This paper presents a much more cogent discussion of the issues of migration than on the issues of child development. The logical development of the categories of migrants is a useful framework and can help guide development of research agendas for those different circumstances. Also useful is the articulation of migration as a process that does not just move people from one location to another, but leaves other people behind, specifically children. These children would not be identified in their own country as “migrants” or by most researchers focusing on migrants. However, they may be just as affected by the migration process of those who are most clearly responsible for their growth and development. These may be the least visible players in the larger global attention to migration. This is an important point in considering the impact of migration on children.

This paper includes a nice review of data sets. However, there is a need to develop better data sets to assess the questions raised about the impact of migration on children. However, without discipline these could become quite vast, complex and possibly unattainable. Since migration involves changes in location one might easily plan for data collection in sending and receiving locations. This could be done in some settings where there are established migration streams from one area to another, but then that in itself would create a selectivity into which children and which type of migration were being studied. Also, the point is made that if the question is how migrant children fare relative to native born children, then understanding the selectivity of the migrants is less important and data demands more manageable. That is probably more a relative than absolute impact. The questions that are raised about how migrant children do adapt or relate to other social and economic opportunities may well be driven by the selectivity of the migration process as much as by their new experiences in the receiving country.

The trend toward women migrating and leaving their families behind may include leaving children behind. This can create very specific aspects of migration that would plausibly affect child development. How is this similar to the work done on other forms of mother absence? Surely in the US there is an opportunity to study the children of women in the military who are now facing significant periods of deployment. Are there other situations where women are separated from their children, although not a migration phenomena, that might enlighten the case regarding migration effects? There would be more opportunities to study father absence as a result of military service. Such separations may more closely mimic sporadic migration for economic purposes, although literature on father absence due to divorce or separation might also shed light.
One long-observe feature of migration is the propensity of people to migrate to areas where they already know someone or have some family tie. There can be clear economic and social benefits for the adults involved if this facilitates their finding employment and developing a social network. This can lead to a growing web of migrants into a community where there is a greater than usual sense of community and perhaps even interrelatedness. This could be a valuable buffer for children if they have a broader network of individuals who buffer their – and their parents’ – adjustment to a new setting. Addressing such questions would require study designs that varied the level of social cohesiveness and included data about the involvement of families in such networks. Also, the desire to assess outcomes across different countries places even greater demands on data. There are considerable challenges to developing multi-country studies. Getting agreement on social and economic measures – much less child outcome measures – can be daunting. Also daunting would be assessing the likely strength of anticipated effects. If the effects are powerful and models robust, perhaps they could withstand some unevenness in the measures themselves. The concern for data that are available at only the national level is well placed. To the extent that migration is localized, national data be insufficient to assess effects among children in sub-national areas. Sample sizes may dwindle and the detail necessary to understand the local context may be missing.

When families move and there are language barriers, it may be the children who – through schooling or the general plasticity of youth – learn the new language fastest in the family. Does this create a new sense of value for the children in such families? Are there other ways that migration provides an opportunity for youth to break out of traditional expectations? This is an area that could be rich opportunity to assess how a “stressor” has positive and negative effects on children as they mature.

As with the other paper, there was a lack of attention to the likely effects on children according to their age. Specificity by age seems to be quite important from both the standpoint of what the likely effects might be, but also for the complexity of the research. The effects on toddlers may be mediated by the effects on mother’s wellbeing, economic and health wise. The effects on slightly older children may be through their commitment to and involvement in school. The effects on adolescents may be quite different. For some, a move could take them away from harmful traditional practices, could create new opportunities for them for education and employment, or could present them with unspeakable risks for sexual exploitation. I find it hard to think of the group under age 18 as a single block, despite the increases in data and research challenges. Even beyond the variability of effects on children, the ages of migrating children will have considerable effects on the impact such migration places on receiving areas.

The discussion of the micro level raised interesting questions of subjective well-being. Clearly, more than monetary outcomes are needed. This work could harmonize with the poverty research which is addressing non-monetary aspects of poverty. The perceived impact of immigrant children on overall societal well being may affect a willingness to support them in the process of adjustment.
This is an area of work that requires careful scholarship, more than average cooperation across national boundaries, partnerships with international bodies to ensure comparable data and, of course, a commitment to develop research in a way that can be conveyed to policymakers, practitioners and the press. Such a complex topic that appears to touch so many lives is a considerable challenge.