

## **Book Review of "Outward and Upward Mobilities: International Students in Canada, Their Families, and Structuring Institutions"**

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# BOOK REVIEW

## OUTWARD AND UPWARD MOBILITIES: INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN CANADA, THEIR FAMILIES, AND STRUCTURING INSTITUTIONS

REVIEWED BY

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Kim, Ann H. & Kwak, Min-Jung (Eds.) (2019). *Outward and Upward Mobilities: International Students in Canada, Their Families, and Structuring Institutions*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. Pages: 296. Price: 48.75 CAD (cloth).

The education of international students has become an important part of Canada's economy; in 2015 alone, 460,000 arrived in the country. This influx of international students also provides Canada with a pool of potential immigrants who have been educated in this country, may have relevant Canadian work experience, and are usually competent in at least one of our official languages. *Outward and Upward Mobilities: International Students in Canada, Their Families, and Structuring Institutions* seeks to shed light on a group that is often neglected in statistical analyses of Canadian immigration. Both co-editors of this book expand on their previous studies about migration and the Korean-Canadian community as they pull together an impressive body of research about international students in Canada. Ann H. Kim is an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology at York University and is a member of the York Centre for Asian Research. Min-Jung Kwak is an assistant professor in the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies at Saint Mary's University and has co-authored several studies about the immigrant experience and the globalization of education. The chapters that make up this text are co-authored by people with a variety of different kinds of expertise including, but not limited to, graduate students, PhD students, and professors in sociology, psychology, and education as well as medical professionals

and a researcher from Statistics Canada. Several different research methodologies are used. Some chapters draw statistical information from pre-existing studies and surveys conducted by various organizations while other chapters are based on the authors' own findings from studies, surveys, and interviews.

*Outward and Upward Mobilities* explores how international students interact with, experience, and impact the institutions they are involved with. As Kim and Kwak note, institutions are not just supply in the supply-and-demand equation of international student recruitment; the way students perceive these institutions also influences demand. Kim and Kwak also note that immigration policy in Canada is beginning to recognize the role international students can play. Various chapters endeavor to examine different aspects of the international student experience. They outline ways in which policy-making is complicated by the overlapping jurisdictions of federal and provincial governments. Stories are shared about international students who are tasked with finding their places in a new society. For instance, some families of Korean international students expressed that they did not fit in with Korean-Canadian citizens. Other students found comfort in joining cultural groups such as S.U.C.E.S.S., a non-profit group with a large Chinese membership.

The book is broken into four parts; each chapter has

its own list of references and every section has several charts and tables. The first part, "International Students in the Canadian Context," lays the foundations for understanding the history and mobility of international students in Canada and situates us among other countries vying for international students. Part I also investigates the various push and pull factors that influence the choices international students make about their education. It finishes by examining several data sources and noting areas where further scholarship on international students is needed. To date, much of the scholarship on immigration has been focused on permanent residents and does not address the unique features of international student mobility.

The second and third parts of the book take a more individual-centered approach. Part II begins by using developmental psychology to look at how family and friendship relationships impact international students' lives. It posits that most international students are a unique subset of the emerging adult stage. A model of international student adjustment is offered, with three main predictors centering around the student's perceived support from social networks, parents, and universities. Part II closes by examining ways that legal status impacts the experiences of families who accompany young international students to Canada.

Part III of the book relies less on statistical and survey data and more heavily on information gleaned from interviews and ethnographic research. The authors explore ways international students and their families meet their need for a sense of belonging. The stories of three Chinese international students and their connections with Chinese community associations are shared. There is an exploration of how some South Asian international students chose to conform to traditional gender norms and make themselves acceptable to the older South Asian immigrants living near their place of study. Conversely, it is also noted that other South Asian international students chose not to engage with South Asian immigrant communities who did not accept their gender performances and/or sexual identities. Chinese mothers who had immigrated to Canada and enrolled their children in Canadian schools while the fathers stayed in their home countries were also interviewed. The researchers found that it is impossible to generalize about what a "typical" transnational family experience is like.

The final section of the book examines the experiences of international students after they graduate or

when they are unable to meet their educational goals. Economic and job prospects are analysed, as is the rate at which international students become permanent residents. Factors associated with success in the Canadian labour market are explained and immigration policy is briefly examined. Part IV also delves into the global migration of nurses. It questions whether it is ethical to attempt to mediate our nursing shortage by recruiting and/or hiring nurses from countries facing shortages of their own. It raises concerns about brain waste and de-skilling via overly complicated exams, catch-22 immigration policies for internationally-educated nurses, and difficulties regarding quality-assurance for internationally-recognized nursing credentials.

The wide breadth of this book can be appreciated, although the breadth comes at the expense of depth. Many topics are covered just enough to pique interest and not thoroughly enough to provide specific and obvious directives for educators and policy makers. Nonetheless, professors, teaching assistants, student union representatives, and non-governmental agencies who work with international students and their families should be able to use some of the findings to guide their practice. School board officials and post-secondary recruiters who wish to make informed decisions about their international programs would also do well to read this book. The findings are clearly laid out without statistical or academic jargon, making the text a relatively easy read.

Although this book offers interesting insights and anecdotes, some of the research the authors draw on is not representative. Many of the surveys solicited responses from students at only one school and some of the chapters based on interview findings had very few interviewees (three in one, ten in another). Further research with larger and more representative groups is needed. However, it is important to note that while much of the contemporary research on temporary residents in Canada does not distinguish between different motivations and goals of migrants, this text focuses on one particular group that is growing at a rapid pace. As such, this book offers some important original scholarship and invaluable insights about a pathway to permanent residency and Canadian citizenship that is becoming increasingly popular.