

Moving Women and Family Concerns: Reflections from a Cross Cultural Study

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ABSTRACT This paper is based on data gathered during a comparative (Indonesia and Canada), intergenerational, life story project focused on women's reproductive lives. In this paper we explore the ways in which the reproductive stages in women's lives and their family responsibilities influence both their geographical mobility and the intersection with how they 'move' through the stages in their lives. We first compare and contrast how and when women in the two countries move around geographically, and how they manage to maintain their families in the process. We look at the different reasons women give for moving from their place of birth and at the consequences for them. We then relate this data to a discussion about how women also 'move' through the stages in their lives. We consider how mobility has different consequences for a single woman or for a grandmother, whose children are 'moving away'. Finally, we reflect briefly on how mobility of place relates to generation; how women of different ages and stages understand 'place' both geographically and ideologically.

INTRODUCTION

Studies in transnational migration are notoriously first for ignoring women, and then ignoring gender. As long ago as 1984, the *International Migration Review*, a flagship journal in this area, devoted a special issue to transnational women migrants and exposed the lacunae in both the research and the literature. However, ten years later, in 1994 the five editors (including two men) of another special issue devoted to gender (Vol 40, No. 1) were still bemoaning the neglect of both women and gender in the literature on transnational migration. While this issue documented the progress that had been made in virtually all the social sciences in recognising the reality that nearly as many women as men migrate internationally, it was still clearly a 'minority' interest, and outside the mainstream of migration studies. Other authors comment that "the vast majority of immigration studies are still conducted as though gender relations are largely irrelevant to the way the world is organized" (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1999:566), and gender "has encountered resistance and indifference in immigration scholarship" (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Cranford, 1999:106). As recently as 2006 Mahler and Pessar confessed that "Bringing gender into migration studies is one of our objectives, attempting to remedy many decades during which

migration scholarship paid little attention to gender. The field had eschewed female migrants owing to the widely shared assumption that women (and children) migrate to accompany or to reunite with their breadwinner migrant husbands." (Mahler and Pessar 2006: 28).

Apart from bringing women migrants 'out of the shadows' as they put it, the editors of the 1994 *Gender and Migration* special issue also replaced their focus on women with one on gender because 'many migration scholars now insist that migration itself is a gendered phenomenon that requires more sophisticated theoretical and analytical tools than studies of sex roles and of sex as a dichotomous variable allowed in the past.' This theoretical shift from looking at women to looking at the gendered subjects of migration has been important in feminist studies. As Mahler and Pessar put it "More recently, poststructuralist scholars have argued against comparing males versus females and their corresponding gender 'roles' for a more dynamic and fluid conceptualization of gender as relational and situational. This perspective is reflected in an abundance of new publications on migration" (Mahler and Pessar 2006: 29). It is a perspective that has enriched the way in which we understand that gender interrelates with other socially constructed bases of differentiation, such as race and class and allows us to see how women (and men) ac-

tively construct their lives as their circumstances change.

It is particularly important that migration studies recognise this complexity because as Doreen Massey puts it some individuals “initiate flows and movement, others don’t. Some are more on the receiving end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it . . . [There are] groups who are really in a sense in charge of time-space compression, who can really use it and turn it to advantage, whose power and influence it very definitely increases [such as media moguls and the business elite] . . . but there are also groups who are also doing a lot of physical moving, but who are not “in charge” of the process in the same way at all” (Massey 1994: 149). As a steady stream of scholarly articles have recognised, the reasons for women’s migration and the economic and social outcomes for women are very different from those for men. A substantial number of these international women migrants come from countries of the economic south (such as Indonesia) who are seeking jobs that will maintain their families back home. Unfortunately, they usually end up in low paid, exploitative work as domestic servants in countries like Canada, as well as the Gulf states, and East Asian countries (Canadian Woman Studies 2003; Zaman 2006; Castles 2009; Vosko 2000). Mahler and Pessar, building on the work of Massey have developed the framework of ‘gender geographies of power’ in order to articulate the different ways in which gender operates in the process of migration: geographical scales, social location, agency and imagination. “A critical question we ask in our own model is: When the geographical spaces we study extend across international borders, does this multiplication and dispersal produce even greater opportunities for the reinforcement of prevailing gender ideologies and norms, or, conversely, do transnational spaces provide openings for men and women, girls and boys to question hegemonic notions of gender, to entertain competing understandings of gendered lives, and to communicate these new understandings across transnational spaces? That is, do international migration and other crossborder activities that bring people into new gendered contexts change gender relations, and, if so, in what direction(s)?” (Mahler and Pessar 2006: 47).

As a result of such large scale research projects as the Metropolis Project, we now have

a substantial number of detailed studies of international immigrants to Canada, the issues affecting them and the policy and social welfare consequences (Buzzelli 2006; Reitmanova and Gustafson 2008; McLaren 2006; Porter and Jaya 2005; *Our Diverse Cities* Vols 1-6; Tastsoglou and Dobrowolsky 2006; Guo 2006). While the study of migration has both expanded and deepened in recent years, including a focus on the migration of women, it is still the case that most such studies look at international migration as immigration, whether the migration is for economic or other reasons, or is migration as refugees fleeing across borders. There is far less attention paid to internal migration within one country, whether such movements are relatively ‘free’ or the result of civil unrest¹. Indeed, it is difficult to document such migrants, much less explore their experiences. Equally, there is little attention paid to the consequences for women and their families of such internal migration. It is usually seen as a conscious and free decision taken either for economic or educational reasons or to re-unify a family. The time when internal migration becomes most visible is when rural populations, especially of minority or aboriginal groups move to the large metropolis and fall victims to homelessness, drug abuse and the like (Cooke and Belanger 2006). There are some (mainly statistical) studies of international immigrants moving within their host countries (Ostrovsky et al. 2008) but very few on the causes and consequences of internal migration, especially for economic or family reasons.

Feminist theory has also addressed the issues of continuing racialisation, colonisation and exclusion that all immigrants face even in apparently liberal countries like Canada (Bannerji 2000; Thobani 2000; Khan 2002). Feminists have been careful to document and analyse just how these processes of racialisation and exclusion are gendered and work differently for men and women. Apart from pointing to the continuing systemic discrimination against both immigrants and visible minorities, such authors analyse the ways in which countries like Canada continue to construct themselves as essentially ‘white’ and colonial. While Newfoundlanders moving to mainland Canada are not ‘marked’ as non-white, they are marked as ‘different’ to mainstream white Canadians; as having a different speech pattern, culture and tendency to identify as dif-

ferent and to cohere socially in places where they settle - much as international immigrants do (Ralston 1996). In Indonesia we also find that migrants to Jakarta and other large cities live close to and associate with people from their own ethnic group.

In this paper, we are attempting to work from the experience of women who have migrated within their own countries (in this case within Canada and within Indonesia), some of whom have migrated back to their original homes. We are focusing on where women come from, why they move and what consequences this has for them and their families. In doing this we are attempting to contribute to the debates about how societies become more heterogeneous, how 'incomers' diversify and enrich the societies they join and where gender and family intersect with these complex processes.

PART 1: WOMEN AND THEIR FAMILIES MOVING GEOGRAPHICALLY

The study that provides the data we examine in this paper² focused on three generations of women in the same families, so we tended to select families that were still living in the same communities. It is, therefore, remarkable that so many of the women in our study had experience of migration of various kinds. In the first section of this paper, we will document the various kinds of migration women experienced. In Canada, women often moved for work or because their husbands were moving to find work either in other parts of the province or in other parts of Canada. Some women had immigrated to Canada from other countries, usually because of marriage or because of the husband's work. While economic factors outweighed others in our Canadian sample, we did find other reasons for moving, including moving away from a repressive family situation, moving because of discrimination against homosexuality or moving in order to take care of a family member or to be taken care of. In Indonesia, the infamous 'transmigration' programme, or 'transmigrasi' dominated internal migration. This programme, which we discuss below, was primarily a land distribution programme, and aimed to move people from heavily populated areas such as Java to the more lightly populated outer islands. It was at its peak

between the 1970s and 1990s, during which period some 2 million people were moved. Among those people who move of their own accord, usually in the other direction, to the major cities, economic reasons also take priority, especially women moving from rural areas to larger cities such as Jakarta in search of work. Some women were also fleeing difficult family situations.

We will first look at experiences of such geographical migration among our participants in the two countries.

Migration Into and Within Canada

The focus of the study was the comparatively rural and isolated province of Newfoundland and Labrador. The population of the entire province (about the size of England and Wales) is just under 500,000 and is dropping, especially in the key demographic groups of young families³. The largest urban centre, St. John's has a population of about 120,000. While there is some immigration both from other parts of Canada and from overseas, this is not enough to balance the outmigration of people, especially people looking for work in the more prosperous west of Canada (House 1989; Hiller 2009). Of special concern is the changing demographic whereby the proportion of elderly people, with their lower incomes and greater health needs is increasing, while children and the economically active groups are decreasing. In this section of the paper, we look at some illustrative experiences of the women in our study who have migrated.

The oldest member of the "H" family, Hilda, had immigrated to Newfoundland from Northern Ireland after the Second World War because she had married a Newfoundlander, whom she had met when he was stationed in Northern Ireland as a member of the armed forces. The family moved into the husband's community, in rural Newfoundland, shortly after the war. Her experiences of loneliness and isolation are common to immigrants, especially women. Her daughter, who was a young girl when they immigrated, remembers it:

Hazel: I left all my friends [in Belfast], you know and my family, our family is very very very close, large family and that was devastating when I had to lose all of them. I guess I was spoiled a little bit too...they all doted on me, so I missed all that. There were just so many things you

could do over there. Picnics, family things, outings but you couldn't do any of that really on Bell Island I mean where could you go? There was only one movie theatre I believe, that I can remember. And then again with dad's family I had to get used to them. They didn't know me, and they sort of, I got the feeling they sort of looked at us as outsiders....they didn't know us.

So that was hard and it's still like that today, I don't think they've [father's family] ever really accepted the fact, they accepted us yes, naturally but we're not close like my mom's family.... Ireland is still my home.

Hilda's and her daughter's experience throws into sharp relief the threats to identity that migration can cause. The literature on integration is replete with documentation of how incoming communities re-fashion or sustain their sense of cultural identity (Tastsoglou and Dobrowolsky 2006; Pedraza 1991; Alicea 1997; Buijs 1993). In Hilda's case, as with other women whose principal motive for migration was marriage, her situation was compounded by her isolation. The strangeness, the physical and cultural difference between the place where she grew up and developed her identity and the place where she found herself on marriage is expressed as loneliness. Other participants had little or no control over their migration, simply accompanying other family members who had made the decision, as Samantha describes the many moves that characterised her childhood.

Samantha: It was to Bay Roberts then Oshawa for a year, then we moved to Alberta because my dad wanted to go to School, a college there and we stayed there for 3 years and my dad got out of the church and wanted to move back to Newfoundland. Like every time we moved it was always because of my dad... so we all moved home when I was 11 and then we stayed in Come by Chance, Sunnyside area until I left.

Most often the reasons for migration were economic.

Sarah: Because my husband he worked at the milk room at Brookfield and they went out of that business, they just dealt with the ice cream so he got laid off so he went to work with Central Dairies and that really didn't work out so his brother said we're here in Arnold's Cove and we're doing fine, so why don't you move out here.

While this is an example of intra-migration within the province, it demonstrates the 'chain migration' so common for Newfoundlanders, whereby one member of the family moves, and then encourages relatives and friends to follow until there is a small community of expatriates. This process also occurs in Indonesia, where there are often substantial sub-communities of particular ethnic groups in the larger cities.

To conclude this account, we provide a more extended account of what it is like for a young woman to move away from her own community to her husband's community when she married. In this case, her husband was a long distance truck driver, and so often away from home.

Winifred(born 1937): Yeah before we got married he brought me down to his home and I met his mother and brother and that, then we went back and we got married up in Lourdes (on the far west of the island) and we moved down here the last of May.

Marilyn: When you met your husband and you came here had you been off the Port Au Port peninsula before?

Winifred: No, never, never.

Marilyn: So when you came with your husband it was the first time you'd been out on the East coast

Winifred: First time, everybody was strange and everything was different you know.

Marilyn: But coming into here did the people sound different?

Winifred: Oh yes the people was way different. People here on this part of the island when I came here was totally different all together. They weren't as friendly as on the West Coast. You know a 19-year-old coming in a strange place and where I lived there were no young people there at all it was all senior citizens. First when I came here I thought I was in a different world all together. I didn't have no friends there, never had no one belonged to me there, just different.

Marilyn: And he left you by yourself?

Winifred: Yeah with his mother and his brother in the same house. His mother lived in the same house and so did his brother. His brother was very nice, and his mother was also very nice. But she was sort of a distant.

In Newfoundland, as in many other places, it was the custom for women to move to their husband's community when they married. Thus it is the women who experience mobility, with

all the adjustments associated with that. When Winifred married (1956) it was more usual for the husband to come from a nearby community which meant that the women could continue easy contact with their natal families. In this case, Winifred moved right across the island to a community where she knew no one, where the customs were different and at a time when it was difficult and expensive for her to keep contact with her own family. Furthermore, her husband appears to have made some swift introductions and then left Winifred to fend for herself. Nor did she have her own space, having to move in with her mother-in-law and her brother-in-law, a situation that is not easy at the best of times. While to most outsiders, the population of Newfoundland appears homogenous, to the people who live there, there are vast differences of speech, customs, heritage, religion and so on between different parts of the province. In this case, not only does Winifred have to cope with all these differences, but also with a mother-in-law who, while 'nice' is also 'distant' and not much comfort to a shy young wife. This story ends happily, when Winifred has their first child and the couple move into a house of their own. Despite her husband's travelling job, Winifred settled down and made friends and settled into her new community, and now has her children and grandchildren around her.

Migration Within and Outside Indonesia

The key feature of internal migration in Indonesia is the policy of 'transmigration'. Transmigration involves the resettlement of land-poor migrants, primarily from Java, into less populated 'outer island' areas, where they endeavour to forge a livelihood (with some state aid) alongside the original inhabitants of receiving areas (Hugo 2005). Transmigration began in the early 1900s as the Dutch colonial authorities sought to ameliorate poverty and resource conflicts in 'inner Indonesia' and to spur economic development in 'outer island' regions by relocating people, initially at least, from Java to Lampung. The programme was extended by the New Order government from the 1970s onwards, with almost two million people being moved from Java, Bali and Madura to Sumatra, Kalimantan and Irian Jaya (now West Papua) between 1970 and 1990. Accompanying the general transmi-

gration programme has been Local Transmigration (Translok), involving the resettlement of people within a particular province, usually for environmental reasons or to make way for an infrastructural project' (Elmhirst 2002).

Mostly transmigrants were sent from Java Island (and from Madura) to other places that were deemed to be wide and empty enough, such as to some parts of Sumatra, Sulawesi, Kalimantan, and Papua. But there were also waves of movement from Sulawesi to Ambon and Papua, for example, for people to find better living conditions. With the Asian monetary crisis and the civil unrest that led to the downfall of the Suharto regime (1998), many parts of Indonesia experienced deeply disturbing and violent communal-ethnic conflicts in places such as in Kalimantan and Maluku, as a direct result of this policy. Thousands of people whose parents or grandparents had migrated to Kalimantan and Ambon had lost their connections with their place of origin. When they were displaced or fled the violence, they found they had no place in their supposed 'mother land'. It is interesting to note that the transmigration policy is the opposite of the policy of resettlement policy introduced by Smallwood in Newfoundland in the 1960s, which forced people in smaller and more remote settlements to relocate to larger centres (Wadel 1969; Felt and Sinclair 1995).

Despite transmigration, the general pattern of internal migration today is similar to other countries. In general, people move from rural places to urban places. Migration has become a common response to overcrowded conditions caused by rising population as well as part of resistance to the impoverished circumstances in rural communities. Unfortunately, moving to the cities rarely moves people out of poverty. There are complex reasons for migration to the cities, including the 'low priority' of the government to develop agriculture, the large decrease in land available to work for agriculture, environmental degradation leading to difficulty in cultivating the land, as well as the very low earnings of the farmers – all of which forces rural people to move to cities for economic survival. The most common scenario is for farmhands to leave their work as seasonal workers and move to the closest city, where they take up any unskilled work they can find. Men and women alike move to cities and take up low paid occupations such as selling food

and other items, providing services (for example domestic chores, washing, baby-sitting for women; and working as laborers in construction or providing public transportation: *becak*, *ojek*, *bajaj*, for men). Research carried out by Becky Elmhirst (2002) uncovered a significant change in internal migration trends in Lampung, where increasing numbers of young single women were leaving to take up factory jobs in Tangerang (outside Jakarta). The results of unplanned migration to big cities are the same as elsewhere in the world, with an increase in urban poverty and slum dwellers. In Jakarta and other large cities it has become increasingly common to see beggars and street people everywhere.

Indonesia is also well-known as a 'sending' country for migrant workers (Silvey 2004). Migrant workers mostly go to other South-East Asian countries such as Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei; to East Asia such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea; and to Middle East (such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, the Emirates). There are many problems especially related to the human rights protection of migrant workers that is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss¹. There are some Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) working on the issue of protection and advocacy of migrant workers, such as Solidaritas Perempuan (Women's Solidarity), Serikat Buruh Migran Indonesia (Indonesian Migrant Workers Union), and Migrant Care. Formal data underestimates the actual numbers of migrant workers from Indonesia, since many are undocumented, and therefore unrecorded. Formal data showed that in 1999, there were more than one million migrant workers – 1,049,627 – working in foreign countries, two-thirds of them women. But the actual number of Indonesian migrant workers are much larger. In September-October 2002, around 350,000 undocumented migrant workers were deported from Sabah Malaysia to Indonesian frontier town of Nunukan, East Kalimantan, and left with no resources (<http://www.humantrafficking.org/organizations/113> accessed 22 June 2009). Indonesia also suffers a significant amount of internal trafficking of victims who are trafficked from rural to urban areas for sexual and labor exploitation. The NGO, Abdi Ahsi, reported that 3000 women per year were trafficked from rural East Java to Surabaya (2007 US Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report).

The Indonesian data throws up more cases of individual women substantially changing their situation by migrating away from her home community. We will take the example of Aminah to illustrate some of the complex interweaving of different factors in constructing migration for women. In this case, we see a woman trying to solve the problems of her life through migration, although the story is not a happy one. Aminah is a middle aged woman, who experienced migration in many different ways. It begins when her parents' marriage ended, and Aminah and her brothers and sisters were dispersed.

Aminah: I was born in Klaten (a small town in Central Java). When I was a child, I was very miserable. And then my father brought me to Sumatra. He was in the military service. I was there 12 years. Then my father married another wife, and my mother wouldn't let herself stay in the relationship. So she brought us, five of us, to Java. We didn't get education. Then we were just spread around, one lived with uncle, one lived with other. I lived with my uncle, my older sister lived with grandmother, and the other brother lived with our aunt. And then my mother re-married.... We were just very broken. Very broken every where....

Aminah received a marriage proposal and married but her husband left her to go to Jakarta. Later he rejoined her and their two daughters in a small village in Central Java. Her husband never gave her money, and also abused her badly. *Aminah: He gambled all the time, never gave me money. Called me a prostitute and beat me all the time. One day his younger brother asked me to give him (my husband) money, since he would like to go, and he didn't have money. I said, I don't have money. You know what, all of them, my mother in law, his relatives, they all talked badly about me. I could say nothing except cry.*

Her husband went back to Jakarta, and Aminah decided to move to Jakarta to follow him when she heard that her husband was caught doing something 'indecent' with another woman. Apparently he had an affair. So Aminah moved to Jakarta with her first daughter, Nita, but she had to make her own living. Walking door to door in slum areas in Jakarta, she succeeded as a vendor of 'gado-gado', (a kind of meal from mixed vegetable with peanut sauce). Despite her poor circumstances, Aminah still experienced her mi-

gration as a kind of freedom. In the city, no one tried to control her or restrict her choices. She was also free from the pressures from her family to be 'patient' and accepting in her marriage.

Aminah: His relatives, all talked nonsense about me. They said: how come a wife but is 'forward' so she talks to her husband like that. They said (it meant) I was not faithful. They said I had an affair...

Aminah felt 'enough', and in Jakarta she was even brave enough to struggle for a divorce. Her husband was becoming more abusive. He did not want to give her her freedom, but her small community in Jakarta supported her and also protected her when her husband tried to injure her. *Aminah: Some people said I was weird. How come, my husband would like to go back to live with me, but I wouldn't. I just stayed silent. I was sure I couldn't live with him anymore.*

Finally, she was able to divorce him and set herself free. She felt more secure in Jakarta, with people who knew her case and were willing to support and defend her from her ex-husband, who was still trying to assault her. Aminah's story is one of migration that has ended well. It has released her from the restrictive circumstances of her home community and has enabled her to build a new life in a supportive network of friends.

Nita, her daughter, offers a contrasting story of migration and family and sexual relations. She was married to an unemployed man from Sumatra, because of her unintended pregnancy. She and her husband decided to move to a small place in West Sumatra, where his parents lived. Nita found that this move was to a 'more limited life', since she had to adjust to the traditional way of life demanded of women in that community. She didn't feel comfortable, so she asked her husband if they could go back to Jakarta. Currently they live in Jakarta, staying with her mother, Aminah.

When women migrate to pursue money, usually they send what they get to the family, but that is not always the case with men who migrate⁴. Ira, from Madura, told us about her husband who left her to work in Malaysia, but she has never heard from him, or received any money. Now she needs to work herself in Madura to feed herself and her child. In the Indonesian examples we can see the complex interplay between economic needs, family structure and cultural restraints, with women constantly juggling in or-

der to create a life for themselves and their families.

PART 2: WOMEN MOVING THROUGH THEIR LIVES

While it is a less obvious form of 'migration', movement through time involves many of the same adjustments that movement through space does. Most transitions through time, and through the roles women take up in their reproductive lives, are both gradual and well prepared. The day a husband walks out, or a parent suffers a major accident can be as life transforming as a geographical move. It is significant that people use the same language to talk about temporal changes as they do to talk about geographical change 'looking back' 'seeing change' 'young people don't see it the same way we do', or as Myrtle, a participant from Newfoundland, puts it 'It is just the way that I looked at it. That is how I see people here and then'. In this section we point to some of the continuities and discontinuities between the ways women in Newfoundland, Canada and women in Indonesia talked about migration in connection with their life stories.

The Greener Grass

We begin with the way in which young women intersect their geographical moves (usually for the purpose of work or education) with their stage in life and their other priorities. We have already seen an extended example of this in Aminah's experience in Indonesia. Young women, in both countries, like young men everywhere, often think that the 'grass is greener on the other side of the fence'. Here are examples from the Newfoundland data of frustrated young women.

Wanda: Ontario or Alberta, I'm getting out of here.

Marilyn: So what other opportunities do you see up there?

Wanda: Work.

Marilyn: And money?

Wanda: Yeah more opportunities to work because there are none around here.

Betty: No idea. My intention is always to get out of here and move to somewhere exciting.

Indeed, the restless physical mobility many of the younger participants expressed seems to

reflect their inner restlessness, while they work out their adult identity. This can sometimes lead to a devastating disjuncture between their 'old' lives and their 'new' lives in the city. When young women move from rural areas to large cities, especially without the support of their family and if their background has more strict religious prohibitions, they find themselves challenged by the new customs and values they find in the cities.

While studying in Surabaya, my friends and me secretly saw blue films in a friend's house. One of my friends tried to 'practice' with her boyfriend, and she got pregnant. The man refused to take responsibility, and then her parents threw her away. So sad, I felt so much pity for her... I used to console her, told her not to feel pity about herself, but to feel remorse, to pray, to reflect, to promise not to do it again, and also to continue her education even in another place. But to forget the past is so difficult and so sad... it follows you wherever you go.... My friends labelled me 'the pious girl'. They saw me as different compared to their way of lives. Two of my friends used betadine to clean their vaginas from sperm, with the hope that it also would heal the vagina should there be infection. They did abortion several times, body relations (=sex) was so common for them. (Emi, Surabaya)

Other examples of the grass not being greener include the breakup of existing relationships. For example Juli, a participant from Jakarta, told us: *I have a sad experience; my boyfriend left me to marry another girl. He said it is because I was busier with my job in Jakarta... I felt so sad... I heard about him having another girl, from my friend, and then I came home from work. He said I was busier listening to my parents to take job than to take care of him... it is because I felt pity of my parents, they were already old, I wanted to earn money. I worked in Bogor since I was 13, then I moved to Jakarta.*

Like Aminah and other Indonesian women with 'circular migration' patterns, Julia in Newfoundland went through the stage of seeing greater opportunities elsewhere, although she, like others, was eventually drawn 'home' again. *Julia: I graduated high school in Port au Port (a small west coast town) and I then went to the mainland - footloose and fancy-free. And Ontario was supposed to have greener grass, so I went to Ontario for a couple of months and*

I went to Saskatchewan and back to Newfoundland and worked at Woolworth's for a period, about a year. And then went back to Ontario and stayed there for two years then realized city life wasn't for me and I came back (to Newfoundland) and then I went to school.

In both Newfoundland and in Indonesia, we find examples of women searching for a better life or a solution to their problems by migrating to the city. Sometimes these migrations are successful, although in most cases, their success depends on the connection between their economic situation and developing a satisfactory family life. It is hard to see whether the women migrate from choice or necessity. As these examples show it is both more complex and less fixed than that dichotomy suggests. We can see these women taking stock of the problems that confront them and – sometimes – the answer seems to involve moving. Sometimes this provides some security and a sense of progress in their lives. But sometimes the migration either does not work out as they expect, or other, unforeseen factors affect them. In this section we have looked particularly at the way in which young women respond to the challenges facing them and seen that sometimes the 'greener grass' turns out to be yellow and stunted. Very few of our participants who had moved saw their decisions as final. Migration, for them, could be a temporary expedient. Returning home remained an option.

Coming Home

Newfoundland participants were much clearer about their bonds to Newfoundland and their eventual desire to 'come home' to Newfoundland than the women in Indonesia. The usual pattern for Indonesian migrants is for other members of the family to follow the migrants to the big city, so that the city eventually becomes 'home'. Jane (born 1924) expresses the Newfoundland view clearly.

Jane: Well we always said we were going to come home. But he took an early retirement and then of course he had his [leg] where he was wounded. He had that operated on. And we used to come and stay longer in the summers because his mother was alive then. And so it wasn't until, it was after our 50th anniversary that he said to me one day, how would you like to go home?

And I said "yeah kidding again eh Tommy", you know and he said "no I don't mean to".

Whether women 'come home' or not often depends on whom they marry. Hasna (aged 55) is Madurese, was born in Madura, but raised in Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan. It is not clear whether her eventual return to Madura was her preferred outcome, or if she had exerted her will in this way. One thing is certain, the bonds of ethnicity will mean that women will tend to marry endogomously, and that may well mean returning to their traditional home.

Hasna: "I followed my father and mother who joined the transmigration to Banjar-masin, but then I came back to Madura, and got married here".

Newfoundlanders also tend to marry other Newfoundlanders, even though there are not the same clear ethnic and linguistic distinctions between Canadians as there are in Indonesia. The tradition of 'chain migration' often leads to expatriate Newfoundlanders marrying each other. In those cases, there is a much higher probability of them eventually moving home. But if they marry non-Newfoundlanders, then the migration is more likely to be permanent.

Absent Children/ Absent Mothers

There are consequences of migration for families, and especially for older women left behind. However, as we have seen from Aminah's story, migration can also affect children, who can be separated from their parents and 'spread around' the relatives in times of crisis or family breakdown. Geographical migration makes the roles of parenting and grandparenting more difficult, as well as exposing young women to problems they encounter in the cities without support. Most migration involves younger people leaving, while the older generation remains behind. Thus the older generation are deprived of both their children and (later) their grandchildren. While they accept the inevitability of economic migration, they still feel the pain. Here is a Newfoundland grandmother, for whom distance made her role more difficult.

Rebecca: Well that was a little bit stressful because she (her daughter) decided that she wasn't going to a hospital, she was going to have the child at home. So even though she was under her doctor's care she also had a

midwife. And when she went into labour she let me know and [inaudible] so I was here and she was having her baby at home with a midwife so that was scary... And I found it difficult having her away from home for a few years. ... I found that difficult to be away from her. And her marriage was not as stable; the situation wasn't the best in my mind.

Most Newfoundland mothers demonstrated ambivalence about their children moving away for greater opportunities, torn between wanting the best life for them, and wanting them to live close by. Carol is typical.

Carol: She loves it she is happy as anything, came home and bought a car the next year, she has a boyfriend from down there now but hopefully she will eventually come home. She is coming home for Christmas, she comes home in the summer. But she's happy, I'm glad she's gone now, when she's young. But I am hoping she will [come back].

In Indonesia, the examples are more likely to highlight children who have been separated from their parents and are having to survive in the larger cities. In Indonesia, it is a common practice for families to send their children to be taken care of by relatives who may live in a different place, usually to provide them with 'better lives'. In turn, when a child is sent to another household s/he should take the role 'helper' in the family, doing all the chores needed, such as washing the clothes of the family, cleaning the house, cooking etc. Rasmini from Madura describes her experience:

My parents were wealthy enough, but when I entered high school, my father was bankrupt, so my uncle took me to Surabaya. He was the one who paid for my education. In campus I didn't feel free, since right after the course I had to go home. If not, his wife would be so angry and grumbled all the time. It went like that, until I almost finished my script, and my father visited me. He was so shocked that I was so thin, since my uncle moved to a house very far from the campus.

Whereas Canadian families tend to relate most closely within or close to the nuclear unit, Indonesian families draw on a wider circle of relatives. This eases the transitions involved in migration, especially when one member of the family is already established in the city, although, as the example above demonstrates, the arrange-

ments do not always work out well for the young family member.

How Women Understand 'Place'

In Newfoundland we found that women were much less attached to 'place' in the sense of where they were born or grew up than we expected. Many of them had moved to their husband's community and even after living there for many years, they had no sense of connection. Consider Sarah, from our study, who moved to her husband's community when she married and still, 40 years later, does not think of it as 'her' community. Even Barbara, who immigrated to Newfoundland when she was a small child and feels completely integrated says she still has 'itchy feet' and considers moving away.

Marilyn: And you have obviously settled down here?

Barbara: For good if possible. The only thing is that the last little while I have had this strong feeling to pick up and move and I don't know why. I just, I think I would like a break for a while.

The Indonesian women spoke less about the importance of 'place' itself. For them, identity was primarily to an ethnic group, which itself was often tied to place. In the 'circular migration' that we described earlier, it appears that women move from their place of origin to the cities and back to their villages according to need, rather than because they see the 'place' as important of itself. It seems clear from the data from both Indonesia and from Canada that for women physical place, and consequently issues of migration are less important than their 'place' in the family, their relationships with their children and parents, and, if possible, proximity to them. Other studies (Bella 2002) suggest that Newfoundland women who have migrated are much less homesick and inclined to return to Newfoundland than are Newfoundland men. Similarly, discussions with Indonesian women show them figuring out the best moves for their own economic survival and that of their families. While women may enjoy the modern appliances and conveniences they find in the bigger centres, especially in Canada, these are not deciding factors for them. In both countries we found that women value the proximity to their children and grandchildren and will seek to accomplish a way of living that allows that.

CONCLUSION

We opened this paper with a recognition of the difficulties that feminist scholars have faced in both bringing the topic of women's experience of migration into the general field of migration studies and of seeing that experience in terms of gender, rather than as simply the dichotomised experiences of men and women. Authors such as Pessar and Mahler (2003) have also struggled against the overwhelming use of large scale quantitative studies to approach migration issues, critiquing them for their failure to contextualise the data or to address gender biases in the data. They also argue, correctly in our view, that to understand the lived experience and the process of migration, we need small scale, ethnographically oriented studies. The more thoughtful qualitative researchers working in the field have also asserted that we can only develop new theory from the basis of the deeper understanding provided by such efforts to get behind the statistics to the individual decisions, choices, pressures, hopes and failures of the women and men who migrate. We need to get down below the level of the analysis of large movements of people, even below the level of the 'black box' of the household to look at the fluid and inconstant interactions between individuals, recognising their subjectivity as they struggle to make their own lives.

Mahler and Pessar (among others) have demonstrated the richness of their approach by working through their framework of 'gendered geographies of power', which they developed as a "theoretical approach for how to conceptualize and study gendered identities and relations when conducted and negotiated across international borders, as they relate to multiple axes of difference, and as they operate along and across many sociospatial scales – from the body to the globe" (Mahler and Pessar 2006: 16). This approach enormously enriches the ways in which we can look at how, when and why people move and how they experience migration. But virtually all the studies, even the most detailed, focus on international migration, on people moving between countries, often as part of cultural groups which re-constitute themselves when they settle in their new countries. In our study we wanted to take the logic of Mahler and Pessar's approach and apply it to the much messier and more individu-

alistic experience of migration within countries. These people, making their decisions, often life altering, are usually below the radar screen of migration studies. Yet their experience tells us just as much about the process of moving as do the international migrants.

In this paper, we have tried to take the data we have (which was not gathered as part of a migration study) and see how geographic mobility occurs in at least some women's lives. Our study contrasted two very different situations, in Canada and in Indonesia. Therefore, we should not be surprised that even in a small study we found a diversity of reasons for women moving and outcomes from the moves. But we also found continuity both within and between the countries. Women construct their lives in different social, cultural, political and economic contexts, as we show. But by looking at women in the same families, we can see something of the similarity of challenges they face and priorities they hold. At the heart of the issue is the complex position that women hold in families. We have been concerned to break open the 'black box' of the household; not to assume that all members of a family will be of one mind or impacted similarly by decisions to move. But we also found that women (and most men) take their decisions not as individuals but as responsible for their families' welfare and the accomplishment of a better life. Sometimes this involves sending a child to be cared for by relatives; sometimes by working overseas to send remittances for the children's school fees; sometimes by marrying and moving to a different culture; sometimes by moving away from a repressive family situation. Whatever the driving force, we can see the constant fluidity of women's lives, the constant interaction between their individual desires, the needs of their families and the context they find themselves in.

As we see in both the examples from Canada and the examples from Indonesia, physical migration can take different forms and have diverse impacts on both the migrating women and their families. While Indonesia is a 'sending' country, with many Indonesians, especially Indonesian women leaving the country in search of work, mainly as domestic servants, Canada is a 'receiving' country, with the consequence integrating (or failing to integrate) substantial numbers of international immigrants. However, the main concern of this paper is the much less heralded

and studied internal migration that takes place in both countries. In Indonesia we have looked at this primarily in terms of the experiences of women migrating into Jakarta and other large centres; in Canada we have looked at the experiences of 'outmigration' from a poor province to other parts of the country.

In all the data we see women making decisions, or going along with family decisions, but having to adjust to their own, or their children's migration. We have provided some sense of the ways in which identity is tied to geographical mobility, and of the intense emotions attached to a sense of place. We can see women struggling to maintain both their own identities and the cohesion and health of their families in the face of difficult decisions. As the modern world involves increasing mobility of both capital and labour, women will continue to have to face these difficulties. As families are torn apart by economic and other pressures, it will be women who take responsibility for maintaining the family.

NOTES

- ¹ For exceptions see Skelton 2006; Mooney 2001; de Jong and Graefe 2005, Steinberg 2002; Subramanian 2006.
- ² The larger project from which the data presented here is drawn is entitled '*Women's Experience of Reproductive Health in the Family: A Comparative Life Story Project*' funded by IDRC and SSHRC. There are three teams, based in Newfoundland, Canada; Karachi, Pakistan; and Jakarta, Indonesia. Project leader: Marilyn Porter. Members of the Newfoundland team: Phyllis Artiss, Natalie Beausoleil, Diana Gustafson. Pakistan team: Tahera Aftab (country leader), Zareen Ilyas, Shakila Rehman. Indonesian team: Anita Rahman (country leader), Tita Marlita, Kristi Poerwandari. The contents of this paper are the sole responsibility of the authors.
- ³ Recent census data (2006) revealed a substantial net loss in population, continuing a trend for at least the last three census periods. Newfoundland and Labrador currently has a population of 505,000, which is a net loss 7,000 people since 2001. More seriously, more young families in the demographically significant childbearing age groups are leaving the province, exacerbating the problem (Hiller 2009).
- ⁴ 'Indonesia is primarily a source, but also a transit and destination country for human trafficking. UNICEF estimates that 100,000 women and children are trafficked annually for commercial sexual exploitation in Indonesia and abroad, 30 percent of the female prostitutes in Indonesia are below 18, and 40,000-70,000 Indonesian children are victims of sexual exploitation. The East Java Children's Protection Agency estimates that at least 100,000 women and children are trafficked annually from, through, and to East Java. Indonesian women and children are trafficked for

sexual and labor exploitation in Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Taiwan, Japan, Hong Kong, and the Middle East. A significant number of Indonesian women voluntarily migrate to work as domestic servants but are later coerced into abusive conditions. Some Indonesian women are recruited by false promises of employment and are later coerced into prostitution or forced labor. Ethnic Chinese women and teenage girls in the West Kalimantan district are recruited as mail-order brides for men in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore'. <http://www.humantrafficking.org/countries/indonesia>

- 4 Recent research (Wahyumi and Setiawati 2009) found that 70% of the international contract workers in the Arab countries are women. All but 30 of the 125,000 foreign workers in Hongkong are women, each remitting and average of US\$187 per month to their families in Indonesia. 88% of these women have children under the age of 16 years, and their work in Hongkong provides both the daily necessities for their families as well as allowing them to save in order to buy property when they return home.

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