics, Development Economics

## WORKING PAPERS

“[Single by Choice or Rejection? Evidence on Mating Preferences in China](#)” August 2025. Job Market paper. Under review  
“[The impacts of population mobility controls on housing prices: Evidence from the 2014 household registration reform in China](#),” August 2025.  
“[Worker Benefits of Rural Urban Migrants in China](#)”, August 2025.

## WORK IN PROGRESS

“Government Funding, University Innovation on Local Economic Growth,” with Daniel L. Millimet and Shuo Qi

## BOOK CHAPTERS

“Policy-based Evidence Making” (with Daniel Millimet and Shuo Qi), in preparation for Handbook of Labor, Human Resources and Population Economics, ed. Klaus F. Zimmermann, Springer Nature.

## PRESENTATIONS

Applied Young Economist Webinar (AYEW), 2025 (scheduled)  
Applied Microeconomics Dissertation Workshop, Boston University, 2020-2024  
Development Reading Group, Boston University, 2020

**FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS**

Dean's Fellowship, Boston University, 2018-2023  
Tuition Scholarship, Duke University, 2016-2018  
Scholarship for undergraduate exchange program, Renmin University of China, 2014-2015  
Scholarship of Academic Excellence, Renmin University of China, 2013-2016  
National Scholarship for Undergraduates, China Education Ministry, 2012

**WORK EXPERIENCE**

Research Assistant for Professor Marjorie McElroy and Professor Seth Sanders, Duke University, 2017-2018  
Co-organizer, Development Reading Group, Fall 2020

**TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

Instructor, Empirical Economics II, Department of Economics, Boston University, Summer 2022  
Teaching Assistant, Empirical Economics II (EC204), Department of Economics, Boston University, Fall 2019, Spring 2020, Fall 2020, Spring 2021, Fall 2023, Fall 2024  
Teaching Assistant, Empirical Economics I (EC203), Department of Economics, Boston University, Spring 2022, Fall 2022, Spring 2023  
Teaching Fellow, Introductory Microeconomics Analysis, Department of Economics, Boston University, Fall 2021, Summer 2023  
Teaching Fellow, Introductory Macroeconomics Analysis, Department of Economics, Boston University, Summer 2022, Summer 2023  
Academic Tutor, Introductory Microeconomics Analysis, Summer 2017

**LANGUAGES**

English (fluent), Mandarin (native)

**COMPUTER SKILLS: STATA, R, MATLAB, LaTeX**

**CITIZENSHIP/VISA STATUS: China/F1**

**REFERENCES**

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Lang**

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### **Single by Choice or Rejection? Evidence on Mating Preferences in China** (Job Market Paper)

In China, the marriage rates increase with education for men but decrease for women. However, as in most countries, positive assortative matching is still observable in the data. This pattern is inconsistent with some simple models of marital matching.

In this paper, I ask what preferences can explain the observed mating pattern for individuals born between 1972 and 1975 in China. I allow their utility from marrying to depend on their education and their spouse's education. The utility function allows for a discrete jump and a different slope if the wife's education exceeds the husband's. In addition, each person has idiosyncratic preferences for each potential spouse. I assume utility is nontransferable and solve for equilibrium assuming a deferred acceptance algorithm.

I find that women are strongly averse to marrying less-educated men. In contrast, men are rewarded for marrying more-educated wives. The model fits the high single rate among low-educated men and high-educated women. Moreover, when I predict single rates for earlier birth cohorts, I fit the pattern for low-educated men and high-educated women born after 1970 relatively well, but not that for earlier cohorts. This suggests that mating preferences change significantly across generations.

### **The impacts of population mobility controls on housing prices: Evidence from the 2014 household registration reform in China**

The household registration system (Hukou system) as a mobility control instrument in China largely restricts individuals' access to the social welfare system outside their hometown, making it costly and inconvenient for migrants to live long-term in host cities. Without local Hukou, most migrants will not consider purchasing houses where they work. In this paper, I study the effects of the 2014 Hukou reform on housing prices. Using apartment-complex-level housing data, I find that the implementation of the reform increased prices for lower-quality residential properties, while those of higher quality experienced negative shocks. This is consistent with findings in previous literature that more migrant workers move to places where controls are relaxed, spurring demand for basic housing.

### **Network job and worker benefits of rural urban migrants in China**

Despite the rise in rural-urban migration since the 1980s, many migrants in China remain without access to formal worker benefits. Using panel data from the 2008-2009 RUMiC survey, this paper examines how job search methods affect benefit provision among rural-urban migrants. Comparing cross-sectional and fixed effects approaches, I find that apparent negative associations between network job search and formal benefits largely reflect worker selection rather than causal effects. Most relationships disappear when controlling for individual fixed effects, indicating that workers who rely on networks are negatively selected. The exception is pension benefits, where network job search maintains a significant negative effect, suggesting network-based hiring genuinely channels workers into jobs that avoid long-term benefit obligations. These findings reveal that networks primarily matter through selection rather than direct causal effects.