



Charsley, K. A. H. (2021). Afterword. *Citizenship Studies*, 25(7), 1011-1021. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2021.1968690>

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[10.1080/13621025.2021.1968690](https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2021.1968690)

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## **Afterword**

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First submitted: 09 Jan, 2021

Final acceptance: 27 May, 2021

## **Abstract**

This Afterword to the Special Issue on ‘Marriage Migration, Family and Citizenship in Asia’ seeks to foreground some key themes from the six articles it contains. Drawing on some old conceptual friends of the field – including Appadurai’s model of disjunctive global ‘scapes’ and flows, and Plummer’s notion of ‘Intimate Citizenship’ – it highlights particularly significant contributions to understanding processes and practices of citizenship connected to marriage migration, through attention to diversity, continuity, and disjuncture. The disjunctures documented here encompass tensions between processes not just at the level of family and the nation, but between national and inter- or transnational dynamics – highlighting inequalities in intimate citizenship, but also providing potential spaces for change and agency. This rich collection therefore represents a substantial contribution to a foundational issue in the literature on marriage migration – the question of how to conceptualise the agency of marriage migrants, who paradoxically manage the agentic leap of migration at the same time as being profoundly dependent on their citizen spouses, with the well documented potential for victimisation this dependency contains.

Keywords: Marriage migration, intimate citizenship, disjuncture

## **Introduction**

In 2008, Mika Toyota and colleagues published a Special Issue in this journal on the topic of ‘International marriage, rights and the state in East and Southeast Asia’. Rates of transnational marriage in several countries in the region had been rising rapidly but it was as yet, they noted, a relatively understudied phenomenon. Their focus on rights and the state featured issues of citizenship as a central concern. As Toyota set out in the Introduction:

International marriage has become an arena of contention over rights, privileges and access to citizenship. While the reasons and opportunities for individuals to contract marriages with partners of other nationalities have increased in the current globalizing processes, state sovereignty rests on the assumption that its citizens and their family units belong to just one nation. In this regard, international marriages by their very existence challenge the state and the boundaries of its sovereignty. The contemporary conception of marriage has evolved within the context of the construction of the modern nation-state and marriages involve not only the relationship between one individual and another, but also between the state and the individual. (2008: 3)

At that point in time, research on marriage-related migration was gaining pace. Two agenda setting edited collections with an Asian focus - Nicole Constable’s (2005) *Cross-border Marriages: Gender and Mobility in Transnational Asia* and Piper and Roces’ (2003) *Wife or Worker? Asian Women and Migration* had been published a few years earlier. Both volumes critiqued stereotypical representations of marriage-migrant women as simply passive or victims, replacing them with more nuanced understandings of gendered and embedded agency in local and transnational contexts. Piper and Roces’ 2003 volume in particular draws connections with access to citizenship as a crucial frame for understanding such women’s choices – as wives and mothers, but also workers, thus laying important groundwork for

Toyota's 2008 Special Issue, and for this new collection which updates and expands our understanding of 'Marriage Migration, Family and Citizenship in Asia'.

Whilst scholarship on the topic of marriage-related migration in other parts of the world exists (e.g. Johnson 2007), Europe and Asia emerged early on as particular foci for research on the topic – in Asia because of the increasing numbers of cross-border marriages, but in Europe more likely stimulated by a resurgence in attempts to limit this form of immigration.

In the early 2000s, European research on marriage-related migration was often subsumed within the broader and longer-established field of family migration, in which a focus on issues such as 'trailing wives' and migration as a family strategy, had developed as part of the dominant economic approaches characteristic of much of 20<sup>th</sup> Century migration studies (Cooke 2008, Kofman 1999). But with increasing recognition of the centrality of gender for understanding migration and a growing focus on women's migration developing through the 1980s and 1990s (Kofman 1999), the importance of marriage as a source of women's mobility became more apparent (Charsley 2012). Marriage-related migration or cross-border marriage is now an established and diverse area of research in its own right, spanning areas of scholarship including policy, integration, and gendered dynamics of power. An informal scan of google scholar for publications on 'marriage migration' suggests over 50 articles on the topic were published in 2020 alone.

In Europe, much academic interest in marriage migration has been stimulated by increasingly restrictive spousal immigration regimes. There had been earlier attempts to control such immigration (such as the UK's introduction of the 'Primary Purpose Rule' in the 1980s, under which would-be spousal immigrants had to prove that immigration was not the primary purpose of their marriage) but from around the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Denmark pioneered a new wave of curbs on the rights of citizens and long term residents to be joined by foreign

partners. Restrictions subsequently increased in other Western European countries, with regulations across Europe developing a ‘family resemblance’ (Wray et al 2014) amidst concerns to limit or ‘manage’ immigration (particularly that involving migrants considered ‘low-’ or ‘un-skilled’). Marriage has long been a significant source of settlement migration to many European countries, but the renewed policy attention on spousal immigration was not stimulated by a dramatic increase in overall numbers. Rather, the focus was on particular types of marriage migration – the intra-ethnic marriages of former labour migrants and their descendants – often viewed as a kind of ‘chain migration’ at odds with the goals of a selective ‘managed migration’ regime. Hence, in the UK, early policy discourse saw restrictions to spousal immigration justified with reference to forced marriage, often portrayed as primarily a South Asian issue (Wilson 2007), whilst in Denmark, the ‘Combined Attachment’ rule made it harder for those with familial connections to their spouse’s home country to achieve reunification in Denmark (Jorgensen 2012).

In East and Southeast Asia, the scale of the phenomenon of international marriage commanded the attention of both politicians and social science researchers. Many of these marriages were inter-ethnic, commercially brokered, and in some countries such as South Korea promoted by the government as a solution to perceived demographic challenges of reduced fertility or rural bride shortages. Although some of the major Asian marriage migration receiving countries featuring in this Special Issue appear to have passed the peak in terms of volumes of marriage migrants and proportions of citizen marriages involving migrants, such marriages appear to have stabilised at often quite a high level – around a third of marriages in Singapore and Hong Kong (Yeoh et al, and Chiu) - becoming an established part of the demographic, political and social landscape.

For a scholar of marriage migration to Europe, it is exciting not only to read new research illuminating the differences and parallels between issues surrounding cross-border marriage

and its regulation in these differing geographical contexts, but also see how this Special Issue develops the conversation started in the pages of this journal over a decade ago. Whilst Toyota's Introduction to the 2008 Special Issue is concerned primarily with citizenship in a formal sense, Turner's (2008) contribution on 'Citizenship, reproduction and the State' advocated the concept of 'reproductive citizenship' in the sense of gaining rights and claims on the state through reproduction, viewing citizenship as a process. This new Special Issue not only updates the discussion to encompass recent developments, but builds on these insights to explore more diverse conceptualisations of citizenship.

In this Afterword, I seek to foreground some key themes from the six articles contained in this Special Issue, drawing on some old conceptual friends of the field - including Appadurai's model of disjunctive global 'scapes' and flows, and Plummer's notion of 'Intimate Citizenship' (2001, cf. Bonjour and de Hart 2020) – to highlight what I see as some particularly significant contributions which can be drawn from this collection.

### **Intimate Citizenship**

The articles in this volume address citizenship in its formal sense, but also practices and experiences of citizenship, particularly but not only within families. The marriage migrants described here are incorporated into their citizen spouses' societies not simply as individuals, but through families, as wives, mothers and affines. In some Asian societies, marriage to a citizen on its own is often insufficient as a route to formal citizenship, but giving birth to a citizen child appears to enhance a migrant wife's chances of success in long-term residency or citizenship applications. Hence Hsia writes of Taiwanese citizenship as constructed through the 'mother-child dyad', Yeoh et al of 'reproductive citizenship' in Singapore, and Chiu of 'maternal citizenship' in Hong Kong - although in this latter case, Chiu shows that for

divorced or separated marriage migrant women, being a mother to citizen child is insufficient to ensure even long-term visiting rights, and that such women may seek out opaque possibilities for ‘discretionary citizenship’.

In Hong Kong, moreover, widowed marriage migrant women are reported to have better chances of success in securing residency rights than those who are divorced or separated – suggesting a ‘marrytocracy’ (Chiu) in which migrant wives’ motives for and commitments to their marriages are under suspicion. ‘In the public discourse of many [Asian] host countries’, Chiu writes, ‘marriage migrants are often depicted as materialistic gold diggers who take advantage of local men for money, employment opportunities, and citizenship’. In the UK and Europe, amidst more general negative stereotypes of racialised minority and Muslim men, such suspicions are more commonly held about migrant husbands (Charsley and Wray 2015, Bonjour and de Hart 2020), although some nationalities of migrant wives are also sometimes portrayed as ruthlessly instrumental (e.g., Sims 2012 on Thai women). Evidently, a ‘marrytocracy’ therefore not only connotes the significance of marriage as potentially providing a route to incorporation, but also differentiation within the category of marriage migrants, with some viewed as more acceptable as potential members of the national community than others.

In other words, these are questions of ‘intimate citizenship’ (Plummer 2001) – of what practices of intimacy denote the boundaries of insiders and outsiders. The contributors to this volume repeatedly demonstrate that the family is a crucial site for the negotiation of citizenship, and a location from which marriage migrants may be incorporated but also excluded. In Taiwan, Hsia notes that spousal immigrants granted citizenship may be stripped of that status if the marriage is retrospectively judged to have been fraudulent. Interestingly, the possibility of a similar power to strip such spouses of residency rights was also raised in a UK Home Office immigration policy public consultation – along with the suggestion that

British ex-partners could be consulted as part of such processes (Home Office 2007). The State's 'moral gatekeeping' (Wray 2006) of these boundaries includes not just the questions of immigration motivations or commitment to marriages, but compliance with expected marital forms and behaviours, such that the Japanese women married to migrant men described by Kudo (in this volume) found expectations that heads of households would be male citizens could lead to them being denied housing (cf. Kwak 2019 on South Korea), and legal discourses on 'runaway brides' in South Korea reveal the expectation that marriage migrant women will not abandon their 'home' even if it is a location for abuse and confinement (Yi).

As Plummer outlines, however, 'intimate citizenship' is not just a question of national inclusion and belonging, but rather 'about a plurality of rights and obligations shaped through participatory, *differentiated social worlds (and communities), each with contested status and continuing tensions that need resolving*' (Plummer 2001: 241, emphasis added). In other words, that negotiations of 'intimate citizenship' take place at various scales - bringing to mind Pessar and Mahler's formulation of the 'gendered geographies of power' operating at different scales and social locations (2003) – but also that the processes within these different dimensions may be disjunctive.

### **Disjuncture between Family and Nation-state**

The concept of disjuncture appears, explicitly or implicitly, in each of the papers in this collection. They encompass tensions between processes not just at the level of family and the nation, but between national and inter- or transnational dynamics.

The role of the state, as Yeoh et al observe, is not monolithic, but rather can be riven with multiple and sometimes conflicting objectives. Hence, Hsia describes how tensions between



regional geo-political goals and domestic objectives for which these ‘unselected’ marriage migrants were seen as undesirable meant that: ‘As the wives of Taiwanese citizens, the Taiwan government could not reject their access to Taiwanese citizenship and consequently adopted a “dual exclusion-assimilation scheme” (Cheng 2013) that aimed at increasing barriers for marriage migrants to acquire citizenship and initiated programs to assimilate them into Taiwanese culture and “improve” their “population qualities”.’

In Yeoh et al’s article on the family as a site of mediation and negotiation of citizenship for marriage migrants in Singapore, the authors describe the ‘disjuncture between intimate incorporation of marriage migrants into the work of reproducing the family on the one hand, and their enforced partial citizenship vis-à-vis the nation-state on the other’. Whilst their pathway to formal citizenship might rest on motherhood, as members of Singaporean families such women negotiate reproductive roles against their desires, and sometimes the families’ need, that they would undertake paid employment. Full membership of a family here contrasts with partial membership of the nation, with consequences in terms of the ‘patriarchal bargains’ (Kandiyoti 1988) that women may strike or be forced into accepting.

In the papers by Hsia and Cheng, both on the Taiwanese context, we again see disjunctures between the national and the familial, this time in the context of changing discourses about migrant wives and their offspring. First perceived as a problem of ‘population quality’ (Hsia) to be remedied by targeted education interventions, ‘New Taiwan’s Children’ were presented as problematic others to be incorporated into the national community. In the context of geopolitical competition with China, they have been reframed in official discourse as the ‘seeds’ for the ‘New Southbound Policy’ of South East Asian economic expansion, their transnational ties and language abilities revalued as a nation building resource. Their mothers, in turn, are reframed as potential language tutors and tour guides for visitors from the region. This positive

reframing, however, is shown in disjunction with the lived realities of migrant wives' existing roles – the limited teaching hours (Cheng) or flexible mobility required of tour guides are a poor match for the obligations of women who have been incorporated as reproductive labour, whilst also often acting as breadwinners. An interesting echo of these assumptions is found in the UK Migration Advisory Committee's 2018 suggestion that family migrants in the UK could be used to fill the low-skilled labour deficit created by Britain's departure from the European Union's free-movement arrangements – overlooking the possibility that such migrants' family responsibilities and locations may undermine their reconceptualization as a flexible labour force.

The re-evaluation of marriage migrants and their children in the Taiwanese political discourse may present opportunities for some such women and their families (Cheng) but sits uneasily alongside the contingency and fragility of their citizenship status. Cheng's description of the Taiwanese case resonates with Chiu's account of the Hong Kong state accessing migrant wives' reproductive labour, without accepting responsibility through provision of full citizenship rights. And as with Kudo's discussion of 'hafu' ('half' or 'mixed') children of one citizen and one migrant parent in Japan, the new valuation of their identity in some contexts sits alongside continued experiences of exclusion and discrimination (Hsia). As one of Cheng's participants commented, 'grannies and granddads don't read those glossy business magazines' – in other words, the new representations reach only certain audiences. For Kudo's Japanese-Pakistani young women participants, their secure citizenship status belies their struggles of belonging both within families and a society in which ethnic 'purity' remains normalised. These accounts of disjunction, and the endurance of logics of reproductive labour, 'quality' and 'purity' provide a rather pessimistic response to Bonjour and de Hart's recent challenge (2020) for researchers to examine the lived consequences of changing discourses around transnational marriage.

Finally, Yi's article situates discourses surrounding 'runaway wives' in South Korea in the disjuncture between the state's use of marriage migrants to address a perceived demographic crisis in birth rate, and recognising them as agentic beings beyond the role of 'wife' or 'mother'. It is to this issue of agency, and its relationship with disjuncture that I now turn.

### **Disjuncture as a Site for Change and Agency**

Appadurai's (1990) influential model of globalisation suggests multiple disjunctive and interacting 'scapes' of globality (of people, finance, media, ideology and technology). These 'scapes' are, like landscapes, perspectival – appearing from different perspectives for various global audiences, so that the 'ethnoscapes' of marriage migrants may appear as an integration challenge for a receiving country, and a high-stakes migration route risking citizen women's exploitation for some bride-sending states. This model of 'scapes' was picked up early on in the development of research on cross-border marriages, with Nicole Constable echoing the typology in her coining of the notion of 'marriagescapes' in which not just spouses but ideas and images about marriage circulate.

For Heyman and Campbell (2009), Appadurai's depiction of chaotic unpredictability in disjuncture and flow suggests a false equality of influence of the various scapes, and would be enhanced by recognising the particular weight carried by economic factors. We could see this in the logics by which, in many of the national contexts described in the articles of this Special Issue, 'elite' or high skilled migrants are given paths to citizenship whilst work permit holders or 'guest workers' are viewed as labour resources from whom access to settlement is withheld. Amidst this logic, marriage migrants hold an ambiguous position – for Turner (2008) the 'profound contradiction between the economic requirements of flexibility and

fluidity in the labour market and the states' goal of defending its territorial sovereignty' means that 'international marriages can be regarded as a site where these contradictions between state and market are condensed.'

State responses to marriage migration can be seen as reactions to these disjunctures. For Appadurai (1990), it is in disjuncture that flow and change occurs. I would argue that this perspective provides theoretical context for a range of (sometimes apparently contradictory) developments described in the contributions to this volume: the South Korean state's initial encouragement of marriage migration to address the economic challenges of declining birth rates, despite concerns over the 'quality' of the resulting migrants and their parenting; or the ramping up of restrictions to citizenship for marriage migrants to restrict them to a position more akin to labour migrants (Hsia), particularly in Singapore where the opaque requirements for migrant spouses to obtain citizenship seem to include issues of socio-economic status. Once more, this is a situation which finds echoes in the European context where several countries have imposed minimum income requirements for citizens and residents sponsoring the immigration of a spouse. In the UK, these were set in 2012 at significantly above the subsistence level suggested by welfare payments, and above the level of income of over 40% of the working population (Sumption and Vargas-Silva 2019).

We can also apply this insight of disjuncture as encouraging change to the discourses surrounding marriage migrants and their children in Taiwan (Cheng, Hsia). Neither classified as a high 'quality' elite to enhance the national economic body, nor purely labour migrants with few claims to become insiders, the Taiwanese reconceptualization of marriage migrants and the 'second generation' as economic resources in the 'New Southbound' policy seeks to make use (or sense) of a category of migrant not selected by the state for their economic utility. A similar logic can be found in the UK Migration Advisory Committee's (2018) suggestion, noted earlier, that family migrants could be used to back-fill the shortfall of low-

skilled EU migrant workers lost through Brexit. As we see above, however, these initiatives themselves create further points of tension and disjuncture, not least between old and new logics and discourses.

If disjuncture encourages change at the state level, the articles in this collection show that the same can be true at the level of individuals and families. We can envision these as gaps creating spaces for agency, or at least points of leverage from which to attempt to open up such spaces. Hence, in Singapore, Yeoh et al describe marriage migrant women's struggles over childbearing and employment as attempts to negotiate not just their positions within families but the meaning of citizenship. For Japanese-Pakistani young women (Kudo), disjunctures between new valorisations of mixed ethnicity and lived experiences of racism, and the tensions between gendered positions within families and society, and between local and transnational experiences, produce a space in which they may negotiate new identities and trajectories. The tension between rhetoric and actual policies and practices on the ground can also constitute a space for activism. In Hong Kong (Chiu), NGOs assist women who have been widowed, divorced or separated from their citizen husbands in seeking out opportunities for 'discretionary citizenship' – concealed points at which they might find purchase for leverage, whilst Cheng and Hsia describe situations in which marriage migrants themselves become activists, seeking new opportunities within the ambiguities of their status as marriage migrants.

Interestingly, in the article by Cheng, we also hear of a marriage migrant activist campaigning for migrants' rights in a broader sense, challenging the rigid categorical thinking which underpins so much of the regulation of international marriages, and indeed migration scholarship (Dahinden 2016, Moret et al 2019, Anderson 2013) and which divides migrants into categories of 'labour' and 'family'.

This volume's exploration of disjunction and agency therefore represents a substantial contribution to a foundational issue in the literature on marriage migration – the question of how to conceptualise the agency of marriage migrants, who paradoxically manage the agentic leap of migration at the same time as being profoundly dependent on their citizen spouses, with the well documented potential for victimisation this dependency contains (e.g. Williams and Yu 2006). In the articles making up this Special Issue, we see not only the tensions and disjunctures which characterise the field of marriage migration on so many levels, but also that these can emerge as potential sites of agency for marriage migrants. Taken as a whole, therefore, this collection of articles develops a consideration of 'Marriage Migration, Family and Citizenship in Asia' providing new insights into process not just of citizenship but also of disjuncture, change and agency, reaching into the heart of debates surrounding transnational marriage.

### **Future Directions**

This Special Issue also points to several areas ripe for further exploration. The processes of 'reproductive' or 'maternal' citizenship explored in these pages are deeply gendered, and of course women make up the clear majority of marriage migrants in the national contexts considered in these pages. Men, however, form a growing minority of foreign spouses married to citizens in many countries, so the continued relative neglect of migrant husbands in research in this area is notable. Indeed, only one paper (Kudo) in this collection deals with migrant husbands, and even then is focussed on their female offspring. By pointing this out, I do not mean to criticise the contributors to this Special Issue – the articles clearly demonstrate the utility of exploring the politics and experiences of female marriage migration. But research in other geographical and cultural contexts suggests that male marriage migrants also provide fertile ground for gendered analyses (Charsley 2005, Charsley and Ersanilli 2018,

Gallo 2006, George 2005). In the field of citizenship which forms the focus of this volume, work has begun to address dynamics of national belonging for such couples, as such men tend not to be valued for their reproductive capacities; indeed, their fathering of citizens can present particular challenges in the context of enduring patrilineal ideologies of nationhood (Kwak 2019 on South Korea).

If female marriage migration is the implicit norm in marriage migration policy and research, the same can be said of the heterosexual family (Manalansan IV 2006). In drawing connections between this volume and the concept of ‘intimate citizenship’, it would be difficult to avoid the issue of queer and non-normative relationships which have been central to the development of the concept (Plummer 2001, Roseneil 2010). Chiu deals with single mothers (cf. Constable 2018 on transient relationships and failed transnational marriages), but what other non-normative relationship configurations might be ripe for examination for their connotations for citizenship, belonging and agency? Such work is underway elsewhere (e.g. <https://www.nwo.nl/en/projects/vividi195013>, Luibheid and Chavez 2020), but given the diversity of legal regimes governing homosexuality in Asia, the recent partial legalisation of same-sex marriage in Taiwan, the strongly heteronormative bent of immigration regulations, and the potential for these ‘intimate mobilities’ (Groes and Fernandez 2018) to pursue channels other than official spousal immigration, this might be particularly interesting territory for further exploration (Chang 2019, Yi 2020).

Woven throughout this collection are also illustrations of the importance of temporality – an area of recent interest in migration studies (Griffiths et al. 2013, Charsley 2020). Process of citizenship are inherently temporal, whilst national belongings are constructed through shared temporalities (Golden 2002). The articles in this Special Issue explore the implication of time limited spousal visas, the extended and sometimes indefinite temporalities of gaining citizenship, and the ways in which lifecourse issues such as childbearing are intertwined with

temporal processes of immigration status and integration (Charsley et al. 2019). What further insights could be developed by following these connections between time, cross-border marriage, and citizenship?

This rich collection therefore both adds to our understandings of international marriage, particularly but not only in relation to processes and practices of citizenship, and whets the appetite for further research in this fascinating area of diversity, continuity and disjuncture.

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