

Gender and skilled migration in Europe

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Recibido: 17-09-2011
Aceptado: 22-11-2011

ABSTRACT

This article examines the significance of skilled labour migration and the sectors in which skilled female migrants are employed. It considers some of the major reasons for the lack of attention given to gendered aspects of skilled migration. Nonetheless there have been some interesting theoretical and empirical advances in our understanding of skilled female migrants, which go beyond a general appreciation of the hardships they confront in the course of migration. These studies explore in more detail both the obstacles and their responses and strategies to entry into the labour market and deskilling and in specific sectors and states as well as in the European Union. The article also argues that how immigration regulations shape gendered skilled migrations is a topic which deserves more attention.

Keywords: gender, skilled migrants, deskilling, immigration policies

Género y migración cualificada en Europa

RESUMEN

Este artículo examina el significado de la migración laboral cualificada y los sectores en los que las mujeres migrantes cualificadas están empleadas. Considera alguna de las principales razones que explican la falta de atención que han recibido los aspectos de género de la migración cualificada. Sin embargo, se han producido algunos interesantes avances teóricos y empíricos en la comprensión de las mujeres migrantes cualificadas, que van más allá de una apreciación general de los inconvenientes a los que se enfrentan en el transcurso del proceso migratorio. Estos estudios exploran en detalle tanto los obstáculos como sus respuestas y estrategias a la hora de acceder al mercado de trabajo y de experimentar una pérdida de cualificación en sectores específicos, tanto en los estados como en la UE. El artículo argumenta también que el modo en que las regulaciones sobre inmigración determinan las migraciones cualificadas como procesos generizados es un tema que requiere mayor atención.

Palabras clave: género, migración cualificada, descualificación, políticas de inmigración

REFERENCIA NORMALIZADA

Kofman, E., (2012). Género y migración cualificada en Europa. *Cuadernos de Relaciones Laborales* Vol. 30, núm. 1, p. 63-89.

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Introduction

“Skilled immigration has slipped by as a genderless story in which the androgynous skilled migrant is the central character and economists do most of the storytelling” (Boucher 2009:). The title of an article “highly skilled but under-theorized” (Slade 2004) represents a second appropriate comment on the literature and narratives concerning gender and skilled migration. Academic research and policy studies of migrant women’s employment usually focus on those who enter the highly feminised and lesser skilled reproductive sectors of the labour market, such as sex work (Agustin 2007; Kempadoo et al. 2005), domestic work (Lutz 2008; Parrenas 2001), and more recently care work (Kilkey et al. 2010; Zimmerman et al. 2006). As a consequence, other sectors of the labour market where women are also present (Rubin et al. 2009), including the more skilled sectors, are paid relatively little attention. There seems to be a paradigmatic separation (Kofman and Raghuram 2005; Shinozaki 2008) between the skilled and the unskilled such that globalisation for migrant women has been driven by the circulation of those undertaking less skilled work (Sassen 2000) in order to ensure the survival of households and states.

In contrast, much of the literature on skilled migration pays attention to the contribution of skilled migrants in the knowledge economy, and in particular the science, information technology, financial and managerial sectors which are seen to be the driving forces behind global wealth creation. These occupations are the most valued in monetary terms and are consequently often also designated as highly skilled, rather than just ordinarily skilled, such as teaching, and are therefore increasingly privileged in immigration policies in many European states. These are of course male dominated. However, skilled female migrants tend to be concentrated in female dominated occupations, such as education, health and social work, which are regulated by professional bodies within national welfare states. As with less skilled work, these are also concerned with reproductive labour and, where salary is a major criteria, often classified as skilled rather than highly skilled (see section on immigration regulations).

Other separations also shape our knowledge and conceptualisation of skilled migrations and migrants¹. A significant one is that between economic and family flows through which skilled migrants are filtered. Skilled migrants are studied through the prism of labour migration whilst the world of family migration is categorised as social, in which skills would seem to be irrelevant and of little interest. Yet large numbers of skilled female migrants (defined as those with tertiary qualifications) enter through family routes (marriage, family reunification and accompa-

¹ A key distinction, particularly pertinent for women, is that between those entering to perform work in skilled occupations (skilled migration), and those with high levels of education or qualifications (skilled migrants), who may be deskilled and/or unemployed post migration.

nying spouses of labour migrants). We know very little about the work experiences of skilled females who have moved for family reasons, and who are likely to encounter greater difficulties in accessing professional and regulated occupations. Nor do we know much about the ways in which they develop strategies for their own careers and professional integration in the receiving country (Erel 2003; Liver- sage 2009; Raghuram 2004a; Riano and Baghdadi 2007). We also underplay the significance of family matters and how they impact on and lubricate economic migrations and mobilities (Ackers and Gill 2008: 232; Riano forthcoming; Scheibelhofer 2008). Though referring to research on internal migrations, Cooke (2001: 419) comments that research has generally ‘failed to consider carefully how reproductive, labour market and migration decisions are connected’.

Recent studies of the brain drain highlight the fact that skilled women migrate more than men. These women may migrate independently as students, labour migrants, and spouses, some of whom are able to enter the labour market (Docquier et al. 2008; Dumont et al. 2007). According to Dumont et al. (2007), highly skilled women migrants outnumber skilled men in a number of countries such as the UK, Sweden, France, Germany, Italy and Switzerland. So what happens to them subsequent to their migration? Inevitably, many of them, through whatever route they enter, experience deskilling, a situation which has begun to attract more attention from international organisations, such as the OECD.

The paper first notes the significance of skilled labour migration and the sectors in which skilled female migrants are employed. The second section then turns to the issue of deskilling and the general difficulties skilled migrant women face in accessing employment commensurate with their qualifications. As the introduction highlighted, the literature on skilled migration has on the whole been ungendered and the third section suggests some reasons for this lack of attention. The fourth section presents some interesting theoretical and empirical advances in our understanding of skilled female migrants, in particular an attempt to go beyond a general appreciation of the hardships they confront in the course of migration to a more detailed exploration of both the obstacles and their responses and strategies in specific sectors and states as well as in the European Union. The last section explores how immigration regulations shape gendered skilled migrations, a topic that also deserves more attention.

Given the absence of systematic studies of gendered skilled migration, except for some statistical data on migrant women in skilled occupations and main source countries (see the following section), this article cannot attempt to cover comprehensively the situation in different European states. Furthermore, our attempt to develop a fuller understanding of gender and skilled migration in the labour market and beyond relies on small number of empirical qualitative studies in specific countries and migrant groups. Nonetheless these studies offer insights based on changing gender orders of skilled migrant women and their career strategies in the course of migration. Although the focus is on Europe, relevant studies in other areas of the world will also be referred to.

1. Skilled Migration and Skilled Female Migrants

Recent analyses of the stock and flows of migrants demonstrate that skilled and highly skilled migrants form a substantial proportion of labour migrants in most European states (EMN 2011). Unfortunately breakdowns by sector, skills and nationalities do not include any information by gender. In the Slovak Republic and the United Kingdom, highly skilled workers were the largest set of workers from 2004 to 2009 with skilled being the second². Between 2006 and 2009, in Germany, Ireland, Malta, Netherlands and Sweden, highly skilled workers formed the second largest group of migrant workers after skilled workers; whereas in Austria, Belgium, France, and Italy the second largest stock of migrant workers was low skilled. In Finland, the second largest stock of migrant workers between 2004 and 2006 was highly skilled workers, with low skilled workers constituting the second largest group in 2007.

In some countries there are equal or even higher proportions of foreign-born non-OECD female migrants in skilled occupations as the native-born e.g. in the UK, Hungary and Portugal (see table 1). In Belgium the proportions are almost the same. At the other extreme, there are markedly lower proportions of migrant women in skilled occupations in Southern European countries except Portugal, which tend to be countries of high levels of deskilling and concentration in less skilled sectors.

Table 1 Percentage of women in highly skilled occupations by origin, 15-64, 2004

	Native-born	Foreign-born	Foreign-born non-OECD
Austria	38.2	25.3	18.6
Belgium	42.9	41.6	42.5
Denmark	43.3	38.6	33.9
Finland	42.8	32.5	21.9
France	37.7	30.5	31.1
Germany	46.0	30.5	..
Greece	36.6	13.5	6.8
Hungary	40.8	42.7	40.8
Ireland	40.0	47.9	-

² The EMN study used the ISCO 88 categorisation to group workers by skills. The Highly skilled (ISCO-88 Major Group 1,2,3); Skilled (ISCO-88 Major Group 4 -8); Low skilled (ISCO-88 Major Group 9).

Italy	43.9	29.2	20.4
Luxembourg	51.3	38.5	26.3
Norway	42.2	38.9	23.8
Portugal	25.7	33.6	31.3
Spain	36.2	21.6	12.3
Sweden	45.4	38.3	25.7
Switzerland	44.1	38.0	29.2
United Kingdom	36.2	43.7	39.8

“-“ indicates that figure is not significant “..” no explanation

Source: Table I.15. SOPEMI 2006.

As table 2 demonstrates, the differences between women and men in relation to the number of skilled migrants by country of origin are not great. In a number of countries there are slightly more female skilled migrants than men.

Table 2 Main origin countries for highly skilled immigrants in OECD countries by gender circa 2000

Country of Birth	Female	Total	%
Philippines	562215	887477	63.3
United Kingdom	509887	1,075,160	47.4
Former USSR	506999	930150	54.5
Germany	440991	856679	51.5
India	429547	999566	43.0
China	400495	816966	49.0
Poland	235147	446496	52.7
Mexico	234781	474072	49.5
Canada	217106	422167	51.4
United States	205847	391448	52.6
France	199630	365814	54.6

Source: Dumont et al. (2007:11)

Moreover, women have always been part of these streams of skilled migration as workers in selected welfare sectors such as health, teaching and social work, as students who subsequently join the labour force, as well as spouses. Women were present in the earlier flows; for instance, throughout the 1960s the UK depended on Caribbean and Irish female nurse migration. Canada, too imported female nurses from Third World countries to cut costs and even out fluctuating shortages in the 1980s (Stasiulis and Bakan 2003:107). Large numbers of Filipina nurses also went to the US.

Women's employment in the health and education sectors has therefore contributed significantly to altering the gender balance in skilled migration. Some of these sectors, such as nursing employ large proportions of women. For example, over 90% of migrants in this sector are women and in many countries this constitutes the single largest health profession. In the UK the number of female migrant nurses rose by 49,000 or 92% from 1997 to 2004 compared to an increase of 1% among non-migrant women. Male migrant nurses displayed an even higher percentage rise of 184% (15,000) during this period (EMN 2007b) but the proportion of male nurses to female nurses still remains small. However with the expansion of training places in these professions and budgetary reductions, this trend has been sharply reversed (see Bach 2006, 2010 for nurses).

Women migrants also form part of flows that are usually deemed to be masculine or presented in gender neutral terms. For instance, women form an important part of migrant doctors in the UK with about 54% of new full registrants to the General Medical Council in 2002 being women (Kofman et al 2005). In England in 2000 40.2 per cent of EEA doctors, 36.75 per cent of UK qualified doctors and 26.2 per cent of non-EEA doctors were women (Raghuram and Kofman 2002). As such, it was the EEA qualified medical migrant workforce that was the most feminised.

Women constitute a small, but significant, minority amongst migrant Information and Communication Technology (ICT) professionals entering the major countries of immigration in any year. In the US, Indian women were found to have much higher levels of education, for example masters from American universities rather than a bachelor degree as with men (Chakravarty 2006). However, the small proportions of women must be set within the context of large total numbers (and in most countries until recently, rapidly rising) entering through this category. For instance, in the UK, between 1995 and 2002 there was a rapid growth in migrant ICT professionals and ICT formed the seventh largest industry even among female work permit holders (Raghuram, 2004b). From 1995 to 2004, women comprised 13.7% of those granted work permits in the ICT sector in the UK (Raghuram 2008: 48). In the Netherlands, they comprised 18% of ICT sector, the lowest percentage amongst the different sectors comprising knowledge workers (European Migration Network 2007a). In Germany, only 12% of the IT specialist work permits between 1999 and 2004 were granted to women (Jungwirth 2011).

The discussion has so far concerned the presence of female migrants in skilled occupations. However the presence of skilled migrant women measured in terms of educational level needs to be taken into account. The share of women immigrants holding a tertiary degree in OECD countries is only three percentage points below that of men. In Australia it is almost equal, and in the United States 26.6% of immigrant men had a tertiary degree compared to 25.6% of immigrant women (Dumont et al. 2007:9).

A study of about 3300 spouses (85% of whom were female) with partners mainly working in large companies in a number of different countries, and conducted by the Permits Foundation (2009), found that educational levels did not differ enormously between male and female spouses (see table 3).

Table 3 Highest Qualification

Qualification	Male	Female
Secondary	5.8	8.3
Vocational	8.1	10.6
Bachelor	35.1	36.6
Master	43.6	39.0
PhD	7.3	5.6

Source: Permits Foundation 2009

Prior to the assignment, female spouses had worked to a great extent (87.9%). Compared to men, of whom 93.4% had worked, the main difference was a lower percentage who had been self employed and the sectors in which they had worked. Both were spread across a range of sectors but the main ones for women were in the reproductive and regulated sectors such as education (13.9%) and medical/health (11.5%) and engineering and construction (15.7%) and IT and computers (11.5%) for men. However where we find a notable difference is in the percentage of those who were in employment post migration (25.2% employed and 6.6% self employed amongst women) and (46.3% and 9.5% respectively for men). Fewer women managed to obtain a job in their preferred field (70.5%) compared to men (81.5%).

This section has so far outlined the degree to which women with educational qualifications have migrated to the European Union and some of the key sectors, in which those whose skills are accredited, work. However, one of the key issues that is increasingly being recognised is that of deskilling which, as we shall see in the following section affects women more than men.

2. Deskilling

Although, deskilling is a common experience among all migrants, women face a particularly high level of deskilling. Evidence for this is provided by the extent of over qualification for jobs they hold but of course this does not take into account migrant women who are unemployed and forced back into the home. The study (Dumont and Leibig 2005) of migrant women in the OECD clearly demonstrates that women were more likely to be overqualified for their jobs than men. The very high levels in Southern European countries are likely to be due to shortages in less skilled sectors, especially domestic labour, highly protected skilled sectors and lack of recognition of non-EU qualifications.

There are two major outcomes from deskilling. Firstly professional women are working in sectors other than their original training and secondly that they work at levels below their qualifications within the occupation e.g. nurses working as nursing aides, both of which point to barriers that female migrants face which are independent of their individual education and the number of children they have (Rubin et al. 2009).

Table 4 Percentage of women (15-64) in jobs for which they are overqualified by birth status 2003-2004

	Native-born	Foreign-born	Foreign-born non-OECD
Austria	9.3	24.8	32.8
France	14.2	18.8	19.8
Germany	9.9	23.6	32.3
Greece	9.0	53.4	62.0
Hungary	7.3	10.5	8.9
Ireland	15.6	23.9	38.2
Italy	7.1	27.4	34.0
Spain	24.4	47.6	56.7
Sweden	7.2	15.3	23.2
Switzerland	7.6	13.8	19.8
United Kingdom	14.9	17.0	18.7

Source: Table I.16 SOPEMI 2006

Moreover, the level of ‘brain-waste’ or brain abuse (Bauder 2003) i.e. under-use of the qualifications that migrants possess, was higher for women who migrated from non-OECD countries than for those who migrated within the OECD (see table 4). Within Europe, women migrants from the Eastern European accession countries have also been affected by deskilling - the bulk of migrants since 2004 have filled low skilled jobs in old EU countries (Currie 2009). They are now covered by EU regulations concerning the recognition of qualifications but it is not yet clear to what extent, as they improve their language and settle in, they will be able to move into more qualified employment reflecting their educational level. Migrants may move from one normative gender order with very different gendered structures and ideologies of women’s participation in the labour market and state support for those with caring responsibilities to do so. Drawing on Connell (1987), Jungwirth (2011) defines “normative gender order” as the historically specific complex of norms and cultural ideals referring to gender roles, to a gendered division of labour, and to sexuality, norms and ideals which are reproduced in institutions such as the welfare state, the labour market, the family, and the educational system”. An example would be women who commonly work as science and technology professionals, as in Eastern European states, moving to another in which this kind of occupation is much less common amongst women, as in Germany (Jungwirth 2011). Women’s bodies in such workplaces may be represented as being out of place (Grigoleit 2010). Skilled female migrants may also move to countries where the male breadwinner model still prevails, as is the case in Switzerland (Riano and Baghdadi 2007). Deskilling thus often results in the move from one gender order to another.

Deskilling also occurs within professions, as in nursing. A study of international nurse recruits in the UK, mainly from Europe, Australia, Africa and Philippines found that many nurses felt that their skills were not appreciated or respected and that they confronted racism and xenophobia (Allan and Aggergaard Larsen 2003). Nurses also experienced a considerable degree of downgrading of their skills as they entered the labour market at levels well below that which they occupied before migration. Furthermore their experiences varied considerably depending on whether they worked in the private or public sector.

A project on skilled migration (Jubany 2004) in four European countries (Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK) concluded that qualified migrants are an under-used resource. Some of the factors that lead to deskilling of migrants are common to both men and women. The process of recognition of qualifications for non-EU countries was estimated by this research to be the major problem for labour integration and it is considered to be too complex, lengthy, costly and discouraging for qualified immigrants. The lack of successful and effective formal channels for information about and access to employment is identified. Dominant stereotypes exist, even amongst professionals that tend to classify qualified immigrants and their skills by their country of origin. The lack of support structures for newly arrived qualified immigrant forces them to rely on informal networks. The lack of affordable, accessible and appropriate professional language courses for qualified immigrants is another key finding of this study.

However, some of these factors influence women more than men. For instance, the ability to attend professional language courses may be more limited for women who have childcare responsibilities. The loss of social networks, personal and professional, after women migrate can be worse if they also have less ability to go out and access new networks. Women's need to re-skill or to get accreditation may also be given less priority by families when there is gender hierarchy within households. Eventually, lengthy periods out of the labour market and under-employment take away the confidence and professional identity of such migrants and increase deskilling.

Given the differences between the forms of circulations, experiences and difficulties of transferring their professional expertise and knowledge, it might seem surprising there has been so little attention paid to these issues by academics and policy makers. In the next two sections I offer some reasons for this lack of interest, on the one hand, and examine some studies, on the other, which seek to explore these aspects in depth and further our theorisation of gender and skilled migration.

3. Why the Lack of Interest in Skilled Migrant Women?

Despite the growing emphasis on skilled migration in the past decade (Chiswick 2005; Cornelius et al. 2001; Lowell 2008; Smith and Favell 2006; Solinas 2008; OECD 2002), the European Commission's (2002) emphasis on skills and mobility, and the loss of human capital and resources for states, there still seems to be relatively little interest in the gendered composition, experiences and obstacles to mobility of skilled migration (Kofman 2000; Raghuram 2008). In reviews of gender and migration in Europe (Slany et al. 2010), there is little discussion of skilled migration or skilled migrants (but see Anthias and Cederberg 2010 on the UK). Projects on gender and skilled migration, primarily in science and research have been funded in Germany and by the European Commission³.

There are a number of reasons that might explain the slow progress. The first is that the literature on female migration has increasingly come to focus on their role in the domestic and caring sector where the growth of labour in the household and in residential homes has occurred across all types of European welfare regimes (Kilkey et al. 2010; Kofman 2010). Demand has been particularly high for migrant labour in regimes where the family has traditionally been expected to provide services for child and elderly care as well as for the disabled, as in Southern Europe and Germany (Lutz 2008). Demand has also been growing in states where services have been privatised and employment conditions have become less secure, as in the UK (Cangiano et al. 2009; Cox 2006). Social care, and its new privatised forms, have become a major policy and research issue in Europe (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions 2006) and internationally (Razavi 2007) and therefore in receipt of funding.

Theoretically, these developments have been increasingly analysed through the framework of global chains of care, which Hoschschild (2000: 131) defined "as a series of personal links between people across the globe based on the paid or unpaid work of caring" (p. 131), migrant women from the South provide necessary physical and emotional labour in homes in the global North. It thus allocates women lowly positions in supporting reproductive roles for the provision of welfare⁴. Though primarily applied to less skilled migrations, there have been attempts to extend it to skilled migrations, in particular that of nurses (Yeates 2004, 2009) and

³ Examples are MOBISC (2003-4) which examined mobility and work/life balance in career progression of highly skilled women and men in the EU (see publications by Ackers, 2004, 2005, 2011; Ackers and Gill 2008) and Integration hochqualifizierter Migrantinnen auf dem deutschen Arbeitsmarkt (The Integration of Highly Qualified Women the German Labour Market) funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (see publications by Grigoleit 2010; Jungwirth 2010).

⁴ There is an extensive literature nowadays on migration of careworkers using this framework but it lies outside the scope of this article.

to sites beyond the household (Kofman 2010; Kofman and Raghuram 2010).

The second reason for female skilled migrants not receiving much attention is because the world of skills seems to be populated by male migrants. The economic benefits of migration are often only analysed in the context of occupations in knowledge-based industries such as finance and science and technology⁵. The managerial, scientific and technological knowledge that underpin these industries are seen as the driving force of globalization, productivity and wealth creation, and are therefore promoted by the EU and states (Kofman 2007). The European Commission has thus equated mobility and skills and sought to promote intra-European mobility as well as attracting skilled, and especially scientific migration from beyond the EU in order to make Europe “the most competitive and dynamic economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion” (EC 2002). ICT in particular, a male dominated sector, epitomises the mobile worker at the forefront of the new knowledge economy (Caviedes 2009) and a partial breach of closed European labour markets. However, the association between female migration and skills is rarely made in academic (Williams 2006; 2007) and policy literature (see following section).

The third reason is the unwarranted assumption that migrant women, not employed in skilled sectors, do not possess skills (Dumont et al. 2007). In particular this applies to spouses who enter through family migration programmes with their partners or who come to join a partner and have not been specifically chosen for their educational qualifications and/or their skills. There is little theoretical or empirical literature on the employment of dependants (Migration Advisory Committee 2009). The presence of migrant women is not analytically linked to the world of production or to skills but connected with social, welfare and integration. Thus they are omitted from the discussion of women as economic actors of migration and situated in the realm of a largely unchanging symbolic gender order (Jungwirth 2008; 2010), where family migrants have become increasingly problematised as backward and inimical to modernity (Kofman 2011 et al), and thus necessitating a raft of integration measures to ensure they participate in the labour market. This is a serious and disturbing assumption given that family migration provides a major route for permanent settlement in all European states, and in some, such as France, Sweden and Switzerland, the dominant route (Kofman et al. forthcoming). In addition, there is a tendency to treat family migrants as a fairly homogeneous group. The evidence on the educational qualifications of spouses in settler countries (CIC 2006), the levels of overqualification (SOPEMI 2006) and the deskilling of migrant women in EU countries (Dumont and and Leibig 2005; Rubin et al. 2009), do not support these assumptions.

⁵ There has been some feminist critique of the assumptions behind the knowledge economy and society and its implications for women and gender relations in society (Mósesdóttir et al. 2006; Walby et al. 2007; Walby 2011).

This situation has not been helped by the continuing failure to provide relevant gendered data. In some cases, data on skilled employment exists but receives scant commentary, as in the studies of highly skilled migrants and health professionals (European Migration Network 2007a, b). In other cases, there is no data at all, as in a report on shortages and labour migration (European Migration Network 2011) which contains abundant material on skill levels by stock and flows in various European countries.

4. Recent Theoretical Developments and Empirical Studies

The relatively little attention paid to skilled female migrants, as outlined above, is not to say that there has not been any advancement in our understanding of a number of aspects concerning gendered (highly) skilled migration or its inclusion in general reviews of gender and labour migration (Dumont et al. 2007; Rubin et al. 2009). Theoretically in the past decade, the critique has moved beyond noting the absence of skilled migrants within the burgeoning field of gendered migrations. In terms of skilled labour, most research has focused on female-dominated sectors, in particular nursing (Kingsma 2006; Pittman et al. 2007; Yeates 2009). Because nursing is so obviously feminised, discussions about the sector in policy literature may fail to consider gender issues (see Part III Immigrant Health Workers in OECD countries in the broader context of highly skilled migration SOPEMI 2007).

However, some scholars have begun to compare female and male migrations (Shinozaki 2008) and explore the experiences of skilled female migrants in male dominated sectors, such as ITC (Raghuram 2008), medicine (Raghuram and Montiel 2003), academia (Czarniawska and Sevón 2008), business (Cooke 2007; Grigoleit 2010), science (Ackers 2004; Ackers and Gill 2008; Scheibelhofer 2008). Examining female migrants in such sectors generates new questions about career trajectories and blockages (Raghuram 2008), the role of mobility in career progression and prospects (Ackers 2004; Ackers and Gill 2008, Ackers 2011), gender relationships in the workplace (Grigoleit 2010), the differential impact of immigration regulations according to gender and sector (Kofman et al. 2005), and the complex and varied interplay between class, ethnicity and gender (Riano and Baghdadi 2007).

If the norm of men as migrants (Schwenken and Eberhardt 2008) has been attenuated, it is not the case in relation to skilled migration which is closely associated with modernization, globalization and the knowledge economy based on the circulation of scientific and managerial elites (Kofman 2007). As previously noted, little consideration has been devoted to its gendered implications (Walby 2011; Walby et al. 2007). The discussion of knowledge diasporas (Leclerc and Meyer 2003) is premised on the circulation of ITC and high level managers. However, drawing on Michael Polanyi's (1958, 1966) distinction between the codified and the tacit, Williams (2006) proposed a more complex classification of types of knowledge and their propensity for transfer through migration. Kofman and Raghuram

(forthcoming) have further suggested that these forms of knowledge may be gendered and have implications for circulation and re-embeddedness in the new location.

Two of the most relevant forms are *embrained* knowledge, dependent on conceptual skills and cognitive abilities, which allow recognition of and reflection on underlying patterns. Their generic nature, often derived from scientific reasoning, supposedly renders them more mobile and economically productive. *Encoded* knowledge's, on the other hand, are embedded in signs and symbols which are to be found in traditional forms such as books, manuals, codes of practice and website. This is the kind of knowledges associated with traditional professions relating to law, medicine, and education, although these have embraced other forms of knowledge creation as well. For Williams (2006) these forms of knowledge are less mobile. These are also the regulated professions most difficult to gain access in the receiving society and increasingly feminised. Professional closure and non-recognition of qualifications also tend to be most severe in these sectors, thus leading to high levels of brain waste (Bauder 2003, Kofman and Raghuram 2006). It may be further reinforced where there is a demand for *encultured* knowledge, that is knowledge where meanings are shared due to some form of common culture. Understandings arise from socialization and acculturation so that language, common experiences and sociality are the key elements of this form of knowledge, which is shared generally by those who have passed through the same national system of education and professional training. Thus obtaining employment often requires local or national experience (Bauder 2003; Liversage 2009; Riano and Baghdadi 2007).

Of course women are to be found in non-female dominated sectors and partake of European and global mobility. In fact Adrian Favell (2009) in his study of European Union free movers⁶ comments that the prototype of this minority (about 2% of the EU population have moved to another country) are single young women from Southern European countries who have sought to leave behind rigid economic structures in their home countries for more exciting and stimulating prospects in major cities such as Amsterdam, Brussels and London. They find work across a variety of occupations and types of employment, though in general his interviewees were to be found in business and management, international law, scientific research and design and media, and often in multinational companies or self employed.

Another thread of analysis has moved away from the workplace and the narrow focus on labour migration so as to include the experiences and professional integration of female skilled migrants who enter through other routes such as marriage,

⁶ This category is not part of the elite but could be said to represent what has come to be termed 'middling transnational' (Conradson and Latham 2005), that is middle class and not the global elite. Another study within this framework is that of British middle class migrants in Paris (Scott 2006).

family, education and refugee (Kofman and Raghuram 2006; Liversage 2009; Jungwirth 2011, Raghuram 2004; Riano and Baghdadi 2007). Though all too frequently portrayed as tied and trailing spouses who sacrifice their careers, those within skilled dual career households may deploy complex strategies for career progress and professional integration (Hardill 2002). Raghuram (2004) suggests that one needs to look at the specificity of the labour market within which the migrant couple is seeking employment and the regulations which determine whether the spouse may enter the labour market as well⁷. In dual career medical couples, women may also take the lead where they have the advantage in terms of occupational niches. Even amongst spouses who accompany their partner through company routes, a high proportion worked before the overseas assignment. The extent to which this is possible depends on the conditions determining the right to work which varies considerably between countries⁸. On the whole, the majority would like to work but may not be allowed to do so (Permits Foundation 2009).

Several recent studies have explored the transfer or blockage of cultural capital through the process of migration. Though Bourdieu's (1984, 1997) analysis of cultural and social capital within social fields was limited to the nation-state, a number of scholars (Bauder 2003; Kelly and Lusic 2006; Kofman and Raghuram 2006; Liversage 2009; Nohl et al. 2006; Riano and Baghdadi 2007; Weiss 2011) have found his analytical framework useful in understanding the degree of transnational portability of cultural and social capitals. In particular, two studies in countries with contrasting normative gender orders (see section on deskilling) and contexts (professional closures, welfare arrangements and availability of child care) in Denmark (Liversage 2009) and Switzerland (Riano and Baghdadi 2007) have explored the different strategies and responses that highly skilled migrant women, who largely entered through marriage and refugee routes, have adopted to facilitate the transfer of their social and cultural capital and gain access to higher level employment commensurate with their qualifications.

Both analyses adopt interpretive biographical methods⁹ to focus on key turning

⁷ Permits Foundation has a list of general conditions for work applicable to spouses of skilled migrants

<http://www.permitsfoundation.com/docs/2010%20Apr%20web%20country%20summary.pdf>.

There is also a more detailed list of conditions in countries which are more favourable to spouses working.

http://www.permitsfoundation.com/docs/Permits_Country_Summary_April_2011.pdf

⁸ In the US, spouses of HIB visa holders (mainly in science, technology and academia) generally hold H4 visas which do not permit them to work. This can be contrasted with the UK where spouses of skilled non-EU migrants are able to work. Furthermore, EU migrants also have the right to work.

⁹ Kôu et al. (2009) suggest that there has been little attempt to link "highly skilled migrants with life course analysis so as to study their parallel careers of migration, employ-

points at which decisions about the future are made, or what Liversage calls vital conjunctures¹⁰. In Denmark, all of the 15 interviewees (with masters degrees) were from Eastern European countries. The largest number were either married to a native Dane or a compatriot, 4 had entered as refugees with only one migrant woman entering specifically for work purposes. 7 were working at a high level, 3 at a medium level and 5 were unemployed. In Denmark, some professions such as medicine, were easier to enter than in many other countries of immigration; the gender order encourages women to work and childcare was more readily available. The ability to transfer their qualifications was easiest for those with technical and life science qualifications, unlike the case in other countries where these occupations are still highly masculine. In Switzerland, the 57 women interviewed were from Latin America or the Middle East. 30 had entered through marriage, 14 as refugees, 6 for study, 4 family reunification and only 3 for work. Although 45% were employed at their skill level, only 18% were working at their level in stable long-term jobs, 25% were employed below their skills and 30% unemployed. There were nonetheless some similarities between the two countries in the strategies women used to overcome professional blockage – reskilling or renewed engagement with education in rebuilding careers, acting as cultural brokers and doing voluntary work using this, and self employment. Accepting low skilled jobs led to some of them being permanently entrapped and losing their skills, especially in Switzerland. Many of them put a lot of effort into avoiding being forced into becoming housewives. A small minority returned in desperation to their country of origin though a larger number had contemplated this move.

Family issues also matter in the ease with which women and men are able to pursue a scientific career, especially where mobility is expected and even essential for career prospects (Ackers 2004; Ackers and Gill 2008). Given the lengthy education in scientific careers, many researchers may be in their 30s when they obtain their PhDs and go on to do post-doctoral training. Parenthood can reduce the ability for mobility and has a particular impact on women. Care of parents may also become a preoccupation which affects women in particular, as a study of Austrian researchers in the US highlighted (Scheibelhofer 2008). Nevertheless we should be wary of men not being affected by family issues in their decisions to migrate or return, as Varrel's study (2011) of Indian IT specialists returning to India from the US, shows.

ment and household ... and gain a deeper understanding of the influence of life paths, social networks, diasporas and immigration policies”.

¹⁰ She adopts this term from Jennifer Johnson-Hanks (2002: 871) who defines “vital conjuncture as a socially structured zone of possibility that emerges around specific periods of potential transformation in a life or lives” as an alternative conceptual approach to the ‘life stages’ approach. The vital refers to key moments of change such as graduation, getting married or cohabiting, becoming a parent, or in this case migrating.

5. Immigration Regulations and Gendered Skilled Migration

Immigration regulations have considerable influence on skilled women's ability to migrate and to work post migration. The classic states of immigration (Australia, Canada, USA) and the UK began to position themselves as from the late 1990s in the global competition for skilled labour, altering their immigration regulations to facilitate the entry of skilled migrants (Boucher 2009; Cerna 2009, 2010). However, the particular criteria adopted for filtering people with skills have varied across different countries and influenced migrant women differently. Understanding how immigration regulations shape skilled migrations and determine whether spouses may work are very important and deserve much more attention (Boucher 2007, 2009; Iredale 2005; Kofman et al. 2005; Kofman and Raghuram 2006; Raghuram 2004a).

In countries where the selection of migrants favours male dominated sectors, such as ICT, a heavily masculinised skilled migration results. As a recent analysis of gender and skilled migration in New Zealand commented (Badkar et al. 2007), "gendered migration may be more connected with the type of occupation the migrant is coming to New Zealand to work in rather than with the source country". In Canada, education and language attainment reflecting human capital has replaced occupation as a filter for migration, and leading to an increase in the proportion of females in the skilled worker class migration category. This was particularly seen in the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA), which came into force in 2002. Amongst skilled workers, there are now almost 30% women compared to 24% in 2000. It appears that although women are still a minority amongst skilled worker principal applicants, the shift to a broader human capital approach is likely to be less disadvantageous to women as their educational qualifications increase. Moreover, male principal applicants also achieve extra points for their spouse's educational level so the actual proportion of women with skills who are emigrating to Canada is higher than that suggested by the number of female skilled worker applicants.

In Northern Europe, the opening up to skilled labour has been more limited. Some countries (Austria, Estonia, Greece, Italy and Latvia) impose quotas (EMN 2007a). In others, apart from Ireland and the UK, labour demand drives recruitment (Belgium, the Netherlands and Sweden). In many instances, the reality is that schemes are largely restricted to ICT, engineering and research, as in Germany and France. In Germany, a new Act was instituted in 2005 to attract highly skilled migrants but less than 1,000 migrants entered through this scheme in 2005 and in 2006. Given continuing shortages in electrical and mechanical engineering sector, the government opened up this sector to the 12 new member states and students who have obtained their degree in Germany <http://www.workpermit.com/news/2007-08-25/germany/germany-new-eu-engineers-allowed-to-work-graduates-three-years.htm>). Thus in 2007, only 1,302 highly skilled migrants, of whom 22% were women) were living in Germany with a permanent residence permit (Jungwirth 2011). In the Netherlands, though there is a

scheme to attract knowledge workers, the vast majority of the permits in 2006 were taken up by ICT, industry, academia and education and finance. The latter was the only sector with over a third female workers (40.7% European Migration Network 2007). France too has sought to limit family migration, considered to be largely unskilled, and encourage more skilled labour migration.

Amongst the European states with routes for the highly skilled, such as Ireland and the Netherlands, earnings in the country are a major criteria in defining a highly skilled migrant, quite unlike the systems operating in traditional societies of immigration. Given that women are globally confronted by a gender pay gap, that is equally applicable to skilled women¹¹, this criteria, compared to a more broadly based points system in which education and other human capital elements are considered, may particularly work against skilled women. Furthermore, skilled female migrants, as previously noted, are to be found to a greater extent in the highly regulated and lesser remunerated sectors such as nursing, teaching and social work.

The EU has also instituted a Blue Card (EU Council Directive 2009/50/EC), designed to attract highly skilled migrants to the EU, and which was finally adopted on 25 May 2009 and had to be passed by the individual member states within the next 2 years (EuroActiv 2009). Though representing a harmonised admission route for the highly skilled, states do not have to replace their own schemes, are allowed to set their own admission numbers and vary the minimum salary level for a work permit, which is currently set at 1.5 times the average annual salary. Three states (UK, Ireland and Denmark) are not part of this scheme. The Blue Card emphasises, even more than tier 1 of the UK Points Based System higher than average salary levels in the country of destination as the primordial consideration. It is likely that criteria based on salaries, such as the Blue Card, and countries which adopt it as the main criteria for entry as a highly skilled migrant, will privilege men.

The only country that has begun to recognize the inherent gender-selectivity involved in skilled migration programmes is Canada. Boucher's (2009) comparison of Australia and Canada's shift towards skills and accumulated human capital and away from family migration in their immigration entry policies showed that Australia had paid little attention to the effect of gender and ethnicity. Canada has instituted a gender-based analysis (GBA) of immigration policy (as well as settlement and integration programmes) (Kofman et al. 2005). It is

“a process that assesses the differential impact of proposed and/or existing policies, programs and legislation on women and men. It makes it possible for policy

¹¹ We should note that globally the gender gap averages about 16% and is often higher in wealthy countries such as the United States and Canada (International Trade Union Confederation 2008). In the UK, for example, the gender gap increases with educational level and is higher in female dominated occupations.

to be undertaken with an appreciation of gender differences, of the nature of relationships between women and men and of their different social realities, life expectations and economic circumstances". (pp. 35-6).

In the UK, the public equality duty means that public authorities, such as the UK Border Agency, have to evaluate the outcome of proposed changes to policy, such as the Points Based System (PBS) applied to skilled and highly skilled migration. However this has been done in a fairly simplistic manner though it had resulted in some minor changes, for example taking into account maternity leave in the period of time used for calculating the pre-entry salary in the country of origin for the highly skilled (tier 1 of the PBS) (Kofman et al. 2009)¹².

Analyzing the gendered effects and outcomes of immigration policies requires full data sets and intensive qualitative research so that the effects of education, income, sectoral employment patterns and age, for instance, can be considered as they operate alongside gender. For instance, do women who take career breaks due to child-bearing and rearing find it harder to enter as skilled migrants? This kind of intersectional approach can also be used to study the effect of nationality. For example, the proportion of skilled female migrants to major destination countries from China and India differ markedly but the differences can only be understood through careful study (for the UK see Kofman et al. 2009). Moreover, longitudinal data can help us understand the effect of economic factors in sending and receiving states on female skilled migration.

6. Conclusion

One of the few areas to open up in European labour markets has been that of highly skilled migration but it has been partial and aligned with a vision of a scientifically and technologically driven knowledge economic society. However the gendered circulations within the global economy means that such openings privilege male mobility with the female subject largely reliant on the less valued and regulated reproductive sectors which are also more constrained by immigration regulations. The gendering of skilled migration does not only occur through a differential division of labour in the global economy but also through prevailing normative gender orders in European states that still too often represent women as being out of place in scientific and technological professions. In addition, as a number of recent studies have shown family matters intervene disproportionately in career progression, especially where mobility is an expectation and a strategy.

¹² The UK, under the Conservative-led Coalition government abolished the general route under tier 1 in April 2011 and replaced it with the category of talent migrants limited to 1000 per year.

As argued in this paper, gender considerations should not be restricted to labour migration but need to take into account the other routes of mobility and migration. If labour migrants encounter difficulties in maintaining professional identities, it is all the more so for skilled spouses of labour migrants and those who have moved as marriage migrants and refugees. The obstacles they face may arise from professional closure, lack of recognition of social and cultural capital in the process of migration, familial responsibilities and immigration regulations. These factors affect migrant women in diverse ways depending on class, ethnicity and nationality, marital status and age as well as the prevailing gender culture and norms.

It is also important to develop theoretical analyses and policy responses addressing issues of equality and discrimination. Theoretically, recent research in this field has drawn on notions of the transfer of social and cultural capital, on the application of intersectional approaches to gendered experiences in the workplace, and on household dynamics. Methodologically, projects have explored responses and strategies through interpretive biographical and life course analyses drawing attention to key turning points and encouraging participants to reflect and act upon insights established during the course of the research. A critical evaluation of immigration practices and policies would benefit from more research, especially with the development of EU and national policies on skilled and highly skilled migration. So too would the linking up of work on the brain drain in countries of origin with brain waste in receiving countries be a welcome addition to the understanding of the gendering of global skilled migrations.

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