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ISEAS Michael Leifer Memorial Prize

Congratulations to Chan Kwok Bun and Seet Chia Sing for having won the 2005 ISEAS Michael Leifer Memorial Prize for their article “Migrant Family Drama Revisited: Mainland Chinese Immigrants in Singapore”, published in the October 2003 issue of the ISEAS journal *SOJOURN: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*.

Dr Chan is Head and Professor, Department of Sociology, and Director, David C. Lam Institute for East-West Studies, Hong Kong Baptist University, while Dr Seet is Statistician, Singapore Department of Statistics, Government of Singapore.


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About the article “Migrant Family Drama Revisited: Mainland Chinese Immigrants in Singapore”

It unfolds the drama of mainland Chinese migrant families in Singapore in terms of their gender and generation politics — the interpersonal as well as role conflicts within the domestic domain as they were engendered and negotiated during the migration process. The “better life” promise of migration for each and every family member was scrutinized — each time gazing at a different member in the context of his or her institutionalized position in the family. As it happened, divided rather than common interests emerged. Not all benefited from moving. Yet all were convinced of the family having made “the right move”. The social construction of the family was further strengthened by transnationalism, which reproduced the “reality” of family solidarity through mundane everyday life activities acted out across borders. But when internalized as a construct, an ideal, the family bonded its members — thus its internal cohesiveness. It also bound and controlled the self. Sure there were gains, but there were also losses, especially on the part of the less powerful. Globalization and transnationalism have yet to fulfil their promises.

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