Chapter 9
Accounting for Children's Agency and Resilience in Independent Child Migration in Southeast Asia

Mark P. Capaldi and Alessia Altamura

9.1 Introduction

Following a growing global trend towards bringing the voices of children and youth into social studies, a body of literature on what is now commonly known as 'independent child migration'[1] has emerged in the last 10 years or so in Southeast Asia (Huijsmans, 2017). Studies have focused primarily on voluntary movements for work and, to a more limited extent, on the intersection between this scenario and migration for other purposes such as education and marriage (IOM, 2019; Khoo & Yeoh, 2018; Boyden, 2013).

Though exploring the issue from different angles, this scholarly work has contributed to questioning the predominant stereotypical portrayal of migrant child workers as solely exploited and 'victims of change' (Huijsmans, 2010, p. 14). Indeed, children and youth moving on their own in search for labour are normally labelled as trafficked children, reinforcing the perception of them as passive individuals (O'Connell Davidson, 2011). The idealised Western view of childhood as an age of innocence and vulnerability has significantly spread in Southeast Asian countries, leading to a unidimensional interpretation of independent child migration in the region as an adverse experience characterized by exploitation, abuse, coercion

---

[1] There is no uniform definition of 'independent child migration'. For the purpose of this contribution, we use the definition by Yaqub who described independent child migrants as: "children who have to some extent chosen to move their usual residence across a major internal or international boundary (…), live at destination without parents or legal/customary adult guardians (…), and also possibly have travelled independently" (Yaqub, 2009, p. 10). Reflecting the diversity of their mobility trajectories, Yaqub suggests that individuals below 18 years of age may display independence either during travel or at destination or both, may or may not cross an international border and may at times be travelling or living with other relatives.

M. P. Capaldi (✉) · A. Altamura
Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies, Mahidol University, Salaya, Thailand

and deception. As a corollary of this interpretation, young migrant workers are generally regarded as lacking capacity and self-determination, needing to be shielded from the adult world as recipients of protection and welfare.

Whilst recognising that independent child migrants are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, a number of scholars have begun to shed light on their 'real' lived experiences, giving impetus to a deconstruction of the hegemonic trafficking narrative (Huijsmans, 2008; Beazley, 2015; Beazley & Ross, 2017; Capaldi, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017). The oversimplification of the child migration phenomenon within the child trafficking discourse, it is argued, has overshadowed the fact that migration can be a positive expression of young people's 'future seeking' and aspiration to the full realisation of their rights. The concepts of 'agency' and 'childhood as a social construct' are central to this growing body of research. The focus is increasingly placed not just on the competence and evolving capacities of the child but also on how childhood is conceptualised and understood in different contexts and cultures. Some scholars have gone beyond stressing children's agency. For example, Yea (2016) and Capaldi (2015, 2016) have emphasised that agency and vulnerability are not antithetical concepts while Huijsmans has proposed a relational approach to agency which underscores the importance of factors such as age, gender and generation (Huijsmans, 2012, 2016, 2017).

Research about independent child migrants in Thailand in 2014 has also drawn attention to the often neglected capability of children to be resilient (Capaldi, 2014). Based upon a constructivist approach to resiliency as theorised by Ungar, the study has unveiled the significant interaction that exists between the individual characteristics and capacities of child migrants, their social ecology and the diverse cultural contexts they navigate. The introduction of this theoretical framework has paved the way to an important change in understanding how children migrating on their own can make choices and decisions that affect their lives. Nevertheless, its application in research efforts remains limited, and its potential policy and practice implications are yet to be acknowledged by duty bearers in the region.

Building on a comprehensive literature review covering all Southeast Asian countries,[2] this book chapter seeks to illustrate the recent paradigm shift in the interpretation of independent child migration in Southeast Asia, emphasising the dimensions of agency and resilience. After a brief critical analysis of the child migration and trafficking discourse as generally presented in relevant literature, the concept of agency will be introduced to question the predominant protection and welfare approach to independent child migrants. It will be shown that the traditional

---

[2] Besides drawing largely from Capaldi's unpublished doctoral dissertation (2016) and subsequent scholarly articles, the review has involved an extensive literature search using databases and networking platforms such as Google scholar, Researchgate, Academia and Science direct. Keywords used for this purpose include among others: child migration, independent child migration, independent child migrants, children's agency, resilience, child labour, labour migration, child trafficking, children on the streets, trafficked children, child domestic workers. Whilst it covers all ASEAN countries, the review was not able to identify relevant research in Brunei and Singapore. Studies on migrant women and men were also scrutinised and included in the review whenever presenting information and data about adults who migrated independently before turning 18.

Western- and adult-centric conceptualisations of the 'vulnerability of childhood' are not simply replicable to the Southeast Asian context. The section that follows unpacks the theories and concepts related to risk and resilience and how they impact on adolescents, especially those relevant to a migratory context. Through the narratives of children's lives and migratory journeys, resilience will be presented as one of the key factors facilitating the navigation of risks and obstacles and a feature characterising the lives of many independent child migrants. The final section will reassess the common adult assumptions concerning children's agency, vulnerability and resilience within the migratory processes, examining the over-generalisations associated with child migration. The conclusion is that only by acknowledging this complexity and understanding the lived experiences of young migrant workers, will it be possible to develop more effective and flexible protection systems to reduce the risks of unsafe independent child migration, leading to better long-term results.

9.2   A Brief Critique of the Child Migration and Trafficking Discourse: Deconstructing Conflating Concepts

Independent child migration for work is significant in Southeast Asia, taking many forms and leading to different outcomes (IHRP et al., 2013; Capaldi, 2014; Beazley, 2015; Van Doore, 2018). The phenomenon occurs mostly internally or across borders in the region, with Thailand in particular acting as a major catalyst for child migrants from neighbouring countries (IOM, 2019; Capaldi, 2014). Most children migrating on their own are well into their teenage years and engage in highly gendered occupations: boys are primarily working in physically demanding sectors such as agriculture, construction, manufacturing or on fishing platforms, girls are most prevalent in domestic and care work, bar and restaurants, garment factories, light manufacturing, and in the service and entertainment industries (Capaldi, 2014; Chhay, 2019).

The near-absence of legal migration channels means that most independent child migrants in the region move across borders undocumented or irregularly. This condition exposes them to severe dangers at the outset of migration, while in transit and at destination (Van de Glind, 2010; Capaldi, 2014). Clearly, for children migrating internally for work, irregular legal status is not an issue, yet they also face various risks.

Children migrating alone are vulnerable to a range of human rights violations that they struggle to navigate and overcome. These include exploitative working conditions with unpaid or low salaries, long working hours and lack of safety in the workplace. In most egregious situations, independent child migrants may end up in forced labour and debt bondage or suffer serious abuse, violence and discrimination (IHRP et al., 2013). Many young migrant workers experience harsh living conditions and difficulties in accessing services due to language and other barriers, others may face arrest and detention for being undocumented:

> After being in Thailand for about one month, I went out with friends and got arrested because I didn't have any documents. My brother had to come and pay some money and then I was released. Since then I dared not to go out at all. I wish I could have the right papers but it's expensive and I can't afford it. (Cambodian boy aged 15 years; working as food vendor; migrated at age 14 years) (Capaldi, 2014, p. 86).

The discourse by UN and NGO researchers has generally focused on the myriad of perils that children moving on their own encounter, placing particular emphasis on the need to protect them from human trafficking, forced labour and exploitation. With few exceptions (Apland & Yarrow, 2019), the narrative of anti-trafficking agencies has been dominated by depictions of independent child migrants as 'passive victims'.

Echoing a dominant global trend, Southeast Asian governments have tended to conflate the issue of independent child migration for work with combating child trafficking and irregular migration. This approach leans to a legal justification in the *UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children* which, as a matter of definition, stipulates that children's consent to any form of facilitated migration resulting in some level of exploitation is irrelevant and that such exploitative mobility always constitutes a child trafficking offence.

Crystalising the construct of child migrants' victimhood, the irrelevancy of a minor's consent to exploitative migration, combined with the fact that most migrant child workers endure some degree of exploitation, has led to the phenomenon being conceptualized as a trafficking problem (Van Doore, 2018; Huijsmans & Baker, 2012). The resultant prevailing strategy adopted by governments to address the exploitation of young migrant workers has revolved around criminal justice responses and anti-trafficking policies aimed at stemming mobility and discouraging migration. The common rationale behind this modus operandi is that children are by their very nature at risk and thus can be better protected if they are kept out of migration and work. Contrary to its supposedly protective intention, the adverse consequence of this focus on detection and arrest is that independent child migrants are often the target of policing interventions. This in turn makes their journeys more expensive and dangerous while also exposing them to a heightened risk of exploitation once at destination.

Traditional studies on child and youth migration and anti-trafficking campaigns have contributed to fuel this conflation by focusing disproportionally on bad migratory experiences through the human trafficking lens (Capaldi, 2017). There is no doubt that child trafficking and labour exploitation are among the most pernicious and heinous crimes which lead to the abuse of countless children across all ASEAN countries. Nevertheless, the assumption that all independent child migration for work is akin to child trafficking presents some conceptual shortcomings that policy makers and some anti-trafficking agencies have yet to acknowledge (Howard, 2017).

A first important dilemma lies in the notion of exploitation which is a fundamental component of the definition of child trafficking. Given that the understanding of this concept remains vague and unclear, how unfair, unhealthy and poorly paid should work be to be categorised as child trafficking? To help solve this dilemma,

ILO has tried to capture the different nuances and degrees of exploitation by distinguishing between 'children in employment', 'child labourers', 'children in hazardous work' or in the 'worst forms of child labour' (Diallo et al., 2013). The advantage of this conceptual classification is that it recognizes that not all work by children under 18 is exploitative. However, while indicators have been formulated to identify cases of child labour (FAO, 2015), the lack of nuance around what is normal or abusive work conditions, legitimate work or exploitative labour, is at best ambiguous for it involves moral and political judgements that may not be universal (Apland & Yarrow, 2019; Peleg, 2018).

The quandary around exploitation becomes even more complex when considering that the 'exploited' themselves can perceive a very different reality from that defined in international legal instruments. A number of studies in different ASEAN countries have investigated how independent child migrants or migrant workers including under 18-s felt about their current jobs, revealing that many, if not the majority, were satisfied with their employment (Open Institute, 2016; Capaldi, 2014; Nanthavong, 2013; Nguyen Thi, 2008; Huijsmans, 2007).

Focusing on undocumented labour migration from Laos to Thailand, Huijsmans, & Baker (2012, p. 940) noted that Lao young people 'rarely challenge unfairness or dissatisfaction with their work but generally put up with it, only to leave the job without any notice when exploitation is stretched beyond certain limits'. This behaviour should not be interpreted as a passive acceptance of the situation as young migrants can often be well informed of other work opportunities and thus be very mobile illustrating agency (Peou, 2016).

Furthermore, due to the lack of better alternatives in their home countries, it is not uncommon for young migrants to choose to stay in exploitative conditions even when they are allowed to leave and return home (Apland & Yarrow, 2019; Huijsmans, 2007, 2008). Though this may sound a 'paradox', the 'consensual exploitation' that some youth seem to experience calls into question the automatic labelling of all under 18-s involved in facilitated exploitative migration as child trafficking victims.

In the case of most independent child migrants, the boundaries between child trafficking, labour exploitation and smuggling are blurred, making the empirical distinction between these interrelated phenomena particularly challenging. Children migrating on their own may sometimes voluntarily cross the borders irregularly without the help of intermediaries or through the services of smugglers but may also become victims of smuggling or trafficking. They can even enter a country legally and then overstay their border-passes, becoming illegal at a later stage. During the whole migratory process, they can experience different degrees of exploitation and drift in and out of trafficking contexts by changing jobs.

The complexity and fluidity inherent to independent child migration thus requires that overlapping concepts be better analysed as a continuum within which considerable levels of variation exist. Most importantly, the peculiarities of children migratory trajectories show that the usual construct which sees children as intrinsically vulnerable and non-agentic individuals who are only in need of protection should be questioned. As noted by a key informant interviewed by Zimmerman et al. (2015, p. 28), 'we too often approach the issue of migrating children from narrow

assumptions of what we think is best for children and not enough time given to understanding what children want for themselves.' Listening to children's voices through a constructivist approach that acknowledges the interplay between context, culture and an individual's experience is therefore crucial to go beyond common adult-constructed assumptions about independent child migrants. By analysing children's agency and resilience, this paradigm shift can release many migrant children from the predominant construction of human trafficking and ultimately result in more positive child migratory journeys and outcomes.

9.3 Tensions Within the Concepts of Children's Agency and Vulnerability: At the Crossroads of Tradition and Modernisation

Contemporary social discourses on childhood have traditionally been dominated by a conceptualisation of children which sees them as lacking certain adult dispositions such as cognitive capacities, maturity, and autonomy (Boyden, 1997). By virtue of simplistic analyses viewing childhood as a transient phase to adulthood, children are depicted as innocent, naïve, immature 'human becomings' (Qvortrup, 1991, p. 8) or are reduced to 'incomplete adults' (Sinclair, 2004, p. 107) and 'semi-citizens' (Cohen, 2009, p. 155). However, the sociology of childhood that has permeated social sciences since the 1980s has refuted this dominant strand, highlighting that children are social agents with capacities to act independently, shape their life circumstances and influence their social environment. As well as emphasizing the concept of children's agency, this new approach has theorised that childhood is a social construction and, as such, conceptualizations of childhood may vary according to time, place and the socio-cultural expectations on the child.

> Children are and must be seen as active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and the societies they live in. Children are not just passive subjects of social structures and processes. (Prout & James, 1997, p. 8; cit. in Savahl, 2010)

Whilst this theoretical perspective was emerging, the adoption of the Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1989 marked the definitive globalisation of the Western modern construct of childhood (Boyden, 1997; Imoh, 2012). Despite some criticism that the CRC's pre-occupation with the protection of children has reinforced the portrayal of their vulnerability, the CRC has also legitimately been regarded as one of the conceptual origins of children's agency as it acknowledges that children have rights to participation, autonomy and self-determination (Abebe, 2019). This is particularly evident in Art. 12 which encapsulates a child's right to participate in all decisions affecting their lives 'in accordance with their age and maturity', and art. 5 which for the first time in an international human rights treaty introduces the notion of 'evolving capacities' (Kosher et al., 2016).

The tensions within the concepts of children's agency in the UNCRC reflect the coexistence of two conflicting approaches underlying the formulation of this legal instrument: protectionism and liberationism. These contrasting positions also have a bearing on how the issue of independent child migration for work is interpreted and addressed. Indeed, if the liberal view of childhood advocates for the right of children to migrate and make decisions about their own education regardless of their age, the paternalistic perspective supports the idea that child work is incompatible with studying. For example, Rehfeld (2011, p. 144) strongly argues that children's education and welfare must be a priority before space is created for the development of their citizenship capabilities; he describes childhood as 'a naturally precarious time' with millions of children living in unstable environments vulnerable to many threats. Rehfeld believes that a healthy childhood that is 'protected from the concerns of adults,' means that we need to be wary of the potential harm of children engaging in the adult world. However, the protectionist approach that sees education and child work as mutually exclusive ignores that children themselves are continuously looking for livelihood options, to learn about the world of work and engage in activities in safe work environments. As many scholars have recognized (Peleg, 2018; Howard, 2014; Huijsmans, 2007; Pinheiro, 2006; Molland, 2005), without provision of such opportunities, children's vulnerability to socioeconomic marginalisation grows, forcing them to access resources through informal or unsafe means that may increase their exposure to abuse and exploitation. Prioritising protection needs by generically assuming incompetency on the part of children reduces them to welfare recipients rather than accounting for the reality of their localized childhoods which sees them as active social agents of change with resilience and capacities, particularly in the setting of cross-border migration for work. The accounts given by older migrant child workers in particular demonstrate that they are mature, agentic and resilient citizens; at the same time their complex situations challenge the idea of a universal and individualistic autonomy and resilience, suggesting that their choices and aspirations are embedded in socio-political and cultural contexts and relational dynamics that may either restrain or facilitate their agency and ability to respond to adversities (Abebe, 2019; Tisdall & Punch, 2012; Huijsmans, 2017; Capaldi, 2016).

Similar to other developing nations, countries across Southeast Asia have all taken to institutionalizing the modern Western concept of childhood. Today, the notion of childhood as a happy and 'golden' time that must be devoted to schooling and play is widespread especially among ruling elites and educated middle-class, particularly in urban areas (Beazley, 2015; Huijsmans, 2010). However, this idealised construct is at odds with the reality of much of the poor in Southeast Asia whose children increasingly take up work responsibilities as they get older.

Cultural norms of filial obligations and parental expectations on children to contribute to the family livelihood are a key component of the traditional Southeast Asian value system. Permeating society at all levels, the idea that children should help with labour and earn family income is more common among rural communities. In these contexts, migration can provide an opportunity to improve the

household economic conditions while at the same time ensuring adherence to traditional roles:

> My family led a modest life. We did not have much. I saw how other families were improving their lives because of migrants' money. I felt I must also migrate to help my parents. I didn't want to see them left behind. (Indonesian girl, age unknown; migrated to Taiwan at age 17 years as a domestic worker) (Chan, 2017, p.8).

Whilst several studies suggest that the final decision to engage in labour migration is often the result of a personal choice made by the children and young people themselves (Chhay, 2019; Bylander, 2015; Capaldi, 2014; Patunru & Kusumaningrum, 2013; Hesketh et al., 2012), discussions usually take place within the household to reach an agreement and get permission from parents (Chan, 2017; Chhay, 2019).

Like in most of the developing world, in Southeast Asia migration is viewed as a transition from childhood to adulthood. On par with other key life course events such as quitting school and entering the labour market, getting married or having children, leaving home to find work represents a normal rite of passage through which adolescents stop to be considered dependent children and 'establish themselves more firmly as youth' (Huijsmans, 2017, p. 128).

Within the region's patriarchal societies, traditional practices and gender norms tend to depict the experience of migration as a male prerogative while women's independent mobility is deemed inappropriate. If relocating for work is a strategy allowing men to fulfil their conventional role of breadwinners, moving away from home is commonly perceived as a risk for young girls of ending up in socially-condemned sexual behaviours (Huijsmans, 2014; Kusakabe & Pearson, 2015).

The social stigma associated with girls' mobility contrasts with the process of feminisation of labour migration that Southeast Asia has experienced since the last decades of the twentieth century. Together with important socio-economic transformations, modernisation in the region has brought with it a reshaping of traditional gender norms and relations through a process of 'negotiation and contestation' (Yeoh, 2016, p. 78). An example is that of contemporary Indonesia where the once male dominated practice of *merantau*[3] (wandering) is now used to justify the prevailing young girls' involvement in independent migration (Beazley & Ross, 2017; Khoo et al., 2017; Khoo & Yeoh, 2018).

Yet across the region 'deep-seated transformations in gender ideologies or scripts are resistant to change' (Yeoh, 2016, p.75). In contrast to boys, girls are usually persuaded to leave home for work solely if they can rely on social and family networks at destination (Bylander, 2015). On the other hand, cultural specificities and gender norms in each ASEAN country also mean that expectations on boys and girls to migrate may differ. In countries such as Cambodia and Lao PDR, for example, young boys still face stronger household pressure towards transnational migration due to the persistence of the traditional bride price system which requires wealth accumulation in view of marriage, as well as by the likelihood of higher earnings as

---

[3] *Merantau* refers to men involvement in migration, usually for work and to improve social status (Beazley & Ross, 2017).

compared to girls (Huijsmans, 2014; Bylander, 2015). Instead, in the Philippines and Thailand it is the daughters who are expected to migrate and act as financial helpers when they are adolescents or young women (Anderson et al., 2017; Capaldi, 2016).

9.4 Theories, Concepts and a Constructionist Discourse on Resilience

If increasing scholarly attention has been paid on how children exercise agency throughout the migratory journey, a key capability of independent child migrants still requiring analysis and research is resiliency. As noted by Ensor and Gozdziak (2010, p. 7), 'it is important to acknowledge that children's agency, and their ability to overcome the challenges of migration, … reflects their own individual and socially generated vulnerabilities and resilience'. It is by tapping into resilience skills, factors and strategies that children are capable of successfully and proactively manage the innately risky process of labour migration and, in many cases, secure positive outcomes.

9.4.1 Early Conceptualisations of Resilience

The concept of resilience first appeared in the scientific arena in the 1970s when a group of clinical researchers found that some children achieved good outcomes despite being exposed to a high risk for psychopathology. These pioneering efforts led to a significant shift of focus from mental disease and deficits to mental health and resources, giving impetus to a new research field (O'Dougherty Wright et al., 2013).

The construct of resilience has become increasingly fashionable, yet there is a lack of consensus and ambiguity on the meaning of this term (Ungar, 2011). Different understanding of this concept reflects the variety of theories and models that have been developed over the years. However, it is now widely accepted that two recurring elements feature in all definitions of resilience: exposure to serious stress and positive functioning. As Vella and Pai (2019, p. 233) recently stated, 'resilience is commonly described as the ability to bounce back or overcome some form of adversity and thus experience positive outcomes despite an aversive event or situation.'

Scholars have identified different waves or approaches to researching resilience in the last few decades (Ungar, 2011; O'Dougherty Wright et al., 2013). Originally, the study of resilience focused on the individuals and their particular traits, capacities and internal resources (Lee et al., 2009; Shaikh & Kauppi, 2010). Several intimate qualities (such as spirituality, self-efficacy, self-esteem, intelligence, optimism, empathy, life skills and problem-solving ability) were found to particularly

contribute to positive outcomes in children and function as protective factors (O'Dougherty Wright et al., 2013; Ungar, 2004). However, the major limitation of resilience being portrayed as an assemblage of inborn traits is that it becomes viewed as a static individual attribute which some children have and others do not (Shaikh & Kauppi, 2010). Furthermore, this approach does not give credence to the influence of dynamic factors that can change over time and also misses out another key aspect: the social context and conditions that build, nurture and reinforce resilience among children.

Thanks to the groundbreaking work by Rutter and others (e.g. Garmezy, Werner, Luthar and Masten), the initial focus of research on resilience has shifted from identifying and measuring psychological innate factors to understanding the processes and interactions between the environment and the individual's internal aptitudes (Ungar, 2011).

Early ecological understandings of resilience identified clusters of resilience related factors and processes that were thought to be applicable globally. However, the validity of this 'notion of resilience as an independently existing entity which is measurable using universal norms' (Heffernan, 2017, p. 17) has been more recently questioned. It is argued that, far from being universal, resilience related factors are not necessarily protective for all children and their relevance varies according to children's development stage and the context in which they grow up and develop. If few of these variables can be exclusively assigned to risk or protective factors, more interactive and contextual processes are likely at play and therefore a different approach is needed to capture such complexity.

9.4.2 A Constructionist Approach to Resilience and Ungar's Socioecological Theory: A Useful Model to Understand Independent Child Migrants' Subjective Experiences?

One of the latest directions taken by resilience research is the constructionist conceptualisation proposed by Ungar. While still anchored on an ecological perspective, this model has strengthened the belief of the benefits of integrating resilience and negotiation into the local context, culture and diversity of the individual (Ungar, 2004, 2008). Of central importance is the individual's own interpretation of adversity and what the person sees as viable behaviours and outcomes. The notion of resilience as a social-ecological construct is reflected in the following definition:

> In the context of exposure to significant adversity, resilience is both the capacity of individuals to *navigate* their way to the psychological, social, cultural, and physical resources that sustain their well-being, and their capacity individually and collectively to *negotiate* for these resources to be provided and experienced in culturally meaningful ways. (Ungar, 2008, p. 225)

Challenging an individualistic and Western-centric approach, the socioecological theory of resilience introduces the concepts of 'decentrality' and 'cultural relativity'. Unlike other scholars that have placed emphasis on the child's personal qualities or

the interaction between the individual and the environment, Ungar proposes to shift attention away from the child and focus on their ecologies. 'Resilience', he argues, 'is as, or more, dependent on the capacity of the individual's physical and social ecology to potentiate positive development under stress than the capacity of individuals to exercise personal agency during their recovery from risk exposure' (Ungar, 2012, p. 15). As such, prominence should be given to resilience-building interventions targeting the social environment of the child.

The notion of cultural relativity is well illustrated by multi-country studies by Ungar and colleagues (Ungar et al., 2007, 2008). Through this work, multiple culturally embedded paths to resilience were identified. However, this does not mean that there are no global aspects or cross-cultural similarities. Indeed, seven universal tensions were defined, namely: access to material resources, relationships, identity, power and control, cultural adherence, social justice and cohesion. Though being universal, these tensions are resolved by each child in their own way and according to the culture and context they belong to/grow up in (Ungar, 2008).

In particular, this resilience model was used by Libório and Ungar (2010) to support a literature review of children's own experiences of work. Whilst identifying a range of risk factors at structural, relational and personal level, the study revealed that in contexts of limited resources, work may result in good outcomes for some children allowing them to resolve successfully the seven tensions. Similar findings also emerged from another research by these authors (Libório & Ungar, 2014) which investigated children's economic activity in a Brazilian municipality of São Paulo State. In contrast to a common view of child labour as being always harmful, children's employment was found to contribute to positive functioning and psychosocial growth.

9.4.3   The Why, the What and the How: From Constructiveness to Interconnectedness

The notion of resilience is clearly an important concept in the analysis of independent child migration as the child's individual resilience influences their agency. As the constructionist conceptualization of resilience examines personal traits within the individual's cultural and contextual lives, this raises the need to better understand the child's agency and the reasons for their migratory journeys. Within Southeast Asia the only attempt to examine resilience of this group of children from a constructionist perspective was conducted by Capaldi (2014, 2015, 2016). Certainly, independent child migrants were able to successfully 'navigate their way' through Ungar's seven tensions with Capaldi suggesting that the 'glue' holding these all together was perhaps the reasons for them migrating and entering the labour market in the first place. For most of the children and youth moving for work in Southeast Asia, economic reasons were the main factor for their migration (Capaldi, 2014; Peou, 2016; Beazley, 2015). Cultural and historical factors mean

that children have grown up expecting to contribute to the family income. This concept was clearly articulated by a key informant in research on independent child migrants in Thailand:

> Asian children have a strong sense of responsibility to parents – this is the 'bottom line' on why they migrate. Asian's have a different definition of what is a good child. The children have responsibilities to send money back home, need to be prepared to be exploited and must make sacrifices for the family (Capaldi, 2014, p. 68).

A number of studies on migrant remittances suggest that responsibility and desire to send money back home is strong, particularly amongst girls (IOM, 2019; Kusakabe & Pearson, 2015; Rahman & Fee, 2009; They & Treleaven, 2013). Yet independent child migrants' remittances are rarely regarded as positive indicators because of the generally negative demographics of irregular, displaced, unaccompanied or trafficked children (Cortina, 2010). However, in many regions of the world, they are a concrete manifestation of an 'inter-generational contract' that is a major motivational factor that influences migrant children, manifested within a sense of pride, independence and aspirations for a better future. Self-direction and motivation theories are integral to a constructionist interpretation of agency and resilience within the context of work environments. Frederic Herzberg identified that the prime motivators included recognition, responsibility and goals as opposed to lesser secondary factors such as working conditions or compensation (Herzberg cited in Christensen et al., 2012). Across a number of ASEAN countries, child migrants clearly articulated their personal and collective sense of purpose and consistently reported a sense of pride and stronger social recognition as a result of sending remittances back to their families:

> When I was in Cambodia, my relatives and neighbours never treated me as their niece. After I worked here for two years and then returned home, they were so nice to me. I was so surprised and proud of myself. (Cambodian female aged 28 years; working as domestic worker; migrated first to Phnom Penh at age 17 and later to Malaysia) (Chhay, 2019, p. 68)

Many believe they have matured, become independent and acquired knowledge and skills through their migratory experience (Jampaklay & Kittisuksathit, 2009; Capaldi, 2014; Chhay, 2019; Hesketh et al., 2012):

> …here… I feel that I'm improving my communication skills and general knowledge. I would not have these skills if I stayed in Myanmar. Thailand is more developed and improved to our own country. (Burmese male aged 19 years; working in food processing; migrated to Thailand at age 14 years) (Capaldi, 2014, p. 136).

Some youth are increasingly fascinated by the opportunity to experience new adventures, access consumer goods and reshape their identity by accruing wealth and status via labour mobility (Peou, 2016; Beazley, 2015; Bylander, 2015; Anderson et al., 2017). Others consider the earnings deriving from labour migration as a practical solution to cover the high costs associated with continuing education (Hesketh et al., 2012), though the complex reality facing those relocating across borders is such that they are normally forced to abandon their initial educational aspirations (IOM, 2019). Research has also identified that some young leave home in search for

work to postpone marriage and gain more power to negotiate the choice of a partner (Khoo & Yeoh, 2018; Huijsmans, 2018; Chan, 2017):

> My sister is in the village. She is married and has a baby. I would probably be married now too if I stayed. (Indonesian girl aged 15 years; migrated to Jakarta from villages elsewhere in Java; profession unknown) (Bessell, 2009, p.536).

If these strong motivations are *why* children migrate, despite the vulnerabilities and dangers, then their resilience is *what* helps the child to withstand such adversity and even thrive; the child's agency is *how* they navigate the obstacles and challenges of migration. Capaldi (2016) suggests that it is the interconnectedness between 'the why, the what and the how' that best empowers the child within independent migration.

Whilst independent child migrants moving for work face numerous risks at different levels, when listening to their voices, it is clear that their involvement in an economic activity dispels the view that they only need protection. Their experiences show that labour migration provides them with an opportunity to make a significant contribution and build resilience amid adversity (Libório & Ungar, 2010). A successful approach to mitigating vulnerabilities associated with independent child migration should therefore not ignore the impact of this experience on their identity, empowerment and aspirations, creating the conditions for them to resolve the seven tensions of Ungar's socioecological theory as safely as possible.

9.5   Conclusion

This chapter has questioned the conventional adult constructions of independent child migration for work in Southeast Asia. By complementing mainstream research, the aim was to understand the phenomenon from children's perspective, drawing from existing literature. Indeed, a relatively recent wave of studies based on a child-centred participatory approach has shed light on the lived experiences of many cross-border and internal young migrants, proposing a paradigm shift.

Such emerging fieldwork does not deny that these youth are not vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. The trafficking and exploitation of migrant children clearly exist in the region and are intolerable crimes requiring urgent action. We should also be wary of overzealous enthusiasm for children's resilience and agency that downplays their lack of choice and the types of exploitation experienced. However, the common understanding of all children migrating voluntarily for work as victims of unscrupulous traffickers due to their intrinsic vulnerability does not reflect the reality.

When listening to their voices, young people engaging in labour migration tell us a story that does not match the usual narrative of most anti-trafficking agencies and Southeast Asian governments. In pursuing their migratory projects, independent child migrants undoubtedly exercise agency and self-determination building their confidence and bringing pride in the work they do. Their accounts show that

migration may be a constructive aspiration of young people's search for the full realization of their rights and a better life. A significant motivational factor shapes their lives that is largely influenced by socio-cultural beliefs around familial obligations and the transition from childhood into adulthood. Not differing much from young adults, adolescents embarking in independent labour migration possess capabilities, skills, and a reservoir of resilience, enabling them to make decisions and successfully navigate the potential dangers associated with irregular or unsafe migration. This is at odds with the more deficit model of capacity that is too often associated with the age bound limitations of 'evolving capacities' enshrined in the CRC. The legal definition of a 'child' applied to a 16- or 17-year-old migrating on their own for labour can easily neglect that these older children are in fact competent youth migrants.

Migrant children as independent and voluntary workers is rarely acknowledged as it does not sit well with the Western-centric expectations of childhood. A number of factors contribute to the existing disconnect and tension between this scenario and the dominant anti-trafficking approach. Firstly, a lack of definitional clarity of what constitutes exploitation and human trafficking and the rendering of a child's consent to migrate irrelevant if exploitation is deemed to occur, all serve to entangle and confuse the anti-trafficking discourse. Secondly, the CRC and its associated modern concept of childhood ignore the economic development needs of the children of the majority world. Whilst the heavy focus on protection is not unwarranted when there is a danger to child migrants of trafficking and exploitation, in many cases of child migration the exploitation appears as advantageous for both the child and the employer. This is even more true where there are no better alternatives in communities of origin. Interpreting this exchange as human trafficking risks reducing the less exploitative work options, pushing child migrants (who are mostly irregular) into more dangerous and exploitative work conditions. Thirdly, accurate and verifiable data about the scale of child trafficking compared to successful child migration outcomes is absent, making the development of appropriate policies and programmes problematic. Fourthly, despite child trafficking being generally pictured as a lucrative business run by criminal gangs and ruthless exploiters yielding coercive power, the stories recounted by many adolescent migrant workers show that this is not a common situation. The fluidity and nuances typical of their experience and condition demonstrate that the spectrum of child agency within migration can easily oscillate from positive experiences at one end of the continuum to exploitation and child trafficking at the other.

Therefore, the generic categorisation of child migrants who are of legal age to work as trafficked victims and inherently vulnerable is misleading. Throughout numerous studies, the children tell us that their problem is not that they haven't reached 18 years; rather, it is the common forms of migrant discrimination, exploitation, and poor implementation of labour rights that prey on other vulnerabilities such as their irregular status.

Clearly, this does not entail that policies and programmes to stop child trafficking and exploitation should be sidelined. Addressing the worst forms of child labour in specific places and industries through distinct responses that access the most

vulnerable should remain a priority. However, we must guard against the use of select elements or principles of the international child rights framework and advances of legislation, policies and programmes being misinterpreted or detached from reality. Dealing with child migration as assumed human trafficking, the best interest of the child may be overlooked in the political rush to crack down on 'illegal migrants'.

Moving from generic or adult-centric approaches to prevent child migration or that only situate the issue within the child trafficking discourse brings with it a significant shift. It means developing adequate policies, approaches and regulations that reduce the risks and hazards of irregular migration and that provides a more supportive environment for children's well-being. This could include awareness-raising campaigns around exploitation and safe migration in sending communities for example. Another option could be to promote labour law reform in countries of destination and raise awareness amongst the public of the contribution of migrants in order to stem stigma, discrimination or exploitation of adolescent migrants. Equally relevant is to systematically target employers that exploit young migrant workers to make them accountable for their actions and design specific programmes that help build these youth's resilience.

Regardless of the type of strategy to adopt, it is imperative that the voices of the adolescent children do not remain unheard. This can only be achieved by expanding research efforts using a child-centred approach that focuses on the aspirations and positive outcomes of child migrants (in more localised settings) and not just the worst-case scenarios of child exploitation and trafficking. These latter narratives paint a bleak picture of child migration fueling self-prophesying rhetoric of poor parenting, vulnerabilities, trafficking and exploitation. Further research is needed on the different contexts for child migration that is age-specific, including of adolescents of a legal working age who have completed compulsory education and who have the right to appropriate and legal employment.

Longitudinal studies should also be conducted to understand whether children's agency in independent child migration is embedded in the best interest of the child and inter-generational relations over longer periods of time. Finally, issues around free and full consent or positive outcomes and impact are better assessed through longer life course dynamics.

References

Abebe, T. (2019). Reconceptualising children's agency as continuum and interdependence. *Social Sciences, 8*(81), 1–16. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci8030081

Anderson, A., Apland, K., Dunaiski, M., & Yarrow, E. (2017). *Women in the wind: Analysis of migration, youth economic empowerment and gender in Vietnam and in the Philippines*. Plan International.

Apland, K., & Yarrow, E. (2019). *Casting light in the shadows: Child and youth migration, exploitation and trafficking in Vietnam*. Coram International.

Beazley, H. (2015). Multiple identities, multiple realities: Children who migrate independently for work in Southeast Asia. *Children's Geographies, 13*(3), 296–309. https://doi.org/10.108 0/14733285.2015.972620

Beazley, H., & Ross, D. (2017). Dominant positionings and paradoxical mobilities: Child migrants in Java, Indonesia. In C. Ni Laoire, A. White, & T. Skelton (Eds.), *Movement, mobilities, and journeys* (pp. 85–109). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-287-029-2_8

Bessell, S. (2009). Indonesian children's views and experiences of work and poverty. *Social Policy and Society, 8*(4), 27–540. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1474746409990108

Boyden, J. (1997). Childhood and the policy makers: A comparative perspective on the globalization of childhood. In A. James & A. Prout (Eds.), *Constructing and reconstructing childhood: Contemporary issues in the sociological study of childhood* (2nd ed., pp. 190–229). Routledge Falmer.

Boyden, J. (2013). 'We're not going to suffer like this in the mud': Educational aspirations, social mobility and independent child migration among populations living in poverty. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education, 43*(5), 580–600. https://doi.org/10.108 0/03057925.2013.821317

Bylander, M. (2015). Contested mobilities: Gendered migration pressures among Cambodian youth. *Gender, Place & Culture, 22*(8), 1124–1140. https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2014.939154

Capaldi, M. (2014). *The child's journey in search of rights: Determining and addressing points of vulnerability in independent child migration in Thailand*. Terre des Hommes.

Capaldi, M. (2015). Rethinking independent child migration in Thailand: Victims of exploitation or competent agents? *Journal of Population and Social Studies, 23*(1), 16–32. https://doi.org/10.14456/jpss.2015.10

Capaldi, M. (2016). *The child's journey in search of rights: Assessing the construction of vulnerability in independent child migration in Thailand [unpublished doctoral dissertation]*. Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies, Mahidol University.

Capaldi, M. (2017, June 21–22). *Independent child migration: A demonstration of children's agency or a form of child trafficking?* [Paper presentation]. The international seminar on mixed migration in southeast and East Asia, UN-ACT and Mahidol University. http://un-act.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Independent-Child-Migration.pdf. Accessed 29 Mar 2021.

Chan, C. (2017). Not always 'left-behind': Indonesian adolescent women negotiating transnational mobility, filial piety and care. *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology, 18*(3), 246–263. https://doi.org/10.1080/14442213.2017.1311372

Chhay, C. (2019). *Migration-decision making and social status: Cambodian female migrant workers in Malaysia [Master's theses]*. Kent State University.

Christensen, C., Allworth, J., & Dillon, K. (2012). *How will you measure your life?* Harper Collins Publishing.

Cohen, E. (2009). *Semi-citizenship in democratic politics*. Cambridge University Press.

Cortina, J. (2010, May 27–28). *Migration and development: A multilevel perspective to data collection*. Global migration group, practitioners symposium.

Diallo, Y., Etienne, A., & Mehran, F. (2013). *Global child labour trends 2008 to 2012*. ILO-IPEC.

Ensor, M., & Gozdziak, E. (Eds.). (2010). *Children and migration: At the crossroads of resiliency and vulnerability*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Feingold, D. A. (2012). Trafficking, trade, and migration: Mapping human trafficking in the Mekong region. In P. A. Chouvy (Ed.), *An atlas of trafficking in Southeast Asia: The illegal trade in arms, drugs, people, counterfeit goods and natural resources in mainland Southeast Asia*. I.B. Tauris.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO]. (2015). *Handbook for monitoring and evaluation of child labour in agriculture: Measuring the impacts of agricultural and food security programmes on child labour in family-based agriculture*. FAO.

Heffernan, F. M. (2017). *'Constructions of resilience': A Q methodological study to explore how young women view resilience [Doctoral dissertation]*. The University of Sheffiled.

Hesketh, T. M., Gamlin, J., Ong, M., & Camacho, A. Z. V. (2012). The psychosocial impact of child domestic work: A study from India and the Philippines. *Archives of Disease in Childhood, 97*(9), 773–778. https://doi.org/10.1136/archdischild-2012-301816

Howard, N. (2014). Teenage labour migration and antitrafficking policy in West Africa. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 653*(1), 124–140. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716213519242

Howard, N. (2017). *Child trafficking, youth labour mobility and the politics of protection*. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-47818-4

Huijsmans, R. (2007). Approaches to Lao minors working in Thailand. *Juth Pakai: Perspective on Lao Development, 8*, 18–33.

Huijsmans, R. (2008). Children working beyond their localities: Lao children working in Thailand. *Childhood, 15*(3), 331–353. https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568208091667

Huijsmans, R. (2010). *Migrating children, households, and the post-socialist state: An ethnographic study of migration and non-migration by children and youth in an ethnic Lao villages* [Doctoral dissertation]. Durham University. http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/420/1/FullThesisCorrectedSept2010.pdf?DDD14. Accessed 29 Mar 2021.

Huijsmans, R. (2012). Beyond compartmentalization: A relational approach towards agency and vulnerability of young migrants. In A. Orgocka & C. Clark-Kazak (Eds.), *Independent child migration—Insights into agency, vulnerability, and structure. New directions for child and adolescent development* (pp. 29–45). New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development, no. 136. doi: https://doi.org/10.1002/cad.20009.

Huijsmans, R. (2014). Becoming a young migrant or stayer seen through the lens of 'householding': Households 'in flux' and the intersection of relations of gender and seniority. *Geoforum, 51*, 294–304. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2012.11.007

Huijsmans, R. (2016). Generationing development: An introduction. In R. Huijsmans (Ed.), *Generationing development. A relational approach to children, youth and development* (pp. 1–31). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-55623-3_1

Huijsmans, R. (2017). Exploring the "age question" in research on young migrants in Southeast Asia. *Journal of Population and Social Studies, 25*(2), 122–134. https://doi.org/10.25133/JPSSv25n2.004

Huijsmans, R. (2018). 'Knowledge that moves': Emotions and affect in policy and research with young migrants. *Children's Geographies, 16*(6), 628–641. https://doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2018.1468869

Huijsmans, R., & Baker, S. (2012). Child trafficking: 'Worst form' of child labour, or worst approach to young migrants? *Development and Change, 43*(4), 919–946. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7660.2012.01786.x

Imoh, A. T. D. (2012). The convention on the rights of the child: A product and facilitator of a blobal childhood. In A. T. D. Imoh & R. Ame (Eds.), *Childhoods at the intersection of the local and the global* (pp. 17–33). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137283344_2

Institute for Human Rights and Peace Studies (IHRP), ECPAT International, Centre for Southeast Asian Studies & The Research and Education for Peace. (2013). *Mapping and analysing the protection situation of unaccompanied and separated children in Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia*. Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies, Mahidol University. https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/1073432/1930_1401958815_538840d14.pdf. Accessed 29 Mar 2021.

IOM. (2019). *Supporting brighter futures: Young women and girls and labour migration in South-East Asia and the Pacific*. IOM.

Jampaklay, A., & Kittisuksathit, S. (2009). *Migrant workers' remittances: Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar*. Institute of Population and Social Research, Mahidol University.

Khoo, C. Y., & Yeoh, B. S. A. (2018). The entanglements of migration and marriage: Negotiating mobility projects among young Indonesian women from migrant-sending villages. *Journal of Intercultural Studies, 39*(6), 704–772. https://doi.org/10.1080/07256868.2018.1533539

Khoo, C. Y., Platt, M., & Yeoh, B. S. A. (2017). Who migrates?: Tracking gendered access to migration within households "in flux" across time. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies, 15*(3), 326–343. https://doi.org/10.1080/15562948.2017.1283456

Kosher, H., Ben-Arieh, A., & Hendelsman, Y. (2016). *Children's rights and social work*. Springer International. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-43920-4

Kusakabe, K., & Pearson, R. (2015). Remittances and women's agency: Managing networks of obligation among Burmese migrant workers in Thailand. In L. Hoang & B. Yeoh (Eds.), *Transnational labour migration, remittances and the changing family in Asia* (pp. 50–81). Palgrave Macmillan.

Lee, T., Kwong, W., Cheung, C., Ungar, M., & Cheung, M. (2009). Children's resilience-related beliefs as a predictor of positive child development in the face of adversities: Implications for interventions to enhance children's quality of life. *Social Indicators Research, 95*(3), 437–453. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-009-9530-x

Libório, R. M. C., & Ungar, M. (2010). Children's labour as a risky pathways to resilience: Children's growth in contexts of poor resources. *Psicologia: Reflexão e Crítica, 23*(2), 232–242. https://doi.org/10.1590/S0102-79722010000200005

Libório, R. M. C., & Ungar, M. (2014). Resilience as protagonism: Interpersonal relationships, cultural practices, and personal agency among working adolescents in Brazil. *Journal of Youth Studies, 17*(5), 682–696. https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2013.834313

Molland, S. (2005). Human trafficking and poverty reduction: Two sides of the same coin? *Juth Pakai: Perspectives on Lao Development, 4*, 27–37.

Nanthavong, S. (2013). *Expectations and benefits from working in Thailand: A case study of young Lao migrant workers in Changwat Prachinburi [Master's Theses]*. Chulalongkorn University.

Nguyen Thi, H.X. (2008). *Migration of youth to Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam: Determinants of mobility and adjustment experiences* [Doctoral dissertation]. Adelaide, Australia: University of Adelaide. http://hdl.handle.net/2440/49883. Accessed 29 Mar 2021.

O'Connell Davidson, J. (2011). Moving children? Child trafficking, child migration, and child rights. *Critical Social Policy, 31*(3), 454–477. https://doi.org/10.1177/0261018311405014

O'Dougherty Wright, M., Masten, A. S., & Narayan, A. J. (2013). Resilience processes in development: Four waves of research on positive adaptation in the context of adversity. In S. Goldstein & R. B. Brooks (Eds.), *Handbook of resilience in children* (2nd ed., pp. 15–37). Springer.

Open Institute. (2016). *Internal migration for low-skilled or unskilled work in Cambodia: Preliminary qualitative results*. Open Institute.

Patunru, A. A., & Kusumaningrum, S. (2013). *Child domestic workers (CDW) in Indonesia: Case studies of Jakarta and greater areas*. ILO-IPEC.

Peleg, N. (2018). Illusion of inclusion: Challenging universalistic conceptions in international children's rights law. *Australian Journal of Human Rights, 24*(3), 326–344. https://doi.org/10.1080/1323238X.2018.1542924

Peou, C. (2016). Negotiating rural-urban transformation and life course fluidity: Rural young people and urban sojourn in contemporary Cambodia. *Journal of Rural Studies, 44*, 177–186. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2016.02.002

Pinheiro, P. (2006). *World report on violence against children*. United Nations.

Prout, A., & James, A. (Eds.). (1997). *Constructing and reconstructing childhood, contemporary issues in the sociological study of childhood*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203362600

Qvortrup, J. (1991). *Childhood as a social phenomenon. An introduction to a series of national reports*. Eurosocial report no. 36. European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research.

Rahman, M., & Fee, L. K. (2009). Gender and the remittance process. *Asian Population Studies, 5*(2), 103–125. https://doi.org/10.1080/17441730902992059

Rehfeld, A. (2011). The child as democratic citizen. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 633*(1), 141–166.

Salazar, N. B. (2016). The (im)mobility of Merantau as a sociocultural practice in Indonesia. In N. Bon & J. Repič (Eds.), *Moving places: Relations, return, and belonging* (pp. 21–42). Berghahn Books.

Savahl, S. (2010). *Ideological constructions of childhood* [Doctoral dissertation]. University of the Western Cape. https://etd.uwc.ac.za/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11394/2028/Savahl_PHD_2010. pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y Accessed 29 Mar 2021.

Shaikh, A., & Kauppi, C. (2010). Deconstructing resilience: Myriad conceptualisations and interpretations. *International Journal of Arts and Sciences, 3*(15), 155–176.

Sinclair, R. (2004). Participation in practice: Making it meaningful, effective and sustainable. *Children & Society, 18*(2), 106–118. https://doi.org/10.1002/chi.817

The, N. (2015). Coming of age in Cambodia. *Young migrants in their transition to adulthood* [Master's Theses]. University of Utrecht. http://dspace.library.uu.nl/handle/1874/320504. Accessed 29 Mar 2021.

They, K., & Treleaven, E. (2013). *Women and migration in Cambodia: A further analysis of the Cambodian rural-urban migration project (CRUMP)*. UNFPA and National Institute of Statistics.

Tisdall, E. K. M., & Punch, S. (2012). Not so 'new'? Looking critically at childhood studies. *Children's Geographies, 10*(3), 249–264. https://doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2012.693376

UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC). (2016, December 6). G*eneral comment No. 20 (2016) on the implementation of the rights of the child during adolescence*, CRC/C/GC/20. https://www.refworld.org/docid/589dad3d4.html. Accessed 29 Mar 2021.

Ungar, M. (2004). A constructionist discourse on resilience: Multiple contexts, multiple realities among at-risk children and youth. *Youth and Society, 35*(3), 341–365. https://doi.org/10.1177/0044118X03257030

Ungar, M. (2008). Resilience across culture. *British Journal of Social Work, 38*(2), 218–235. https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcl343

Ungar, M. (2011). The social ecology of resilience: Addressing contextual and cultural ambiguity of a nascent construct. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 81*(1), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1939-0025.2010.01067.x

Ungar, M. (2012). Social ecologies and their contribution to resilience. In M. Ungar (Ed.), *The social ecology of resilience. A handbook of theory and practice* (pp. 13–31). Springer.

Ungar, M., Brown, M., Liebenberg, L., Othman, R., Kwong, W. M., Armstrong, M., & Gilgun, J. (2007). Unique pathways to resilience across cultures. *Adolescence, 42*(166), 287–310. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/17849937/

Ungar, M., Brown, M., Cheung, M., & Levine, K. (2008). Distinguishing differences in pathways to resilience among Canadian youth. *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health, 27*(1), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.7870/cjcmh-2008-0001

Van de Glind, H. (2010). *Migration and child labour: Exploiting child migrant vulnerabilities and those of children left-behind*, ILO working paper. ILO.

Van Doore, K. E. (2018). Child migration and trafficking in South-East Asia. In M. Crock & L. B. Benson (Eds.), *Protecting migrant children: In search of best practice* (pp. 203–218). Edward Elgar.

Vella, S. C., & Pai, N. B. (2019). A theoretical review of psychological resilience: Defining resilience and resilience research over the decades. *Archives of Medicine and Health Sciences, 7*(2), 233–239. https://doi.org/10.4103/amhs.amhs_119_19

Yaqub, S. (2009). *Independent child migrants in developing countries: Unexplored links in migration and development*. Innocenti Research Centre.

Yea, S. (2016). Vietnamese children trafficked for forced labour to Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam: Exit, return and reintegration. In C. Ni Laoire, A. White, & T. Skelton (Eds.), *Movement, mobilities, and journeys* (pp. 1–18). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-4585-93-4_16-2

Yeoh, B. S. A. (2016). Migration and gender politics in Southeast Asia. *Migration, Mobility, & Displacement, 2*(1), 74–88. https://doi.org/10.18357/mmd21201615022

Zimmerman, C., McAlpine, A., & Kiss, L. (2015). *Safer labour migration and community-based prevention of exploitation: The state of the evidence for programming*. The Freedom Fund and London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

Mark P. Capaldi has worked directly with child rights organisations on issues such as child migration and trafficking, street children and working children, and has also implemented projects on children in conflict with the law, on violence and abuse against children and addressing the vulnerability of children of internally displaced persons and as child migrants. Mark Capaldi has a doctorate degree with the Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies at Mahidol University, Bangkok, where he currently works as a lecturer.

Alessia Altamura has a MA in Humanities Studies and earned a second-level professional master course in Peace Education, Human Rights and International Cooperation. She worked for over fifteen years with ECPAT in various capacities, first in Italy and then for the ECPAT International Secretariat in Bangkok. Her main area of expertise is child sex trafficking which Alessia has been researching since 2000. As a researcher on the issue, she contributed to the development of training manuals, compilation of good practices, legal documents, national and global reports and thematic papers on specific aspects.