



Migration
& Mobility

Migration, Mobility and Transnational Families: New Priorities in the Asia-Pacific

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Summary: This essay, the first in a series about migration and mobility within, from, and through the Asia-Pacific region, explores the social relations and experiences of mobile people in the current global era. The first part of the essay describes regional flows, summarizes recent research on current labour migration trends, and assesses the effect of nation states and policies on the experiences of migrants and refugees in an era of increasing economic and political precarity. The essay explores the importance of social networks and family dynamics of low-skill and skilled migrants. Throughout, the paper emphasizes the impact of the precarious nature of late capitalism on migrant family ties, affective experiences, and perceptions of mobility and opportunity.

Keywords: migration; Asia-Pacific; new political and economic conditions; family; children; labour migration

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I. Introduction: Asia-Pacific migration trends, shared histories and family ties

International migration is on the rise, with at least one seventh of the world's population now living outside of their country of birth (IOM 2011a). Within nations, mobility is increasingly part of finding a job, getting an education, and settling down with a family. Nowhere are these global and regional patterns more visible than in the Asia-Pacific, where centuries of entrenched travel flows were built on almost a millennia of early regional trade, and, in the colonial era, on international demands for labour and goods. Since the early 1970s, low-skill workers seeking jobs and prosperity in Asian special economic zones, and the global move towards capitalist enterprise requiring low-skill labour and skilled managers to run facilities and projects, has meant rapidly changing movements from, to, and throughout the Asia-Pacific.

It is increasingly clear that scholars of individual Asian nations who choose to focus exclusively on conditions within the country are telling only part of a nation's story. Robust Asia-Pacific migration to Canada and the United States over the past century highlights Canada's shared history with that of communities in India, Vietnam, China, Korea, Samoa, the Philippines, Indonesia, Japan, and more. The west coast of Canada, in particular metropolitan Vancouver, is now strikingly multi-cultural, with significant migration from Hong Kong, mainland China, Korea, and India over the past three decades, and notable resettlement of refugees from Vietnam since the 1970s. Mobility is key not only to understanding the Asia-Pacific in the current era, but also to understanding globalization and global relations more broadly.

In this essay, I review Asia-Pacific trends, assessing dominant migrant flows in the region, and describing various aspects of migration. I focus in particular on the impact of nation-states on migration processes and the manner in which these are mediated by, and imbricated with, culture and family. In an era when borders are being increasingly policed at the same time as citizenship is ever more flexible—a contradiction that creates precarious living conditions for many mobile persons—the social, cultural and emotional networks of mobile persons are critical to the larger story of current regional flows. In this essay, I hone in on the experiences of families within migration, in particular the lives of children, reviewing some of the social patterns and personal challenges facing mobile persons. The overall objective of this working paper is to contextualize the lives of both low skill and affluent migrants more fully, highlighting the lived experiences, practices, and meanings of migrants themselves, and understanding migration and the act of moving as part of a wider, human story.

About the Author

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About the Program

The Centre for Asia-Pacific Initiatives' Migration and Mobility Program is a dynamic, interdisciplinary program housed at the University of Victoria, Canada. The program offers research, policy, and knowledge mobilization on themes pertaining to human migration and mobility within, from, and through the Asia-Pacific region: <http://www.capi.uvic.ca/migration>

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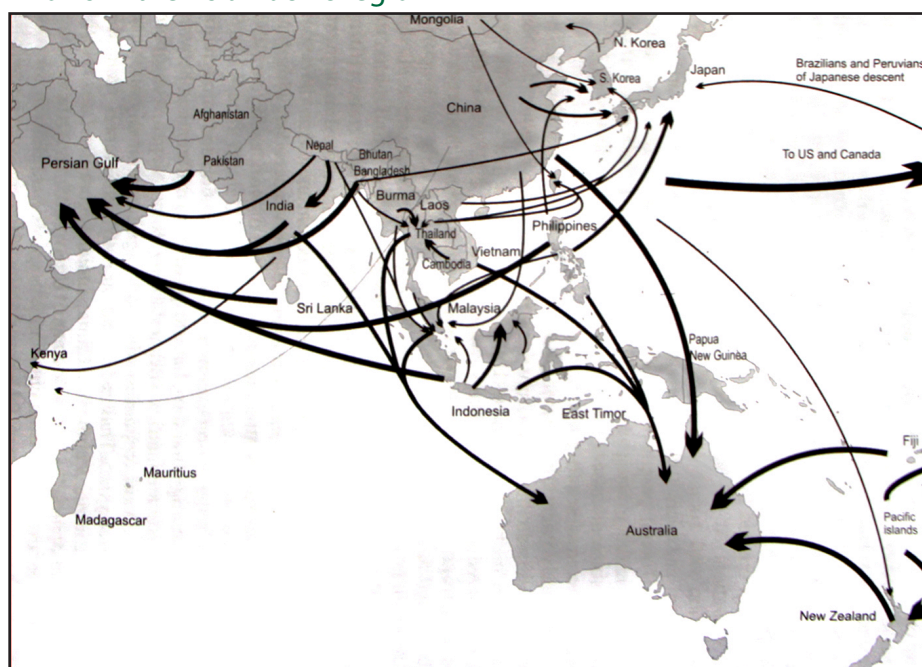
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II. Shifting Ground: Contemporary Asia-Pacific migration and mobility

While migration and mobility have always been features of human life, the movement of people from one area to another has become key to understanding the contemporary era. Castles and Miller (2009) call this the “age of migration,” where fundamental economic, social and political transformations are changing when, where, and how people move. Since the end of World War Two, migration has become increasingly global in scope. Worldwide, between 1960 and 2005 the number of international migrants has almost tripled, from an estimated 75 million in 1960 to almost 200 million in 2007, or approximately 3% of the world’s population (Castles and Miller 2009:5). Much migration is driven by economic factors with migrants in advanced capitalist nations often relocating to join relatives in urban ethnic enclaves. Migration contributes to economic polarization which often finds low-skill migrants in service or other industries described as “the three Ds – Dirty, Dangerous and Difficult” (Hugo 2008a:19; Piper 2008). Recently, migration of affluent families has also helped build the “superdiversity” increasingly found in many global gateway cities such as Vancouver, London, or Sydney (Ley 2010).

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Map 1 | Migration flows in the Asia-Pacific region



Source: Castles and Miller, 2009

The fluidity of current migration is echoed in the lack of a standard definition for the term (IOM 2011a). Ill-understood both by the general public and at a policy level (Anderson and Blinder 2011; World Bank 2013), the word migration is often misused, conflated with immigration policy, and issues related to ethnicity and integration. For the purposes of this paper, we use the most encompassing definition of **migrant** as an individual who has crossed international borders to reside in a foreign country. **Mobility**, or internal migration, refers to the movement of people from one area to another within a nation-state, and **internal migrants** to describe this within-nation flow. If a person crosses borders without accepted documentation, in some conditions he or she may be labeled an **undocumented migrant**. In other contexts, that person may be labeled a **refugee**. Typically, undocumented migrants are understood to move on their own volition, whereas refugees have been forced to move as a result of dangerous conditions.

Table 1 | Summary of Asia-Pacific Migration Patterns

Country	Net migration rate (per 1,000 people)	Remittance in-flows (% of GDP)	Remittance outflows (% of GDP)	Stock of emigrants as percentage of population, (%)	Stock of immigrants as percentage of population (%)
Australia	10.5	0.43	0.33	2.1	25.7
Bangladesh	-4	10.81	0.01	3.3	0.7
Brunei Darussalam	1.8	..	3.6	6	36.4
Cambodia	-3.7	3.29	1.91	2.3	2.2
China	-0.3	0.89	0.03	0.6	0.1
Fiji	-6.8	5.78	0.69	21.3	2.2
Hong Kong, China (SAR)	5.1	0.15	0.19	10.2	38.8
India	-0.5	3.21	0.23	0.9	0.4
Indonesia	-1.1	0.98	0.4	1.1	0.1
Japan	0.4	0.03	0.08	0.6	1.7
Kiribati	..	..	..	6.5	2
Korea (DPR)	0	..	..	1.3	0.2
Korea (Republic of)	-0.1	0.86	1.12	4.3	1.1
Laos	-2.5	0.57	0.11	5.7	0.3
Malaysia	0.6	0.55	2.75	5.3	8.4
Maldives	0	0.2	5.31	0.6	1
Marshall Islands	..	..	..	16.6	2.7
Micronesia	-16.3	..	..	19.7	2.4
Mongolia	-1.1	4.46	2.73	1.2	0.4
Myanmar	-2.1	..	..	1	0.2
Nauru	..	..	..	..	..
Nepal	-0.7	21.66	0.2	3.3	3.2
New Zealand	3.1	0.59	0.82	14.5	22.4
Pakistan	-2.4	5.48	0.01	2.5	2.3
Palau	..	..	..	38.8	28.1
Papua New Guinea	0	0.16	3.41	0.9	0.4
Philippines	-2.8	10.73	0.03	4.6	0.5
Singapore	30.9	..	..	6.1	40.7
Solomon Islands	0	0.43	0.65	1	1.3
Sri Lanka	-2.5	8.38	1.1	9.1	1.7
Thailand	1.5	0.55	..	1.2	1.7
Timor-Leste	-9.4	..	..	1.4	1.2
Tonga	-16	23.65	2.6	45.4	0.8
Tuvalu	..	..	..	..	..
Vanuatu	0	0.93	0.38	1.6	0.3
Viet Nam	-1	7.76	..	2.5	0.1

Source: Human Development Report, United Nations Development Programme, 2013

From every vantage point, the Asia Pacific region is central to global migration flows (see Table 1). As of 2005, estimates suggest around 20 million Asian migrants have left their home countries to work abroad (Hugo 2008a). In 2010, worldwide, five out of the top ten sending countries were in Asia – Bangladesh, China, India, Pakistan and the Philippines (World Bank 2013). The Chinese are the world's largest diaspora, with an estimated 50 million Chinese living outside of China (Castles and Miller 2009).

Likewise since the 1990s, migration within Asia has become significantly more common, with Malaysia and Singapore, Japan, and Hong Kong as key destination countries, and emigration increasing out of Bangladesh, Burma, China, Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam. As Map 1 shows, some migrant flows are well-established. Thailand attracts migrants from Cambodia, for example, and Pacific Islanders migrate to Australia in significant numbers. Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nepal and the Philippines are important sending nations. Approximately 97% of migrants from India and Pakistan and 87% of migrants from Sri Lanka migrated to Gulf Cooperation Council countries (World Bank 2013). In Singapore, over 30% of the country's residents are migrants. In addition, internal migration within the Asia-Pacific is among the busiest in the world, significantly affecting regional economies, shaping nations, and bringing about change in both the receiving and the sending societies.

III. The Demands of Labour Migration

Labour migration to, from, and within the Asia-Pacific has received significant scrutiny (Hugo 2008a; Xiang 2007) in part because of striking gender patterns. While women make up half of all international migrants, in some countries they make up over 70%. In the Philippines, for example, 75% of out-migrants are women; in Indonesia it is 80% (IOM 2011a; Hugo 2008b). Women who once migrated as part of family units are increasingly leaving family behind and working in low-skill “care” industries as nannies, maids, and home care workers (Hochschild 2000; Pratt 2012; Kelly 2006; Kelly and D'Addario 2008; McKay 2003; see also Colen 1995). Some locate the feminization of migrant work within a residual regional Asian values ethos (Ngai 2005; Ong 1987). Others point to the exploitation, discrimination, and social constraints that women face at home and abroad, as well as global systems of gendered inequality as important factors contextualizing women's decision to leave home for work (Beazley 2007; Parrenas 2005). In the care industries, women often work in isolation, and exploitation of nannies and maids in the closed quarters of private homes is rife (Yeoh and Huang 2010). Migrant women's choices are further complicated when viewed from the state level.

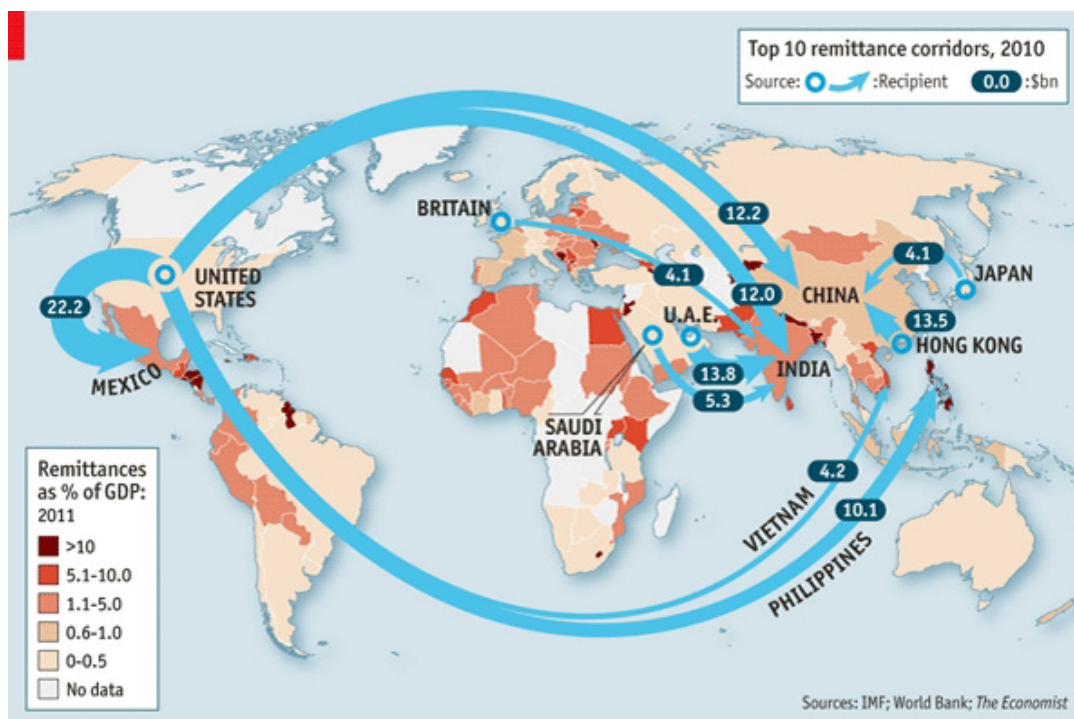
In many country contexts, women who migrate for this kind of work are praised by the state. In Indonesia, for example, they are heralded as “model mothers,” and in the Philippines they are considered “heroines” of the nation (Graham Davis 2010; Parrenas 2008:133). The primary reason for such state-level praise is because of migrant women's important role in sending home remittances to family. Remittances play an important part in fostering development in the region (see Map 2), and in some cases are key to government financial decisions and practices. Remittance flows to Bangladesh and the Philippines, for example, notably represented 12 % of the GDP of each country (World Bank 2013). Not surprisingly, top emigration countries were also top remittance-receiving countries, with China and India receiving USD\$69 billion and USD\$60 billion respectively (World Bank 2013).

Given the critical role of the migrant work force in Asian economies, the weakness of international agencies, and the refusal among advanced capitalist nations to implement the United Nations convention on migrant rights, it is not surprising that states retain primary power for imposing and enforcing immigration policy. Several Asian states, including Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore, show an overall lack of political will to deal with migration issues from a rights perspective and discrimination along the lines of race or work status endures (Yeoh & Huang 2010; Pratt 2012). For example, Singapore's modified Asian Values approach uses “draconian” methods to curtail short-term migrants from bringing in family or having children of their own (Yeoh & Huang 2010:40; Devasahayam & Yeoh 2007), a policy designed to regulate and inculcate ideal norms of family in the country.

The social organization of migrant-sending networks, and problematic working conditions, are also raising concerns in the region. Brokers and agents often extort high fees, though they can provide safe and trusted networks (Hugo 2008a, 2008b). In cases such as home care workers, women may experience deplorable working conditions without social safety nets in place that can extend to their isolated work place. Male migrants working predominantly in construction in the Gulf oil states routinely experience 24-hour work shifts, segregation in barracks, and strict rules preventing long-term stay or family reunification (Castles 2010; Margold 1995). In response to these conditions, non-governmental organizations have been lobbying governments to create a more efficient and transparent framework for migration. Many initiatives nonetheless reinforce hierarchies and discrimination (Rudnycky 2004; Lindquist 2010). For example, in Indonesia local governments have been increasing the identification, tracking and management of emigration. The Jakarta Airport installed a terminal specifically for returning migrants where they are put through disciplinary regimes such as obligatory medical examinations. The government reinforces the status of “migrant” as distinct from other citizens, benefiting from the remittances they contribute to the national economy, while failing to protect their safety (Silvey 2008).

Internal labour migration. Mobility within the densely populated countries of Asia has also had a major impact on national development. In Indonesia, the state-run *transmigrasi* program moved millions of Indonesians from densely populated regions of the country to more rural areas (Hoey 2003), leading to new conflicts and new displacement (Hedman 2008). More recently, many relocated Indonesians are moving anew to borderland regions such as Batam, seeking low wage work in offshoot industries located in Indonesia but which produce Singapore-bound goods (Lindquist 2009, 2010). In India, rural workers are moving rapidly to urban centres. Xiang (2007) describes the Indian labour system of “body shops” in the information technology (IT) industry where large numbers of rural men trained in IT work relocated to body shops in urban Hyderabad and elsewhere to meet the need for a flexible mobile workforce able to respond rapidly to the shifting demands of the global high-tech industry.

Map 2 | Global Remittance Flows



Source: IMF; World Bank; *The Economist*

China's case is illustrative of the extraordinary impact of internal labour migration in the current era. Traveling in contemporary urbanizing China is like "being caught up in the eye of the greatest typhoon in the history of capitalism" (Ong cited in Ley 2010:11). China officially began to liberalize its market in the 1980's, but it was not until the 1990's that urbanization took off and temporary *hukou* (a type of household registry) were granted for internal migrant labor. Unregistered migrants grew more than ten-fold from 1980 to 2010, and now represent around 20% of the country's total population. Most live in the outskirts of urban centres and rent from peasants who custom-build unregulated apartment complexes. This leads to neighborhood segregation, migrant "ghettoes" and long distance commutes. Rural migrants express shame for lacking "development," which motivates them to seek education, jobs, and cultural immersion in the city (Gui, Berry, and Zheng 2012). Yet these unregistered migrants do not have access to legal security or welfare subsidies associated with urban residency. Without legal representation, migrants are frequently denied wages, and in Beijing and Guangzhou, a number of high profile suicides have highlighted the lack of legal options available to internal migrant workers (Xu 2008, Kwong 2011).

Undocumented labour migration. As people think beyond borders and cross them more often, traditional territorial boundaries of the nation-state are being challenged. Undocumented migration is on the rise, and people are increasingly manipulating citizenship status to suit their purposes. One consequence of increasing mobility worldwide is the identification and elaboration of the category of undocumented migrants. In other words, states create categories of "illegal" to be addressed by law. As Dauvergne (2008:2) argues, "migration laws and their enforcement are increasingly understood as the last bastion of sovereignty." The precarious nature of late capitalism propels these laws, creating categories of opposition and exclusion, and often enhancing cavernous gaps between those with legal residency status, and those who do not possess it (Sassen 2007). States move to restrict refugee protection, for example, while expanding refugee rhetoric that emphasizes the threats and dangers of refugees, and exacerbates perceptions of "us" versus "them" (Dauvergne 2008:5).

Undocumented migrant statistics are notoriously hard to tally, but recent estimates suggest the numbers are similar in scale to documented migration (Hugo 2008a:41). There may be approximately four million undocumented migrants in Asian countries (Castles and Miller 2009:129). Typically, lower to middle-income countries such as Malaysia or Indonesia, aiming to increase economic prosperity, develop initiatives around industrialization which demand large numbers of workers, requiring them to relax their borders to migration. This results in the erosion of nation-state boundaries and encourages illegal migration (McNevin 2011; Dauvergne 2008). The undocumented migration stream between Indonesia and Malaysia, as an example of the sheer size of this underground movement, is the second-largest in the world (after U.S./Mexico), with at least 400,000 known undocumented migrants in Malaysia, more than three times the number of legal migrants (Hugo 2007; 2008b; IOM 2011b). The experience can be brutal for these individuals, many of whom find themselves swept up in border policing and housed in camps in Thailand, Malaysia, Myanmar, and Papua New Guinea, among others. Often minors, the undocumented migrants in these camps are denied basic rights and live in prison-like conditions (Wong and Anwar 2003; Bryant 2005).

Disasters and Forced Mobility. Asian countries are host to a wide range of natural disasters and environmental disasters, such as floods, droughts, storms, and earthquakes, which puts them at the top of the World Risk Index, with Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Vanuatu at "extreme risk" of natural disasters. Other Asian countries such as China, India, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka are among the top 15 countries affected (UNU-EHS 2011). The small island nations of the Pacific are at risk for rising water levels. Forced relocation due to rising waters is already underway, compounding the vulnerability of residents of Pacific nations (Mimura 1999; Barnett and Campbell 2010). Displacement within the nation, or movement across borders, is a common response to environmental disasters (IOM 2011a). When humanitarian aid moves in, camps are often built at border regions, and these often remain when the disaster is deemed over. The state may deploy the police and military to a disaster zone, imposing narrow ideologies and definitions, and forcing putatively "non-qualified" populations out. In other instances, the state may reject humanitarian aid altogether, as in the disastrous case of Aceh after the 2005 tsunami (IRC 2006). When normal conditions are suspended, such as following a tsunami or after political unrest, states can implement emergency measures that target persons already identified as marginal. In such cases, the use of emergency measures temporarily in-

creases the state's power to enforce policy, but jeopardizes long-term stability (Ramraj 2010). Environmental crises can also reduce the state's capacity to provide for its residents. In Japan, for example, almost 300,000 persons were displaced following the 2011 tsunami. Camps built were supposed to be in use for only two years, but as of March 2013, only half of those initially housed have been relocated. Because the state is footing the bill for the Tohoku reconstruction, narrow state ideologies of what constitutes a family means that members of non-traditional family formations, such as single-parent families and same-sex couples, are not being included in state provisions (Steele and Osawa 2013:59).

It is important to note that migration does not happen only in response to economics. Castles (2010) has argued that an understanding of migration that privileges the individual migrant's search for work, limits an appreciation of migration as a social phenomenon. Summaries of individuals' movement undermine the place of the migrant in a wider set of social relations, and separate migrants from other kinds of people. These trends are dangerous, Castles (2010:33) argues, with particular implications at the policy level:

"The failure of policy-makers and analysts to see international migration as a dynamic social process is at the root of many political and social problems. The source of the failure is often a one-sided focus on economic models of migration, which claim that migration is an individual response to market factors. That has led to the belief that migration can be turned on and off like a tap".

In the following section I describe more fully the social context of migration from a perspective which privileges emotions, values, and practices of families. I describe issues around families and migration, focusing on the place of children within wider studies about the emotional consequences of globalization. I also review recent studies of skilled affluent migrants, highlighting their family relationships as being of central importance in the larger story of global flows and how these are reshaping social worlds.

IV. Cultural, Familial and Emotional Contexts of Migration

Migration is often a family affair, involving the families of those who move, and the social networks that allow mobility to happen. Massey, et al. (1998) recently argued that the current era of rapid and generalized changes, of fluidity and openness, needs an analytic framework that recognizes families increasingly think beyond nation-state borders, and cross them with increasing frequency (Urry 2007). Migrants, in short, are subjects making a wide range of choices, and interpreting their experiences reflectively from within a highly social personal space.

For many mobile persons, one of the most challenging aspects of mobility is the loss of valued family networks. While a compelling stream in current studies of globalization explores how mobile persons newly experience the world in positive ways (e.g. Giddens 1991; Lindquist 2009; Constable 2005), a mobile person's role in their family has a dramatic impact on the scope of their experiences. Women's role in the "care" industry shows this clearly, as women migrants leave their homes, families, and children, in order to care for the homes and children of other families in other, wealthier nations. This has been described as a "second shift" in which a migrating mother is expected to care for her family even when working overseas (Ehrenreich & Hochschild 2004; Hochschild and Machung 1989; Hochschild 2000; Parrenas 2005). Because women tend to be discursively constructed within domestic spaces, women's migration has tended to be subsumed within an oversimplified rhetoric emphasizing exploitative domestic workplaces at the expense of other aspects of family migration (Piper and Yamanaka 2008). Only since the late 1990s, following the call of Silvey & Lawson (1999), has research honed in on the affective social relations and networks of migrating women themselves. Such key works as *Maid to Order in Hong Kong* (Constable 1997), *Global Filipinos* (McKay 2012), *Families Apart* (Pratt 2012), and *Global Women* (Ehrenreich & Hochschild 2004) use storytelling or qualitative methods to describe the experiences of families and the resilience of women. Migrant women often long for closer relationships with their faraway children, and suffer feelings of inadequacy when they cannot meet expectations at

home. Most migrant mothers use multiple strategies, including cell phones, texting, social media and remittances to help maintain parent-child intimacy and strong social ties across distances (McKay 2007; 2012; Madianou and Miller 2011a and 2011b). Not all women are able to manage the “double shift” of caring for family while away. Some women assert personal agency by delaying their return, deferring parental responsibilities, evading reproductive expectations altogether (Hoang & Yeoh 2011; Graham 2008), or violating regional Asian norms of an ideal mother-child bond in other ways (Quah 2008).

While research on migrant fathers has been greatly neglected, the scant literature suggests that they actively participate in staying connected with their stay-behind children (McKay 2012). A growing trend is for the father to remain at home and care for children while the mother migrates for work. Stay-at-home fathers destabilize traditional gender norms, often thrusting men into basic care roles for which they are unprepared, and in some cultural contexts creating perceived challenges to their masculinity (Ball and Wahedi 2010; Hoang and Yeoh 2011).

The experiences of children within migration are receiving increasing attention. Research by Parrenas (2005), and Madianou and Miller (2011b) show that the “stay behind” children of Filipino overseas workers suffer greatly when their parents leave them behind, experiencing emotional distress and challenges at school and in social networks. Less is known about the children of the many parents who migrate outside of formal channels, and children of undocumented migrants have mostly fallen through the cracks of researchers and state policy makers. However, social constructions of children as “not-yet-fully-formed” legitimate two dominant responses to migrant children in general: they either need to be protected, or they need to be better controlled (James et al. 2007). On one hand, policies toward migrant or stateless children tend to construct the child as weak, vulnerable, and dependent—simplistic caricatures that reduce children’s potential to a “prism of victimhood: vulnerable by definition to abuse, trauma and deprivation” (Boyden and Hart 2007:243; Ni Laoire et al. 2010; Camacho 2007). On the other hand, migrant children fall through the cracks in discussions about citizenship of migrants because the attributes of citizenship are routinely evaluated only from an adult-centred viewpoint (Bhabha 2009b). Bhabha (2009a) has signaled the fragility of a global rights system through her depiction of “Arendt’s children,” illegal migrant children in a state where there are no parents or guardians to look after them. These children lack reliable access to education, health care and other benefits associated with a legal identity, and are more likely to experience discrimination and harassment (Doek 2007; Vandenabeele 2011). Indonesian children of illegal migrants in Malaysia, for example, are typically poorer than Malaysian children, have more difficulties at school, and suffer more discrimination (Bryant 2005; Wong and Anwar 2003). Yet in increasing numbers, adolescent children without citizenship papers are crossing international borders to work, often in order to fulfill notions of family responsibility and honour through work (Beazley et al. 2006).

In sum, migrant families often suffer negative emotional effects of isolation and of having little control over their working or living conditions. Lindquist (2009; Dalzell and Lindquist 2008) describes a lack of closure which he suggests is common to Indonesian internal migrants who leave home to seek opportunities elsewhere in Indonesia. The failure to achieve what family and community expect of them, including expectations of remittances and also success in work and social relations, exacerbates feelings of anxiety and uncertainty. For the mobile working poor, opportunities are not always forthcoming: many mobile aspirants return home empty-handed, in debt, and feeling deeply marginalized, the lure of middle-class status unattained (Lindquist 2009; see also Liebelt 2008).

Family and Mobility for Skilled and Affluent Migrants. For affluent migrants, or migrants with valued skills and training, the experience of migration is typically presented as less of a challenge. This distinction is based partly on perceptions of class-based patterns of mobility. As Bauman (1998) notes, movements of the highly skilled are often celebrated as professional mobility, and immigration laws favour them, while low skill labour migration is viewed in derogatory terms, as occurring out of necessity only, and immigration laws discriminate against them. The 21st century is increasingly characterized by the class-specific, selective *right* to be mobile.

Despite the increasing importance of affluent, mobile professionals in business, political and cultural spheres, we know

far less about the social experiences of skilled migrants than we do low-skill migrants. What we do know suggests skilled migrants are leaders in creating a new “transnational social field” (Glick-Schiller 1999; Ley 2010:3). Where once migration was understood primarily as linear—from one home to a new location in a new home—increasingly that model is being challenged as affluent migrants now move repeatedly, often returning home later in life, maintaining dual citizenship. Some breadwinner family members may move repeatedly, while others in the family, usually the children, may move only once. Various innovations in the transportation industry along with revolutionary developments in telecommunications mean that transnationalism has become a way of life for many (Ley 2010).

Affluent members of the Chinese diaspora, where bi-nationalism is a desired, and common trait, offer a compelling example of families living in a transnational social field. For example, Chinese-Canadians in Vancouver extol the virtues of both countries: “Hong Kong for making money, Canada for quality of life” (Ley 2010:5). Acumen in capital accumulation has been associated with global investors from the “four tiger” economies, whose successes within largely unregulated markets in Asia have allowed for spectacular investments and accumulation of wealth in global markets. The “bamboo networks” or *guanxi* of overseas Chinese business families are reshaping global finance (Ley 2010; Ong 2012, 1999). Business travelers within this network have to adopt a mobile transnational lifestyle, moving from one country to another as new opportunities present themselves.

Students are also highly mobile. Affluent students from Korea, Japan and China, who increasingly seek to study abroad, confront expectations of freedom and personal choice when they are away, but often face gendered socio-economic and cultural expectations that prevail when they return home (Kim 2011; Ong 2006; Xiang and Shen 2009). Many of these students then seek “provisional circularity... willing to go anywhere for a while” (Kim 2011:38), partly for work, but partly as a new form of mobile identity and to get away from family obligations at home (Kuah-Pierce 2006; Smith and Favell 1995; Yamashita 2008; Butt n.d.).

Marriage, part of the “gendered geographies of power” that underlie all transnational migration (Mahler and Pessar 2001:5), has long been a means to mobility, both for the affluent and those seeking upward mobility. Over the past three decades, the numbers of women from Asian nations marrying men from advanced capitalist societies has soared. For example, from 1991 to 1999, 91% of the Filipinos marrying outside of the country were women. Almost all of the men they married were from the U.S., Japan, Australia, Germany, and Canada. In Japan, after 1970, marriage by Japanese women to non-Japanese men quadrupled. After 1980, out-marriage from China to Taiwan increased ten-fold, with Chinese women embracing this opportunity so enthusiastically that in 1996 the Taiwanese government had to impose limits on the number of mainland Chinese brides who could enter Taiwan (Constable 2005:5). Some of these marriages are arranged through such channels as the mail order bride industry. More recently, the use of the internet to negotiate marriage contracts has ushered in the trend of mostly women leaving lower income Asian nations to marry men in affluent societies. The “cartographies of desire” that these marriage trends show are partially of fantasies about modernity, opportunity, and sexuality (Constable 2003). However, research also suggests transnational marriage allows women to become more mobile than they might otherwise be, although not always in predictable ways. For example, women can pragmatically marry below their social class in order to prevent the deskilling that often occurs if they had migrated on a work visa (Thai 2005; Siar 2011; Kofman and Raghuram 2006; Willis and Yeoh 2003; Yamashita 2008).

Ironically, despite the porosity of national boundaries for affluent families, cultural boundaries appear to remain strikingly robust. Within the Asia-Pacific region, first world managers who migrate to the Asia-Pacific typically work in economically dominant positions in hierarchies reminiscent of the colonial systems many of those countries sought to overcome (Leggett 2005, 2010). Fechter describes expatriate lives in Jakarta, Indonesia as highly concerned with social boundaries, with families actively engaged in creating a spatial and social “Western bubble” within which they order their lives (Fechter 2007:viii). In similar fashion, Ley (2010) describes Chinese “millionaire migrants” in Vancouver who live in tight enclaves, shop at China-themed shopping centres, and maintain strongly valued, tightly closed, global networks.

At the same time, the cultural competence of mobile migrants has become increasingly important in global business strategies. Brannen's research shows how biculturals - individuals who have been deeply socialized in two or more distinct cultures - constitute a new, growing demographic in the global labor force. Increasingly, individuals with mixed cultural identities are emerging as key boundary-spanning employees and managers in complex organizations (Brannen & Thomas 2010; Brannen et al. 2013). The value of people with complex cultural skills may partially mitigate the "banal racism" and discrimination skilled migrants who leave the Asia-Pacific often say they experience (Kim 2011:77; Yeoh and Huang 2010). Affluent migrants, even when highly valued in the workplace, can struggle with racialized identity politics, challenges around individualism, and ambition and expectations at home and away (Kim 2011; Willis and Yeoh 2003).

Despite clear differences between the opportunities available to affluent, skilled migrants and low-skill migrant lifestyles, many emotional similarities endure. "Transnationalism multiplies the unease of life," Ley argues (2010: 198), and this holds for all classes. The strategy of breaking up the family in order to provide economic benefit for the larger family whole is challenging for all. As the family becomes geographically dispersed, it may grow economically stronger but can remain socially, and often emotionally, weaker (Ley 2010:198; Hoang and Yeoh 2011). The Chinese women who act as "study mothers," accompanying their children to new countries so the child can acquire an education, often experience depression due to isolation from social networks (Huang and Yeoh 2005). Similarly, the Filipina who leaves her children behind to work as a nanny in the United Kingdom may experience feelings of loss and quiet suffering (McKay 2012). The resulting long-distance relationships are a significant cause of contention (Ley 2010:5), often the source of family fragmentation as spouses may take on second families, or decide to divorce (Lang and Smart 2002). While affluence does make it easier to maintain contact, strategies for staying in touch are also roundly similar across classes. Teleconferencing, social media, telephone, and active social networks help to lessen the challenges of staying connected, and committed, to the larger family goals that inspired the migration in the first place.

In sum, even with a supportive transnational kin network, migration for both low-skill and skilled or affluent migrants often precipitates family fragmentation, with parent-child relations suffering many of the negative effects of constant mobility and vulnerability (Coe 2011). Excluding the place of family in debates and policies around migration undermines the motives of most families, whatever their socioeconomic background, to sustain emotional relationships with overseas loved ones.

V. Conclusion

This essay has contributed to arguments which show that migration is not a rational economic choice made by a single person, but rather a social act with complex social outcomes. Migrants are actors, helping to shape the nature of contemporary society, economic flows and cultural trends. This essay has emphasized a holistic view of migration, arguing migrants are complex social beings, driven by personal or familial financial need and expectations, emotional and family desires, state expectations and regulations, new workplace conditions, new cultural trends, identity politics, and political and economic conditions. As the numbers of people who move continue to grow, and mobility increasingly becomes the new normal, the transformations in family life will take on increasing importance in scholarship, contributing to cutting-edge dialogue on the changing social worlds of mobile people.

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