Gender, Migration and the Global Race for Talent

Dr Anna Boucher, Department of Government, University of Sydney ++ KNOMAD Seminar Series, World Bank, 6 April 2016

+ Context

- Skilled immigration is proliferating as a policy preference.

- Employer-sponsorship, sectoral "lists-in-demand" and points tests are key trends.

- Human capital theory underpins much of skilled immigration policy.

- Women make up 50% of global skilled stock (Brucker et al 2013) but are underrepresented in skilled flows.

- Questions: Does skilled immigration policy raise gendered obstacles? Are these obstacles the same in different selecting states and across different types of visas? How can we measure the gendered dimensions of immigration selection policies perspective?

- Resonance with KNOMAD work

+ Overview

- Skills literature provides insights on gender processes in labour relations.

- I apply this literature to skilled immigration selection policy.

- Presentation of a unique dataset, the GenderImmi Dataset of 37 visas, across 12 OECD countries.

- Consider 12 indicators of gender awareness.

- Some aggregate findings also revealed.

+ Indicators of gender awareness

- Drawing upon labour relations scholarship, I developed the following indicators, across three dimensions:

Dimension 1: Process indicators:

- whether a **gender audit** of that visa was undertaken by the relevant departmental body;

- whether **gender disaggregated data** is publically available for that visa; and

- whether a **gender auditing unit** exists within immigration departments.

Indicators of gender awareness

Dimension 2: Skills definition indicators … consider whether:

- a **wage threshold** is used to select applicants and whether higher earning applicants received dispensations in meeting selection criteria;

- selection is largely determined by **government** or by **employers**;

- Selection models **preference certain sectors** or alternately, a **general human capital model** is adopted;

- **Care and emotional labour** are considered under skilled selection mechanisms; and

- **Language proficiency** is treated as an assessable skill.

Indicators of gender awareness

Dimension 3: Life course indicators

- acknowledgement of **career breaks** in selection criteria;

- acknowledgement of **part-time work** in selection criteria;

- **age limits**; and

- the application of **dispensations for younger applicants.**

Data analysis and methodology for the GenderImmi Dataset

- Selected 37 skilled visas from 12 major OECD countries.

- OECD International Migration Outlook reports used to identify countries.

- Consider only visas that governments consider "skilled", except the Live-in Caregiver programme in Canada also coded

- Consider point-in-time from July 2013, although also historical visas in Canada and Australia

- Coded twice by multi-lingual coders

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Dimension 1: Process indicators

- whether a **gender audit** of that visa was undertaken by the relevant departmental body: Only Canada; Not in classic gender-mainstreaming countries;

- whether **gender disaggregated data** are publically available : Canada; UK (light touch); and

- whether a **gender auditing unit** exists within immigration departments: Canada previously, now mainstreamed.

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Dimension 2: Skills definition indicators: Who selects?

- a **wage distribution curve** is used to select applicants and whether higher earning applicants received dispensations in meeting selection criteria;

- selection is largely determined by **government** or by **employers**.

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Dimension 2: Skills definition indicators: Specific or human capital model?

■ Selection models **preference certain sectors** or alternately, a **general human capital model** is adopted.

■ Feminist scholars argue that general human capital model is less gendered (Estevez-Abe 2012 ; Kofman and Raghuram 2009).

■ But it is also increasingly uncommon within skilled immigration selection.
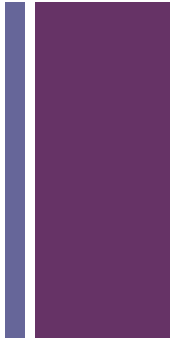
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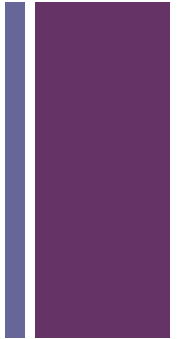
Dimension 2: Skills definition indicators: Care and language

- Care and emotional labour are considered under skilled selection mechanisms.

- language proficiency is treated as an assessable skill.

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Dimension 3: Life Course factors:
Acknowledgement of career breaks in selection criteria

- Women's careers marked by far more interruptions than men's (less linear career trajectories)

- Breaks likely case over the child rearing years (Hynes and Clarkberg 2005)

- But most women, especially highly skilled women, return to the workforce after the child rearing period (Kitty 2014)

- Women also take more breaks than men to care for elderly and sick relatives (Henz 2006)

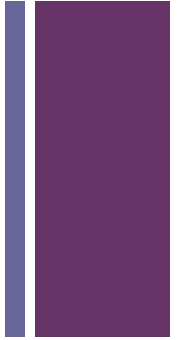# **+** Dimension 3: Life course factors:
Gendering the life course

- *Example*: Work breaks:

Is non-continuous work experience permitted?

- Possible in 17/37 visas

Is part-time work experience permitted?

- Less common, only possible (explicitly) in Canada and New Zealand.

- Some visas explicitly require full-time work

- Others visas require it implicitly through wage limits.

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Dimension 3: Life course factors:
Treatment of age and interaction with career achievements

- As a result of career breaks and part-time work, women reach career milestones later than men.

- Women often provide higher levels of support to a husband's career than vice versa.

- When children leave the home, women's careers actually accelerate at a faster rate than men's (Weinberger 2011)

- The key years for a wage penalty are in the 30s (Kahn et al 2014)

+ Dimension 3: Life course factors:

Gendering the life course

- *Example*: Cut-offs for age:

- Age increasingly a factor as governments are concerned to limit future welfare dependency of migrants.

- Yet, age can also be gender discriminatory given that women take longer to reach career milestones than men (OECD 2012; Loretto and Vickerstaff 2011).

- Anglo Saxon countries more likely to have cut-offs for age: Canada, New Zealand and Australia between 49-54. Young gained most points in many countries.

- No age threshold in Tier 2 (UK), Belgium, France, Ireland or the United States

Aggregate findings

- I attempted to develop typologies of gender awareness using both factor analysis and QCA.

- Neither method elicited clear 'categories'

- Ranking of all binary indicators reveals some interesting patterns however….

- Canadian visas ranked higher.

- Permanent visas did not rank better than temporary ones.

- Classic explanations for gender equality do not appear to explain outcomes.

+ Do gendered policies contribute to gendered immigration outcomes?

- The central causal relationship between outputs and outcomes must be addressed.

- Research to date indicates a relationship between selection and gendered outcomes BUT does not demonstrate causality.

- Would be difficult to demonstrate methodologically.

- Women are underrepresented in skilled flows as principal applicants (Dauvergne 2000; Kofman 2014; Dobson and Crush 2004)

- When skilled immigration selection policies change, so too does women's representation in skilled flows (Boucher 2015).

+ Conclusion

- Overall, no clear exemplar in skilled immigration and gender awareness emerges.

- There are multiple pathways to equality (and inequality).

- Governments must remain vigilant and assess policies for gender impacts.

- As in domestic labour market policies, so too in skilled immigration policy must we consider gendered life course trajectories

- Ongoing analysis needed, preferably coupled with gender disaggregated data.

+ Resonance with KNOMAD's work

■ KNOMAD's literature review on gender and migration argues for the:

1. Promotion of non-discrimination in labour market to assist migrant women

2. Removal of barriers to migration to assist women to enter via legal avenues (rather than illegally)> reduces vulnerability

3. Production and dissemination of gender disaggregated data

+ # Thanks!

- Questions and comments welcome

- Contact me at: anna.boucher@sydney.edu.au for more information