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Transnational Academic Mobility: A Case Study of Fifteen Academics

La mobilité universitaire transnationale : une étude de cas sur quinze universitaires

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Abstract

Academics around the world face many pressures to engage in transnational mobility (TNM) as a part of their scholarly work. This includes travelling abroad for conferences and symposia, teaching abroad, supervising graduate students abroad and participating in international research partnerships/collaborations. This is a case study of 15 academics at different stages of their academic careers, located in 12 different countries and representing a wide range of academic disciplines. The findings confirm the widespread and regular international travel that higher education academics participate in; and that while largely valuing their experiences abroad, most feel pressured to engage in TNM and those pressures are exacerbated for faculty in precarious and early-career positions.

Résumé

Les enseignants universitaires du monde entier font face à des pressions pour participer à la mobilité transnationale dans le cadre de leur travail universitaire. Cela comprend voyager à l'étranger pour assister à des conférences et à des symposiums, enseigner à l'étranger, superviser des étudiants de deuxième cycle à l'étranger et participer à des collaborations ou des partenariats de recherche internationale. Voici une étude de cas portant sur 15 enseignants universitaires à divers stades de leur carrière, dans 12 pays différents et qui représentent un large éventail de disciplines universitaires. Les résultats confirment l'ampleur et la régularité des voyages internationaux que font les enseignants universitaires; et que tout en reconnaissant largement la valeur de leurs expériences à l'étranger, la plupart se sentent contraints de participer à la mobilité universitaire transnationale et ces pressions sont exacerbées pour les membres du corps enseignant qui occupent des postes précaires ou qui sont en début de carrière.

Keywords: academic mobility; internationalization of higher education; early-career faculty

Mots clés : mobilité universitaire; internationalisation de l'enseignement supérieur; corps enseignant débutant

Introduction

In our era of globalization, higher education academics are on the move as increasing numbers have become transnationally mobile as a part of their professional responsibilities (Altbach & Yudkevich, 2017a, 2017b; Fahey & Kenway, 2010; Larsen, 2016; Puzo, 2016). Indeed, while there is long history of academic mobility (Jöns, 2009; Kim, 2009; Welch, 2008), we can speak now of the global discourse of mobility that shapes the lives of higher education academics in profound ways. Mobility, as Fahey and Kenway (2010) assert, has become “all the rage in education and beyond” (p. 565).

The shift to a dynamic knowledge economy as the principal advantage among nation-states has contributed to competition for highly skilled academics. These are academics that regularly engage in transnational scholarly activities, ranging from attending conferences and symposia abroad to long-term teaching abroad, and international research partnerships. This study, based on surveys and interviews with 15 academics from 12 different countries, is about the pressures

academics face to be mobile and their experiences engaging in transnational mobility (TNM)¹ in their post-PhD careers. Specifically, this article focuses on answering these research questions:

- 1) What, if any, pressures do higher education faculty face to engage in transnational mobility (TNM) as a part of their professional careers?
- 2) What are the ways in which higher education faculty engage in TNM and what value do they place on travelling abroad for their work?

This study provides a picture of the frequency and types of international travel that faculty at all stages of their careers engage as a normal part of their academic lives. The study also demonstrates that academics, while largely valuing their experiences abroad, feel pressured to engage in TNM and those pressures are exacerbated for faculty in precarious and early-career positions.

Transnational Academic Mobility: Theory and Background

Mobilities theory with its focus of movement and flows provides the theoretical framing for this study. Mobilities theorists focus on researching the combined movements of objects, information, and people within their complex relational dynamics and assert that social life and social relations are reshaped through mobilities (Sheller, 2011; Urry, 2007). Although it is understood that there have always been mobilities in the world, mobilities theorists view the world today as “arguably moving differently and in more dynamic, complex and trackable ways than ever before” (Sheller, 2011, p. 1). These changes necessitate new theoretical and methodological approaches in the social sciences, which mobility theorists put forward in their efforts to make sense of the role of the movement of people, ideas, objects, and information in our world today.

Mobilities theorists also direct their attention to forms of mobility capital that make mobility possible for some and not for others. Such forms of mobility capital (e.g., qualifications, connections, visas, money) make possible the movement of many higher education academics across national borders. In addition, there are multiple forces and factors that shape the particular ways that academics are compelled to be mobile as a necessary part of their work. For example, the increasing speed and scale of academic mobility has been made possible due to the greater involvement of governments and higher education institutions in developing institutional internationalization policy strategies that privilege TNM. Internationalization strategies have been taken up by a wide range of higher education institutions motivated by the desire to compete on the global stage through ranking systems. Key markers of internationalization, as promoted by global ranking systems, place a high value on international academic activities such as increasing numbers of international students, international faculty, publications in international academic journals, and transnational research partnerships (Kenway & Fahey, 2007; Larsen, 2016).

As a result, many universities focus on recruiting international students and international faculty, the latter who are now viewed as major contributors to teaching English-language courses and publishing in English-language academic journals. For instance, university policies in Hong Kong, Singapore, and Switzerland all aim to hire approximately half of their faculty from the international market, in order to expand the number of English taught courses and degrees, and contribute to an English-speaking environment for domestic faculty and students (Altbach & Yudkevich, 2017a). As Altbach and Yudkevich (2017b) assert, “[i]n many countries, international

¹ The term “transnational mobility” refers to the movement of higher education academics across nation-state borders. In taking into account non-state actors and their networks that play a role in cross-border relations, the term “transnational” reflects a more flexible and fluid understanding of our global world.

faculty are considered an important and powerful source of improving university research performance” (p. 9).

Governments have also developed policies aimed at increasing academic mobility under the assumption that transnational exchanges will generate greater domestic knowledge and enhance economic development (Metcalf, 2017). Some examples of national policies aimed at increasing academic mobility include Japan’s Global-30 initiative and Russia’s 5-100 program. Within the European Union, a 2016 directive aims to attract non-EU researchers, as well as researchers from across EU countries to help facilitate academic mobility within the EU (ERA-SCHRM Working Group, 2016). And Canada’s “Building on Success: International Education Strategy” (Government of Canada, 2019) is another government policy that privileges academic mobility as a vehicle to foster national economic growth.

Overwhelmingly, the majority of the scholarly literature on higher education mobility focuses on student mobility, and not the mobility of faculty and staff. Metcalf (2017) reminds us that “[w]hat is not known about academic mobility far outweighs what is known” (p. 132). Not only is little known about academic mobility in general, but there is also no global data or accurate statistics on academic mobility. Therefore, it is difficult to get a clear sense of the numbers of transnational mobile academics. This lack of information is exacerbated by unspecific and shifting terminology associated with transnational academic mobility (Altbach & Yudkevich, 2017b).

There is no international database that adequately captures trends in faculty mobility. However, regional data attests to the pervasiveness of mobility among academics today. The December 2017 MORE3 survey study on mobility patterns of researchers in Europe demonstrates the extent of academic mobility across Europe. In post-PhD stages, 27% of researchers currently working in the EU had been mobile in the previous 10 years for more than 3 months. Two thirds (63%) collaborate with researchers in other EU countries and almost half (46%) collaborate with researchers in non-EU countries (Commission, 2017). In the United Kingdom, university staff are also highly diverse by nationality. Since 2013–14, the number of non-U.K. academic staff had increased by more than a quarter, with non-U.K. nationals constituting over 40% of the total staff in disciplines such as engineering and technology (Universities U.K., 2019).

There are also many overlapping types of faculty mobility, alerting us to the many different ways of being mobile. Some researchers distinguish between the stage in an academic’s career trajectory when mobility occurs. Thus, the term “early-stage career mobility” is used, often in distinction from “high skills mobility.” Hoffman (2007) in his study of long-term academic mobility in Finnish universities distinguishes between early-stage research mobility, global lateral mobility, marginality and the field of temporary positions, and highly productive academics and the field of permanent positions. The latter are referred to as “complete faculty members” who have much experience teaching, consistently secure large amounts of research funding, and have published extensively. Those who are marginal are accomplished academics, but in temporary positions, some of whom thrive in uncertain circumstances and others who experience isolation. Global lateral mobility refers primarily to transnational teaching faculty. Many of these positions are long-term and permanent or quasi-permanent.

Increasing numbers of scholars are mobile early in their careers, often right after completing their doctorates and engage with mobility with the expectation of “vertical mobility” (Hoffman, 2007). These early-career academics are also known as contract, limited term/duty or sessional faculty. Research literature about early-career academics addresses the motivations and expectations of early-career scholars to engage in mobility for career purposes, the tensions and challenges these scholars face in being able to exercise mobility; and the tensions and stresses they

confront in being mobile (Bilecen & Van Mol, 2017; Equeter & Hellemans, 2016; Giorgi & Raffini, 2015; Gopaul & Pifer, 2016; Hoffman, 2007; Puzo, 2016; Schaer et al., 2017). However, while this area is growing, Mihut et al. (2017) assert in their review of the literature on faculty mobility, that there is still a disproportionate focus on “star” faculty and those in prestigious institutions, rather than “worker bee” faculty.

Thus, this study aims to address two gaps in the emerging body of research on academic mobility. First, this study recruited participants across a wide range of career trajectories with the specific goal of contributing to our understanding of academic mobility at early- and mid-career stages. And finally, much of the research on academic mobility has focused on economic and political macro-dimensions (Chen & Koyama, 2013; Giorgi & Raffini, 2015), with less attention paid to the specific mobility experiences of individual academics. This study takes a microlevel approach in order to understand individual academic experiences with TNM. In this way, borrowing from King’s (2002) research on European migration, this study aims to attend to the “life-course” of a group of mobile academic subjects, illuminating the meanings they ascribe to their transnational academic experiences in order to provide an account of mobility from below. These provide the key rationales for this study.

Methodology

There were two parts to the broader study of which this study is a part. The first part consisted of an online survey of academics who have engaged in TNM. The survey had three parts. The first part consisted of background demographic data about the participants (gender, age, region of the world where they currently resided, region they considered home, languages spoken, marital status, the presence of children at home, highest degree, and information about their academic position and field of study). The second part of the survey included questions about their experiences with TNM including expectations they face to travel abroad as a part of their professional responsibilities, whether or not those experiences have been positive, and quantitative data about how many times they have engaged in short and long-term TNM over the past year and past 5 years. The third part of the survey, which is not the main focus of this article, was about the barriers and challenges they face in travelling abroad for professional purposes.

The survey was sent out to all of my own academic contacts through email, Facebook, and Twitter. As a researcher in the field of comparative and international education, I have extensive international contacts and I used these to recruit individuals to complete the survey. Snowball sampling was used as I asked survey respondents to forward the survey link to other academics. This enabled me to recruit as wide a range of participants as possible.

To gain further insight into the pressures and experiences that academics have face to engage in TNM, survey participants were asked to indicate if they would participate in an interview. Of the 60 survey participants, 15 agreed to be interviewed during the course of the study. Following the completion of the survey, each individual participated in a semi-structured interview to further my understanding of their experiences with TNM. The interviews were between 15–65 minutes in length and were conducted in English and Spanish using Skype or telephone.

For the interview part of the study, my aim was to recruit equal numbers of male and female participants from a range of career trajectories, academic disciplines, and countries. There were eight females and seven males in the study. The majority (9) were between the ages of 35–44; one was between 25–30 years, two between 45–54, and the remaining three were over the age of 55. The geographical locations of the participants included: Australia (1), Canada (2 French Canada, 1 English Canada), Cuba (1), Denmark (1), Germany (1), Israel (1), India (1), Japan (2), Poland

(1), Slovenia (1), United Kingdom (1), and United States (1). Their academic positions ranged from being precarious workers in contract positions, to lecturer/assistant professor, associate, full and adjunct professors. Unsurprisingly, given my own background in educational studies (and the recruitment process of circulating the initial survey to my own contacts), eight of the participants identified education as their field of study. However, the other seven participants represented a wider range of academic backgrounds, including hard and natural sciences, medicine, sociology, psychology, languages and applied linguistics, and philosophy. Overall, the study comprised a range of participants from a variety of geographical, disciplinary and family backgrounds. See Table 1 for a summary of the participants in the study organized largely according to their career stage as this became an important variable in understanding their various mobility experiences. All of the names used are pseudonyms.

Both the quantitative survey data and the qualitative interview data were analyzed manually largely drawing upon a grounded theory approach in which open, axial, and selective coding took place from which broader categories and concepts were derived (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). In the first step, I analyzed the quantitative data to see any overall trends and patterns among the participants in terms of their mobility practices. In the second step, I analyzed the qualitative interview data to gain further, in-depth understanding of the mobility experiences of the participants. The data was combined in the third stage of data analysis in order to develop three themes related to the research questions: expectations to engage in TNM, frequency and types of TNM, and value of engaging in TNM. In presenting the findings related to each of these themes, I refer to the stage of the participant's career, which became an important variable in terms of the different kinds of mobility pressures and experiences that these 15 academics faced and experienced.

Findings

Expectations to Engage in Transnational Mobility

Thirteen of the 15 participants agreed or strongly agreed (on the survey) that they were expected to engage in transnational scholarly activities as a part of their professional responsibilities. Young, early career, and precarious workers especially faced the most pressure to engage in TNM in order to secure permanent positions. For example, John, a precarious contract worker from Canada, had completed his PhD in 2015 in the field of applied linguistics and language education. At the time of his interview, he held two contract (sessional) positions at two different universities in Canada and a post-doctoral position as a research officer at another university where he was "expected to carry out research projects and then disseminate the findings at international [and domestic] conferences." He "strongly agreed" that he is expected to engage in transnational scholarly activities as a key to securing a permanent academic position.

Some participants spoke about the general expectations they faced associated with their specific fields of study and their own universities to travel abroad as a part of their work. Neil, an early-career researcher, originally from the United States, was living and working in India at the time of the interview as an assistant professor in a School of International Relations. He noted that he was expected to engage in transnational scholarly activities as a part of his work. Given that his field of study is international relations, he explained that "there is an expectation to engage in transnational collaborations or transnational scholarly activities of some sort." He explained that his dean would be "surprised if [he] didn't go to either the international political science meeting or the international societies meeting, some major Western-based scholarly meeting."

Early-career academics also talked about the expectations to engage in TNM associated with tenure or habilitation processes². Christina had completed her PhD in Education in 2011 and at the time of the interview held a lecturer position at a university in Poland. She had held this position for about 6 years. As a young scholar, she was under great pressure from her university to engage in transnational activities as a part of the procedure of habilitation which mandates the newly hired academics have between 8–10 years to “prove” themselves in terms of research and teaching. Christina explained that “the expectations from this procedure of habilitation [are] to go abroad to do some scholarship, to do some teaching, so to engage in international research, and publish in international journals, in English obviously.” Similarly, Dorian, a later-career professor in Slovenia reflected upon the fact that to be promoted through the system of habilitation, it is “good...to have this period of time staying abroad.” He explained that when he was preparing for habilitation, he “fulfilled this requirement for spending some time abroad.”

Mid-career professors also discussed the pressures they faced to engage in TNM in order to be promoted. Mary, originally from Russia, who was living and working in Israel at the time of the study as an associate professor and had held her academic position in the Faculty of Humanities/School of Education since 2012. She “strongly agreed” that she was expected to engage in transnational scholarly activities as a part of her academic work. Mary noted, in her interview, that while institutional expectations for travelling abroad are not explicit, academics in Israel are very much urged to engage in transnational scholarly work. She explained that “it is very institutionalized in Israel, the idea that the academic needs to be connected to the outer world.... The academia in Israel is very internationalized. More than half of all the articles published are published with international partners. Many of my colleagues have done sabbaticals abroad, teach, do research in different universities. So, people know that they have to do that, but there are no written rules.”

Similarly, Dina (originally from Chile), who was in a lecturer position at an Australia university at the time of the interview, noted that “if you want to progress as an academic, you’re expected to develop international collaborations and be part of those exchanges that happen at conferences.” And some later-career professors reflected upon the pressures they had experienced throughout their careers to engage in international travel. Ralph, a full professor in an endowed chair position in the field of medicine in Canada, strongly agreed that he was expected to engage in short-term transnational scholarly activities as a part of his scholarly work. In his interview he explained that “one of the main drivers of promotion both at the associate and full professor level is international reputation and that is measured through [transnational academic mobility].”

Frequency and Types of Transnational Mobility

On the survey, respondents were asked to indicate the number of times (once, 2–4, 5 or more, not at all) they had travelled abroad for short-term (less than 1 month) over the past year; and long-term (more than 1 month at a time) scholarly activities over the past 5 years. They were also asked to indicate the types of TNM activities they engaged in. During the interviews, the participants described these experiences in more depth and discussed the value of these transnational experiences for their professional lives. At one end of the spectrum we have Christina, an early-

² Habilitation is a qualification required by faculty in many European countries to conduct self-contained university teaching, and to obtain a professorship. It is the highest qualification issued through the process of a university examination; and remains a core expectation of scholarly careers in countries where it exists.

career Polish lecturer with young children at home, who had only been able to travel abroad once over the past 5 years to attend a conference elsewhere in Europe despite pressures from her employer to engage in transnational activities as a part of the habilitation process at her university.

At the other end of the spectrum, we have Robert, a mid-late career academic, from the United States who has travelled the world throughout his career, consulting on U.S., U.N., and foreign-sponsored human resource and technology development projects in over 40 countries. Robert had held several faculty positions in a higher education institution for almost 20 years, including being an adjunct professor at a U.S. university and at a Cambodian university. His academic work crosses faculties of natural and health sciences. Since October 2017, he had been conducting research in Bering Strait. Over the past year, he stated that he had engaged in 2–4 short-term transnational activities including, research meetings and workshops, international symposia /conferences, cross-border graduate student co-supervision or examination, short-term teaching abroad, building research and educational facilities, and research and development in health care and research. In addition, over the past year, he had engaged in long-term transnational activities more than 5 times, including research partnerships/collaborations, development education contracts, teaching abroad, and research and development (e.g. developing clinical and population research trials for HIV and diabetes interventions). He was the most mobile of all of the participants interviewed for this study.

Robert was one of the six of the participants who had been involved in long-term research partnerships over the past 5 years; most of which necessitated travel abroad to collaborate with research partners. John, from Canada, who worked in the field of applied linguistics had also participated in a long-term research partnership. John was a lead editor of a volume co-edited with two other editors (one in Europe and the other in Canada), which had culminated in a book launch in Iceland. Frederik, based in Denmark but originally from Germany, talked about research projects he was involved in with people in Germany, Estonia, Italy, and the United States. He explained the extent of his research projects: “I still have projects with people in Germany, which is not surprising because I just came from there. Then there’s projects hanging in the air that we would like to resume with the University of Virginia. Then I have a project with a team from Iowa, Texas and the EUI in Florence.” And finally, Mary, a later-career professor of education from Quebec, Canada, during the previous 5 years had travelled abroad for longer term scholarly activities as a part of her work more than 5 times to participate in research partnerships and a research and development contract.

Some of the long-term international research projects were comparative studies. For instance, Sarah, an education researcher, was involved in a long-term research partnership involving a cross-comparative study with scholars from a variety of countries. And Kaitlin, an international education researcher, had participated in a large-scale, long-term international comparative and mixed methods study of internationalization policies across five continents. In addition, Kaitlin had been involved in a multi-sectoral/stakeholder transnational initiative that brought “together people from various ministries of foreign affairs and education and NGO, CSO’s, teacher groups, and academics.”

With the exception of Christina, all of the other participants regularly travelled abroad for short (less than 1 month) periods of time as a part of their professional responsibilities. Half had participated in 2–4 short-term scholarly activities over the past year; and half had engaged in those shorter trips more than 5 times over the previous year. Overwhelmingly, short-term travel abroad was primarily to attend international conferences and research symposia, attend research meetings and workshops, participate in cross-border graduate supervisions or examinations, and in

international research projects. To a lesser degree, participants travelled abroad for short-term teaching appointments.

For example, over the previous 5 years, Kaitlan, who was based in the United Kingdom, had engaged in a variety of short-term transnational scholarly activities including international symposia or conferences, transnational research meetings and workshops, cross-border graduate student co-supervision or examination, and serving on review committees of proposals for research funding. Having moved to the United Kingdom (from Canada), she had found that “being located in Europe opens up a lot more possibilities for engaging in that kind of work.” This, according to Kaitlin, has to do with economics as there are more opportunities being closer to Europe to be involved in transnational meetings and having scholars from the continent come to her university in the United Kingdom.

And Dorian, a full professor based in Slovenia, while not facing expectations from his employer to travel abroad at this later stage in his career, had (over the previous year) engaged in a wide range of short-term transnational research meetings and symposia/conferences, cross-border graduate student co-supervision/examination and short-term teaching. His transnational activities included his work as an executive board member of UNESCO, and various trips for professional purposes within Europe and the United States.

Value of engaging in transnational mobility

Overall, while participants noted that they felt pressured (primarily by their employers) to engage in scholarly activities abroad, they all spoke positively about their experiences abroad for work. In particular, full/tenured professors, were the most enthusiastic about the international scholarly work they had done. For instance, Mary, a later-career education professor, had “absolutely loved” her transnational experiences, the first which began in the mid-1980s in Kenya, just after she completed PhD, and had continued throughout her academic career. She had engaged in many international experiences including research meetings, partnerships, and development education contract work. Likewise, Ralph, a full professor in an endowed chair position in medicine had participated in transnational activities such as research meetings and workshops, conferences, cross-border graduate student co-supervision and examinations more than 5 times over the previous year. He explained the value of these opportunities for his professional work: “In general, what I value is the opportunity to work with other people who are doing the same kinds of things as I am. And to work with the best relevant scholars in my field. As your work become more specialized, the need for people whose interests match yours becomes more important and it becomes harder to find them locally or even within Canada. So, it becomes even more important to work outside of one’s specific area. So international conferences allow that sort of interaction to start and then international collaborations can keep that going.”

Early- to mid-career faculty also indicated, in their interviews, the value of travelling abroad for their scholarly work. Many noted the value of going to conferences abroad which enabled them to meet and converse with scholars in their own fields of study, and develop potential research partnerships. Others spoke more generally about the value of going abroad and being exposed to new ideas and perspectives. Luis, an assistant professor in a faculty of education and applied sciences in Cuba, strongly agreed that his experiences travelling abroad for his work had largely been positive. In his interview, he talked about the value of travelling abroad as a Cuban scholar in terms of broadening his horizons with new perspectives:

I think it’s really good, really great. Especially as a Cuban because you get to go out to see another aspect of the phenomena that you are researching, and you get to interact with other people and that way you are exposed to new ideas, as opposed to always speaking with the same people, you get a

new perspective. And in my profession it's especially important because you get different ways in the area of business, exchange, and because I work a lot in the area of student travel . . . So, you can see new ways to incorporate things and new things to incorporate in your process, new ways to educate students, always improving the exchange of culture and improving.

Similarly, Hiroko an adjunct professor at a private university in Japan, had travelled abroad for her work, mostly to participate in international conferences and a training course for English language teachers. She has travelled to Hong Kong, Great Britain, and continental Europe for her work. In her interview, she explained the positive aspects of going abroad for her work, "I find it kind of refreshing to go abroad. I don't know whether it is useful for my work here, but I want to learn something new." Specifically, she explained the value of going to conferences abroad where she encountered "different perspectives" and received "better feedback" compared to conferences in Japan.

Discussion

As the findings from this study reveal, academics today experience many pressures to be mobile in relation to knowledge economy policy discourses that urge them to engage in transnational research collaborations, teach abroad, and attend international conferences. Mobility is viewed in instrumental terms as the rational means for the production of knowledge that is multi-sited, interdisciplinary, and multi-authored, and tightly linked to national economic goals. All of the participants in this study were emphatic in asserting that they faced expectations relating to obtaining a permanent position, tenure and promotion, to be mobile in their work. Participating in transnational activities and developing a global mindset makes for an "attractive research career" (Commission, 2017, p. 3) in academia. This notion of "attractiveness" driven by mobility is supposed to increase a researcher's productivity. Thus, mobility is now considered crucial to knowledge production. In alignment with previous research, this study confirms the ways in which academics are expected, as a part of their careers, to engage in transnational scholarly activities (Ackers, 2008; Gopaul & Pifer, 2016; Puzo, 2016).

As noted earlier in this article, there are also many overlapping types of faculty mobility, alerting us to the many different ways that academics are mobile in their careers. In this study, all of the 15 participants had been mobile as a part of their professional responsibilities, but the extent of their mobility practices differed considerably, illustrating the ways in which mobility is a selective process that generates new inequalities among academic scholars. Using the various categorizations of academic career trajectory noted above, we see here in this study differences in academic mobility experiences between early-career faculty such as Sarah, John, Christina, Frederik, Mary, Kaitlin, Neil, and Hiroko, most of whom felt a lot of pressure to travel abroad to either secure a permanent academic position and/or gain tenure/habilitation. Some of these early-career faculty faced barriers in being able to travel abroad related to childcare responsibilities, and others were prevented due to teaching expectations and lack of finances.

Mid-career faculty such as Ralph, Dina, Kaitlin, and Carina all had permanent positions and were either associate or full professors. They faced less pressure to travel abroad from their employers in terms of maintaining their positions, but nonetheless, they engaged in regular travel abroad (at least once a year) for professional purposes. For the most part, short-term travel abroad was for international conferences and symposia, and long-term was for international research collaborations. To a lesser degree, the individuals interviewed for this study engaged in short or long-term teaching abroad, including fly-in fly-out teaching, a topic that deserves more research attention.

The three later-career faculty, Alicia, Dorian, and Robert had all travelled extensively throughout their academic careers and can be considered highly productive academics in permanent positions to use Hoffman's categorization of academic mobility. Robert who had engaged in the most travel abroad of all the participants in this study, having lived and travelled to over 40 countries throughout his career, represents what Kenway and Fahey (2007) refer to as the "jet set intellectual," a highly networked individual who seeks out the "best" knowledge and channels personal interactions towards techno-scientific knowledge transfer.

If we break down the data further, we see the emergence of other mobility differentiations. Early-career scholars such as Sarah, John, and Christina, who were all working in precarious jobs consisting of short-term contracts, faced particular challenges related to mobility. Mobility for early-career scholars is considered a necessary strategy for establishing a successful career (Gopaul & Pifer, 2016). As Giorgi and Raffini (2015) explain, "Mobility is an adjunctive, extraordinary tool, in the life projects [of academics], but it can also represent the only possibility to nurture the hope of building a professional trajectory in line with skills and expectation, in a context marked by precarity and by the risk of downward social mobility" (p. 46).

In the cases of Sarah, John, and Christina, they were unable to be as mobile as they would like to have been because of family caregiver responsibilities, heavy teaching workloads, and lack of employer support. These findings align with other existing research on the challenges that precarious academic workers face and the long-term risks of downward mobility if they do not participate in overseas scholarly activities (Giorgi & Raffini, 2015; Kim, 2009). For example, in her research on the mobility practices of early-career scholars in Europe, Ackers (2008) found that mobility was not articulated as a matter of upward ascension in one's career. Rather, mobility was understood by her participants as a coercive mechanism to force them to jump from job to job, due to the precarious nature of their work, limited career options, and pay differences.

What this study demonstrates is the ways in which academic mobility is a set of ongoing, criss-crossing processes. It is relational, embodied, and situated in particular places and practices. In her ethnographic account of the rhythms of academic mobility, Enriquez-Gibson (2018) claims that mobility "is not a mere container of things or fixed in a manner that positions stuff. It is in-between—simultaneously open and yet bounded by practices and people to "take place" or... place [her]" (p. 7). Many academics, as this study has shown, feel that they are expected and, in some cases, compelled to be mobile in order to obtain a permanent position in academia or further their academic careers.

Conclusion

As Fahey and Kenway (2010) explain, Australia's academic researchers are "always on the move, going away and coming back, going and staying away, being away for short periods and going back and forth with shared international and Australian appointments" (p. 572). Mobility is not for most academics a one-off event, but continuously the part of their professional scholarly careers. Mobilities theories alert us to the mobile nature of contemporary life and that mobility is characterized by networks, flows, and connections, all of which we see characterizing the professional lives of the participants in this study.

Moreover, the individual narratives of the 15 participants in this study illuminate the nuanced realities of academic mobility across a wide range of settings. As Robertson (2010) asserts, we need to attend to the "ways of thinking about subjects as active social and political subjects, negotiating, interpreting, contesting their social worlds by mobilising and materialising the knowledges . . . through which that social world is constituted." (p. 644). In such a way, we

privilege the voices and experiences of individual academics, viewing them as active subjects through their narratives of their own mobile lives.

In our contemporary times, institutional, governmental, and intergovernmental policies privilege academic mobility. This phenomenon needs to be considered within light of the growing pressure for higher education institutions to compete with one another in the global knowledge economy in order to enhance their international reputation measured through global rankings. This case study based on interviews with 15 members of what we can call the global academic labour force demonstrates the ways in which male and female academics from across disciplines, geographies, and career stages face expectations from their employers and academic communities to be mobile in their work. While all had had experiences of crossing national borders to engage in transnational research, contract work, teaching, conferences, and graduate student supervision, the degrees to which they had been able to exercise their mobility capital ranged. Thus, we see differentiations within the participants in terms of who is able to be mobile and who is not. In particular, the data illustrates the particular challenges that early-career faculty face in navigating the transnational mobility landscape and balancing work demands with family and other personal pressures.

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Table 1: Participants

PSEUDONYM	AGE	MARRIED/ CHILDREN	CAREGIVER FOR CHILDREN	COUNTRY OF RESIDENCE	COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	FIELD OF STUDY	CURRENT POSITION/TITLE
A) PRECARIOUS							
SARAH	35–44	Married 2 children 7 & 10 years	shared	Germany	Germany	Education	Post-doc, contract work
JOHN	35–44	Separated Children 6–16 years	shared	English Canada	Canada	Applied Linguistics, Education	Post-doc, contract faculty
B) EARLY-CAREER							
CHRISTINA	35–44	Married Children 2–6 years	primary caregiver	Poland	Poland	Education	Lecturer
FREDERIK	35–44	Married 5-year-old child	primary caregiver	Denmark	Germany	Psychology & Sociology	Lecturer
MARY	35–44	Married, Children 2, 11 years	primary caregiver	Israel	Russia	Education	Lecturer
LUIS	35–44	Married 2 children 10, 12 years	partner	Cuba	Cuba	Social and Applied Sciences	Assistant Professor
NEIL	25–30	Single	N/A	India	United States	Political Science, Education, Law	Assistant Professor
HIROKO	35–44	Single	N/A	Japan	Japan	Cultural Studies	Assistant Professor
C) MID-CAREER							
RALPH	45–54	Married Children 6–16 years	shared	French Canada	Canada	Medicine & Health	Full Professor
DINA	35–44	Separated 1 child 6 years	primary caregiver	Australia	Chile	Educational Psychology	Senior Researcher, Full Professor
KAITLIN	35–44	Single	N/A	United Kingdom	Canada	Education	Senior Lecturer
CARINA	45–54	Single	N/A	Japan	Austria	Education	Associate Professor
D) LATER-CAREER							
ALICIA	Over 55	Married	N/A	French Canada	Canada	Education	Full Professor
DORIAN	Over 55	Married	N/A	Slovenia	Slovenia	Philosophy and Theology	Full Professor
ROBERT	Over 55	Married	N/A	Bering Strait, United States	United States	Science & Humanities	Full Professor; Endowed Chair