The transition to adulthood in developing countries is undergoing dramatic transformations, and many rural youth view migration as a promising strategy for a successful future. This dissertation is composed of three studies on youth migration in Haiti. The first study examines two characteristics of youth migration: youth’s motives and parents’ continued provision of financial support to migrants. Findings reveal that education motivates nearly a quarter of youth migration episodes. Labor motivated migration becomes increasingly common between the ages of 10 and 24, and family-tied migration becomes less common. Findings also reveal that nearly two-thirds of youth migrants receive financial support from their families. Though female youth are more likely to be migrants, they are less likely to receive financial support from their families. Youth migration is discussed in the context of the changing labor market, and as a whole, education migration should be considered part of a continued parental investment strategy.
The second study examines education migration following the completion of primary school from a within family perspective. Multilevel logistic regression models compare outcomes between siblings, and findings suggest that parental perceptions of how smart their children are and how well their children do in school are strongly associated with education migration following primary school. There was no evidence to support the hypotheses that having older, migrant siblings is positively associated with education migration or that having younger siblings, who can take on the responsibilities of household chores, eases the departure of older siblings. Findings also suggest that families have reduced the use of education migration as a strategy for investing in their children’s education as a response to the 2010 Haitian earthquake.

The third study explores the context and timing of early sexual experiences among rural-to-urban migrant adolescents in Haiti by examining their early sexual behaviors, knowledge, and attitudes. I first examine the timing of sexual initiation as it relates to migration using three competing hypotheses—adaptation, disruption, and selection. Findings reveal that a disruption hypothesis is that most plausible explanation among female migrant youth, who are less-likely to initiate sexual initiation near migration. Findings also reveal weak associations between migration and sexual initiation among boys. Furthermore, migrant adolescents accumulate less protective knowledge and endorse premarital sex similarly to non-migrants. This study finds evidence that is contrary to the overwhelming assumption that migrant youth risk deleterious sexual and reproductive health outcomes. The high aspirations of migrant youth provide a likely explanation for these findings.