

# From the Rainbow Nation to the Land of the Long White Cloud: Gendered Journeys



**CARINA MEARES  
MASSEY UNIVERSITY ALBANY  
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# Outline



- **Women, work and skilled migration**
  - De-skilling
  - Feminisation
  - Re-domestication
- **Gendered Journeys**
- **South African migration to New Zealand**
- **Disrupted, damaged careers...**
- **Moving home...**
- **Reflections and re-conceptualisations**
- **Conclusion**

# Women, Work and Skilled Migration



- **Under-researched**
- **Existing work**
  - Largely quantitative
    - ✦ Compares employment outcomes for migrant groups with the native-born, or with each other
  - Focuses exclusively on women's paid work
  - Ignores
    - ✦ Interconnectedness of productive and reproductive spheres
    - ✦ Dynamics of family relationships
    - ✦ Impact of wider social networks
    - ✦ Gendered discourses, including those about motherhood, family and work

# Women, Work and Skilled Migration



- **Migration tends to damage the careers of professional women**
  - **De-skilling**
    - ✦ Guida Man (1995, 1997, 2004), Chinese women in Canada
    - ✦ ‘escalation of traditional roles’
  - **Feminisation**
    - ✦ Christina Ho (2004, 2006), Chinese women in Australia
    - ✦ ‘an escalation in women's roles as wives and mothers’
  - **Re-domestication**
    - ✦ Brenda Yeoh and Katie Willis (2005), Singaporean women in China
    - ✦ ‘tightens the ties that bind women to the home’

# Gendered Journeys



- **Biographical interviews with 6 South African migrants, women and men**
- **Diverse communities: English and Afrikaans-speaking, Indians, Coloureds, Jewish and African**
- **Biography facilitates an examination of**
  - Interconnectedness of productive and reproductive spheres
  - Dynamics of family relationships
  - Impact of wider social networks
  - Gendered discourses about motherhood, family and work

# South African Migration to New Zealand



- South African migrants in New Zealand from early 20<sup>th</sup> century
- Large numbers from mid-1990s
  - Introduction of the points system
  - Turmoil surrounding South Africa's first democratic election
- 6<sup>th</sup> largest migrant group in 2001 (26,061) and 2006 (41,676)
- Settled predominantly in Auckland, particularly in the East and North of the city
  - Afrikaans is the second most commonly spoken language in the Bays area, after English

# Disrupted, damaged careers



- **Pre-migration**
  - Banking professionals, small business owners and university lecturers in South Africa
- **Interim positions/strategies**
  - Having another baby
  - Cleaning
  - Telephone surveys
  - Cashier
- **Post-migration**
  - Part-time teachers, fast-food operators, part-time administrators and retrain in a completely new area

# Moving home...



- **Moving away from career work**
  - As a response to the New Zealand labour market
    - ✦ Problems with recognition of overseas qualifications and experience
    - ✦ Difficulties with accent and names
    - ✦ Lack of New Zealand experience
  - As a response to the challenge of balancing work and home lives
- **Losing cheap domestic help and family support**
  - From supervising housework to doing it
  - Intensive parenting and support of immediate family

# Reflections



- **Feminisation**
  - Assumes that there is something inherently feminine about being at home
- **De-skilling**
  - Takes on the gendered assumptions associated with the labelling of some work as skilled and other work as unskilled
  - Has been used previously in theorising the consequences of industrialisation
- **Re-domestication implies a return to the domestic sphere, but most often this is the first time their lives have been dominated by home and family in this way**

# Re-conceptualisations



- **None of the terms capture the dual, inter-related nature of the shift**
  - Disrupted, damaged career
  - Moving home
- **What language or metaphor might we use?**
  - Describes these separate shifts, BUT ALSO accounts for
  - Interconnectedness of productive and reproductive spheres