

67. (Re) negotiating Gender and Generation in Transnational Families

Convenor:

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An increasing range of social anthropological literature describes transnational families in different parts of the world. However, surprisingly little has been published in a cross-cultural and comparative theoretical and methodological perspective. This is especially the case for questions about the implications of transnational migration on gendered and intergenerational dynamics between members of a transnational family.

This workshop aims at filling this gap by focussing on questions like:

- How are economic and emotional ties developed and sustained across nation state borders? What are the constraints and /or facilitations imposed by labour market and migration policies?
- How does migration affect concepts and praxis of gender roles as well as intergenerational dynamics? In which ways are power relations inside the family affected and (re)negotiated? How is transnational motherhood/parenthood (re)negotiated and performed?
- How do hegemonic concepts of motherhood and family in the country of residence as well as in the country of origin influence these negotiations?
- Which theoretical concepts are apt to grasp these complex relations?
- Which research methods are particular apt to explore transnational family networks?

In order to have a lively comparative and cross-cultural discussion, ethnographic case studies from all parts of the world are invited including especially countries of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

Emotions betwixt and between: Anthropology and the relevance of feelings among members of transnational families

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The Haitian term 'family' refers to a network of individuals in a series of households, who are united by an ideology of common interests and needs. The connections between Haitians in the diaspora and their families left behind in Haiti are sustained by multiple motivations and multiple means. In Montreal, Canada, where I did my fieldwork among Haitian immigrants in 2002 and 2003, I observed the differences in the individual's attachment to the homeland, since women, men and their children express feelings to their homeland in different ways.

Many Haitian women in Montreal experience the connection to their families as an ongoing duty and endless responsibility; additionally they live their every-day-life in close contact to their children with a strong interest in their educational success.

Many men, on the other hand, refer to Haiti in an individual nostalgic momentum or even a longing for an eventual return, and are very much concerned with the political and economic developments on the island.

Their children, either born in Canada or born in Haiti and brought to Canada at an early age, re-create Haiti, which they hardly know, in their need for a positive migratory belonging. The conflict between their family and their community on the

one hand and the Canadian society on the other leads them to the creation of an imaginary territory as a support for action, a sort of liberating and united homeland, which serves as their source for ethnic consciousness.

My paper will aim at exploring the conflicts arising from these differences in interests and needs and focus on the family member's discourses around issues such as community life, individual autonomy and solidarity to the homeland.

Travelling Mothers. The relations between female Ecuadorian migrants in Spain and their families

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In the late nineties due to severe economic and political crisis the number of families with at least one member abroad has increased dramatically in Ecuador. There has also been a shift in the main destination of Ecuadorian migration from the US to Spain as well as in its gender composition: While most of the emigrants to the United States were men, at least half of the Ecuadorian immigrants in Spain are women. This feminization of Ecuadorian migration has simultaneously led to an emerging discourse on broken families and abandoned children. Due to their main role as family carers, migrant women are thought to be more guilty of families break-up than men. The aim of this paper is to analyse the influence of the Ecuadorian hegemonic concepts of motherhood and family in the migrant mothers' career and experiences. Moreover, it explores their strategies to re-negotiate motherhood in the distance and after re-unification. The paper is based on data of an ongoing ethnographic fieldwork between Barcelona (Spain) and different places in Ecuador. In the end of the paper, I will discuss some methodological and theoretical problems I had been faced with during my fieldwork.

Chechen Asylum Seekers in the Czech Republic: Challenges to Gender Roles and Concepts of Family

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In my paper, I will explore how experiences of forced migration influence the perception of gender roles among Chechen asylum seekers living in the Czech Republic (mainly in refugee camps). The focus will be on the dynamics of power relationships inside the family and on the position of women within the migrants' community.

I consider gender to be a crucial organizing feature in accounting for the causes, consequences and processes of transnational migration as well as for understanding how migration is lived at the level of everyday life. Despite my emphasis on gender categories, I approach this study with an awareness of class, age, ethnicity, and religious identity as elements intertwined with gender to constitute migration experiences.

Life in refugee camp represents a liminal period in the migration experience. Refugees find themselves in the situation of huge uncertainty, immobility and disruption from their previous social status. They are forced to rebuild their lives, their social and also material spaces of existence. I assume that a re-negotiation of gender roles is an integral part of this experience. Moreover, situating research in the

Czech Republic is particularly interesting because it brings Central Eastern Europe into the field of migration studies.

Four generations of women in Moldova: Life stories of transnational movement in political landscape

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Focusing a case study of four generations of Moldovan women, I will explore how their life stories give insights into significant geopolitical events of the 20th century's Europe. The family is of Jewish/ Bess Arabian/ Ukrainian background and has been living in Chisinau, the capital of Moldova, during the Soviet period, after World War II. Everyday experiences of education, work and motherhood under shifting regimes and localities highlight gendered structural power in relation to revolution, war and globalisation.

The narratives of these women are told through words as well as body language. In the paper will present glimpses of the narratives, which expresses how the body remembers strong feelings and painful experiences. Furthermore, I will show how personal micro experiences are linked to macro historical events in various ways. This leads me into questions about the relationships between the subjective and objective realms of life. My main focus will concern what gender has meant for these generations of women who have crossed national as well as political borders between the Soviet Union, France, Moldova and Norway.

Social networks and gender

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In this paper I wish to explore and discuss the social networks of Somalis and Tamil people in Norway and how different gender regimes and differences in social networks may contribute to our understanding of the different adaptation profiles of these two minorities. Somalis and Tamil people appear to be very differently adapted as migrants in the Norwegian society. While Tamil people statistically are among the most successful minorities when it comes to employment and other social aspects, the Somali minority is to be found on the other end of the scale.

For both groups social networks extend national borders, but there are many significant differences in their composition and contents. One such difference is the gendered composition of networks. While the Somali refugees maintain wide transnational networks with kin and friends, one effect of the clan kinship system is that spouses only rarely have common networks.

Tamil couples on the other hand likewise maintain transnational networks, but these appear to contain less family members and much more friends and colleagues.

Moreover, spouses generally share the same network. The paper explores these differences and their implications for family life and social mobility in Norway.

'As long as I do proper things I can decide'. The relationship between young girls and their parents in Multiethnic Norway

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In this paper I wish to explore intergenerational relationships of immigrant families in Norway. In the last few years, gender, equality and autonomy have become key concepts in the discourse on multi-ethnicity in Norway. In multiple ways the concepts are linked to intergenerational relationships and to processes of cultural continuity and change. In policy documents as well as in the media debate on the integration, the relationship between parents and children has become the focal point, particularly as to how they practice autonomy and authority. The practices of ethnic minorities are compared with those of the ethnic majority, which are seen to be the normal standards of freedom and independency. By analyzing two cases I will discuss how young immigrant girls and their parents negotiate gender roles and power relations inside the family, and how concepts of parenthood and family in the country of residence as well as in the country of origin influence these negotiations.

