Cluster Seminars

Deciphering Reproductive Mobilities in Indonesia: Trajectories of Infertility, Adoption and Migration
By Dr Linda Rae Bennett

Date : 20 Aug 2015
Time : 16:00 - 17:30
Venue : Asia Research Institute Seminar Room
Tower Block Level 10, 469A Bukit Timah Road
National University of Singapore @ BTC

CHAIRPERSON
Dr Chee Heng Leng, University of Science, Malaysia

ABSTRACT
This paper engages the concept of reproductive mobilities to explore the nexus between the migration of female domestic workers and the adoption of their birth children by infertile couples who remain within Indonesian borders. The paper derives from a five year, multi-site ethnographic study of compromised fertility in Indonesia conducted between 2010 and 2014. My discussion incorporates the motivations and experiences of both birth mothers and adoptive mothers. I illuminate how the migratory experiences of birth mothers render their children available for adoption, with reference to case studies of women who have worked as foreign domestic workers (FDW), as well as women who have migrated internally within Indonesia seeking employment as domestic workers (IDW). I also reflect on how the insecurity or success of migrant opportunities for birth mothers impacts on the stability of adoption for adopting couples and the children they embrace. Additionally, I trace patterns of mobility among adopting parents who are willing to travel and temporarily relocate in order to secure children who are available for adoption. Regulatory structures relating to cross-border adoption and cross-border migration are more formalised and more closely monitored than is the case for migration and adoption within Indonesian borders. The paper considers how these differential cultures of regulation with regards to mobility promote ease of access to children available for adoption by infertile couples. In exploring women’s negotiations of adoption I also examine how kinship relations circumscribe both the opportunities for and the terms of adoption. Adoption is a process deeply infused with social and emotional meanings, and I seek also to unravel how the pursuit of social mobility or the conferral of normative social status, underpin the motivations and decisions of birth mothers and adopting couples. Finally, the paper reflects upon the emotional risks and costs embedded in the adoption of children born to migrant mothers by infertile adoptive couples.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER
Linda Rae Bennett is a critical medical anthropologist whose research and scholarly activities engage with the nexus between identity, culture and health, and the varied power relations that shape the health of individuals and communities. Her work has a strong focus on gender, sexuality, biological and social reproduction, reproductive and sexual health and rights, and gender-based violence. She has worked most often with youth and women in Australia, Southeast Asia and the Pacific, including migrant communities in these locations. Her research explores the myriad ways that new technologies impact upon women’s bodies, subjectivities and experiences, as well as investigating the salience of indigenous healing knowledge and practices. Dr Bennett has recently completed an ARC Future Fellowship that focused on understanding compromised fertility in Indonesia. She has published widely and the third of her scholarly books to be published by Routledge; Sex and Sexualities in Contemporary Indonesia (with Sharyn Graham Davies) was released in January 2015. She is strongly committed to research training both in Australia and international settings, and to increasing awareness of how qualitative and quantitative techniques can work together to produce rigorous outcomes with strong policy applications.

REGISTRATION
Admission is free. We would greatly appreciate if you RSVP to Ms Tay Minghua via email: minghua.tay@nus.edu.sg