Family migration to Australia

Literature review – August 2012
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Foreword

Many migrants come to Australia as secondary family applicants, to be reunited with family or to marry. However there is comparatively little research about their contributions to Australia. This departmental literature review, completed in mid-2012, informed a larger research project about family migration by the Australian National University’s Australian Demographic and Social Research Institute. The different categories of family migration, the contributions of family migrants and the factors that limit or enhance them are topics covered in the review.

Research notes good labour market outcomes for family migrants without children and those from English-speaking backgrounds overshadowing poorer outcomes for those with young children and from non-English-speaking backgrounds. The literature also identifies family migrants’ important social and civic contributions through volunteer work and by some in facilitating the social integration of Skill stream primary applicants.

The literature review finds that family entrants’ contributions to Australia can be affected by local unemployment rates and labour market discrimination. The degree of support available to migrant families through affordable, high quality childcare and family networks is significant to migrant women’s participation rates. Factors limiting participation do not impact evenly on migrant groups. Family composition and age are also important.

Strategic Policy, Evaluation and Research Branch
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Introduction

A central pillar of Australia’s migration program, family migration, has attracted less research attention than other migration categories. The Policy Innovation, Research and Evaluation Unit of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) has prepared this literature review in response to this gap and in building the evidence base about family migrants’ roles in Australia. This review aims to support a larger survey-based research project being undertaken by the Australian National University’s Australian Demographic and Social Research Institute on the contributions of family migrants to Australia, which is due for completion at the end of 2012.

Migration of family members occurs across several visa categories. The partners and dependent children of permanent Skilled, Business, Family and Humanitarian visa holders can migrate with them as secondary (accompanying) migrants. Section 87 of the Migration Act 1958 states that visas for partners and children cannot be capped, although they are subject to planning levels. Citizens and permanent residents can also sponsor overseas-born partners, prospective spouses, dependent children or parents to migrate to Australia via the Family visa stream.

While the majority of primary migrants are selected on the basis of what they can contribute to Australia, many secondary migrants also have skills and qualifications of benefit to Australia and its economic development. Partners in the Family stream have solid employment outcomes, while the young age profile of Humanitarian entrants is an asset to the future workforce. Many family migrants perform important unpaid community and settlement work. Most importantly, intact families support migrants to settle successfully in Australia without the strain of indefinite separation from loved ones.

Policies that facilitate family reunion contribute to minimising settler loss among Skilled and Business migrants, and are shown to give the countries with such policies a competitive edge (Khoo 2003). Most people rely on family as a primary source of economic and social support (Hartley 1995). The family unit is a place of social reproduction, where members of the next generation are socialised in the values, social mores and skills of their communities (Hartley 1995). Families provide intimacy and connection. They also support wellbeing, better health and education, and members commonly provide care for elderly, young or sick people (McDonald & Gifford 2009). By providing an environment of care, families support migrants to settle in new countries.

Internationally agreed human rights of a family

The value of family is emphasised in several international human rights instruments. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that: ‘the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State’ (article 16; United Nations General Assembly 1948). The International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and Covenant of Social and Political Rights (both 1966) also reaffirm the principle of family unity.

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1 Throughout this paper, references to ‘family migration’ without capital letters refer to an inclusive category including secondary migrants from Skilled and Humanitarian as well as primary Family stream entrants. References to a (capitalised) Family stream relate only to people applying for visas in the Family category — this includes primary or secondary applicants.
3 There are two types of visa applicants: primary applicants and secondary applicants. The primary applicant must satisfy the primary criteria for the grant of a visa under the Migration Regulations. A secondary applicant is a member of the primary applicant’s family such as a spouse, partner, dependent child or dependent relative.
A core principle of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989) is that children have the right to live with their parents. The Convention’s preamble describes a family as ‘the natural environment for the growth and wellbeing of all its members and particularly children’ which ‘should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community,’ According to article nine ‘a child shall not be separated from his or her parents against their will, except when competent authorities subject to judicial review determine…that such separation is necessary for the best interests of the child.’ Article ten, which addresses the migration context, states: ‘applications by a child or his or her parents to enter or leave a State Party for the purpose of family reunification shall be dealt with by States Parties in a positive, humane and expeditious manner. States Parties shall further ensure that the submission of such a request shall entail no adverse consequences for the applicants and for the members of their family’ (UN General Assembly 1989).

**Defining family**

Who are family migrants? As mentioned above, this diverse group includes people across Australia’s three permanent migration streams: Skilled, Family and Humanitarian. In each stream, all spouse or dependent child entrants are family migrants. All visa holders in the Family stream (mainly Partner migrants) are family migrants, even the primary applicants. This paper is about migrant families across all of these visa classes. References to visa classes have remained part of the analysis where possible, as different groups of family migrants are likely to have different strengths and limitations and therefore may need policy attention in different areas.

Family migrants differ in terms of their familiarity with the English language, home context and culture (Menjivar and Salcido 2002). In their review of family violence in immigrant communities, Menjivar and Salcido remind researchers that the settlement outcomes for any individual depend on their occupation, education, social networks in the host country, ability to form informal networks, and social status (2002). Migrant families vary significantly according to the resources they can call on during the settlement period (Hartley 1995). Migrant families settle across Australia, in rural, regional and urban areas in any number of industries. A family migrant could be a highly qualified engineer, the partner of a similarly qualified primary applicant in the Skill stream. He or she could speak fluent English on arrival, integrating seamlessly into Australia’s labour market and social community. Alternatively, a family migrant could be the partner or teenage child of a newly arrived Humanitarian or Family entrant, speaking little English and hoping to study in Australia before starting work.

A family migrant could have met his or her Australian sponsor as a student already in Australia, or have met their sponsor overseas as a tourist. Other couples have started their relationship as pen-pals or social media contacts.

This complexity contrasts with many depictions of family migrants in the mainstream media. For example, the media may promote stereotypes such as ‘mail order brides’ or stigmatise migrant families as welfare dependent ‘chain migrants’. These reports are less likely to mention the significant contributions family migrants make to Australia through their families and through paid and community work.

**Scope and structure**

Despite the wide reach of this paper, some areas remain outside the scope of the review. Temporary entrants, like ‘457’ Temporary Skilled migrants have been excluded. However, the partner entrants of Family stream migrants have been included, even though they are always placed on a two-year period on a temporary visa before they can apply for a permanent visa.
While this division helps focus discussion on those longer-term migrants most likely to make significant contributions to Australia, it is important to remember that it introduces some imprecision. Many temporary entrants find pathways to permanence with their families or by partnering in Australia; conversely, many permanent immigrants may not stay in Australia permanently.

Family migration integrity issues also lie outside the scope of this paper, as the research is designed to identify genuine contributions and the factors that configure them.

In mainstream migration research, shorthand policy thinking that assumes family migrants play only a role within the family is common (Kofman 2004). It is important to look beyond this stereotype because few individuals have lives that do not encompass multiple roles across the home, the labour market and the community. Family migrants work, while Skill stream migrants are part of family life either in Australia or in a transnational setting. Migrant children join the workforce as they mature. These are just a few examples of the contributions family migrants make, and the bulk of this paper contains research exploring them further.

The structure of the paper complements that of the larger, survey-based research project by the Australian National University. Beginning with the historical context of Australia's migration program in relation to permanent family migration, the first part of the paper introduces literature on the characteristics of family migrants. Later sections are about family migrants’ contributions, and the factors that can enhance or hinder them.

Before going further into the contributions Family migrants offer Australia, the next section gives some background about how families have historically been part of the migration program. The section has been included because it illustrates the way the program has progressed, and the central role that whole families, rather than individuals, have played in making Australia the successful, multicultural nation it is today.

Families in Australia’s post-war migration history

Large-scale, planned migration began in Australia at the end of World War II. Millions of people in Europe had been displaced from their homelands and they saw international migration as a way to build a future for their families.

The Australian Government began an ambitious migration program intended to boost Australia's population and supply additional workers for large infrastructure projects like the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Scheme. Migrant families from Britain and continental Europe arrived in large numbers, many under assisted passage and Displaced Persons schemes. Approximately 1.6 million migrants arrived between 1945 and 1960. Reflecting contemporary social attitudes, white English-speaking migrants were considered the most desirable (Hartley 1995).

Australia's first immigration minister, Arthur Calwell, believed it imperative to attract as many migrants as possible. Australian birth-rates were falling and Calwell believed that the country would be at risk of invasion if its population were too small. In his book How many Australians tomorrow? Calwell explained:

> My duty (is) to awaken my fellow Australians to the perils that will always hang over them unless this land is peopled to its carrying capacity. If the experience of the Pacific War has taught us one thing, it surely is seven million Australians cannot hold three million square miles of this earth's surface indefinitely.

The government’s policy was to attract young families, believing they would be more stable and settle better than single people (Ho 2008). Yet in practice, immigration strategies favoured single male workers due to the need for a flexible, mobile workforce to support infrastructure development. Single men were prioritised in non-British immigration schemes for this reason (Tsolidis 1995). Ultimately, the importance of family was reasserted as a policy aim when separate migration programs for single Greek and Italian women were
introduced. The aim of these programs was to counterbalance a perception that large numbers of southern European single men constituted a social problem (Tsoidis 1995). Despite Calwell’s commitment to bring in high numbers of migrants, family reunion category numbers were controlled by the government to guard against perceptions that too many family migrants would arrive (Vasta 1995).

At the time the accepted concept of ‘family’ was based on the Anglo–Australian nuclear family consisting of husband, wife and unmarried children. It also drew on the mid-twentieth century Anglo-Australian assumption that women would not work outside the home (Yue 2008). In immigration policy and administrative procedures at the time, men were classified according to their roles as workers while migrating women were categorised in terms of their relationships: as either single, married or unaccompanied. This assumption of dependency did not reflect the experiences of many post-war women migrants who worked and made an important contribution to household income (Hartley 1995). European women migrants were more likely to work outside the home than Australian women at the time: Tsoidis found that from the 1950s to the 1970s, 56 per cent of Greek-born women worked outside the home compared with only 9.2 per cent of Australia-born women (1995).

In the early 1970s, the government progressively reduced the size of the migration program, which had reached levels of around 170 000 per year, in response to the end of a long economic boom period and increasing unemployment. By 1975, planning levels had fallen to 50 000 people.

The White Australia Policy, which had severely restricted non-European migration, declined in significance over the decades following World War II before it was formally renounced by the Whitlam government in 1973. Whitlam announced that future migration would take no account of race, ethnicity or religion (Jupp 1998). Government policy began to emphasise multiculturalism and to reject openly the idea that the goal of the migration program was to produce the highest possible population. As Prime Minister Whitlam explained:

> We removed the assertion that a primary national objective must be to increase population. We removed the commitment to expand the immigration program. We related our immigration needs simply to the capacity of Australia to provide ‘employment, housing, education and social services’ (Whitlam, 1985).

The Fraser government that followed also supported multiculturalism. Australia’s success was attributed to its culturally diverse but cohesive society: as Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser explained in 1981:

> Australia has been capable of embracing an ever increasing degree of ethnic and cultural diversity. The record shows that the Australian people, from wherever they have come, have enriched and strengthened this country with their cultures, their energies, their commitment and their children. Together, we have built a nation which today, by any international standard of comparison, must be judged a success. 4

In the 1980s migration policy shifted from an emphasis on labour migration to pay greater attention to family reunion and Humanitarian categories (Hartley 1995). Previously, Australian governments had responded to humanitarian crises in an ad hoc fashion, providing resettlement for people fleeing conflicts such as the Vietnam War. The Fraser Government introduced a formal, planned Humanitarian Program in 1977–78 to offer refugees asylum in Australia. In 1981, the Special Humanitarian Program (SHP) was announced to assist people who had close relatives in Australia and who were suffering substantial discrimination or human

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4 Inaugural address on multiculturalism given by the then prime minister, the Rt Hon Malcolm Fraser, to the Institute of Multicultural Affairs in Melbourne on 30 November 1981.
rights violations but could not be accommodated under the existing refugee programs (Karlsen, Phillips and Koleth 2011).

The Skilled migration stream was also changing during this time, but it still emphasised the importance of family. DIAC introduced a new migrant selection assessment system in 1979. The Numerical Multifactor Assessment System (NUMAS) assessed migrants on factors like occupational and language skills. The department designed NUMAS to offer more points to prospective migrants with family ties, as they were considered to be an indicator that they would eventually settle with success. A new system that replaced NUMAS in 1982 also strongly favoured Skilled migrants with close family ties in Australia.

New Independent and Concessional categories in the migration program were introduced in 1986 to allow extended family members to migrate, provided they qualified in relation to employability, age, education and skills. During this period, migration was highly gendered, with more men than women arriving under the Skilled and Humanitarian categories while the Family categories were dominated by women (Hartley 1995).

In the 1990s, the government introduced controversial new Temporary Protection visas (TPVs), which did not allow holders to apply for family members to join them. TPVs were first issued by the Hawke Government in 1991 after the Tiananmen Square massacre in China and discontinued three years later (Crock and Ghezelbash, 2010). Again, in 1999, the Howard Government introduced a similar three-year TPV for ‘unauthorised arrivals’ who had sought asylum while in Australia and were found to be refugees. Holders of this visa were not allowed to sponsor family members or access social security services.

On both occasions, the policy attracted substantial negative media attention toward the government of the day because of their implications for separated families. TPVs were criticised by international human rights bodies, some of which articulated Australia’s human rights obligations around family unity in the migration context. In a submission to the Senate’s legal and constitutional committee, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) stated that the international community had agreed that family unity was a human right:

> The unity of the family members is a fundamental human right […]. This right includes maintaining family unity for members arriving in Australian territory together, as well as assuring family reunion for members arriving separately. When coupled with the use of temporary protection visas for Australia, which do not provide for family reunion as a basic individual right, the impact of such State action may result in a breach of Australia’s formal obligations under various human rights instruments, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as ignoring standards that Australia has helped create and promote.5

UNHCR spokesperson Michael Gabaudan testified to the committee that the spouses of refugees, even if they did not themselves have a claim to be convention refugees, still had the right to join their partners in Australia:

> You have a man who … is severely discriminated against, who escapes so as not to be jailed or tortured or whatever. His wife may not know anything about his activities but that does not give the international community the right to separate them forever, and that is why we consider that his family should be reunited with him.6

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6 Michel Gabaudan, appearing for the Office of the UNHCR before the Senate, Legal and Constitutional References Committee request for comments, 06/08/2002, regarding the Migration Legislation Amendment (Further Border Protection Measures) Bill 2002.
TPVs were abolished by the Rudd Government in 2008, with most holders being granted a permanent Resolution of Status visa. Australian governments have continued to maintain and adjust the original migration program to take account of changing economic, social and political environments.

Current policy settings

As discussed above, today's migration program is made up of three streams: Skilled, Humanitarian and Family. The purpose of the Family stream is to bring families together by enabling the partners, children, siblings and parents of Australian residents to live in Australia (DIAC 2010b). Migrants are selected because they have familial relationship with their sponsor in Australia.

The largest category, Partners (see Table 1), comprises the spouses or de facto partners (including same-sex partners) of Australian resident sponsors. People living overseas who plan to marry their Australian sponsor after travelling to Australia can also apply for this visa class. Child visas are for the dependent children of Australian sponsors, including children adopted overseas by the sponsor. Child visas can also be granted to the orphan relatives (aged less than 18 years) of Australian residents. There are two visa types for parents wishing to migrate to Australia to join their children who are Australia-residents: the Parent category and the Contributory Parent category. The number of Parent and Other Family category visas issued is subject to an annual ‘cap’ set by the Minister for Immigration. When this cap is reached, applicants wait in a queue for consideration of the grant of a visa in a following year, subject to places becoming available. Finally, the Other Family category includes carers, aged dependent relatives and ‘remaining relatives’ who have no near relatives outside Australia.

Table 1: Family stream outcomes

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>33 340</td>
<td>35 076</td>
<td>32 354</td>
<td>33 058</td>
<td>36 374</td>
<td>40 435</td>
<td>39 931</td>
<td>42 098</td>
<td>44 755</td>
<td>42 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>559</td>
<td>513</td>
<td>4 929</td>
<td>4 501</td>
<td>4 501</td>
<td>4 500</td>
<td>4 499</td>
<td>8 500</td>
<td>9 487</td>
<td>8 500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child</td>
<td>2 162</td>
<td>2 681</td>
<td>2 662</td>
<td>2 491</td>
<td>2 547</td>
<td>3 008</td>
<td>3 062</td>
<td>3 238</td>
<td>3 544</td>
<td>3 300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Family</td>
<td>2 021</td>
<td>2 524</td>
<td>2 284</td>
<td>1 686</td>
<td>1 869</td>
<td>2 136</td>
<td>2 378</td>
<td>2 530</td>
<td>2 468</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Family Stream</td>
<td>38 082</td>
<td>40 794</td>
<td>42 229</td>
<td>41 736</td>
<td>45 291</td>
<td>50 079</td>
<td>49 870</td>
<td>56 366</td>
<td>60 254</td>
<td>54 550</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 2010-11 planning levels


7 In this category families commit to financially support the applicant and any accompanying family members, who are not eligible to receive government social security support.
This majority of the material covered in this review relates to partner and dependent child migration because the larger research project is based on a survey of people in these categories only.

As well as via the Family stream, family migrants enter Australia as part of the Skilled and Humanitarian streams. The Skill stream accounts for approximately two-thirds of migration program places. It is designed for migrants who have skills or outstanding abilities that will contribute to the Australian economy. Skilled migration is intended to address skill shortages in Australia and enhances the size and skill level of the Australian labour force. When Skilled migrants arrive with family, these secondary migrants are counted in the Skill stream. In 1997, the immediate family members of accepted refugees and other Humanitarian entrants were merged into the Humanitarian stream, rather than the Family stream (DIAC 1998). The use of family reunion is not evenly distributed across migrant groups. People who migrate to Australia in Humanitarian visa categories are more likely to sponsor family members than other migrants (Khoo 2003).

Figure 1: Primary and secondary applicant arrivals by migration stream

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8 For the purposes of this review, secondary migrants are referred to as family migrants (although they are not in the family stream).
Figure 1 shows the numbers of arriving primary and secondary visa holders by migration stream from 2000-01 to 2010–11. In the Family stream, where the majority of applicants are for the partner of an Australian resident, there are relatively few secondary applicants. In the Skill stream, primary applicants are more likely than not to be in an established family. DIAC’s Continuous Survey of Australia’s Migrants (CSAM) shows that three out of ten Skill migrants migrate with their partners and children. Two out of ten Skill migrants come with a partner but no children. In 2009–10, 57 per cent of Skill stream places went to the partners and dependents of primary applicants.

Family migrant profiles

The following sections profile the age, gender and other characteristics of family migrants, as well as introducing recent scholarship on family migration.

The term ‘family’ is hard to define. Its meaning differs historically and across cultures. Families are dynamic and change across the life cycle through separation, divorce, repartnering and death (McDonald 2003). Children age, become independent or commence families of their own. Families can be social as well as biological. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2008 definition includes the following family household types:

- couples with or without co-resident children of any age
- lone parents with co-resident children of any age, or
- other families of related adults, such as brothers or sisters living together, where no couple or parent-child relationship exists.

Most Australians would also consider relatives, like parents, who live in separate houses to be members of their families (McDonald 2003).

Some cultures define family more broadly than Anglo-Australians usually do. According to participants in McDonald-Wilmsen and Gifford’s interviews and focus groups with Burmese Karen, Afghani and Sudanese families, the refugee experience had reconfigured families by bringing surviving relatives together. Grandparents, polygamous spouses, and the orphaned children of friends and relatives were all considered important parts of the family unit for most research participants (McDonald-Wilmsen and Gifford 2009). In one case reported in the media, Melbourne mother of four, Shamsa Hassan, brought six orphaned children to Australia after the death of her sister in Somalia. Melbourne’s Northern Weekly newspaper quoted Hassan on her relief when the family was reunited:

"When the children were orphaned, they were aged between four and 11. I knew I couldn't abandon them," she said. "I embarked on a very difficult journey that took several years but now we are finally a family." (Northern Weekly, 15 May 2012).

While reuniting families is a key component of family migration, spouse migration is also significant. Birrell (1995) identifies four types of spouse migration based on the different contexts: (1) a ‘boy-meets-girl’ pattern: when the partners meet in the course of overseas travel, study or work; (2) reunification processes in which recent migrants (particularly refugees) sponsor spouses left behind to join them; (3) marriage migration (for former migrants) in which single people return to their country of origin to find a marriage partner; and (4) people who immigrate as children who return to their parents’ country of origin to find a spouse. To update this for the present, it would be possible to add a category for people who meet and decide to have a relationship via internet social networks or similar fora.
Bonifacio has developed a further typology designed to sharpen understandings of marriage migration, identifying four trajectories for Filipina women who become Partner migrants. Some are clients of introduction agencies and others come to Australia on a Skilled or other visa and meet a spouse here. A third group are former workers in the tourist industry in the Philippines who have met Australians visiting there. A final group is made up of students or other professionals who meet Australians working in the Philippines (Bonifacio 2009).

Having explored the definition of family, the following sections are intended to provide a brief overview of family migrants as a group.

**Gender**

More women than men are primary applicants in both the Family stream and Humanitarian program. In the Skill stream men predominate as primary migrants, women are mostly accompanying (secondary) spouses. Overall, the Family stream is 67 per cent female and 33 per cent male (DIAC 2010a). Males occupied the most places in the Interdependency (same-sex couple) visa class, holding 63.2 per cent of visas (DIAC 2008).

In 2009, the Partner subclass replaced the Interdependency visa, a change intended to treat same-sex and opposite sex couples on an equal basis (DIAC 2011d). This means more recent data are not available for this visa category.

**Place of origin**

In the Skill stream secondary applicants are most likely to be sponsored by people born in the UK, Singapore and South Africa. People born in India and China were the least likely to arrive with secondary applicants (ABS 2009). In 2009–10, 17 per cent of migrants in the Family stream came from the People’s Republic of China while the next five most common source countries were the United Kingdom (12 per cent), India (eight per cent), the Philippines, (five per cent) and Vietnam (five per cent) (DIAC 2011d). During the period from 1997 to 2001, same-sex partners were more likely to come from Western countries: the UK and Ireland, together with other European countries and America made up 59 per cent of the total of 755 successful applications (Yue 2008). Asian migrants were also a significant group of same-sex couples (Yue 2008).

Data from the first Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia (LSIA) show there are differences in the country of origin of spouses and fiancés sponsored by native-born and overseas-born Australians (Khoo 1997, 2001). Most spouses sponsored by Australia-born men and overseas-born men and women came from Asian countries. Australia-born women tended to sponsor partners from the UK and Ireland. A large proportion of spouses sponsored by Australia-born women were from Middle Eastern countries (Khoo 2001).

In 2007–08, 20 per cent of arrivals in the Humanitarian stream were born in Myanmar, of whom 56 per cent were secondary applicants. Humanitarian visa primary applicants born in Iraq and Afghanistan were accompanied by a larger proportion of dependants compared with those born in other places. Almost three-quarters (72 per cent) of Humanitarian arrivals born in Iraq were secondary applicants, as were 74 per cent of Humanitarian arrivals born in Afghanistan. Thailand and Tanzania had a major proportion of secondary applicants (94 per cent and 96 per cent respectively).

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9 Research notes from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) suggest some data issues apply to secondary applicants in the Humanitarian stream. For Humanitarian entrants, the ABS (2009) notes children may be recorded as being born in countries that do not reflect their nationality. For example, if a child’s Burmese parents had lived for some years in a refugee camp in Thailand, he or she would be recorded as having Thai nationality rather than Burmese.
Age

Both Family and Skill stream migrants have a median age of 31 years. The median age of female Family migrants in 2009 was 30, and for male migrants 34 years (DIAC 2010b). Most (83 per cent) primary applicants in the Prospective Marriage visa category were aged between 20 and 39 years (DIAC 2008).

The median age of the primary and secondary applicant combined in the Humanitarian intake over the 2003–2009 period was 20 years compared with a median age of 42.9 in the Australian population. As well as being younger than most Australians, Humanitarian entrants are also younger than the total immigration intake. Young adults aged 15–24 were overrepresented compared with all immigrants, while the middle and older working age groups (25-49) were significantly underrepresented (Refugee Council of Australia 2010).

Qualifications

According to the 2007 Characteristics of Recent Migrants (CoRMS) survey, across all visa streams secondary applicants over the age of 20 were likely to hold a post-school qualification. Fifty-three per cent of secondary applicants had a post-school qualification compared with 64 per cent of primary applicants. While secondary migrants in the Skill stream are stereotypically seen as ‘trailing spouses’ they are often highly qualified and seeking work in their fields (Hawthorne 2011). In some industries, taking the qualifications of spouses into account almost doubles the number of entrants with that skill set and experience. In her analysis of the General Skilled Migration category (as opposed to employer sponsored migration), Hawthorne found that this significantly boosted arrival numbers in many occupations. Taking only primary applicants into account, between 2004–05 and 2008–09, it would appear that only 1489 medical practitioners entered Australia. If Spouses are included, then the number of medical practitioners rises to 2593. Some 4938 teacher or lecturer Skilled arrivals were reported as coming during this period, but there were actually 8697 entrants in total once spouses were taken into account. More managers or administrators who arrived in the Skill stream were secondary applicants than primary applicants (Hawthorne 2011).

In fields dominated by one gender Hawthorne’s results were more modest. For nurses, only 1276 fellow nurse spouses added to 6400 primary applicants, while only 374 extra engineer spouses could be added to 11 167 primary applicants (Hawthorne 2011). As the skills of secondary migrants in the Skilled category are not tested before arrival, little data is collected about their qualifications before they enter Australia (Hawthorne 2008). This is problematic in terms of Australian society being able to make the most of secondary migrants’ skills and qualifications.

Skilled migrants are offered five extra points on Australia’s points test for having a highly qualified partner—but this is relatively modest since the total number of points possible is 100. Those five points are allocated on the basis of the spouse’s age, English ability, recognised qualifications and experience.

Some Family and Humanitarian migrants are highly qualified and are indistinguishable from Skill stream entrants—coming to Australia in those streams while being fully qualified medical practitioners, for example (Hawthorne 2011).

Family stream entrants are more likely to have tertiary qualifications than the average Australian, but are less qualified than Skill stream entrants. One-third of Family entrants hold a bachelor degree or higher qualification compared to 23 per cent of Australians aged 15 to 64 (DIAC 2010b). A 1998 survey by the Gay Immigration Task Force found 60 per cent of same-sex visa applicants had postgraduate level education (Yue 2008).

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10 However, this comparison may not be an accurate reflection of the difference since the Australian figures include people aged 15–20 who would be unlikely to have obtained a bachelor degree. People aged 55–64 are less likely to have tertiary qualifications than people in the younger age groups.
Having briefly provided a demographic overview of the characteristics of family migrants, the following sections consider the contributions family migrants make to their families, the wider community and the workforce.

Contributions of family migration

Family migrants contribute socially and economically in three important spheres: within their families\(^1\), the wider Australian community and the Australian economy through paid work. These areas are discussed in turn below.

Methodologically, this section relies heavily on small qualitative studies. Many researchers have judged this method the most appropriate for understanding the nuances of migrants' personal experiences. Some of the following findings are unsurprising, such as the research showing that migrants often turn to their spouses for support. Yet in order to make an accurate judgement about whether migrants' settlement is aided by the presence of family members, it is necessary to consider the daily life experiences reported in qualitative studies. It is important to document the benefits and interdependencies in migrant family relationships in order to analyse whether different outcomes occur for migrants who are either together with or separated from their families.

Support in families

Families have an impact on the way migrants live and work in their receiving societies. Migrants’ families are an important resource, supporting members to adjust and settle into their new environment.

The forms of support family members give each other have rarely been explored in the migration literature, perhaps because they are considered self-evident or natural, or because Australia's migration program has historically favoured the permanent migration of whole families. Even in-depth case study research on migrant families rarely touches on the support offered by family members to each other in a way that facilitates settlement. Key texts on migrant families in Australia emphasise how extended families help new arrivals (for example, Nguyen and Ho, 1995 and Soriano 1995) without similarly explicit chapters on how migrant family members provide assistance for each other. This pattern could also relate to the assumption that family support cannot be quantified since it is expected to be given altruistically.

The types of support provided by family members include financial (sharing money), physical (providing care or assistance), emotional (sharing love, understanding and counsel), legal (occupying positions of guardianship) and spiritual (performing religious duties) (McDonald 1995 cited in Batrouney and Stone 1998). Referring to South American migrants living in Australia, Amezquita, Amezquita and Vittorino make a distinction between the family support that takes place in wealthy families compared to poor families (1995). They suggest that for wealthy families support means helping to maintain the family's political and financial status, for example by building a business together. For poor families support is more directed at basic needs, such as exchanging services like child care or exchanging food.

Migration almost always has an impact upon family groups rather than individuals. Even migrants physically separated from their families are still linked into transnational networks of care, support and communication. The ‘autonomous migrant’ does not really exist (Walton-Roberts 2003 cited in Creese, Dyck and McLaren 2006 p. 25).

\(^1\) Family migrants also make substantial financial contributions to their families overseas through remittances, but such contributions fall outside the scope of this review.
The quality of family life is important. In her research concerning wealthy Business Migrant families, Haour-Knipe (2001) found that supportive family units assisted people relocating from the United States to Europe. Family members were better able to cope with isolation and culture-shock when they had good relationships with each other compared to other families where relationships were not as good.

The importance of having family and extended family obviously differs for migrants according to age group, culture and individual circumstances. Research findings emphasising the positive outcomes of family reunion do not mean that single migrants are less able to settle. Instead, they show that for migrants with families, unity rather than involuntary separation facilitates the best outcomes. In some cultural contexts, spouses with children may voluntarily accept or prefer temporary separation so that extended family can continue to help with child care outside Australia while one partner comes here for work or study.

Families help migrants integrate into the new society, avoiding isolation and its social and psychological consequences. In a longitudinal study of migrant families in Canada, Creese et al. (2006) found that families sustain and develop the human, social and cultural capital of immigrants. Migrants living with other family members were able to adopt flexible household strategies to cope with the challenges of migration. For example, household support enabled migrants to pursue long-term plans, including study, training and re-skilling ‘with some assurance that their daily livelihood was somewhat secure’ (Creese et al. 2006, p. 25). The authors contend that immigrant households are not a burden on the migration system but a lynchpin of successful integration.

Family support is especially important to migrants of non-English-speaking background with limited social networks outside the home. Results from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics Australia (HILDA) survey show 43 per cent of people from non-English-speaking countries report poor social networks persisting over three years, compared with 28 per cent of people across Australia generally (Wilkins, Warren, Hahn and Houng 2010, p. 93). Family is an important factor in helping migrants to settle, since networks in the wider community may be limited, at least at first.

Spouses are a particularly important source of support for migrants, even slightly more so than for Australian people. Using data from the Australian Life Course Survey (ALCS), work by Batrouney and Stone documented the importance of the spouse and immediate family, as opposed to outside-the-home contacts, for both Australia-born people and migrants. When respondents were asked who they would turn to for emotional support, far more people across all categories said they would confide in spouses than other relations. Of those born in Australia with Australia-born parents, 58 per cent would confide in a spouse, as would 61 per cent of people born overseas in a non-English-speaking country. Similar percentages were found where respondents were asked to whom they would turn if they became ill or faced an emergency (Batrouney and Stone 1998).

Migrant families provide information as well as support. A Canadian study based on ethnographic interviews with immigration officials, migrants and their families showed that even when migrants had access to official information, family and friends in Canada remained important sources of social support by providing information and advice (Simich, Beiser and Mawani 2003). Migrants found family advice especially useful when official channels proved difficult to access. Family and friends helped to protect and clarify migrants’ legal rights and met needs that government services found difficult to meet because more intimate ties brought familiarity and personalised understanding (Simich et al. 2003).

12 The HILDA survey is a large, longitudinal panel study funded by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA). The survey commenced in 2001, with a new wave every year since then.
13 In this study, a ‘poor social network’ was defined by the aggregation of several questions designed to measure social support, such as whether the participant felt he or she could get help from other people.
14 The ALCS was a national random telephone survey of 2685 adults conducted by the Australian Institute of Family Studies during the final part of 1996, and an additional 63 respondents surveyed via a translator in early 1997.
There has been little research on the support migrant children provide to their parents during the settlement process. A small Irish focus group study of family reunion migrants offers some evidence (Kenny 2009). Kenny found children quickly learned about the Irish culture and language. They then provided support in many situations, such as by re-telling stories that were difficult for parents to understand. Children also provided practical help, such as by negotiating with real estate agents. Participants believed they were better able to meet people and make friends through their children’s social activities. The contributions were especially useful to families during the difficult first few months of settlement in Ireland.

A larger mixed methods study in the United States found that children regularly provided translating and interpreting services for their migrant parents (Orellana 2003). Children translated words, letters and phone calls, legal documents and bank statements. Children actively participated in encounters with authorities, negotiating absences with parents’ employers when the parents were sick and explaining tenancy issues to landlords. The children were aware of power differences between their families and the outside world and sought to protect their families' reputations. Children helped families survive by helping them to access resources (Orellana 2003). DIAC funds translating and interpreting services for new migrants in Australia but nevertheless, the broader picture of children supporting families through their language skills is likely to hold true in the Australian context.15

A New Zealand study of adult children, and the immigrant parents they had sponsored to live in New Zealand, distinguished between social, emotional, functional, cultural and financial support. Based on nearly 2000 in-depth interviews, the study found that the sponsored mothers provided functional support through child care or housekeeping assistance such as cooking, which enabled sponsors to enjoy more leisure time and reduce their stress levels. Sponsored fathers provided home handyman assistance. Grandparents’ provision of child care meant adult children were able to work rather than using leave entitlements to care for sick children. Both the sponsor and their partner were able to work, rather than one staying home. Sponsored parents also provided support for the continuation of cultural practices, such as by telling grandchildren about their culture. They provided financial support through assistance with daily living expenses, emergency finance and housing costs (NZIS 1999). A series of focus groups conducted by Walton-Roberts in Canada with European and non-European migrant families also confirmed the important role played by grandparents in enabling the increased participation of women in the labour market (2005).

Having explored how migrant families operate in terms of social support, the following sections look at the contributions family migrants make in terms of their civic and community activities.

Contributions to the community

The community sphere is an important space in which family migrants exercise and develop citizenship. Women’s and marginalised groups’ political participation may not take the form of the formal political engagement traditionally understood as citizenship: it may be more informal in nature.

In 2010 the Refugee Council of Australia reviewed the economic, social and civic contributions of Humanitarian and Refugee migrants (DIAC and Refugee Council of Australia 2010c). The review found limited research focusing specifically on volunteering among people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, but noted it was widespread and that as community volunteers these people provide the greater part of their services to benefiting mainstream society rather than their own ethnic group.

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Carrington, McIntosh and Walmsley (2007) found that migrants spent more time than Australia-born people undertaking informal voluntary activities, such as helping family and friends. As one example, case study research with Hong Kong women living in Sydney with their children, joined friends and family in charity work such as serving meals to older people (Pe-Pua, Mitchell, Iredale and Castles 1996).

Filipino women comprise one of the largest subgroups among partner and prospective partner migrants to Australia. Roces (2003) suggests the contributions of these women have not been studied extensively because they have been perceived as ‘brides’ rather than as individuals participating in social, economic and civic spheres. Roces’ suggestion supports Kofman’s theory that the contributions of family migrants are sometimes overlooked as a research subject because it is assume their activities take place only in the domestic sphere (2004).

The literature reflects keen research interest in the ways that Filipino women contribute to Australian society, particularly through community groups (Bonifacio 2009). Through thirty interviews with community leaders and women who attended the groups, Bonifacio learned how these groups, run by the women themselves, support new arrivals and established migrants by providing advice, information about legal rights, work training and a place to socialise with others of the same background. These groups often participated in activities outside the Filipino community, such as volunteering with the 2000 Sydney Olympics, and participating in local community festivals. During Bonifacio’s fieldwork with community members and leaders in the early 2000s, thirty-seven Filipino groups and associations were operating in Western Sydney alone (2009).

Another 2003 study of Filipino marriage migrants living in Mt Isa, a remote mining town in Queensland, found many of these women were making extensive social and economic contributions to the local community (Roces 2003). Their social contributions were eclectic and included singing in the local church choir, dancing at multicultural events and helping with political activities such as fund raising. Most of the women also undertook paid work in industries ranging from hospitality and retail, to professional nursing and social work. Together, these studies show that through community work, family migrants not only exercise their own citizenship but support and empower newer arrivals to acquire self confidence, useful knowledge and resources for participating in Australian society (Bonifacio 2009).

### Paid work

Migrants increasingly integrate in the labour market, the longer they spend in Australia. For example, Partners initially earn less than the Australian average but their incomes rise to approach the Australian average after four years in Australia (DIAC 2011c p. 8). Research into the specific contributions of family migrants has been hampered by the scarcity of data that distinguish the different migrant visa types. Furthermore, previous studies have tended to concentrate on main wage earners, with secondary earners appearing usually as ‘shadowy figures’ (Creese et al. 2006, p. 3).

Two DIAC surveys which provide disaggregated visa data are the Continuous Survey of Australia’s Migrants (CSAM) and the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia (LSIA). Among Family stream migrants interviewed in the first CSAM in 2009, 28 per cent were employed full-time, 18 per cent worked part-time, 19 per cent were unemployed and 35 per cent were not in the labour force (see Table 2). These results capture

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16 The study used ABS data, which did not distinguish visa category, to assess the social costs and benefits of migration. The authors noted the methodological challenges of assessing social impacts, as opposed to economic impacts.

17 The Continuous Survey of Australia’s Migrants (CSAM) commenced in September 2009 to monitor the outcomes of recent migrants to Australia from the Skilled and Family streams. Each cohort is surveyed around six months after arrival (or after grant of a visa granted in Australia), and again six months later. The 2010 and 2011 results have not yet been released.

18 The Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia (LSIA) provides data on the outcomes of three migrant groups, those who arrived in Australia: (a) between September 1993 and August 1995; (b) between September 1999 and August 2000; and (c) between December 2004 and March 2005, including those granted a permanent visa in Australia in this period.
outcomes during a period of global recession. Also, the interviews took place at the beginning of the settlement process — six months after the migrant arrived in Australia or a permanent visa was granted to an onshore applicant. The interviewees include a small proportion of Family stream migrants who were not Partners and 11 per cent who were aged 55 years or more (DIAC 2010b). Family migrants are employed in a wide range of occupations in Australia (Table 2).

**Table 2: Employment and occupation outcomes by migrant type**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment outcome</th>
<th>Family stream migrants</th>
<th>Skill stream migrants</th>
<th>Partners of Skill stream migrants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working full-time</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working part-time</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not in the labour force</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managers</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionals</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tradespersons</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Clerical</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate Clerical, Sales &amp; Service Workers</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate Production &amp; Transport Workers</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary Clerical</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labourers &amp; Related Workers</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


CSAM data indicate that six months after arrival, the partners of Skill stream migrants have slightly better employment outcomes than Family stream migrants. At this stage, 35 per cent of the partners of Skill stream migrants were working full-time, 27 per cent were working part-time, 12 per cent were unemployed and 26 per cent were not in the labour market. One third of Skill stream partners were managers, administrators or professionals, while just 7 per cent were in labouring occupations (see Table 2).

Analysis of LSIA data shows that primary applicant migrants (including Skilled and Family) have a higher labour force participation rate and a lower unemployment rate than their accompanying partner migrants (Cobb-Clark 2006, Le 2006). Women who were primary migrants were 13 percentage points more likely to be employed 18 months after migration than female secondary migrants. Male primary migrants were seven percentage points more likely to be employed than male secondary migrants (Cobb-Clark 2006). Female secondary migrants were less likely to be in the labour force than primary migrants before migration, and family constraints were more likely to discourage them from entering the labour market after (Le 2006).

Cobb-Clark and Connolly (2001) found that spouses not employed before migrating worked fewer hours in Australia than spouses who had worked beforehand. The hours worked by spouses increased with age. Spouses, both male and female, from the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia worked significantly fewer
hours than their European counterparts, which the authors suggested may reflect cultural attitudes toward work or discrimination in the Australian labour market. The work hours of both male and female spouses were positively related to their partner’s hours of work, but declined as their partner’s income increased.

Family stream

Partners have better labour market outcomes than other Family stream migrants. Eighty-eight per cent of Partner visa holders surveyed in 2009 were in the labour market compared with 65 per cent of all Family stream migrants. Their unemployment rate was 9 per cent (DIAC 2011c, p. 5). These figures may be quite volatile, however, as LSIA data for earlier migrant cohorts show lower participation and higher unemployment rates for Partners across their first four years of settlement: approximately 70 per cent labour force participation and 20 per cent unemployment on average (DIAC 2011c, p. 7).

DIAC has attempted to quantify the impact of migrants’ employment using economic modelling. The migrants’ fiscal impact model\(^\text{19}\) indicates that overall, as a group, Family stream categories make a substantial fiscal contribution to the Federal Budget each year, varying from $195.4 million in the first year to a low of $40.4 million in Year 3 and $166.4 million in Year 20. The figures relate to all migrants, not an estimate per 1000. The low in year three is because migrants become eligible for social services after the two-year waiting period for permanent Partner visas.

Within the Family stream, the contribution of Partners reflects their solid labour market outcomes. Partners contribute negatively ($17.9 million) in the first year, then positively from Year 2 (+$81.9 million) through to Year 20 (+$257.8 million) (DIAC 2011c, p. 11). This result is notable given family reunion migrants are not assessed on important labour market readiness factors such as skills and English proficiency. These statistics are based on estimating the contributions of all migrants arriving in the 2009–10 financial year.

The incomes Partners earn are solid, and labour force participation grows over time. Their tax revenue also tends to grow strongly, reflecting a significant increase in labour market participation over time as well as good growth in incomes for those employed. This category also has a very low rate of attrition, in terms of the number of new migrants who subsequently decide to leave Australia


Skilled secondary applicants

Skilled migration primary applicants make a greater contribution to the Australian economy than do Family stream migrants (DIAC 2011c, p. 11). Primary Skilled applicants have lower unemployment (5 per cent) and higher labour force participation (95 per cent) than other migrant categories, including secondary Skilled applicants (see Table 2).

Reasons for the solid employment outcomes among partners of Skilled migrants have not been empirically explored, but one explanation is that ‘like attracts like’ — as discussed earlier in the section reporting Hawthorne’s work on the significant boost to the numbers of medical professionals and teachers provided by secondary migrants. Thus one professional is likely to marry another professional, and the partner of the primary applicant is likely to have a similar level of skills, effectively offering Australia two Skilled migrants ‘for the price of one’ (DIAC 2010b pp. 4–5). Consistent with this view, analysis of LSIA data shows a positive relationship between the hours worked by each partner, indicating that primary applicants able to find working

\(^{19}\) Fiscal contributions are based on modeling which compares tax revenue with estimated government spending. Survey data on migrants’ incomes are used to estimate the tax contributed to the federal Budget. Data on migrant outlays are sourced from Annual Reports and Portfolio Budget Statements across all government departments.
opportunities in Australia also had spouses who were more likely to find work (Cobb-Clark and Connolly 2001, p. 807).

The net fiscal contribution made by the partners of Skill stream migrants has not been quantified. Their labour market outcomes would suggest they make a positive contribution which is at least comparable to, probably greater than, partners in the Family stream.

Findings from the CoRMS in 2007 show primary Skilled migrants find work in Australia a little more quickly than their partners. Thirty per cent of primary Skill stream migrants in the survey found a job within a month, and nearly half obtained a job within three months, compared with 12 per cent and 24 per cent, respectively, for secondary Skill stream migrants (ABS 2009).

Little is known about secondary migrants’ earnings relative to primary applicants. Case study evidence suggests that secondary migrants’ earnings are likely to be lower, but their work is nevertheless important to their families. For example, Nepalese women in professional families in Australia earned considerably less than their husbands, but their income enabled the family unit to afford the high cost of housing in Australia and otherwise made a significant contribution to household income (Dhungel 1999).

**Humanitarian**

The Budget contribution made by the Humanitarian Program category as a whole is negative for the first 12 years, since labour force participation is very low initially and there is considerable use of government services. To a large extent this reflects the young age of Humanitarian entrants, as well as the potential for Humanitarian entrants to have had their careers and schooling disrupted by living in refugee camps or places where there is war. After year 12, the per capita contribution made by Humanitarian entrants is positive but remains lower than all other categories except for Parents in the Family stream (Access Economics 2008, p. 25). The net fiscal contribution made by the partners of Humanitarian entrants has not been quantified. When other factors were controlled, spouses of Humanitarian entrants worked significantly fewer hours than spouses in the other visa categories (Cobb-Clark and Connolly 2001).

**Children**

The children of migrants are strong contributors to the Australian labour market as they age. As tax payers, they will support the older generations. Migrant children in all visa categories offer an economic return to the wider society although they represent an initial cost to their parents (and the federal Budget). A literature review into the civic, social and environmental contributions of Humanitarian migrants, commissioned by DIAC, found that children of migrants from Poland and Hungary (major source countries for refugees after World War II) were more likely than third generation Australians to have a university degree or diploma, to own or be purchasing their own home, and to work in a professional or managerial position. Researchers have found similar outcomes for the children of Vietnamese refugees (DIAC 2010b).

**Factors affecting the scope and size of contributions**

Various factors limit or configure family migrants’ paid work and social contributions to Australia, and their integration into the labour market and community. As Collins (1993) points out, settlement outcomes relate to the economic and social structures of the destination country as well as migrants’ skills and personal characteristics. Many external factors influence migrants’ lives, including family migration policies, workplaces and labour market opportunities, government administration and social institutions (Strasser et al. 2009). Other important factors include local unemployment rates, family members’ attitudes to partners working, the common work and family struggles faced by most Australian families and exacerbated by a lack of family
support, and experiences of racism or prejudice. These factors do not impact evenly across the diverse range of migrant families (Alcorso 1989).

Smith (2004) argues it is important for scholars to acknowledge the effects of economic, social and political processes in evaluating migrants' post migration outcomes (p. 278).

To take the specific example of work, migrant unemployment is linked to structural conditions in the Australian economy as well as the human capital they have brought with them or acquired locally (Collins 1997). In some ethnic communities unemployment rates have been linked to a lack of culturally sensitive employment, training, translation and interpreting services (Burnley 2003). Migrant labour force participation and employment outcomes vary considerably according to migration category, English language proficiency, gender and country of origin. Unemployment rates for those who migrate as refugees are much higher than for those in Skilled and Family categories, regardless of length of residence (Khoo et al 2008, p. 115). With this in mind, some of the factors that limit or configure family migrants' contributions are discussed here.

Gender and feminisation

Although the importance of gender is emphasised by feminist migration research, it is surprisingly absent from many of the mainstream sociological studies reviewed here. Some of them do not even mention the gender of participants (Curran et al. 2006). In some studies (such as the third wave of LSIA) only primary applicants were interviewed, leading to an over-representation of male respondents in the Skilled category and an under-representation of men in the Family category.

Nevertheless, feminist scholarship on gender and migration finds that social and employment outcomes are different for migrant women compared to men, especially women with dependent children. As 75 per cent of people in the Family stream and a majority of accompanying Skilled and Humanitarian stream spouses are women, gender issues are highly relevant to this literature review. Unfortunately, much of this literature is dated as research examining gender and migration peaked in popularity in the early 2000s and then became more infrequent.

Cobb-Clark and Connolly (2001) identified two theoretical approaches to understanding family migration: the concept of ‘tied movers’ and the family investment model. The term ‘tied movers’ (Mincer in 1978) refers to women who agree to move even when they would experience a negative return on their decision to migrate. This theory hypothesises that they do so because the benefit to their spouse would be so high as to make the return for the whole family an overall positive.

In contrast, the family investment model (first used by Long in 1980) proposes that immigrant wives actually work more than other women in order to facilitate the development of their husbands’ country-specific human capital, while neglecting their own. This theory receives only limited support when viewed from the Australian experience, where migrant women tend to work less rather than more than Australia-born women (Ho 2008). Ho (2008) suggests that the Australian migration experience supports Mincer’s model.

One of the issues for migrant women is that they are entering a society in which women are overall less likely to do paid work than men. In Australia, women’s labour force participation, at 59 per cent, is below that of comparable countries such as the United Kingdom and Canada (FaHCSIA 2009). For women with children, labour market contributions are configured by access to child care or its lack. Female spouses have been found to work fewer hours than males and the presence of children under the age of two has a strong negative effect on the labour force participation of women (Cobb-Clark and Connolly 2001).

Migrants with children face intense work and family dilemmas because they lack the wider social and family network of established residents. Creese et al. (2006) found a lack of extended family support affected the way new migrant couples could integrate socially and also into the Canadian labour market. These couples had difficulty finding child care during the hours when they were working or attending training programs.
Couples were limited in their ability to socialise together because they had no-one available to look after children in the evening. While Australian couples are undoubtedly in a similar position, the issue is different for them because they already have existing social networks. These work and family dilemmas have a particular impact on women. In her study of Nepalese professional families, Dhungel (1999) found all but two women partners waited for their husbands to find work before they could start work or study. This was linked to the lack of stability prior to the husband finding a job. Afterwards, the couple had found ongoing housing and identified a school or child care placement for their children. Like Australian women, the Chinese women in Ho’s (2008) study confronted difficulties accessing child care. They were not able to work long hours in Australia as they had in China.

Downward occupational mobility is another hazard for migrant women, again particularly those with children. Ho identifies a ‘feminisation’ process that occurs after migration. Migrant women’s double burden is that they confront the challenges of moving countries and escalating family responsibilities without their previous access to domestic support, such as paid workers and extended family (Ho 2008). Women become ‘feminised’: after migration, they perform more traditionally feminine duties, rather than the paid work they had undertaken in their countries of origin.

Where they do perform paid work, it may be in a field that does not fit their existing skills. The women in Dhungel’s case study were more likely than their male partners to retrain in Australia. Of the 14 Nepalese professional families living in Australia, all of the female partners had undertaken retraining in Australia. Even though all had arrived with tertiary qualifications, including Master and PhD degrees, every woman had retrained in other areas. This was linked to difficulty having their skills recognised in Australia. Former professionals like teachers found work in areas such as (?) hospitality and child care (Dhungel 1999).

Ho’s (2008) study suggests that women migrants are disadvantaged in the Australian labour market because they lack local qualifications. Ho measured downward mobility by comparing the work the participants undertook in Australia with their previous work in Hong Kong or mainland China. Despite many of her participants being strongly focused on their careers in their home countries, a majority experienced downward mobility in the Australian labour market. Typical of her sample of 44 women, a participant who had been an accountant was employed as a factory worker, while a university lecturer became a high school teacher. The participants who did experience upward mobility had usually completed their qualifications in Australia.

De-skilling has also been observed among partners in families interviewed by Creese et al. (2006) in Canada. While the women were actively seeking further training, they were currently employed in occupations with lower skill requirements than the work undertaken in their home countries.

In four case studies of Taiwanese women living in Australia and New Zealand, Chiang (2004) found more evidence that labour market exclusion led to the women becoming full-time homemakers although they would have preferred to work in their fields. The women in Chiang’s study had turned to volunteer rather than paid work, contributing to the Australian community in this way. Pittaway (2004, p. 30) has found that female refugees in Australia are far more likely than males to stay in the home. They are also less likely to access English classes, employment and settlement services, including housing, training and health care.

Not all evidence identifies heavy de-skilling among secondary migrants to Australia. The 2007 CoRMS found a small proportion of migrants had experienced a reduction in occupational status in Australia. For example, 26 per cent of primary migrants and 18 per cent of secondary migrants had worked as professionals before arriving in Australia, while 22 per cent of primary migrants and 13 per cent of secondary migrants found professional work once they arrived (ABS 2007). These results may mask the extent of de-skilling among some ethnic groups because they include migrants from the United Kingdom and other English-speaking countries, who can more easily transition to the Australian labour market and have historically experienced excellent labour market outcomes.
International research findings support the feminisation thesis. Women interviewed by Creese et al. (1999) in Canada said they could do less work because they had become solely responsible for child care, whereas in their country of origin this was shared among extended family. This prevented women from becoming involved in the community and the labour market.

Women tended to help family members rather than themselves. Education and employment for other family members became ‘family projects in which women... play a central role while their own needs were neglected’ (Creese et al. 1999). Strasser et al.’s (2009) European study noted female migrants, especially, often experienced a lack of freedom and social life as they could no longer depend on friends or family for child care.

Stereotypes of immigrant women (in particular) as dependent and/or unemployable may make it difficult for them to find employment (Creese et al. 1999). Women who had formerly worked in careers such as engineering (seen as unremarkable for Chinese women) encountered scepticism and discrimination when they apply for jobs in Australia. Women from Hong Kong thought Australia had pronounced gender inequality compared to their home country (Ho 2008). The nuclear family model common in Australian society can be problematic for refugees from countries with traditionally very different family structures. In Dhungel’s (1999) case study, most of the Nepalese couple families had to adapt to the loss of regular assistance and support from relatives because they had moved from three-generation extended families to nuclear families upon migration. Female refugees in New Zealand report that looking after children makes work and learning English more difficult (NZIS 2004).

Family separation

Family separation is another key issue that configures the contributions of family migrants. In qualitative research with Somali women living in Melbourne, participants emphasised the importance of extended family in Somalia and the support it had provided to them. Because their family was not with them, they no longer had support to help with daily matters such as child care. Participants gave a practical example: in Somalia, extensive support was available to women who had just given birth, but in Australia no help was given to them. Without husbands in Australia, women felt they had to be both parents to their children, which they found very stressful (McMichael and Ahmed 2003). In Kenny’s (2009) study of separated refugee families in Ireland, sole parents with spouses overseas experienced profound work and family dilemmas. Participants commented they would have been able to undertake paid work if they had a partner who could help take care of their children. Participants resented not being able to work and having to depend on welfare, saying it made them feel stigmatised and ashamed (Kenny 2009).

Prolonged separation causes significant distress to people who are living involuntarily apart from their families. This can negatively affect migrants’ ability to settle successfully and participate in Australian life. Research on this topic for migrant families comes mainly from advocacy based studies. According to case study research by the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR 2004), the length of separation has a powerful impact on family dynamics and settlement experiences. As well as having to deal with trauma from persecution, refugees being resettled need to adapt to a new language, find a place to live and seek employment. It is harder for them to focus on their own language acquisition, job search or education if they are worried about their families (CCR 2004). Separated couples can lose trust in each other when the processes of migration take a long time, with the person left overseas wondering whether their spouse really does want to be reunited with them.

Research from the UNHCR supports these claims (Jastram and Newland 2003). In their literature review, Jastram and Newland (2003) also found the length of asylum procedures can cause family members to separate. If family members are absent, distress and preoccupation can mean arrivals are less able to fully devote themselves to setting up a new life.
A 2001 discussion paper circulated by the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) suggests these issues also apply to Australia. This discussion paper was based on community consultations and in-depth interviews with refugees held over several years. Family members who had managed to come to Australia were distressed by the thought of close relatives left behind in camps or dangerous countries. Distress affected their ability to concentrate on work and study. This paper provides a useful introduction into the significant issues that refugees and Humanitarian entrants face when seeking family reunion (RCOA 2001).

A study of Hazara Afghan, Sri Lankan and Iraqi men living in Australia on Temporary Protection visas also sheds light on the negative consequences of being without family (Fernandes 2002). These men said worry about their wives and children preoccupied them throughout the day. Sharing stories about family separation often resulted in emotional breakdown in the groups. The negative emotional consequences had an adverse effect on the men’s work and study. Intrusive and frequent thoughts about family led to a lack of concentration during language classes, and sleep difficulties. It was especially troubling for men to be physically safe knowing their wives and children lived in constant danger. Common sights like food in supermarkets made the men feel guilty because they knew their children may not have had enough food to eat. Most of these men had not been able to contact their families for over a year.

**English language proficiency**

Language proficiency influences non-English-speaking background migrants’ capacity to interact with the host society and find employment in skilled occupations (Carrington et al. 2003, p. 30). Most family migrants do speak English well. More than 70 per cent of Family stream migrants rate their spoken English as good or very good (DIAC 2010b, p. 2). For those who do not, lack of English language skills act as a barrier to employment. Many permanent visa holders over 18 years old are eligible to 510 hours of English language training under the Adult Migrant English Program, however, partners holding temporary or provisional visas (such as those in the waiting period for a permanent Partner visa) are not—so findings about English language proficiency are especially relevant to them.

Analysis of the 2007 CoRMS found that among recently arrived migrants, primary applicants report stronger English proficiency than secondary applicants. For example, 50 per cent of primary migrants said they mainly spoke English at home, compared to 44 per cent of secondary applicants. Six per cent of primary applicants said they did not speak English, compared to 11 per cent of secondary applicants (ABS 2007).

In their study of the labour market behaviour of immigrant spouses, Cobb-Clark and Connolly (2001) found spouses20 were most likely to be in the labour market if they had strong English skills. Women who spoke English ‘well’ worked 2.4 fewer hours per week than those who spoke English ‘only’ or ‘best’. Women who spoke English ‘badly’ worked three fewer hours per week. This was primarily because such women were less likely to actually work, rather than working fewer hours. For male spouses, this effect was even larger—7.4 and 9.8 hours respectively (Cobb-Clark and Connolly 2001). As a group, Skilled migrants from non-English-speaking countries have lower rates of employment than either Australia-born people or migrants from English-speaking countries (Ho 2008).

Low proficiency in English presents a barrier to participation in education and training and in leisure, cultural and sporting activities (Carrington et al. 2003). In an Australia-wide survey undertaken in 2002, 11 per cent of migrants who were not proficient in English did voluntary work, compared with 26 per cent of migrants who were proficient in English (ABS 2003, p. 29). The ability to communicate with the host community is vital for building cross cultural understanding, social cohesion and social capital networks (Carrington et al. 2003,

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20 Spouses in this study were all secondary applicant spouses within the migrating unit. Primary applicant partners of Australian residents in the Family migration stream were excluded.
This underscores the importance of having accessible and cost-effective migrant language instruction in Australia.

The labour market experiences of people who do not speak English well are in part a reflection of the capacity of employers to recruit people less fluent in English.

**Family violence**

Power dynamics within families are significant for migrant settlement (Creese et al. 2006 p. 25). In some families, supportive processes exist but the benefits are one-sided in favour of members who primarily receive support while providing little themselves. For some immigrant spouses, especially those whose immigration status is dependent on a spouse visa sponsor, violence can have an extremely damaging impact on all parts of settlement on the social and civic contributions family migrants can make.

Few of the sources used in this section differentiate between primary and secondary applicants or provide information about visa class, with the exception of those that mention spouse migrants. No studies on English-speaking background migrants were found, but most of the problems identified relate to a lack of cultural familiarity and English language knowledge. It has been necessary to rely on general sources about non-English speaking background women, and as a result some of the findings may relate equally to women who have been primary applicants on Skilled visas — although a key difference would be that primary applicants could be expected to have more independence through knowledge of, and security in, their immigration status, as well as possibly being in a better position financially.

Findings systematically reviewed across Australian, US and Canadian scholarship suggest that violence in migrant communities is probably no higher than in the native population (Menjivar and Salcido 2002), but its effects can differ where migrants have limited knowledge of Australian laws. Migration produces its own stressors and thus its own unique impact on the violence in relationships. Factors that exacerbate violence in the migration context include limited knowledge of the host country's language, isolation from friends and family, and a lack of other social contacts even where there is extended family.

A final factor identified in the literature is migrants’ cross-national frame of reference. Migrants from countries with few institutions protecting women against violence may not know about options available to them in Australia, such as police intervention and court orders. They may also be less likely to seek help if socialised with values that explicitly place responsibility for violence on women's behaviour (Eastal 2003, Queensland Sexual Assault Services 2010). Migrant women in violent relationships are especially vulnerable due to a relative lack of knowledge about financial and welfare entitlements (Eastal 2003). Many non-English speaking background women fear reporting violence against them if they are dependent on their partners for support, or will be ostracised by their communities or extended family members in Australia (Queensland Sexual Assault Services 2010).

Spouses who depend on their partners for migration status (for example those sponsored for spouse visas) can find this sponsorship used against them as a form of blackmail (Menjivar and Salcido 2002). Some spouses attempt to cancel their former partners’ visa altogether. In one recently publicised legal case reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 2012, a woman (unsuccessfully) contacted the department to seek to have her partner’s visa revoked while he was on holiday overseas, arguing in court that the partner had only lived in Australia to be with her and should therefore not be allowed back in the country after the end of their relationship (Hall 2012). While this case involved an attempt to revoke a visa, it demonstrates how some partners can use immigration status as a tool in attempting to end a relationship.

Women on Provisional Partner visas (Subclass 309 and 820) can be intentionally misinformed about their immigration situation by their sponsoring partner or spouse. Women frequently report that they have been told by a violent or abusive partner that they will be deported if they leave the relationship, or that their children will
lose Australian residency. These lies create fear and confusion and can leave these women believing they have no choice but to stay with their violent partners (Queensland Sexual Assault Services 2010).

In the early 1990s Australia introduced laws to allow women sponsored as partners to apply for permanent residency if they leave a violent relationship (Eastal 2003). However, the legal route can be a challenging one for these women who are also required to provide evidence of the abuse, which can be difficult if they have not had the confidence to visit a professional person (such as a doctor) to have their injuries documented (Eastal 2003).

While Menjivar and Salcido's review found no evidence of higher rates of violence among immigrants compared to local populations, some sub-groups of family migrants are in an especially vulnerable position. Female refugees experience higher rates of domestic or family violence than other Australian women (Pittaway 2004). Some marriage migrants are vulnerable because they have been purposely selected by people who believe they will be more servile and compliant.

Advocates recommend that policy makers respond to domestic violence among family migrants through continuing support for community based organisations operating in the same ethnic communities as the violence is occurring (Menjivar and Salcido 2002). This is especially important because mainstream service providers are often ill-equipped to respond to the needs of women from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Queensland Sexual Assault Services 2010). This research by the Queensland Government found that most service providers in the state were unaware of the Telephone Interpreter Service (TIS).

Scholarship on Filipina marriage migrants shows that community groups can help women who find themselves in this position. Bonifacio (2009) found that women used the community sphere to share knowledge of the rights of Australian citizenship and how to leave violent relationships through separation and divorce.

Skills recognition, racism and discrimination

Skilled recognition is a longstanding problem for family migrants as well as non-Family stream primary applicants. In 2005, the Joint Standing Committee on Migration established an inquiry into the difficulties migrants face having their skills recognised in Australia. Following this inquiry, the Joint Standing Committee on Migration maintains an interest in the issues regarding skills recognition.

Even where migrants' skills are officially recognised, they can still face discrimination. DIAC noted in one of its submissions to the Joint Standing Committee on Migration that 'Australian employers… remain skeptical and perhaps risk averse in hiring people with skills from overseas’, noting that 20 per cent of primary Skilled applicants and their spouses were not using their qualifications in their work (Joint Standing Committee on Migration 2006, p. 16). Canadian research supports this view of employers’ attitudes. Creese et al. (2006) found that even tertiary educated migrants with costly International Credential Evaluation Service certificates (a Canadian body which validates overseas credentials for the Canadian labour market) found employers did not respond to their resumés.

Racism and prejudice can have an impact on migrant families' relationships with others, including fellow workers, union officials and employers (Collins 1997). The Australian Human Rights Commission defines racism as ‘an ideology that gives expression to myths about other racial and ethnic groups that devalues and renders inferior those groups, that reflects and is perpetuated by deeply rooted historical, cultural and power inequalities in society’. Racism can be overt or subtle and hard to prove.
Housing

Again in common with other Australians, new migrants’ ability to contribute can be influenced by their ability to find appropriate and convenient housing. This may be especially problematic for larger families or those who have been sponsored to live in Australia. Housing problems can contribute to stress in the family (Queensland Government 2010).

Intergenerational issues

There is an extensive literature on the way the stresses of migration can affect cross-generational tension and be counterproductive in the settlement context. One such stress is the tension created by parents, who have migrated to secure a good future for their children, through very high expectations for their children’s performance at school (Queensland Government 2010). Others include the different rates of acculturation for different family members — particularly children who may learn the language quickly, leading other family members to fear they have lost their culture or that they are not behaving appropriately (Queensland Government 2010). Children’s language proficiency can also lead to a sense of role reversal.

Characteristics of family-related migration networks

Having explored the factors that affect the contributions family migrants make in the community, the family and the workforce, the following section moves towards a different aspect of family migration: the way family relationships intersect with decisions to migrate or with migration networks. Theoretical work on networks attempts to answer the question of why networks are more significant for some migrants than for others.

A theoretical model developed by Müller-Schneider suggests that family unification is used differently by different groups of migrants. He suggests that migrants from Western welfare states are less likely to bring relatives when they migrate than people from developing countries. In this review it was noted above that Humanitarian entrants are the most likely to apply for family reunion.

Despite this, migration networks are not the exclusive preserve of people living in emigration countries. When people living in the West seek marriage partners from their home country, they rely on friends and families and, increasingly, electronic communication such as the internet. Although often constructed as victims, partners also play an active part in the process, seeking marriage and migration as a way out of poverty (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2010).

Birrell (1989) suggests the maturity of immigrant communities has an impact on whether ‘chain migration’ (chains of extended family members following each other to Australia) occurs. He argues that for chain migration to occur family members need to be willing to facilitate the migration of kin, but kin also have to be willing to migrate. Family reunion migration can only occur if there is a recently arrived migrant community. This is because the main categories for family entry are for partners, parents and siblings. Only communities with relatively young people will have relatives at home young enough to migrate also, such as parents who are living and other relatives young enough to be interested in migration and eligible despite age restrictions (Birrell 1989).

The contexts of family migration

Across the international research literature, people migrate for a diverse range of reasons: not just calculations of personal financial gain but also emotional reasons. A study of the context of spouse migration found there were other motivations for family migration besides marriage and reuniting with family (Khoo 1997, 2001). A significant percentage of spouse migrants interviewed in the LSIA said one of the reasons for
their migration was ‘a better future for the family’. For others, particularly those from UK and Canada, Australia’s lifestyle was key deciding factor.

According to the analysis by Massey et al. (1993), migration can be driven by rational calculations of earning potential (neoclassical model), by a family unit's desire to avoid risk (new economics of migration), by demand by employers (dual labour market), by the material and ideological links driven by the penetration of capitalism into developing countries (world systems theory), by the pre-existence of family and community links which evolve into widespread networks, by the enabling migration industry (black market and NGOs), as well as by changes caused by cumulative causation such as changes to agrarian production and the distribution of land (Massey et al. 1993).

Non-economic factors are important drivers of migration. Migrant families interviewed as part of a longitudinal study by Creese et al. (2006) in Canada primarily chose to migrate because they were concerned for their children’s future, rather than their own. This finding explains partly why some migrant families remain in the destination country despite personal occupational deskilling.

Family obligations drive migration for many migrants. In Oishi’s (2002) study of female labour migrants, women chose to move in order to support parents and younger siblings, nieces, nephews and grandparents. Sri Lankan migrants wanted to save for their own dowries so their families did not have to pay for them. Married women were motivated more by the hope of providing for their children's futures. For these migrants, decisions were often an individual choice rather than a strategy agreed to by the family group (Oishi 2002).

Conclusion and further research

This literature review has identified gaps in the current knowledge of the characteristics and contributions of family migration to Australia. By understanding the processes that constrain or enable the participation of family migrants, DIAC can develop policies that support citizenship through awareness of rights, links with others in the community and education. Some of the key gaps are outlined below.

Family is an intrinsic part of human relationships, helping people through the migration and settlement process. At the same time, family migration cannot be uncritically seen as beneficial for all members. Many studies discussed here demonstrate that gendered inequalities in families can be magnified by migration (Roces 2003, Ho 2008).

The unpaid, sometimes informal family or community work performed by family migrants has not been effectively examined in previous Australian migration research. Bonifacio’s research on Filipino community groups in Australia show that activities within particular communities can be important and highly valued conduits for sharing information, help and forming a sense of community, giving support to DIAC’s ongoing strategy of supporting existing community groups through the Settlement Grants Program.

The data collected for immigration purposes has been one obstacle to understanding settlement for family migrants. Migrants tend to be analysed according to their visa class, which tends to conceptually obscure the contributions they make across both paid work and family spheres (Kofman 2004). Studies have usually focused either on work or family but not usually both. With the exception of research such as Dhungel’s (1999) case studies and Piper and Roces’ (2003) compilation of research about women migrants in Asia, few studies have attempted to concurrently draw out the links between work and family for migrants.

The idea that governments should not intervene in ‘private’ cultural practice may be responsible for some of the lack of research interest in family migrants. If problems within families (such as violence or the isolation of some family members) are assumed to be part of migrants' home culture they have imported to Australia, there may be less interest in researching these issues. Where violence is considered to be a private matter and not an appropriate subject of state intervention by migrants themselves as well as by authorities in the
host country, it can be doubly hard to both conduct research and develop appropriate policy responses (Menjivar and Salcido 2002).

Fiscal impacts of family separation

There are a number of possible fiscal impacts of family separation, and they have not attracted much research attention. They include the fiscal costs of new migrants sending money out of Australia to support close relatives overseas where families have not been able to reunify promptly. There may also be costly implications for the mental health system when people are distressed by involuntary separation from their existing partners (especially in the case of Refugee and Humanitarian entrants). There could also be an opportunity cost to Australia if Skilled migrants choose to depart temporarily to live with their family overseas while a visa is processed.

If Humanitarian entrants with family members in Australia remain for long periods in temporary camps where there are significant safety risks (especially for lone women), health costs on arrival as family entrants may be higher than they would have been if the people had come to Australia sooner.

Impact of family on migrant retention

While the effects of family migration are explored in DIAC’s modelling (especially models exploring the fiscal impact of migrants) the risks of not allowing family members to enter Australia have not been similarly quantified.

The relationship between sponsorship of family members for migration and immigrants’ permanent settlement (or return migration decision) has been examined using longitudinal data (Khoo 2003). Migrants who had sponsored or intended to sponsor family members for migration were significantly more likely to be disposed to permanent settlement than those who had not. The relationship between sponsorship of parents and siblings for migration and permanent settlement intention was also stronger for Skilled and Business migrants than for all migrants. Further research could explain this issue in more detail.

Ethnographic studies

There is little detailed and recent ethnographic information about Family stream migrants and the families of Skilled migrants, including their labour market experiences. Smith (2004) recommends using ethnographic data to collect rich insights into human agency and disrupt notions of humans as rational economic actors, as sometimes implied by human capital theories of migration. Such an approach would acknowledge the influence of factors such as the availability of child care and the importance of social networks. An approach attuned to these dimensions of family migration would produce useful findings around the social, cultural and psychological dimensions of migration.

Longitudinal studies

It is difficult to research migration and the family using current Australian data because researchers are unable to link individuals to families unless they have migrated at the same time and on the same application. It is therefore difficult to trace how particular families become separated or reunited as they settle in Australia. The Longitudinal Surveys of Immigrants to Australia collected data only for the first few years of settlement and do not follow migrant families across the life cycle, exploring changes to members’ housing, work and family situations.
The larger project associated with this literature review is not longitudinal, but will produce far more nuanced data for family migrants and will allow DIAC to learn about how families changed in composition up until the time of the survey.

Comparisons with other population groups

Few studies of family migrants in Australia have had a control group made up of Australian residents. Discussions of emotional, economic and financial contributions among migrant family members benefit from reference to norms in Australian society, such as typical rates of labour market participation for men and women. Many studies reviewed here (except those concerned with labour market discrimination and racism) compare one migrant stream to another, rather than comparing migrants to the rest of Australian society.

Studies tend to include either people who want to reunite with their families, or those who have done so. There were few sources exploring the views of people who do not want to migrate with their families. Studies of family migration need to identify migrants who do not seek to bring their families, and their sources of support if they are not from family.

Men as family migrants

Little information is available about men who migrate as accompanying spouses or as applicants in the Family stream (especially spouse and prospective spouse visas, or older dependent children). Smith (2004) recommends questioning gendered assumptions usually held in migration research as they apply to men, such as the idea that male migrants are ‘lead migrants’ who instigate family relocation in order to benefit their own careers (p. 268). Recent changes to family migration patterns worldwide include an increasing number of men arriving on spouse and fiancé visas (Kofman 2004) yet their experiences are rarely addressed in the literature.

In conclusion, research addressing the above gaps in the literature would contribute to the evidence base for further development of family migration policies, and to take into account the benefits family migrants can offer Australia.
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