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Sustaining the Household in a Globalizing World: The Gendered Dynamics of Business Travel

This article draws upon a large-scale survey as well as focus group discussions to examine how Singapore households grapple with the demands of participating in globalized work. It highlights the household as a site of analysis, where individuals engage with contemporary trends of globalization in their daily lives. Specifically, this article examines the case of Singapore households where one or both spouses engage in business travel. The study (a) emphasizes the need to focus on processes that bring about shorter-term transnational variations to a household's daily geographies and how household members negotiate these disruptions; and (b) demonstrates that the transnationalizing household rests on taken-for-granted gender ideologies to reproduce and sustain it, whether through women carrying the reproductive burden while their spouses travel, or through female transnational domestic workers who liberate their Singapore women employers to travel. The findings validate other studies that contend that globalization has done little to destabilize patriarchal gender norms.

KEYWORDS: GLOBALIZATION · MIGRATION · SINGAPORE · BUSINESS TRAVEL · FAMILY

The emergence of what has been called “transnational families”—where family members are distributed in two or more nation-states but continue to function as a collectivity in economic and emotional terms—as a strategic response to the rapidly changing social, economic, and political conditions of a globalizing world is beginning to make a mark in the scholarly literature (see, for example, Parreñas 2001; Bryceson and Vuorela 2002; Yeoh, Graham, and Boyle 2002; Yeoh, Huang, and Lam, 2005).¹ In response to the deepening conditions of uneven development under globalization, families have undertaken a transnational division of labor in order to spread risks, or to pursue specific projects to better their future. Families stretched across borders continue to be sustained, as well as fractured, by the possibilities and limits of simultaneity in negotiating both “transnational circuits of affection” and flows of financial support (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997, 550). At the same time, these split-household transnational families remain “family” despite time and distance apart by drawing on memory and ideologically-laden “narratives of self and kin” to create the family’s “interior life” (Chamberlain and Leydesdorff 2004, 227). This is particularly salient in many countries in Asia, where state constructions of the “family” are often based on a “nostalgic vision of femininity” in which decision making is expected to be hierarchical (read “patriarchal”), and where individual desires are usurped by the “greater good” of the family (Stivens 1998, 17). These ideological constructions of Asian families are being both elaborated upon and challenged by the absence of Asian women from the home (and the home-nation), as a result of their increasing participation in transnational migratory labor flows. As Silvey (2006) observes, in the context of the Indonesian state’s constructions of the family as the bulwark against the social costs of modernity, and of women as the lynchpin responsible for the fate of the family, transnational migrant women who leave their families to work abroad are simultaneously exalted as “heroes of foreign exchange” while seen as in need of “protection” to preserve their sexual and moral purity for the sake of their families. At the same time, the continued overseas labor migration of low-income women is seen as necessary and inevitable in sustaining visions of the newly emerging bourgeois consumerist family.

Globalization, Transnational Mobility, Families, and Households

While the split-household transnationally stretched family represents an important and increasingly common social formation emerging under

conditions of globalization, the spatial dispersal of family members is but one dimension of the way families and households have responded to multi-scalar globalization processes. A diverse range of household formation and sustenance strategies—beyond transnational dispersal—have also become increasingly evident in globalizing societies where the quickened pace and ease of transnational mobility is widening the choice of responses to disjunctures and dilemmas brought about by social and demographic change. In many societies in the Asia Pacific, for example, increasing trends (often fuelled in part by increasingly globalized engagement) in delayed or non-marriage; plummeting, below-replacement fertility rates; rising divorce rates; and rapidly ageing populations (Jones 2004; Caldwell and Caldwell 2005; Ogawa, Lee, and Matsukura 2005) have had major social and economic impacts, including a shrinking labor force and chronic labor scarcities, falling number of consumers, alarmingly high dependency ratios (of the non-working to working populations), and welfare crises (Douglass 2006). At the very core of these crises, the sustainability of the “household” is at risk. At the same time, “solutions” to the crisis of the household have increasingly drawn on “resources” or “complementarities” from beyond national borders in order to sustain household relations and transactions. This can be seen in the increasing importation of transnational domestic workers and health care workers to provide care for children, the elderly, and the sick (Huang, Yeoh, and Abdul Rahman 2005); the rise in cross-nationality marriages and brokerage activity in the regional marriage market (Wang and Chang 2002; Nakamatsu 2005); the increase in the adoption of children from abroad (Evans 2000) as well as the use of foreign women as surrogate parents; and the emergence of new trends, such as the movement of retired couples from higher to lower income countries as a strategy to stretch fixed incomes and to access low-cost health care (Toyota 2006).

While the above trends reshaping the household in the Asia Pacific are producing socioeconomic entities that fold into itself transnational difference (often in “visible” ways such as in the form of the presence in the household unit of marriage partners of different nationality, ethnicity, and culture, or a transnational domestic worker as the main caregiver), we argue that the impact of globalizing forces may also be felt and absorbed into the fabric of the household in less tangible ways. We observe that in rapidly globalizing societies household members have need to be, and have become, more mobile in their everyday geographies, particularly in response to the demands of increasingly globalized workplaces and the need for transnational connectivities. As such, households have to adjust not only to long-term separation (as in the case

of spatially dispersed transnational families) but also short-term disruptions to the household routine as a result of frequent travel on the part of one or more household members for purposes of business or professional work. The latter has attracted scarce scholarly attention in the globalization and transnationalism literature; what work there has been on business travel has usually remained at the level of metanarratives, drawing upon broad scale surveys (e.g., Waters 1988; Collins and Tisdell 2002) or discourse analysis of press clippings (e.g., Chin 2000). Current work on longer-term transnational migration and the impact on household maintenance has focused mainly on unskilled and semiskilled migrants.² Where professional and managerial households are concerned, the literature thus far has been dominated by a focus on the split-household transnational family (as discussed above) as the main strategy to meet the productive-reproductive needs of the household. Less work has been done on the everyday rhythms and quotidian geographies of such households under conditions of globalization.

It should also be noted that, in the context of the household, the question of who travels and who does not is often inseparable from taken-for-granted gender ideologies that “women stay home and men go abroad” (Clifford 1997, 6). As Freeman (2001, 1018) observes, “travel, with its embodiments of worldliness, adventure, physical prowess, and cultural mastery, is widely constructed as a male pursuit.” Explanations advanced to account for the differences in the receptivity of men and women to international careers often highlight gender as a key variable. For example, Markham et al. (1983) found that women’s unwillingness to relocate overseas is tied to the perception that it would lead to a conflict with family roles, while Stroh (2000) argued that women in fact are generally as interested in international postings as men; gender differences emerge only when comparing men and women with children. Interestingly, Markham et al. (1983) found that the small minority of women who considered themselves as the head of their households and hence its primary providers was as receptive to overseas career opportunities as similarly situated men. In terms of short-term business and work-related travel, it has been argued that gender differences that exist in travel patterns (with men tending to travel more often than women) are most probably tied to lifecycle factors and the way that these are intrinsically tied to the way family-work commitments are handled (Hartley and Tisdell 1981; Collins and Tisdell 2002). Overall, however, it is clear that differences exist between the genders in how career and family roles are prioritized, which affect both their longer- as well as shorter-term work-related mobility.

Moreover, current work on transnational household strategies among geographically dispersed family members in the Asian context shows not only that adult male household members are more likely to travel than the women but also that “highly-skilled employment migration is a highly-gendered process” (Willis and Yeoh 2000, 261). For the Singapore household, the study by Yeoh and Willis (2004) of 150 professional, managerial, and entrepreneurial migrants from Singapore to China (in response to the regionalization drive promulgated by the Singapore state) found that transnational migration as a means to pursue careers is “a hegemonically masculinized enterprise where men and women remain complicit in the reproduction of patriarchy beyond national shores” (ibid., 160). For men, marriage and children do not appear to be major obstacles to accepting postings abroad, and men on the regional beat are seen to be key players in lubricating the construction of the nation’s second wing economy. In contrast, women either remain in the home-nation to tend to household reproductive tasks and sustain the Singapore family or, when they do travel as part of the regionalization drive, they usually do so as single persons (seen to be unencumbered by family responsibilities) or in a supportive role, as appendages to men in the form of “trailing wives” (ibid.). Clearly, travel—in this case for job postings and business entrepreneurship—is very much locked into gendered modes of discourse underlying men’s and women’s subject positions in the household.

In light of these larger trends, this article draws upon a large-scale questionnaire survey as well as focus group discussions with Singapore women to examine how the Singapore household grapples with the demands of participating in globalized work through business travel. In focusing on the household, we highlight its value as a site of analysis because it is here that individual household members engage with contemporary trends of globalization and social transformation that impinge upon their daily lives. Specifically, we examine the case of Singapore households where one or both spouses engage in business travel. In doing so, this article aims to, first, highlight the need for research to look beyond long-term household restructuring under globalization in order to focus not only on processes that bring about shorter-term transnational variations to a household’s daily geographies but also on how household members negotiate local disjunctures brought about by transnational travel; and, second, demonstrate that the transnationalizing household rests on gender ideologies to reproduce and sustain it.

In the next section, we discuss the Singapore context, highlighting how state efforts to reconfigure Singapore into a global city have been predicated on two key strategic prongs: the import of foreign talent (as well as lower-

level workers), on the one hand, and the call to Singapore talent to venture into the Asian region and beyond to engage with economic opportunities as a means of ensuring the city-state's continued growth and vitality, on the other. We then describe the methodology behind the empirical research of this article. In the main analytical section, we draw upon the empirical material to examine, through the eyes of the "woman of the house," the impact that business travel has on households with and without children, and with and without transnational domestic workers.

Singapore: Strategizing for Global City Status

Recognizing Singapore's limits as a small, natural resource-scarce city-state, the Singapore state has premised its main economic strategy in becoming a major player with a global future on the development of a highly skilled human resource base. Besides investing heavily in information technology and human capital to meet global competition, the state, in the words of then Minister for Manpower Lee Boon Yang (2000, 70), has constantly emphasized the development of Singapore into a "brains service node" and, ultimately, a "Talent Capital" of the New Economy "where local and foreign talent combine their strengths, ideas and creativity to drive the economy and rise above global competition." As such, Singapore's political leaders are rapidly reconfiguring the city-state into a "space of flows" where crisscrossing circulatory streams of people act as repositories of knowledge and skill in "an oasis of talent." The long-term vision, as articulated by then Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong (2001), is to turn Singapore into a "globapolis," with "people from all over the world and well connected to all parts of the globe—by air, sea, telecommunications and the Internet, in market access and investments, and in areas such as education, sports and the arts." Major initiatives launched to achieve this vision have focused on welcoming the infusion of foreign talent into Singapore, on the one hand, and, on the other, regionalization efforts that have focused on exhorting Singapore's own local talent—recognized first and foremost as those embodying the spirit of entrepreneurialism—to venture beyond the nation's shores to develop a "second wing" economy in the region and beyond.

In terms of *international talent*, it is argued that, to stay ahead in the "the global war for talent," Singapore must continually devise strategies to ensure it can increasingly act as "a magnet for all talents," both local and foreign (*Straits Times*, 21 Aug. 2006). This constant striving is necessary to "maintain the momentum to keep abreast in the global competition for

wealth creation” (Lee Boon Yang 2000, 71) and secure Singapore’s place in “a global network of cities of excellence,” as Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew (2000, 14) puts it. To create “an environment conducive to creative and knowledge-based industries and talent” (MICA 2000, 4), the state has also put in place strategies to move Singapore beyond being just a cosmopolitan center that provides a “pro-business administration and world class business facilities” (ibid., 34) to one that, in the words of then Prime Minister-designate Lee Hsien Loong, is a “special, exciting, diverse cosmopolitan place” (*Straits Times*, 21 Aug. 2006), with “cultural and creative buzz . . . [and able] to attract both local and foreign talents to contribute to the dynamism and growth of [Singapore’s] economy and society” (MICA 2000, 5).

The focus on attracting “foreign talent” given its value in Singapore’s quest for global city status does not mean that foreign labor that does not qualify as “talent” is irrelevant. Through most of its history as an independent nation, Singapore has faced a labor shortage problem, especially of unskilled workers, and the state has played a pivotal role in regulating the flow of labor into the country to ensure that labor needs are met. When labor shortage first became an issue in 1968 not long after Singapore’s independence in 1965, the demand was met by the importation of labor, on one-year work permits, from neighboring Malaysia, and from 1978 onwards by workers from “non-traditional source” (NTS) countries such as Bangladesh, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and Thailand (Wong 2000). Since then, despite a policy to phase out the importation of unskilled workers by 1991, the number of foreign workers in Singapore has continued to increase steadily to reach approximately 30 percent of Singapore’s total labor force. Of particular note for our purposes here are the 140,000–150,000 or so transnational domestic workers (*Straits Times*, 21 Feb. 2005), the majority from the Philippines and Indonesia (table 1), who have been introduced on a large scale into Singapore households in response to the developing crisis in the reproductive sphere as more and more women have joined the workforce (Singapore women’s participation in the formal economy took off in the late 1960s and rose steadily to cross the 50 percent mark by 1990, a level maintained to the present day). It is estimated that today at least one in every seven Singaporean households employs at least one transnational domestic worker as a means to resolve the crisis in household reproduction.³

Further, Singapore’s *regionalization* drive began in the 1990s as a means to build an “external wing” to compensate for, and expand on, the small size of Singapore’s domestic economy. As part of this “go-regional” policy,⁴ Singapore companies and Singaporeans themselves are exhorted to

Table 1. Estimated stock of transnational domestic workers in Singapore, 1986–2004

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	1986	1991	1995	1999	2004
Philippines	28,000	30,000	55,000	40,000– 50,000	60,000– 70,000
Sri Lanka	n.a.	10,000	8,000	n.a.	12,000
Indonesia	n.a.	5,000	15,000– 18,000	50,000– 60,000	50,000– 60,000
Others	n.a.	5,000	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Total	n.a.	50,000	80,000– 85,000	100,000	140,000

Source: Adapted from Abdul Rahman et al. (2005, 237)

embrace a culture of “risk-taking” and “innovation” and venture forth into the hinterland, defined by then Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong (2001) as “all the countries and cities which are within 7 hours of flying time from Singapore.” Singapore businesses and “enterprising Singaporeans” are thus encouraged to “strike out in business” (*ibid.*), particularly in China and more recently India, to ride on their phenomenal growth. As a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Singapore is also part of the regional effort to ensure “dynamic, productive and flexible” labor markets to sustain regional growth and attract global investments and businesses to the region (Lee Hsien Loong 2006). An integral part of working toward the vision of an ASEAN Community by 2020 are labor-related priorities, such as increasing social security and protection; facilitating labor mobility in ASEAN; addressing the impact of economic integration on employment; and enhancing tripartite partnerships in industrial relations and workforce employability (ASEAN 2006). Hence, the increased mobility of the Singaporean workforce in recent years must be understood within the framework of regional collaboration, economic integration, and community-building initiatives under the auspices of ASEAN.

The state has also actively spearheaded the drive to regionalize and internationalize through “political entrepreneurship” by using government-linked companies to open up overseas business opportunities for private capitalists and negotiate the institutional framework for these opportunities to be tapped by Singaporean firms and entrepreneurs (Yeung 1998). It is argued that the “internationalization” of Singapore’s talent accorded by such efforts and opportunities will not only “shape useful global perspectives” and “boost confidence to tackle the New Economy” but also “help to build a

web of economic and social contacts that promote a flow of information and knowledge to link Singapore to the dynamic but distant parts of the global economy” (Lee Boon Yang 2000, 68).

Although important, such macroscale discussions of Singapore’s regionalization and internationalization efforts tend to overlook the impact that having one or more family members posted overseas for prolonged periods, or embarking on frequent travels for work, can have on family dynamics and relationships. Hence, for the rest of this article, our analysis will refocus the lens on the more intimate scale of the household to understand the “everyday practices” of “how particular people negotiate life-worlds that involve a shuttling across international borders” (Conradson and Latham 2005, 228). In investigating short-term transnational business travel (rather than longer-term overseas work) at the household scale (rather than metanarratives), we hope to address neglected facets of the literature on transnational mobility and its impact on the household. Before we present our empirical analysis, however, we first describe the methodology behind the data collection process in the next section.

Methodology and Sample

The empirical data for this article are drawn from two sources: a series of focus group interviews, followed by a large-scale questionnaire survey, all conducted between late 1998 and early 2000. All our respondents—for both the focus groups and the survey—were either female heads of household or wives of the male heads of household.

We conducted seven focus groups, each ranging in size from three to six women, with the discussions lasting from one to three hours. A total of twenty-eight women were interviewed. They comprised a mix of working women and homemakers, all of whom, at the time of the interview, were married. Although most had between one to three children, some did not have any. There was also a mix of women from nuclear and extended (multigenerational) households, as well as those with and without a transnational domestic worker in their employ. This article focuses only on the ten women in the focus groups whose husbands traveled overseas in the course of work (ten cases) or who themselves traveled abroad for work (two cases) (table 2), in addition to the data generated by the quantitative survey. All respondents are referred to by pseudonyms.

For the *questionnaire survey*, we obtained a stratified probability sample of household addresses from Singapore’s Department of Statistics. The addresses

Table 2. Profile of focus group participants who personally or whose spouses undertake overseas business travel

RESPONDENT'S NAME, AGE, EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS, MONTHLY INCOME	HUSBAND'S AGE, EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS, MONTHLY INCOME	AGES OF CHILDREN	EMPLOYMENT STATUS AND HOURS AT WORK DAILY*	RESPONDENT'S OVERSEAS BUSINESS TRAVEL PATTERN	HUSBAND'S OVERSEAS BUSINESS TRAVEL PATTERN	HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURE; LIVE-IN DOMESTIC WORKER?
Mona , 34 'A' levels \$6000-\$7999	37 'A' levels \$6000-\$7999	2 years	Full-time Work 11	Irregular; 2-3 days/trip	2-4 times last 6 months; <2 weeks/trip	Nuclear Yes
Vera , 37 'A' levels <\$2000	37 'A' levels \$4000-\$5999	10 years 7 years	Full-time Work 12	Nil	Not currently. Previously 2-4 times in the last 6 months; 2-16 weeks/trip	Nuclear Yes
Pearl , 27 University Degree \$4000-\$5999	30 University Degree \$4000-\$5999	8 months	Full-time Work 10	Nil	1 time in the last 6 months; <2 weeks/trip	Nuclear Yes
Su Ai , 31 University Degree \$4000-\$5999	44 Polytechnic Diploma \$4000-\$5999	4 years 7 months	Full-time Work 10	Irregular; once in the last year for 3 days	1 time in the last 6 months; <2 weeks/trip	Extended (mother-in-law and sister-in-law) Yes
Lan Ying , 37 Masters Degree No income	38 Masters Degree \$8000-\$9999	4 years 1 1/2 years 4 months	Homemaker N.A.	N.A.	2-4 times in the last 6 months; 2 weeks-1 month/trip	Extended (mother-in-law and grand-mother) Yes

Table 2 continued

RESPONDENT'S NAME, AGE, EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS, MONTHLY INCOME	HUSBAND'S AGE, EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS, MONTHLY INCOME	AGES OF CHILDREN	EMPLOYMENT STATUS AND HOURS AT WORK DAILY	RESPONDENT'S OVERSEAS BUSINESS TRAVEL PATTERN	HUSBAND'S OVERSEAS BUSINESS TRAVEL PATTERN	HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURE; LIVE-IN DOMESTIC WORKER?
Aileen , 43 'O' levels \$2000-\$3999	44 'O' levels \$2000-\$3999	6 years	Full-time Work 12	Nil	2-4 times last 6 months; <2 weeks/trip	Nuclear No
Swee Lee , 37 'A' levels <\$2000	39 Masters Degree \$8000-\$9999	11 years 7 years	Part-time Work 6	Nil	>10 times in the last 6 months; <2 weeks/trip	Nuclear No
Jasmine , 36 University Degree No income	40 University Degree \$6000-\$7999	12 years 9 years 6 years	Homemaker N.A.	N.A.	8-10 times in the last 6 months; <2 weeks/trip	Nuclear No
Irene , 41 'A' levels \$2000-\$3999	41 'O' levels \$2000-\$3999	6 years	Full-time Work 11	Nil	2-4 times in the last 6 months; <2 weeks/trip	Extended (mother) No
Poh Choo , 37 'O' levels \$2000-\$3999	41 University Degree \$8000-\$9999	14 years	Full-time Work 12	Nil	5-7 times in the last 6 months; <2 weeks/trip	Extended (mother- and father- in-law) No

were stratified by household types and geographical spread; the final sample was proportionate to the population distribution of household types. As our study was on Singapore households, we defined an eligible household as one with at least one member of the family who is a Singapore citizen. The questionnaire was constructed in English, and translated to Mandarin and Malay. In order to maximize the response rate, we used a drop-off, pick-up method for data collection for those who did not have the time to be interviewed on the spot. This hybrid method worked out very well. Altogether, we successfully interviewed 908 respondents, yielding a response rate of 80 percent.

Our survey respondents were either heads of households (9 percent), joint heads (40.7 percent), or wives of heads of households (48.3 percent). The average age of our respondents was forty-one years (standard deviation, nine years), and the average age of their spouses was forty-four years (standard deviation, ten years). Most of our respondents and their spouses had completed secondary level education. Almost half (45.6 percent) of our respondents were engaged in either part-time or full-time paid work (in comparison, 92.8 percent of the respondents noted that their husbands had either part-time or full-time employment). All our respondents were married and resided with their spouses. The vast majority (86.6 percent) had children, with the average number of children being 1.9 (standard deviation, 1.1); about half had young children twelve years old and younger.

Gender, Work-related Overseas Travel, and the Singaporean Household

The phenomenon of women withdrawing from the workforce upon marriage is usually understood in terms of patriarchal gender norms, with the women being seen as having returned to their traditional homemaking roles. In addition, although research has established that time conflicts and overloads in managing work and family obligations are a major challenge for *both* working mothers *and* fathers (Rapoport and Rapoport 1969; Moen and Yu 1999), most studies have consistently identified working women as more vulnerable to the strains of competing role obligations of family and work (Lerner 1994; Becker and Moen 1999). Thus, given that business travel takes one away from one's home for different periods of time, not surprisingly the women—whether working or not—are again those who are more likely to organize their lives around the strains of overseas travel, regardless of whether they (for working women) or their spouses do the traveling.

Business Travel and the Reproduction of Gender Norms in the Household

In the area of overseas business travel, the survey data suggest that men outnumber women two to one on this score. Our results reveal that just over one in eight (13.0 percent) of the 354 women respondents who have full-time work say that they undertake business travel in the course of their work as compared with almost one out of every four (23.6 percent) of the 817 husbands identified by their wives as having full-time work.⁵ Similarly, women tend to take fewer trips than men: 40.0 percent of the working women say that they take four or more trips annually compared with 55.1 percent of the men (table 3). Additionally, when women do travel, they generally spend less time overseas, with almost nine out of ten noting that they spend one week or less on each trip as compared with the men who are more likely to participate in travel with a wider range in terms of time away from home, from trips of less than a week to those lasting more than two weeks (table 4).

Table 3. Average number of business trips per year taken by respondents and their spouses

NUMBER OF TRIPS	MEN*		WOMEN*		TOTAL	
	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%
1-3	88	44.9	30	60.0	118	48.0
4-6	50	25.5	16	32.0	66	26.8
7-10	14	7.1	3	6.0	17	6.9
10-15	28	14.3	-	-	28	11.4
16-20	6	3.1	-	-	6	2.4
>20	10	5.1	1	2.0	11	4.5
Total	196	100.0	50	100.0	246	100.0

Source: Authors' survey

*Missing cases = 11 men; 4 women

Table 4. Average length of business trips taken by respondents and their spouses

LENGTH OF TRIP	MEN*		WOMEN		TOTAL	
	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%
< 1 week	90	44.3	34	63.0	124	48.2
1 week	65	32.0	13	24.1	78	30.4
2 weeks	26	12.8	4	7.4	30	11.7
> 2 weeks	22	10.8	3	5.6	25	9.7
Total	203	100.0	54	100.0	257	100.0

Source: Authors' survey

*Missing cases = 4 men

The gendered dimensions of overseas business travel are most evident in the way that women’s travel patterns are affected by the presence of children, as compared with those of men. In terms of actually reducing actual trips taken, the survey data clearly show that the presence of children has a statistically significant effect in curtailing their mothers’ business travel but not that of their fathers (table 5). In other words, although women are less likely than men to undertake overseas work-related trips (regardless of whether or not they are parents), *and* both men and women are likely to travel less when children are added to the equation, it is the women who reduce their travel more than men. The apparent strategy to deal with business travel for those women who do continue to take work-related trips, as reiterated by the women in our focus group discussions, is to modify the trip pattern in terms of frequency and length of travel.

Table 5. Impact of children on business travel of full-time working parents

PRESENCE OF CHILDREN	MEN			WOMEN		
	NO BUSINESS TRAVEL	BUSINESS TRAVEL*	TOTAL	NO BUSINESS TRAVEL	BUSINESS TRAVEL*	TOTAL
No children	69 (69.7)	30 (30.3)	99 (100.0)	57 (80.3)	14 (19.7)	71 (100.0)
Children	555 (77.3)	163 (22.7)	718 (100.0)	251 (88.7)	32 (11.3)	283 (100.0)
Total	624 (76.0)	193 (23.6)	817 (100.0)	308 (87.0)	46 (13.0)	354 (100.0)
Kendall's tau-b	-0.058			-0.100**		

*Missing cases = 14 men; 8 women

**Significant at 95 percent confidence level

Source: Authors' survey

The women note that, after having children, they tended to travel less often and for shorter periods. This trend owes largely to the fact that they did not enjoy being away from their children, especially when the latter were very young. Although now a homemaker, Lan Ying’s description of her feelings regarding business travel prior to and after having children, while she was still working, is typical of how the other women feel about how their change in identities (from “working woman” to “mother”) has affected them:

The first time I traveled when I was not a mother, it was different you know? It was like, okay, I'm going off. Bye! And you don't have to call back every day. But when you become a mother and you leave your children, it's so different. The whole feeling is like you left your whole family behind. . . . The first time I traveled [after becoming a mother] was when my eldest daughter was two or three months old. . . . Even though the baby can't talk, the attachment is so different . . . I make it a point to call back every night . . . and when you say bye bye and you hang up, you feel so sad. It's like, "Aiyah. Why am I here? I should be at home."

The women readily admit that, as a consequence, they often arrange their travel schedules around their children, and even argue that they make more effort than their husbands to stay connected with the family while away on business trips. Several rely on traditional gender ideology about women's and men's family roles and relations to rationalize their stand, arguing that this is the "logical" thing for women to do once they become mothers, as a mother's absence is felt more than that of a father's:

Previously if I had to go abroad for three days, I'd most probably take like another week off and then have a holiday there, ride on the air ticket and the hotel and everything but now it's like no three days, two days and you hope to come back already. . . . I think logically, it should be acceptable for both to travel but I think in the real life situation, it's better if the husband travels more than the wife. I mean in terms of sharing of the [responsibility of raising our] kids . . . like we already said, the mother is better at it, so if the mother is away for too long, when you come back, it will be a disaster! (Mona).

I went to India last year but I planned [it] such that [it would be the] shortest possible time you know, within three days and I am back. I feel that . . . the children will be more affected if it's the mother traveling compared with the father, I guess because of the bond. I'm not saying that if the father goes overseas the children won't miss him . . . but I guess if it's the mother who's away, it will take [a young child] a longer time to adjust and of course whichever parent is overseas, I guess the mother will be the one calling back more often than the father. (Su Ai)

A few of the women also contend that their swift returns are linked to the helplessness their husbands feel when they are away. According to Mona,

whenever she is away, her husband “call[s] [her] everyday [to ask], ‘When are you coming back?’” because he cannot manage the daily routines of childcare (he finds it stressful feeding their son, reading him bedtime stories, and so on). As such, she argues that, because her husband is still incapable of changing a diaper or properly feeding the child (“he gives up after two mouthfuls if my son is not in the mood”), there is little hope that he will be able to make up for her absence.

Thus, by constructing their motherly presence within their households and families as crucial to their children’s well being, women both subscribe and contribute to reinforcing the gender-based ideology that the primary identity of women, regardless of their economic participation, is that of the family’s primary nurturer. However, this is not to say that men are not recognized as having a role to play in the Singapore household, nor that the women are generally happy for their husbands to travel. Traveling husbands, quite clearly, also create stresses and strains in negotiating the practicalities and relationships in a household that is disrupted by the men of the house being away on work-related trips.

For the women in the survey whose husbands travel on business, almost half (45.9 percent) of the women admit that they are either “unhappy” (28.5 percent) or “not happy at all” (17.4 percent) with the travel schedules of their spouses, and would rather that they not travel at all, especially after the children came along.⁶ The women in the focus groups argue that fathers who travel frequently are not only “bad for young children” (in Jasmine’s words) but, more often than not, having to frequently cope with the daily realities of raising young children leaves them “depressed and frustrated” and feeling like widows:

At the personal level, it was a nightmare . . . [during] the first half of our marriage, [he would be] away for one, two weeks. And then when the children were very young and fell sick, I had nobody to help carry two, two you know—one two-year-old and one infant—to the clinic and all. . . . And when the kids were older and the girl was down with chicken pox and for some reason I had a nerve problem with my leg and couldn’t walk, the son had no one to send him to school. Things like that I cannot forget . . . such a terrible time. I was depressed and frustrated. (Swee Lee)

The longest he has been away was four months . . . but that was fine. That time [we had] no children; better that he goes. When we had chil-

dren, there was a period [he was seldom home] . . . I felt that I was a widow, really . . . (Vera).

Beyond the issue of childcare, a frequently absent husband may also raise the issue of negotiating a “long-distance” marriage of sorts, particularly with doubts of their husbands’ fidelity, especially when the frequency of travel or the length of time spent overseas increases. As Vera notes, this can prove a strain to the marriage:

He says the project is four months, so you tolerate lah . . . and then, eh, how come another two months? . . . After a while, you can’t help but wonder is there another [woman] outside? . . . It was a very traumatic period lah . . .

Vera, in fact, feels that the insecurity over a spouse’s business travel is worse for housewives than for women who work, because as a housewife:

you don’t have financial freedom, and these days husbands are more daring; they are traveling more often . . . all you see is the money he gives you, so where are your resources and where are your means and where is the self-confidence to start with? Dare to check on your husband? You do give yourself a lot of self-doubt when things happen.

Absentee husbands/fathers also have to negotiate being away from their families due to overseas travel for work. Many of the women in the focus groups observe that absence makes it difficult for their husbands to participate sufficiently in childrearing as the men become, quite literally, distant fathers. Vera, for example, narrated that her husband’s frequent absences while their daughter was very young were “driving all of us crazy in different ways and we coped with it in our different ways . . . He didn’t talk about it, I coped by talking it out . . . and my daughter coped by crying whenever she saw him [because] it’s like he was a stranger to her.” Similarly, Lan Ying observes that not only is her husband’s daily involvement with the children affected, but the family’s outdoor activities are also usually curtailed whenever her husband is away over the weekend because “it is different from having the whole family doing it.”

What the analysis has highlighted is that short-term and frequent absences of a spouse away on business do have significant bearing upon all family members of the affected household, exacting an emotional toll on husbands, wives, and children. However, in adherence to society’s expectations of their primary

responsibility to the domestic sphere and patriarchal notions of a woman's place in Asian families and Asian society, the women are the ones who give up or shorten their business travels once children arrive on the scene. Traditional gender norms clearly underlie the issues not only of who ideally *should* participate in such travel, but also who *actually* travels, for how long, and why. As the next section shows, such households also rest on gender ideologies to reproduce and sustain them, as women in the family and household continue to carry the larger burden of the toll exacted by such short-term travel.

Business Travel and the Gender Substitution of Household Labor

It is easy to overlook the vital role that women play as enablers of men's—as well as other women's—mobility, especially with regard to business travel, given its temporary nature. We argue, however, that business travel, like many other forms of transnational labor mobility, is predicated upon the availability of women in the household—and sometimes, extended family—to sustain the family that is “left behind” when husbands/fathers (and sometimes wives/mothers) travel overseas.

Our survey data indicate that wives are more likely to take up the slack at home while their spouses are away on work-related trips, while husbands (according to their wives) are more likely to leave it to transnational domestic workers and other family members to fill the gap when their wives travel on business (table 6). Other family members are also called upon more often when women (13.2 percent) travel compared with when men (4.3 percent) travel, suggesting that husbands make less complete spousal substitutes when their wives are away, requiring help from other (female) members of the household or extended family. Few men and women claim that their live-in transnational domestic workers cover their household responsibilities while they are away. Although many would prefer their husbands not to travel (as noted above), most of the women are happy enough to make up for their husbands' absence when the latter has to travel. Three-quarters (76.7 percent) of the women claim to be “happy” or “very happy” with having to personally substitute for an absent husband; in fact, a handful (3.4 percent) note that their husbands' absence has no effect on the household distribution of labor. As suggested by the focus group discussions with the women and supported by our survey data, the generally positive reactions of the women to their husbands' absences may reflect a resignation to the demands of work in a globalizing world as well as the low level of involvement that most men

have in the day-to-day running of their households, regardless of whether it concerns childcare (table 7a) or general household chores (table 7b).

Table 6. Person taking over household responsibilities when wife or husband is on overseas business travel, as claimed by women respondents

PERSON TAKING OVER HOUSEHOLD RESPONSIBILITIES	WHEN MEN TRAVEL		WHEN WOMEN TRAVEL	
	NO.	%	NO.	%
Spouse	187	90.8	42	79.2
Other family members	9	4.3	7	13.2
Transnational domestic worker	3	1.5	4	7.6
No one	7	3.4	-	-
Total	206	100.0	53	100.0

Source: Authors' survey

Missing cases = 1 man; 1 woman

Several of the women in the focus groups note the financial and promotional rewards that men like their husbands, who need and are willing to travel, can reap. Irene and Vera, for example, both highlight the “overseas allowances and more income” (in Irene’s words) that their husbands receive. Swee Lee notes that the expectation of traveling was part of her husband’s promotion. Despite the “nightmares” she faced (as described earlier), Swee Lee recalls:

I was prepared to take all the stress . . . as a wife; it's like part of the deal I have never asked him to change his job simply because his level requires it. If I want him to change job, that means a cut in pay [which would mean] maybe a change in lifestyle which I was not prepared to accept . . .

She also acknowledges the importance of supporting Singapore’s regionalization efforts as an investment toward the city-state’s—and, hence, the citizens’—longer-term future: “I think that as a whole, our country is so small. If we don’t [regionalize], we will not be able to progress and gain materially.”

In terms of the men’s lack of contribution to maintaining the household, our findings chime with other studies that have found that women—regardless of whether or not they are employed outside the home—are usually the ones primarily involved in the nitty-gritty day-to-day—even hour-to-hour—

Table 7a. Persons identified as primarily responsible for domestic responsibilities related to childcare, for households with and without a live-in transnational domestic worker (TDW)

DOMESTIC RESPONSIBILITY	WITHOUT A LIVE-IN TDW	WITH A LIVE-IN TDW
Feeding young child(ren)	Wife (74.6) H&W (18.7) Others (6.7)	TDW (59.1) Wife (23.9) Others (17.0)
Bathing young child(ren)	Wife (74.8) H&W (18.0) Others (7.2)	TDW (58.2) Wife (25.4) Others (16.4)
Taking child(ren) to and from school	Wife (62.6) H&W (20.9) Others (16.5)	TDW (44.2) Wife (19.2) Others (36.6)
Fetching child(ren) to and from other classes	Wife (61.4) H&W (22.9) Others (15.7)	TDW (31.5) Wife (31.5) Others (37.0)
Disciplining child(ren)	H&W (56.5) Wife (32.2) Others (11.3)	H&W (56.5) Wife (25.1) Others (18.4)
Supervising child(ren)'s homework	Wife (51.5) H&W (36.3) Others (12.2)	H&W (41.2) Wife (40.7) Others (18.1)
Taking child(ren) to doctor/dentist	Wife (49.2) H&W (39.4) Others (11.4)	H&W (43.2) Wife (33.2) Others (23.6)
Staying home with sick child(ren)	Wife (73.0) H&W (20.6) Others (6.4)	Wife (48.7) H&W (29.5) Others (21.8)

Notes: Figures in parentheses indicate the percentage of responses

H&W = shared equally by husband and wife

Source: Authors' survey

Legend for Table 7a and Table 7b

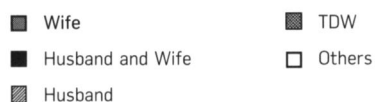
























Table 7b. Persons identified as primarily responsible for general domestic responsibilities, for households with and without a live-in transnational domestic worker (TDW)

DOMESTIC RESPONSIBILITY	WITHOUT A LIVE-IN TDW	WITH A LIVE-IN TDW
Assigning chores	 Wife (62.1) H&W (27.6) Others (10.3)	 Wife (39.8) TDW (30.6) ^a Others (29.6)
Marketing/ grocery shopping	 Wife (56.9) H&W (34.0) Others (9.1)	 H&W (38.9) Wife (31.3) Others (29.8)
Cooking	 Wife (78.2) H&W (10.0) Others (11.8)	 TDW (65.7) Wife (19.7) Others (14.6)
Washing up after meals	 Wife (63.9) H&W (21.3) Others (14.8)	 TDW (85.9) Wife (5.6) Others (8.5)
Tidying the home	 Wife (67.2) H&W (21.5) Others (11.3)	 TDW (83.9) Wife (7.0) Others (9.1)
Laundry	 Wife (74.6) H&W (14.6) Others (10.8)	 TDW (86.9) Wife (8.0) Others (5.1)
Supervision of TDW	 Wife (59.3) H&W (25.4) Others (15.3)	 Wife (52.4) H&W (27.0) Others (20.6)
Household repairs	 Husband (68.5) Wife (13.2) Others (18.3)	 Husband (54.7) TDW (29.2) Others (16.1)
Gardening	 Husband (33.9) Wife (33.6) Others (32.5)	 TDW (59.6) Husband (19.1) Others (21.3)
Washing of car(s)	 Husband (65.8) Wife (12.3) Others (21.9)	 TDW (59.0) Husband (26.0) Others (15.0)
Paying the bills	 Husband (59.9) H&W (20.3) Others (19.8)	 H&W (43.9) Husband (29.8) Others (26.3)

Notes: Figures in parentheses indicate the percentage of responses

H&W=shared equally by husband and wife

For Legend: see Table 7a

^a Refers to the TDW deciding her own work schedule

Source: Authors' survey

management of the household (such as childcare and housework), while men's main household responsibilities entail those that are periodic (such as household repairs and gardening, as table 7b reveals) (Marshall 1993; Presser 1994; Shelton and John 1996; Kroska 2003). Not surprisingly, therefore, Poh Choo notes that, while she misses having her husband around to drive the children to school and drop her off at work, his absence is merely "inconvenient" and "there is no problem when he is not around." Asked why and how she manages given that she has no domestic worker, Poh Choo explains that she is able to cover most of the daily responsibilities with the help of her in-laws (the latter helps with the children). As the focus group interviews consistently reveal, having a mother or mother-in-law, either in the same household or living separately, whom one can call upon during periodic crises (such as when the women themselves have to travel) to help out with childcare, to oversee the duties of a live-in domestic worker, or, in rare cases, to perform domestic chores, is a vital resource for our women respondents:

Even when my husband goes overseas for a few weeks, months, I don't feel the difference. The more important person in my home is my mother. [My husband] makes no difference because really, when he comes home, he plays with my son or teaches him something only if he is like very good mood; if not he will do his own thing, read newspapers ... (Irene).

As Mona argues, her acceptance of having to go on business trips despite having a young child is tied to her strategy of "mak[ing] sure [her] son is at [her] mother's or mother-in law's place" during the few days she is away.

What is surprising is the seeming insignificance of domestic workers in enabling the overseas travel of the male household head when women in the focus groups consider the issue of redistributing household duties during their husbands' absence. This is especially because our data reveal that the presence of a live-in domestic worker clearly relieves the woman of the house of a wide range of household responsibilities, both in childcare as well as general domestic chores (tables 7a and 7b). Nonetheless, few of the women we interviewed *explicitly* refer to their domestic workers as a crucial fallback strategy. Significantly, however, we would argue that the range of duties covered by the domestic worker in households suggests the *implicit* importance of the figure of a live-in domestic worker as an underlying factor in households, where one or both of the spouses undertake business travel,

in enabling that travel—a contention clearly supported by our survey data (table 8). In fact, while having a live-in transnational domestic worker helps to facilitate business travel for *both* men and women, this support is more critical for women—especially if they are mothers—than for men.

As noted earlier, children have only a weak impact on men’s business travel. Further analysis reveals that the presence of children in discouraging men’s travel has a higher likelihood of dampening business travel for men in households where there is no transnational domestic worker (the relationship is statistically significant at 95 percent) than where there is one. Indeed, regardless of whether there are children, lower proportions of men from households without a live-in domestic worker undertake business travel than those with a live-in domestic worker, i.e., for men with children, the figure of 27.3 percent of men from households with no live-in domestic worker who undertake business travel is only half that of the 54.5 percent of those from households with live-in domestic workers; for those without children,

Table 8. Impact of a live-in transnational domestic worker (TDW) on the business travel of full-time working parents

GENDER OF PARENT/ BUSINESS TRAVEL		WITHOUT LIVE-IN TDW		TOTAL	WITH LIVE-IN TDW		TOTAL
		NO CHILDREN	CHILDREN		NO CHILDREN	CHILDREN	
MEN	NO BUSINESS TRAVEL	64 (72.7)	452 (84.3)	516 (82.7)	5 (45.5)	103 (54.5)	108 (56.0)
	BUSINESS TRAVEL*	24 (27.3)	84 (15.7)	108 (17.3)	6 (54.5)	79 (43.4)	85 (44.0)
Total		88 (100.0)	536 (100.0)	624	11 (100.0)	85 (100.0)	193 (100.0)
Kendall's tau-b		-0.107**			-0.052		
WOMEN	NO BUSINESS TRAVEL	50 (83.3)	146 (94.8)	196 (91.6)	7 (63.6)	105 (81.4)	112 (80.0)
	BUSINESS TRAVEL*	10 (16.7)	8 (5.2)	18 (8.4)	4 (36.4)	24 (18.6)	28 (20.0)
Total		60 (100.0)	154 (100.0)	214	11 (100.0)	129 (100.0)	140 (100.0)
Kendall's tau-b		-0.186**			-0.119**		

*Missing cases = 3 men; 4 women

**Significant at 95 percent confidence level

Source: Authors' survey

the figures are 15.7 percent and 43.3 percent, respectively. For women, the impact of having a live-in transnational domestic worker as enabling their own business travel is similar but even more dramatic. Thus, for women with children, only 5.2 percent from households with no live-in domestic worker undertake business travel compared with 18.6 percent for those with live-in domestic workers; for those without children, the figures are 16.7 percent and 36.4 percent, respectively (the relationship is statistically significant at 95 percent for both households with and without a live-in transnational domestic worker).

These observations demonstrate that employing a live-in transnational domestic worker is a vital strategy to manage the demands that work and family life place on married men and women. Indeed, almost three-quarters (74.1 percent) of the women in the survey who had at least one live-in transnational domestic worker currently employed agree that it would be difficult for their families to manage without one. More generally, almost two-thirds (64.6 percent) of these women note that Singapore can no longer do without transnational domestic workers (compared with 36.5 percent for those who have not hired transnational domestic workers). Although the role of the transnational domestic worker is broadly acknowledged—whether through the recognition that transnational domestic workers have become increasingly indispensable as revealed by the survey data, or through the focus group participants' disclosures of the various ways by which the transnational domestic worker contributes to household maintenance—her specific role in enabling men and particularly women to embark on business travel is apparently overlooked. Her presence seems to be taken for granted as other household members—such as the respondents' spouses, parents, and parents-in-law—are seen as the locus of strategic action and processes through which family members are called upon to actively modify their roles, resources, and relationships (Moen and Wethington 1992) to help out during temporary absences brought about by business travel of the man or woman of the house.

What the in-depth discussions with women in such households underline, however, is the gendered nature of such strategizing. Complicit in the reproduction of these gender-stereotypical assumptions about women are, in fact, the women themselves who articulate their roles as their family's primary nurturer, especially when the children are young. Other women—in the guise of family members and, more crucially, in the figure of the transnational domestic worker—are called upon, either explicitly or implicitly, as extended appendages to help sustain the family facing the pressures of

globalization to undertake business travel. The analysis has also shown the paradox of mobility across international borders as a response to globalization and regionalization: it can be both disruptive of household maintenance when household members travel, as well as a “solution” to sustaining the household when transnational domestic workers are brought into one’s household.

Conclusion

As the globalization of the world’s economy continues to demand the international mobility of labor, we need to examine the everyday dimensions of transnational mobility and its effects on people on the ground. While the former approach highlights the apparent flows and fluidities that the “borderlessness” of a globalized world allows and the benefits that transnational organizations and nation-states gain from engaging in it, the latter stresses the potential disruptions and dislocations that globalization effects on the daily lives of people and refocuses attention on the “significant amounts of energy, resources and organization that go into sustaining transnational lives and communities” (Conradson and Latham 2005, 228). Just as crucially, our study illuminates the kinds of “nonflows” (for example, the relative nonmobility of women compared with men when it comes to business travel) that challenge the idea of globalization as borderless and fluid. Acknowledging that women in middle-class households in globalizing cities like Singapore continue to bear the main burden of global householding, and that many of these households are often dependent on the regulated flows of foreign domestic workers into the national space, calls for a more nuanced understanding of globalization as characterized by borders and nonborders, flows and nonflows, mobility and nonmobility, freedom and regulation.⁷ Directing our attention to the scale of the household and its constituent members allows us to grapple with how real people deal with these paradoxes of globalization as well as the multiple, often mundane, issues of sustaining households transnationally stretched across international boundaries and geographically divided in temporary or more permanent ways.

Although there is an increasing body of recent work adopting the household/family scale to investigate globalization’s effects, much of it has centered on the management of longer-term geographical relocations of family members brought about by overseas work stints, international education, and crossborder marriages. Our examination of how the Singapore household comes to grips with the demands of participating in globalized work

through business travel calls attention to the need to look beyond long-term household restructuring under globalization, to incorporate an understanding of how households negotiate shorter-term transnational disruptions to a household's daily geographies. Business travel is arguably an increasingly common phenomenon as the transnationalization of business intensifies under globalization, and the international competitiveness of many organizations and national economies depends on the mobility of personnel (Södersten and Reed 1994, cited in Collins and Tisdell 2002, 140). We argue that business travel is yet "another variant to the transnational 'social morphology' (Vertovec 1999) that characterizes families spread across international space today" (Huang and Yeoh 2005, 396) and, hence, the business traveler, particularly in the guise of the frequent flyer, should be added to the range of social actors falling within the register of transnationalism and international mobility (Rogers 2005, 403). This article shows that business travel does impose emotional and physical costs not just on the family and household of the business traveler, but also on the business traveler himself/herself, and we need to appreciate how these costs are (or are not) managed. As such, business travel provides another lens for viewing how the household is being subverted or strengthened by globalization forces.

This article also emphasizes the importance of rethinking gender-blind perspectives of globalization to expose the unequal relations of gender that are threaded into the material effects of globalization's discourse. Our study demonstrates that the transnationalizing household often rests in multiple ways on patriarchal gender ideologies to reproduce and sustain it. Women who engage in business travel often travel less and go on shorter trips than men, especially after the children arrive. While their husbands' business travels bring about strains and stresses to the household, ranging from having to deal with everyday practicalities (tied to managing the daily household routine) to broader emotional issues (such as issues of potential infidelity on the part of their husbands and the effects of a periodically absent father on the children), the women support their husbands' business travel as they not only recognize the personal (and even broader economic) benefits associated with such travel, but also find it consistent with the role of men as the family's main income-earner and women as the primary nurturer (see also Lai and Huang 2004). Strategies to deal with maintaining the household interrupted by business travel are also gendered, with business travel of both men and women being facilitated by having other female members of the extended family as well as transnational domestic workers in the household to call upon. The latter point also highlights how one form of transnational

mobility (business travel usually undertaken by men) can be predicated upon another (the transmigration of women as domestic workers). It is only by doing more work at the scale of the household that research will bring to light the fact that such gendered mobilities do little to challenge gendered divisions of family labor within households or larger society.

Notes

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- 1 In the scholarly literature, the two terms "family" and "household" are often used with the following distinction: the "household" is concerned with activities such as production, consumption, and reproduction directed toward the satisfaction of human needs, while "family" is seen as inhering symbols, values, and meanings. However, as Rapp, Ross, and Bridenthal (1979, 177) argue, it is important not to miss the "essential connections" between them for "it is through their commitment to the concept of the family that people are recruited to the material relations of the household." We have thus chosen to use both terms in this article, depending on context.
- 2 Among lower skilled households, the spatially split transnational household provides one strategy to increase livelihood support. Where households stay together or migrate as a whole, existing research has been concerned with "issues of integration into the host community, and ways in which new contacts have been developed to mobilize resources for reproductive tasks," as well as "links these households maintain with 'home' and how household strategies can include inputs from kin and friends in the source community" (Willis and Yeoh 2000, 254).
- 3 For discussions of transnational domestic workers in Singapore, see Huang and Yeoh (1996, 1998, 2003); Jackson et al. (1999); Asis et al. (2003); Yeoh and Huang (2000); Yeoh et al. (2004); and Abdul Rahman et al. (2005).
- 4 With a small land area and population, Singapore's natural resources are limited. These resource limitations have led the government and private sector to view investment outside the national boundaries to be of crucial importance. Although Singapore companies have always been involved, to some degree, in foreign investment, it is only since 1986 and particularly since 1992 that a regionalization policy has been heavily promoted.
- 5 The percentages remain almost the same (13.0 percent for women and 24.1 percent for men) when those respondents with part-time work are included.
- 6 The rest noted that they were "happy" (48.3 percent) or "very happy" (1.4 percent) or that they had no positive or negative feelings (4.3 percent) about their spouses having to go on business trips.
- 7 We are grateful to an anonymous referee for highlighting this point so eloquently to us.

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