

Chapter 15

Gendered Highly Skilled Migration in the Knowledge Sector

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Abstract

Highly skilled women form a large part of skilled migrant flows *within, from and to* Asia, although they have little place in the imaginaries of Asian gendered migration. This chapter focuses on the mutually constitutive relationship between gender and skilled migration. It first reviews the key feminist contributions to theorising skilled migration. Second, it outlines how gender, skills and migration play out in skilled migration regimes. Lastly, it sets out a future research agenda for gendered skilled migration research that is sensitive to the geographies in which gender analysis of skilled migrants is conducted, and the need to extend research beyond a heteronormative and patriarchal matrix.

Keywords: gender, international migration, highly skilled, knowledge sector

<a>Introduction

Asia is well known as a source continent for large flows of lesser skilled migrant women who have formed the basis for empirical studies, theoretical advancements and policy discourses globally (Asis et al., 2019). However, while highly skilled women also form a large part of migrant flows *within, from and to* Asia, they have little place in imaginaries of Asian gendered migration. They share commonalities and differences with skilled men and less skilled women in terms of classed, raced and gendered positions, but this has not yet been fully explored.

The chapter begins with an exploration of how gender influences skilled migration and a brief discussion of existing flows and patterns of highly skilled gendered migration into and out of Asia. It then moves to a substantive discussion of feminist contributions to theorising skilled migration. Towards this, it sets out the primary parameters through which skilled migration is currently conceptualised, feminist interventions and the implications of these theorisations for further research on Asia. In particular, it outlines how gender, skills and migration play out in gendered skilled migratory regimes. Finally, the chapter ends by

offering some insights on what a focus on skilled gendered migration into, from and within Asia offers migration research.

<a>Skills, Migration and Knowledge

Asia is one of the most important continents for skilled and lesser skilled migration, with over 40 per cent of all migrants originating from there (Asian Development Bank, 2018a).

Temporary skilled migrants form an important part of these flows as evident in the immigration data of some of the large receiving countries that are part of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) group (DeVoretz, 2003). For instance, in the US, 90 per cent of all H1-B visas in 2016 were granted to workers from Asia (Asian Development Bank, 2018b). Similarly, in the UK, over 60 per cent of all migrants receiving Tier 2 visas in 2017 were from an Asian country (ONS, 2018). Asia is also far and away the largest sender of student migrants, with China and India being among the largest source countries. International student flows from Asia to North America and Western Europe show a gender parity with women comprising 49% of the flows. On the other hand, international student flows into Asia show a male bias; women make up approximately 45% of the flows into Central, East, South and West Asia (Unesco Institute of Statistics, 2012a)

Asia, however, is a large continent with considerable variations in patterns between and within Asian countries. For instance, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries have some of the highest proportions of migrants (Khadri and Shah, 2018), including skilled migrants, as a proportion of the population while other countries, either because of their very large populations or low migrant populations, have only low proportions of migrants. Moreover, the demographic dividend in some Asian countries has meant that there is a large pool of outward migrants, including skilled migrants, while other countries are at the other end of the demographic spectrum and are altering their regulations to invite migrants. Thus,

Asia raises interesting empirical, theoretical and policy questions for gendered skilled migration research.

At the regional level, skills have become a key driver of Asian development (ADBI, 2014). An increase in the skills base, through both upgrading (ADB, 2018) and incentives for return migration of diasporic nationals (ILO-China, 2017), has become part of policy initiatives across many countries. For example, there have been proposals to develop a common framework of skills across the increasingly integrating countries of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) through the formation of a single economic community. A joint ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF) has been established to benchmark national qualifications and enable comparability across the region. Two levels of skills are distinguished: the Mutual Recognition Arrangements (MRAs) that facilitate the mobility of skilled professionals in ASEAN, and the Mutual Recognition of Skills (MRS) that focuses on vocational skills. However, this emphasis on the mobility of the highly skilled has not been without its critics given the extent, significance and problems faced by the very large numbers of lesser skilled migrants within the region (Khasru, 2018), the region's economic and political unevenness, and a lack of recognition of the specific role that women play in the region's economy (International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific, 2016). Hence, while skilled mobility within Asia is encouraged both through migratory and skills regimes, the preferential treatment towards skilled workers is contested.

Further, skilled mobility raises very specific issues when viewed through a gendered lens. First, as education and qualifications are a primary defining criterion for skills, the differential representation of women and men in education is important. Although women in some parts of Asia have poor representation in education, gender representation within the higher education (HE) sector is also subtended by class so that (middle and upper class) women are often well-represented in HE, including in usually male-dominated disciplines

like science and engineering education (Raghuram et al., 2017 & 2018). This is unlike the pattern in some other parts of the world, suggesting that Asian women will have opportunities for skilled mobility in the future.

Second, skilled labour mobility is often highly specific and the gender differences within these occupations are likely to influence who migrates and who does not. Two of the sectors with a very high demand for skilled mobility are both very gender selective – Information Technology (IT) and nursing. The IT sector is highly male-dominated throughout the world although women are better represented in mobility flows from some Asian countries such as India, reflecting the relatively gender equitable presence of women in the sector within the country (Sondhi et al., 2019). IT is seen to epitomise embrained skills (Kofman and Raghuram, 2013), which are easily transferable (Williams and Baláž, 2008). In contrast, nursing is over-represented by women including in migration streams, although the number of male nurses from some Asian countries like India and the Philippines is rising (Walton-Roberts, 2019). Nursing is purportedly much more dependent on embodied skills as with work in many of the social reproductive sectors of the labour market (Kofman and Raghuram, 2015).

Third, skilled migrants are also a product of migratory regimes. Salary thresholds are often used as proxies for entry through skilled labour categories. The global gender gap in wages becomes particularly acute when compared across sectors, with female-dominated sectors often having lower incomes than male-dominated ones. In that context, women nurses are less able to bring spouses with them while male IT workers might well be able to do so. In the latter case, the spouse, very often women with equivalent skills, may appear as a family migrant and their skills erased from registers as a result (Cangià et al., 2018; Ho, 2006). This is particularly important for making skilled women's mobility visible where migration occurs as part of family strategies (Man and Chou, 2017).

Fourth, skilled migration regimes are also selective by age, income, wealth and other factors – often in combination and likely to be gender-differentiated – further reshaping who is a skilled migrant. This is particularly true in certain Asian countries such as Singapore, Japan, and China where inbound skilled migrants have to meet a combination of criteria (ILO-China, 2017; Yeoh and Lam, 2016), inflecting who moves. Skills are also used to differentiate between the wanted (skilled) migrant and those whose (unskilled) labour is needed but whose presence is barely tolerated (Yeoh and Lam, 2016). However, as Baas (2017), using the example of Indian migrants in Singapore, suggests, immigration regulations also disrupt the neat division between the skilled and lesser skilled, either because of the ways in which they deskill migrants or because they provide aspirational routes for migrants to upskill. This may be done through the combination of education and earnings, creating a group of middling migrants, thus disrupting the binary of skilled and lesser skilled. These are likely to be gender-differentiated as women are often known to be deskilled because of the demands placed on them in the context of new reproductive arrangements in the post-migration scenario.

Finally, skilled migrants may move into and out of the labour market category of skilled migrant. Students, spouses and refugees may all be skilled or acquire the skills that enable them to shift category, or at least to work as skilled migrants, irrespective of their visa status. There are, thus, temporal qualities to both skills and to becoming skilled migrants but the extent to which women and men get these opportunities to reskill are likely to vary.

These issues at the intersection of gender and skills are exemplified in the wider literature on skilled migration. A small and innovative body of work on talent migration highlights institutional level factors that influence corporate policies aimed at the acquisition and development of talented human capital to ensure success in a ‘global’ business environment (Adler, 1994, 1997 & 2002; Ho, 2006; Cooke et al., 2013 & 2017). Talent

migration has drawn on the literature from Human Resources Management (HRM) but also from wider recognition of the role that creative industries can play in boosting national economies (Florida, 2002). Creativity, rather than knowledge, is combined with other softer elements such as success and cosmopolitanism (Yeoh and Lai, 2008). The gendering of talent is yet to be fully explored.

When referring to those participating in talent migration, the term ‘expatriate’ has been widely used in the Human Resources Management literature, especially in business journals. Historically, the term expatriate drew on the authority of race and class (Kunz, 2016) and on colonial histories; these have continued their presence in the contemporary literature through the figures of neo-colonialism –Western managers and executives working in large corporate firms as drivers of globalisation (Beaverstock, 2011). However, the dynamism of Asian economic patterns has meant that intra-Asian mobility of such skilled migrants has grown significantly (Altman and Shortland, 2008; Napier and Taylor, 2002; Shen and Jiang, 2015; Shimoda, 2017). Most of the literature emphasises the importance of ‘the boys’ network’ in this form of migration with women rarely seen as key players.

<a>Data Sources

While there is not yet a comprehensive database of skilled migrant data, there are some sources available from which highly skilled migration data can be obtained for both the country of origin and destination. The two key sources of data on highly skilled migrants currently are the (a) global bilateral migration database, and (b) Database on Immigrants in OECD countries (Kerr et al., 2016). These databases report the stock of migrants by education from each home country that have moved to each country of destination and define ‘highly skilled workers’ as those with at least one year of tertiary-level education. These databases suffer from incompleteness of data, as well as different census years, definitions

and data collection methods, thereby limiting their comparability. Another data source is labour force surveys that are more or less routinely conducted within different countries. These may have sampling bias and very often focus on those who are at work. Those with skills but not currently working are not registered. A third data source is more country specific but also more reliable. It involves entry data for countries and is therefore based on migrant flows rather than stocks. Where they are obtained from immigration departments, they are often reliable but in some cases these flows may be based on sampling rather than complete data coverage. There are two challenges with this third method. First, every country collects different data. While some countries (such as Singapore and South Korea) collect data on incoming migrants, others (such as India, Japan, Pakistan and Nepal) collect data on both incoming and outgoing flows. However, only a subset of migrant outflows are captured in some cases such as for India, Pakistan and Nepal (ADB, 2018; India Migration Now, 2019). The second challenge is data access as different countries release different types of data and with varying levels of granularity.

While these types of data are useful, they provide an insufficient picture of highly skilled migration as gendered. Part of the issue is that only a handful of countries provide visa entry data disaggregated by gender. Second, the data that is available is limited in scope of what it can tell about this population. Because of their breadth and coverage, they do not offer the demographic details which can help us to understand this group. One subset of highly skilled migration for which gender-disaggregated is available for both country of destination and origin across Asia is international student mobility. Such data is available for countries compiled by the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (Unesco Institute of Statistics, 2012b), albeit to varying degrees of accuracies.

In addition to these global level databases, there are several small-scale bespoke surveys that collect data on a portion of the population. These are usually focused on specific

sectors within destination countries rather than being comprehensive population statistics, for example, international academics in Singapore (Chou et al., 2017), Indian IT professionals in the UK and India (Raghuram et al., 2017 & 2018), and a cross-section of Indian highly skilled professionals in Switzerland (Tejada and Bhattacharya, 2014).

A review of national level household surveys (Castaldo et al., 2009) identifies key national level data sources, particularly for non-OECD countries, which contain migration related variables: Living Standard Measurement Survey, Demographic and Health Survey, Labour Force Surveys and Integrated Survey, and Population Census. Examining highly skilled migration through these datasets reveals micro-level individual data of tertiary-educated/highly skilled members of a household who have undertaken international or internal mobility. However, unless specifically asked for, it is not always possible to trace the country of destination to which the respondent moved. Similarly, where there is data on inbound migrants – it is not easy to identify the country of origin. Nevertheless, by including other variables such as country of birth, and usual place or residence, it is possible to build linkages between countries of destination and origin. The individual-level data allows for a gendered analysis of inbound and outbound migrant flows, place of skills acquisition and development, and potential inflow and outflow of remittances. This data can be used to map low-skilled, semi-skilled and highly-skilled migrants. Additionally, a meso-level analysis of households in relation to highly skilled migration can be undertaken with these large-scale datasets. When combined with data from receiving countries (Xiang, 2016), we can obtain a broad picture of the composition and patterns of these flows (Khadria et al., 2009; Khadria and Perveen Kumar, 2012). In sum, although there is not a comprehensive database on gendered skilled migration, it is possible to piece together some patterns and issues, and to analyse them theoretically, as we go on to demonstrate.

<a>Theorising Gendered Skilled Migration

Development, human capital, and care

Arguably, the impact of skilled migration has been greater than that warranted by the number of migrants, a proposition which has fuelled significant amounts of research for many years (for an early analysis, see Bhagwati, 1976). The primary concern of the bulk of this analysis has been the impact of skilled migration for development, whereby development is viewed through the modernisation lens. Skilled migration is intrinsically associated with gains in knowledge in the receiving country (brain gain), losses in the sending country (brain drain) and hence, an analysis of how to retain brains in both countries. Migrants become the powerhouse not only for providing skilled services but also for defining skills, producing knowledge, rewriting the histories of the specialisms in which they are involved (Bornat et al., 2014); they also apparently reduce inequalities between countries (Kahanec and Zimmermann, 2014). Underpinning this argument is an implicit faith in the role of human capital, skills and education in the development trajectory.

Gender-aware and feminist approaches have introduced a degree of sensitivity to these theorisations of skilled migration (Bang and Mitra, 2011; Dumont, 2005). Gendered analyses of skilled migrant inflows into OECD countries show that there are more skilled women than men emigrating into these destinations (Docquier et al., 2009). Countries with higher gross domestic product (GDP), lower infant mortality and life span seem to have smaller gaps between women and men skilled migrants. Attempts have also been made to explore the institutional and cultural factors that may shape this gap (Bang and Mitra, 2011). For instance, although women and men do not have equal access to skills, those with equal or equivalent skills have differential access to jobs, promotions, wages and human capital development, so that women face career blocks in ways that men do not. These gendered inequalities in both entry to the labour market and progression within it can also influence the

decision to migrate. The lack of opportunity is not economically derived; it results from a complex interplay of social and cultural positioning, such as ethnicity, gender and age (Raghuram, 2000). Importantly, this gender gap in skilled migration requires locational sensitivity. For instance, it may operate through migratory regimes through institutional practices operating at the level of the firm (for Japan, see Holbrow and Nagayoshi, 2016; Shimoda, 2016 & 2017) or at the level of the family, but overall, mobility is valorised as depending on and adding to human capital. Importantly, the rise of China (Fanjun, 2009) has led to questions about its role as a destination for highly skilled migrants. The overarching question guiding this has been whether these countries offer an alternative to development in the West or more of the same (Dieng, 2007) but this body of work is hopeful about the effects of skilled migration.

Influenced by dependency theorists, a second mode of macro-level theorising has produced a more Marxist-influenced analysis. Outlining concerns over the outflows of money from the South to the North, these theorists extend their analysis to include the effects of the mobility of people. Thus, through the 1960s, the brain drain became a common mantra with widespread analysis of the characteristics of receiving and sending countries and its causes, intensities and directions (Biavaschi et al., 2016; Kerr et al., 2016). Still a strong modality for theorising skilled migration, the models take account of policy frameworks at the national and international levels, that deter or promote migration (Iredale, 1999 & 2005), and the impact of brain drain on equity within the sending country and on development (Mountford, 1997; Ong et al., 1992). This mode of theorising had a particular flavour in Asia where the differential position of economically emergent countries within the capitalist system – the Asian Tigers followed by the Rising Powers – has had particular significance (Amin, 2013). They were seen as repeating the errors of capitalism albeit with an Asian flavour. The

negative effects of such development on migration, especially skilled migration, has however, yet to be theorised in any detail.

In contrast, structuralist arguments around lesser skilled female migration flows have examined how migrant women have been drawn into capitalist circuits through the simultaneous underdevelopment of some countries, and a removal of state provided care in receiving countries (Sassen, 2000). The steps in this have been elaborated by Parreñas (2015), and linked with the notion of care chains (Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2003). However, in doing so these scholars situate skilled work in the global North, a legacy that neither the literature on care chains nor on global circuits of migration has fully addressed. The shorter care chains to countries like Japan (Ford and Kawashima, 2016), Singapore (Yeoh and Lai, 2008; Yeoh and Khoo, 1998a), Hong Kong (Hof, 2018) and Taiwan (Lee and Lin, 2013) have received some attention but the question remains as to whether these are intermediate sites, which pave the way to migration to the global North, or an end in themselves. The latter would suggest that we are indeed moving to a multipolar world (Pieterse, 2011).

Spaces, places and networks

Although ‘the nation’ and ‘knowledge’ remain central to these theorists, meso-levels of analysis – such as on the household, social networks and the city – have come to form an important part of skilled migration debates (Yeoh and Khoo, 1998b). In neoclassical accounts, such as in new household economics, *households* are seen as sites of rational economic decision-making while more structural accounts view households as sites where the vestiges of pre-capitalist systems and the inequalities of international capitalism are played out. However, feminist analysis has shown how households are riven with inequalities. They point to gendered, classed and raced differences in who migrates, who becomes the lead migrant, the role of migrant women who follow men and their labour market outcomes, as

well as the challenges men and even more so, women, face due to deskilling. They thus insert a much-needed corrective to debates in the New Economic Labour migration literature which recognised households but still treated it as a site of equality.

A second meso-level analysis is offered through theories of *social networks*. Networks help to sustain migration flows by providing information, accommodation and employment for incoming migrants and thus serve as an important link between the individual actor and the structural context that fashions migration flows. Once migration begins, these networks come to function as causes of migration in themselves because they lower the costs and risks of migration and increase its expected returns (Massey et al., 1993). These networks can also aid in the resettlement upon return to country of origin such as in the case of South Korean women scholars returning and entering the labour market in South Korea (Yoon and Kim, 2018).

Shifting from social networks to social capital highlights the ways in which networks are operationalised to provide advantage to some migrants. For instance, Sardana et al. (2016) in their study of Indian and Chinese skilled migrants to South Australia, find that although the migrants had human capital, they were unable to combine this with effective social capital, thus lowering the degree of trust between themselves and the local populations, and leading to poor career prospects and a waste of human capital (Pullman, 1996). Similarly, Beaverstock (2011) has shown how casual interactions and friendships at the workplace facilitate international mobility and career development. This extension of networks to social capital, especially as it interrelates with human capital, has been an important contribution to meso-level analysis.

Cities have also become another meso-level analytical category in skilled migration research (Ewers, 2017; Findlay and Cranston, 2015), particularly within the context of the benefits that transnational creative knowledge migrants are seen to offer cities (Florida,

2002). Attracting skilled workers has been an important strategy for cities transitioning to post-oil economies, as with Dubai and Abu Dhabi which are highly dependent on migrant skilled (and lesser skilled labour) (Ewers, 2017). Research on skilled women migrants in cities has primarily focused on gendered negotiations of these cities. Thus, Chang and Kim (2016) suggest that women migrants in different kinds of cities have different experiences; for example, in Shanghai, those in enclaves have more interactions with other expatriates, while those who live in the wider community have a wider range of social interactions with the local population. Similarly, Harrison and Michailova (2012) show how skilled expatriate women in UAE adjust in the country; they do not need cross-cultural training because of the multicultural nature of the city and the practice of living in ‘national’ communities (also see Polson, 2016).

Gendered and raced bodies

Micro-level analysis of skilled migration has focused on the individual gains and losses of migration. This has been applied particularly in the context of how migrants are ‘pushed’ out of countries due to factors such as low wages and a poor working environment while the ‘pull’ of better wages and the possibility of enhancing skills have attracted migrants.

Gender clearly intersects with skills at an individual level as skills are differentially cast as gendered. Moreover, who performs these skills can itself change the value of the skill. Migrants, racialised bodies and women, often lower the value of the skill when they begin to dominate an occupation. Skills are therefore not only embrained but also embodied in situ influencing how they are valued.

In sum, the geographies of the literature around gendered skilled migration may be seen as operating at the macro, meso or micro levels. Gender operates as a structural impediment for women at all these levels, but migrant men and women also continually

contest and (re)shape both skills and what gender means. In the next section of this chapter we focus on shifting skills and shifting gender relations to show how both are changing over time. It outlines what focusing on skilled migrants (rather than lesser skilled ones) adds to existing literature on migration in Asia. It also sketches aspects of work, marriage, and family that are raised when Asian migration is viewed through skilled gendered mobility rather than the more common lens of lesser skilled migration of Asian women.

<a>Migration, Shifting Skills and Shifting Gender

Gender and knowledge are both shaped by mobility. Knowledge and skills, as we see below, have place specificity. Historically, skills are seen to be situated in the global North and they are seen to build capacity and to transfer knowledge to the global South although this is contested in postcolonial theorisations. Nevertheless, skilled migration operates within a more stratified notion of where skills reside, although the shifting global relations of power reveal a change in location of where skills are acquired, validated and utilised. The varying degree of utilisation of these skills (as shaped by skills recognition and gender), combined with mobility, reveals the unstable and changing intersections of gender and skilled migration.

Shifting skills

Asian skilled migration stories are dominated by the history of colonialism, especially in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when many professions were first created (e.g., management, computing) while others grew in authority and structure (e.g., medicine, nursing). At this time, specific constituent element of skills – knowledge, validation structures and work experience – also came to be officially part of what it meant to have

skills (Raghuram, 2009). For instance, the history of medical migration is usually seen as a history of practitioners of Western medicine.

Crucially, skills and mobility were both constitutive of each other. For instance, women doctors in the UK, who had only been allowed to practise medicine since 1869, often found that they obtained little exposure to management or to specialist skills such as surgery (Forbes, 1994). They used the opportunities afforded by the Dufferin Fund, a Fund set up by Lady Dufferin, then wife of the Governor General of India, to travel to India to offer obstetric and gynaecological procedures to upper caste and class women who, it was deemed should not be treated by men. Thus, British medicine depended on mobility to Asia to skill its women.

In the post-war period, the hegemony of the old colonial powers was unsettled by the new hegemon, the USA and Russia, which (too) became the arbiters of what constituted desirable skills. Hence, many skilled professionals from Asia (particularly India and China) went to these countries to be trained (Bhagwati, 1976). These earlier flows had a strong male bias.

In post-independence Asia, the hierarchy of skills, with an apex of skills development in global North countries, shaped the direction of international migration of skilled people from 'East to West', from 'South to North' and from the colonies and newly independent states to the imperial centres. Although not all countries of Asia were colonised, in the regulated skilled sectors, where accreditation was required, the influence of colonial hierarchies in validation became so dominant that desirable practice, research and qualifications were all distilled into these few centres. Moreover, the apex of knowledge, work opportunities and experience no longer neatly align as migration becomes multi-centred. Clearly, skills have place specificity – they were acquired in places in the global North, not usually in Asia, but were applied in Asia.

However, the world, including that of skills, has become more multipolar and the destinations of skilled migrants have diversified. Travel to and within Asia and especially to other former colonial centres, such as Singapore, Malaysia and Australia have become common. For instance, 16,084 of the 46,388 medical professionals entering Australia from top ten source countries in the eight years before June 2016 through temporary streams were from Asia, compared to 23,588 of the 49,535 entering through permanent streams (Hawthorne, 2018). Women formed a very large part of these flows. In Singapore, in 2014, foreign skilled migrants made up 21 per cent of its total temporary migrant workforce. While historically the flows into Singapore reflected colonial ties, the majority of skilled workers in Singapore (apart from Malaysians) now come from China and India (Yeoh and Lam, 2016). There is also a shift in the composition of the flows into Asia from extra-Asian countries. A considerable number of non-Western EU citizens and non-EU citizens make up larger portions of the flows into countries such as Japan, which have historically seen skilled migration primarily from Western European countries such as the UK, Germany and France (Debnar, 2016).

Contemporary flows of highly skilled migrants reflect shifting relations of power, and spatial specificities of skills formation and acquisition. The Indian IT sector accounts for 55 per cent of global software export market (D'Costa, 2018); the majority working within the sector have been trained in India. While the directionality of the movement of highly skilled still is largely from the 'South' to the 'North', or East to West, the location of skills acquisition has changed. The majority of India's technical workforce within the Information Technology (IT) and Information Technology enabled Services (ITeS) sectors receives their formal education and workplace trainings in India. Before they can take on any on-site projects (which requires international travel), these professionals are expected to develop and hone their formal technical skills in India (Upadhyaya, 2016). A second shift in the pattern is

the gender composition of technical, particularly IT, professionals. As mentioned before, skilled mobility has a male bias, except for the health sector (particularly nursing). Within the field of IT and Engineering (in which the majority of Indian IT professionals hold qualifications), women make up a small but growing proportion. In 2016/2017, women made up 35 per cent of all IT professionals in India (Raghuram et al., 2018). A similar figure was seen in China in 2012 (Raghuram et al., 2017). Hence, as the number of women in IT within national contexts increase, their representation on the global scale as part of skilled mobility flows is also becoming more visible. Critiquing the continually reproduced image of migration of Filipino women as care workers, Dimitru (2017) shows that an equal number of women move from the Philippines to the US for skilled work, particularly within the tech sector. Women (trained in the Philippines) currently make up 38 per cent of the skilled flows from the Philippines to the US to work within the IT sectors in technical roles (Dimitru, 2017). Hence, there is a dynamism in gendered migration, and skilled female migration from Asia is clearly important, albeit under recognised.

Shifting gender roles

If skills have been reshaped by mobility, so too has the gendered ascription of skills. For instance, nursing as a discipline has been reshaped in India as it has become associated with greater opportunities for travel and better wages (Walton-Roberts, 2019). More and more men have, as a result, taken up nursing (Timmons et al., 2016). Moreover, masculinity has been re-scripted in the context of skilled female migration. A gendered analysis has been largely missing within studies of highly skilled mobility. Men continue to remain the assumed subject of the skilled mobility (Kofman, 2000), with heteronormative masculinity associated with them. Increasing participation of men within the female-dominated sectors of the labour market such as nursing is one evidence of the shifting occupational and gender

scripted roles to men (Timmons et al., 2016). These assumptions are unpacked when different notions of masculinities are considered, gender binary constructs are removed and heterosexuality is not assumed (Donato et al., 2006; Hibbins, 2005; Manalansan, 2006). Indeed, studies of Asian migrations have produced counter-narratives to a homogenised notion of a hegemonic masculinity solely embedded in heterosexual patriarchal relations in several ways.

First, studies of highly skilled mobility reveal the opportunities afforded for re-scripting and renegotiating masculinities and in doing so, they shift normative notions of gender in skilled migration research. Research such as Manalansan's (2006) study of Filipino transgendered women and gay men carers and nurses in Israel, and Hibbins' (2005) work on Chinese skilled men in Australia, disrupt the gendered assumptions around skills, and reveal the plurality of masculinities across Asia. Second, these studies also make visible other existing versions of masculinities and of gender roles. The growing body of research on men and masculinities within the Asian context offers a critical point of entry (Huynh, 2016; Ikeya, 2014; Liong and Ho, 2019; Ong and Peletz, 1995). Going against the grain of Western gender roles where patriarchal structures of family are unquestioned, Asian research on transnational families and care provide comparisons of different family structures and their roles in showing how masculinity is redefined based on these different versions of the family. Rather than assuming a patrilineal family structure across the continent, in the context of 'left-behind' husbands whose wives take on the role of 'breadwinner' (such as nurses), different family structures with different gender roles are made visible. Research contrasts the patrilineal East Asian family structure of countries such as Vietnam with the bilateral family structure evident in Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia (Hoang et al., 2012; Hoang and Yeoh, 2011).

Third, when trailing spouses are not assumed to be women, the nature of division of labour too might alter. The limited research on trailing husbands has highlighted the different negotiations that occur, and different support is sought for the husbands (Selmer and Leung, 2003). Often framed in the context of dual-career couples, these men's experiences are similar to that of women, marked by deskilling, but it is not clear if their lives are also circumscribed to the sphere of social reproduction (Harvey and Wiese, 1998; Selmer and Leung, 2003). For instance, while trailing wives are seen to play a crucial role in socialising, the career advancement of their husbands, and settling into the new settings, little is known about men's experiences. Trailing husbands make visible the structural androcentrism of state and organisational level policies. Hegemonic masculinity norms are challenged as existing policies and practices within organisations (due to their inherent masculine nature globally) are unable to fully accommodate households where men are equal carers (Selmer and Leung, 2003) as the women. In these situations, men find alternate means that enable them to undertake their caring responsibilities, thus challenging the hegemonic masculinity norms embedded within the institutional structures. Men and women thus undertake various degrees of patriarchal bargaining to manage productive and reproductive responsibilities in the existing structures (Kandiyoti, 1988). In the context of knowledge migrants, gender, skills and migration may be combined and recombined to challenge some existing gender hierarchies while occasionally reinforcing others (Raghuram, 2009).

These examples challenge the assumed normalisation of patriarchal relations as the underpinning characteristic of Asian families. Lugones (2007 & 2010) calls attention to the colonialism of gender wherein patriarchy is the overdetermined trope defining Asian migration. However, we would argue that Asia, with its diversity and complexities of relation, opens space to think about gender (through migration) beyond patriarchal relations and heterosexuality. It raises questions such as what would an analysis of nurse migration

(from Kerala for instance) or skilled migration in female-dominated sectors look like if they are read against the background of matriarchal structures rather than patriarchal ones? The diversity of Asia and, hence, of Asian families, suggests the need to study matriarchal relations.

<a>The Difference that Skills Make

As feminist scholars have already identified, economics is not the only factor that shapes mobility. Rather, migration is shaped by a melange of social, cultural and political considerations (Yeoh and Huang, 2011). The nature of entry and incorporation of women with skills in countries of destination vary greatly, but their presence challenges existing theorisations of both gendered knowledge and international migration. It has particular implications for the ways in which key notions such as marriage, work and migration regulations are conceptualised. In this section we explore some of the ways in which recognition of the significance of skilled women among international migratory streams alters these conceptualisations.

**Marriage **

Given that skills are increasingly seen as desirable among migrants and many countries have, since the 1960s, altered their immigration systems to encourage skilled migration, the fact that women are also skilled must help household migration strategies. In countries like Australia, where migration is based on a point system, with points being awarded for skills, the pooling of points within the migrant Asian household encourages men to find marriage partners who will enable them to acquire the requisite number of points to migrate. Thus, women with skills are more likely to become desirable marriage partners as they facilitate migration, through their employability in foreign labour markets (Percot, 2006; Percot and

Rajan, 2007; Walton-Roberts, 2012). The social capital associated with acquiring skills and knowledge within an international setting, such as the case of international students, also sets women in a position of greater agency to control factors and circumstances around marriage as research in Singapore has shown (Kim, 2011; Sondhi and King 2017).

The ability of women with ‘exportable’ skills to become lead partners in migration can also make them desirable marriage partners. These skills may have been attained prior to marriage, when women moved alone. Such movements have become particularly common, as more people are being sent on short-term overseas assignments (Koser and Salt, 1997). Experience acquired through such assignments increases the marketability of the individuals in the international labour market. Women with such experiences become more marriageable, in that their CVs offer a passport to migration for aspiring men.

Shifting gendered migration patterns, as more skilled women become primary migrants, is leading to shifting expectations of the role and characteristics of husbands and more broadly the idea of family. Hence desirable partners (for women) are men who have skills/ability/desire to remain ‘immobile’, and to take on caring roles and responsibilities; or be mobile while taking on the role of the primary carer, leading to alternative ways of ‘doing’ family (McNulty, 2014). This is particularly the case if women are in managerial positions, and moving to global centres such as Singapore or Hong Kong (Selmer and Leung, 2003).

As women with skills migrate, other shifts in marriage patterns have emerged. Mobility is used to delay life events such as marriage, especially where marriage is a commonplace social expectation. Women may remain single, particularly if they migrate. Migration is seen as a means of human capital development and meeting individual career aspirations. These aspirations may preclude marriage, where women recognise marriage as a barrier to career mobility. These issues are widely observed in East Asia, reconfiguring not only family practices but also leading to shifts in family policy.

The skilling of women is also accompanied by marriage with men outside of what may be considered the ordinary endogamous unit, whether it be caste, or national origin. It may be surmised that marriage or co-habitation with individuals whom they meet in the destination country will also rise. Moreover, marriage patterns have also been altering among skilled elites in countries of origin. In India, for instance, parental choice of marriage partners is increasingly being devolved to individuals, both men and women, particularly where they have skills and some history of constituting and living in single person households (either in the home country or abroad). Sheba George (2000) in her study of nurses who have migrated from Kerala, India to the US suggests that women who become nurses have far more bargaining power in the transnational marriage market. Men who marry nurses, for instance, know that they cannot expect a dowry as it is expected that the international demand for their labour will ensure them earnings and job security which match and often outweigh sums which may be obtained as dowry. “In fact, nurses with degrees and a “good family background” are in such demand that they get “booked up” while still in school” (George, 2000: 152).

Work

There is a gender dimension to the division of labour at work for international assignments. The findings of a study of Indian IT workers in the UK (Sondhi et al., 2019) show differences in the type of work women and men undertake when abroad. Most women are involved in providing service and support for existing systems while the largest single activity for men is consulting which requires more client interaction. As these client interactions are valuable, this difference is likely to shape future career progression for men and women. The gendered nature of the division of this labour needs to be examined in future research. Interestingly, decision making around international mobility for this group of skilled migrants centred

around two factors: professional and personal (Raghuram et al., 2018). Unlike personal factors, there was no significant gender difference noted in professional factors. The differences in personal factors emerged in the role of partners in shaping the decision to move. For the men with partners in this study, undertaking a period of work abroad is a key factor in the decision making as it may impact the partner's career.

For women, a key personal factor is the desire to travel. Gender relations within the household, in this instance, seem to have moved away from the stereotypical assignments of patriarchal control that is usually ascribed to Indian households specifically and the 'Asian' household and family more broadly (Yoon and Kim, 2018). In fact, families provide both encouragement to continue with self-initiated career development mobility and knowledge of how to migrate; it appears that organisational limits and expectations appear to be much stronger barriers to the success of Indian women in science than household formations (Valk et al., 2014). This challenges the tendency to locate gender inequity in careers to the Asian family structure, suggesting instead that the household helps skilled women to transcend organisational barriers. It appears then that skills and migration possibilities operate together to reformat gender.

Migration Regulations

Migratory regulations usually provide differential rights to family formation. Skilled women are more likely to meet the salary thresholds required to sponsor the migration of spouses and children. For instance, almost a quarter of those interviewed in a study of expatriate women had initiated the move (Yeoh and Khoo, 1998b). As skilled migrants their relatively higher wages are able to support a family as soon as they move. These moves become easier for those whose mobility is eased by employers, or by recruitment and resettlement firms, luxuries rarely afforded to those who are less skilled. The relative ease with which skilled

women can reconstitute households has meant that women become channels of migration and their human capital enables migration of the household, not just the individual.

Li and Findlay (1999) in their study of people who emigrated from Hong Kong to Canada, note that in almost one-third of their study sample, women were the primary visa applicants. It was the wife's occupation that was instrumental in securing migration and a strategic choice of who should be the first applicant was undertaken to maximise the rate of success. They found that, given the restrictions on entry of doctors to Canada, the majority of male doctors in their study had emigrated as dependents of their spouse.

The aforementioned study of Indian IT workers in the UK by Raghuram et al. (2018) supports this assertion. Indian women migrants in the UK were able to bring their children and partners with them when they had to undertake work on-site in the UK. Migration within dual-career households, especially where one partner is unable to take up employment in the destination country, can ultimately lead to blocked career aspirations for one, and this may spark off repeat migration. Skilled migration may be circulatory, or more often seen as a series of hops, with different careers being prioritised at different times (Gwynne, 1999). Hence, the country to which people first emigrate is not necessarily the eventual destination country for professional immigrants, as for other categories of migrants, but this may be easier to achieve for some skilled migrants.

<a>Conclusion

This chapter has explored some of the ways in which gender, skills and migration come together leading to shifts in the definition of skills, in gendered behaviour (such as in marriage strategies and childcare) and in managing migration. With gender as a cross-cutting theme, we see how mobility shapes skills and gender. Not all 'skills' are created equal; rather, skills have spatial and temporal specificity to them. The mobility, or lack thereof,

reveals the inequalities of skills acquisition and usage. Mobility also impacts gender discourses and narratives, continually shaping them. In particular, looking at the experiences of men through gender lens shows how mobility of the highly skilled challenges existing gender hierarchies and notions of masculinity through the redistribution of caring responsibilities.

Second, this chapter has highlighted how viewing skills and mobility together, enables us to reconceptualise the notions of marriage, work and migration regulations. Certain notions of skills (when intersecting with potential mobility) reconfigure gendered norms and expectation within the 'marriage' market for both men and women. Women's skills make them more 'marketable' as potential partners. However, with changing patterns of mobility, wherein highly skilled women are increasingly undertaking mobility as the lead/primary mover thereby disrupting the normative construction of the skilled lead migrant within migration regulations, husbands' roles and notions of masculinity are also shifting. There is increasing expectation that men/husbands too should be willing to undertake caring responsibilities or be the 'trailing spouse' if need be. On one hand, we see alternative readings of gender roles in relation of marriage and childcare; on the other, with respect to work, we see that normative gender roles are scripted in the type of 'skilled' work women undertake.

From these discussions, we see several future strands of research. First, there is need to continue to explore experiences of highly skilled women migrants beyond the global North. Following Huang's (2014) call, more (feminist) research in the Asian context needs to be undertaken within and from the Asian perspectives. Second, the types of skilled sectors should be expanded, including examining what we understand as 'skilled' sectors. Lastly, there is an underlying heteronormativity and patriarchal relations within which research on gender and highly skilled mobility tend to be located, particularly when it comes to notions of

marriage and care. As these are not universal, but geographically varied including within Asia, future research should examine the different structures and practices of family and care.

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