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Making Multicultural Families in Europe

Gender and Intergenerational
Relations

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Introduction: Gender and Intergenerational Relations in Multi-ethnic and Transnational Families

In a worldwide context of increasing migratory flows, international research confirms the central role that families play in the migration plans and strategies of individuals, including the decision to emigrate and which family members must or can do so. Families also take on considerable importance in defining subsequent modifications, such as the length and development of migratory projects. Emigration in turn can alter marriage and couple models, ways of living together, and forms of cohabitation. The 'migrant family' is located in a social system where roles and relationships can be partially or completely different. The settlement of individuals in the receiving country, and their changing migration plans and strategies follow multiple pathways, including family reunions, mixed marriages, correspondence brides, small-sized families, and childless couples. The experience of migration, with its cultural and emotional break-ups can redefine and reorganize networks and relational dynamics, particularly between men and women, parents, grandparents, and children.

Starting mainly from a sociological perspective, this book explores family relations in two types of 'migrant families' in Europe: multi-ethnic families, on the one hand, and transnational families, on the other hand, in order to shed light on the current state of multi-cultural families in Europe, and to start to identify the future consequences of the developments under way. Here, *multi-ethnic families* refer to inter-ethnic marriages

between two persons coming from different ethnic/national backgrounds. The contributors to this book have thus approached 'mixed families' through the lens of ethnicity, in order to stress cultural aspects and dynamics. Ethnic groups are considered here both in terms of 'ethnicity', or the objective features of ethnic belonging, such as geographic origin, language, race, and physical traits; and 'ethnic identity', which denotes the awareness of belonging to some given ethnic groups and the importance people place on this aspect of their identity. Because it covers a vast array of subjective aspects linked to individual belonging to a social group, ethnic identity provides a clear picture of the wide variety of mixed couples.

Transnational families designate family networks composed of members who live in two or more countries, but maintain a sense of 'familyhood' across distance and time, and exchange care and support, to various degrees. Transnational families are extremely diverse: they include both nuclear and extended families, and they represent a wide variety of socio-economic, educational, cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds, and with extremely different levels of social, economic, cultural, and symbolic capital both in their home and host societies. Of central importance to their study are the various ways in which they maintain family ties and connections across national borders, including via the use of communication technologies, the identification of the factors that facilitate or impinge this mode of living, and the tensions and transformations that may arise within and across generations because of their embeddedness in different socio-cultural contexts.

After defining and discussing multi-ethnic and transnational families in Chap. 1, the book analyzes in particular gender and intergenerational relations in each of these family types (Parts 1 and 2), and highlights key issues and theoretical insights that arise from an examination of the similarities and differences between, and across, those diverse migrant families. We invited the contributors to this book to have the following general questions in mind when writing their chapter: What are the gender and intergenerational dynamics organizing social relations within multi-ethnic/transnational families and how do they influence their migration experiences? How are family relations reorganized across national borders and what are the impacts of social remittances (ideas,

behaviours, identities, and social capital) in reshaping social relations in multi-ethnic/transnational family networks? What are the connections between negotiation processes and conflicts emerging from cultural differences in multi-ethnic/transnational families?

Based on in-depth qualitative fieldwork and/or large surveys, the authors of this book addressed this challenge by examining gender and intergenerational relations in migrant families from a variety of standpoints (female and male migrants, siblings, elders, and children), and migratory flows, including South-North migratory flows from Asia, Latin America, Far and Middle East to the EU, as well as East-West flows from Central and Eastern Europe to the EU. In their examination of family life in a migratory context, the authors of this book have largely built on, and sometimes further developed, theoretical approaches in social sciences that go beyond migration studies, such as intersectionality, the solidarity paradigm, care circulation, reflexive modernization, and gender convergence theory.

After introducing the book structure and the main content of each chapter, we will present some of the transversal themes that emerged from this collection of chapters.

Book Structure and Content

The book starts with a chapter by Meda and Crespi (Chap. 1), which frames the key issues that emerge in studies on transnational and mixed families, two family types characterized by the need to thematize differences in terms of culture, gender, and generation both within their 'borders', and vis-à-vis the outside world. Through a literature review, the two authors highlight the characteristics of these families, and the challenges and transformations that transnational and mixed families are facing in the contemporary world.

The next five chapters mainly focus on the negotiation of differences across gender and generations in multi-ethnic families (Part 1).

Fresnoza-Flot and Merla (Chap. 2) address the issue of the global householding of migrant spouses in 'mixed' families and examine gender and intergenerational dynamics in the mixed families of Thai women in Belgium. Using the 'care circulation' analytical framework, the two authors identify the way *bun khun* (a culturally defined sense of obligation

to care for one's natal family members, notably parents) influences Thai women's global householding. The study shows that, in order to avoid conjugal conflicts while striving to be 'dutiful daughters' to their parents, these women adopt three strategies: accomplishing a traditional reproductive role at home, earning their own livelihood, and tapping their family networks of solidarity. This study brings to the fore the important role that migrants' partners play in the maintenance of transnational family relations. They do not only influence the migrants' capacity to support their distant relatives but also play a key role in shaping and supporting the migrants' long-term investments in their home country (benefitting both the couple and their relatives there), as well as future possibilities of re-settlement in Thailand.

The chapter by Brahic (Chap. 3) explores some of the negotiations around gender in mixed couples. Lacking a shared cultural bedrock (of which gender is constitutive), partners in bi-national relationships face the task of assembling their own hybrid bedrock to cradle their life together. Subsequently, partners are likely to embark on an exploration of the practice of gender in their relationship leading them to reflect on gender performances, gender relations, and how they intersect with culture. This leads partners to negotiate and strategize around their practice of gender in their couple relationship. Nonetheless, whilst an increased fluidity in 'doing' gender bears the potential for more democratic relationships, deep-seated gendered practices—whereby women deliver the bulk of the emotional labour and care—still endure.

Apitzsch (Chap. 4) focuses on biographies of mixed transnational couples where the men are the subjects of marriage migration, in order to understand why well-educated and integrated women from the third generation of Turkish immigrants in Germany marry partners from their grandparents' country of origin, and why their husbands are willing to migrate. The chapter's hypothesis is that this type of marriage migration cannot be framed as re-traditionalization in the sense of the orientation of the actors at a fixed national and/or religious ethnicity. The study analyzes the daily interactions and practices of spouses who are constantly negotiating their conflicting expectations concerning ideals of marriage, child-raising issues, notions of manhood and womanhood, as well as

their different paths of socialization, in a society where they belong to a minority group.

Chapter 5 by Balaban, Kurti, and Kampmann examines the cultural factors that influence the quality of sibling relationships in multi-cultural and mono-cultural families in Germany. The authors highlight both direct and indirect relationships between societal and family values relating to parenting methods and parental roles, like individualism and collectivism, and the quality of sibling relationships. Drawing on a theoretical approach regarding the variations in family dynamics in different socio-cultural contexts, the study, which uses data from Wave 5 of the Panel Analysis of Intimate Relationships and Family Dynamics (PAIRFAM) (2012/2013), provides new insights on differences and similarities between mono-cultural and multi-cultural families in Germany.

Finally, Chap. 6 by Amirmoayed investigates partnering relationships across cultures, involving Persian immigrants to the UK and non-Persians. The author unpacks the intersection of generation, religion, and gender in the negotiation of practices related to a newborn child. The intersectional analysis of negotiations over the main challenges participants faced at the birth of their child shows that religion is the most significant factor that shapes practices such as choosing a name, baptizing, and circumcizing a newborn. The chapter also highlights the challenging character of intergenerational relations and negotiations with grandparents around those practices.

In Part 2, the main focus shifts to transnational families and their negotiation of care and intimate relationships at a distance. The part starts with Reisenauer's contribution (Chap. 7), where she considers transnational families and kinship networks as spatial phenomena, and highlights the significance of spatial distance for the everyday lives of these families. Narrative interviews with Turkish migrants in Germany show that families and kinship networks find it difficult to equally pursue various kinds of relationship maintenance within a transnational context. The empirical findings regarding the physical separation of family members and relatives between Germany and Turkey indicate that social proximity can exist both *despite* and *because* of spatial distance. This suggests that, when focusing on the reorganization of

family and kinship relationships over long distances and across national borders, the positive aspects provided by spatial distance should also be considered. Consequently, transnational families and kinship networks do not necessarily appear as incomplete and fragile, but can also be regarded as relationships that offer new opportunities under conditions of physical absence.

Chapter 8 by Dallemagne examines how different axes of inequality, namely gender, generation, class, and ethnicity, operate in the circulation of care in transnational Andean families in Spain and Ecuador. 'Care circulation' is used by the author as a framework for analysing women's agency in the transformation of gender norms over time within an extended family originating from a village located at the north of Quito (Ecuador), with members living in Madrid (Spain). The study focuses on the effect of intergenerational and sibling dynamics upon the organization of social relations within transnational families, including intergenerational cooperation, power relations, and their influence on managing care and the intimate at a distance. The longitudinal approach helps understand how these transformations participate in forms of social knowledge and practices, always embedded in specific situations. The chapter looks in particular at how a combination of circumstances may give rise to changes in gendered discourses and practices.

Chapter 9 by Tolstokorova studies the convergence of men and women's family functions in the transnational families of Ukrainian migrant women. The key argument of the chapter is that the combination of migrant paid work and long-distance care responsibilities leads to a certain convergence of the gender roles of migrant women and their left-behind husbands. Yet, transnational mothers who assume the roles of family breadwinners and providers are more affected by these changes, as their family obligations expand and expose them to multiple exploitations. In contrast, modifications in Ukrainian fathers' gender roles are only temporary, and do not entail tangible transformations in the institution of fatherhood in Ukraine.

The chapter by Hărăguș and Telegdi-Csetri (Chap. 10) focuses on how intergenerational solidarity is remodelled when Romanian elderly parents and their migrant adult children are separated by geographical distance and national borders. Using a qualitative methodological design, the

study investigates associational, affectual, and functional intergenerational solidarity and the ways in which support is provided in transnational families, that is, through direct provision with co-presence, direct provision at a distance, coordination, and delegation. Results show that intergenerational relations remain multidimensional and all forms of intergenerational solidarity continue to exist, even if certain dimensions are only fulfilled through direct provision, such as associational and affectual solidarity.

How the experience of migration re-defines and reorganizes the family relations of transnational families in Lithuania is a central question in Juozeliūnienė, Budginaitė, and Bielevičiūtė's contribution (Chap. 11). Building on Smart's concepts of 'imaginary', 'embeddedness', 'memory', and 'relationality', the study demonstrates how these analytical tools can be operationalized by employing several other approaches: intergenerational solidarity perspective, personal networks analysis, ideas of symbolic interactionism, and memory studies in the context of transnational family relations. The authors show that transnational life alters the relational dynamics between parents, grandparents, and children, and that newly emerging identities such as a 'guest-like-father', a 'mother-like sister', and a 'family-keeping' grandmother, all highlight how role-specific commitments are renegotiated when family members live across borders, and how commitments stemming from multiple family roles intertwine.

Isaksen and Czapka (Chap. 12) discuss how local gender regimes and public care arrangements in Norway influence Polish and Italian mothers' migration experiences. This chapter focuses on a Nordic country, Norway, where the majority population has generally accepted and internalized gender egalitarian values, and the male breadwinner model has become a contested family model. Public childcare is universal and plays an important role in parents' work-family balances, and local care and welfare regimes aim to integrate women and migrants in the labour market, and children in local communities. The chapter shows that for migrant mothers coming from European contexts dominated by the Catholic Church and gender conservative family values, developing new care strategies in Norway can cause social tensions and transnational challenges as well as individual empowerment.

Sokolowska in Chap. 13 explores how transnational migration creates changes within family structures, impacting gender roles, socialization, and family dynamics. Based on a qualitative longitudinal sociological inquiry of the intergenerational dynamics of Polish immigrant families, the author examines how migratory decisions and reunifications with those left behind are enacted and reorganized once affected by migration and separation. The findings indicate that separation exacerbates family ties, particularly for single mothers. Contemporary post-accession migration also shifts the power and changes the perception of conventional Polish gender roles towards more-visible equity. The study suggests that female migration with teenage children is still seen as an unacceptable strategy, and, lastly, that Polish transnational families show difficulties in maintaining friendships and in operationalizing transnationalism at a distance.

Finally, the chapter by König, Isengard and Szydlik (Chap. 14) explores how and if intergenerational transfers of money, time, and space are important manifestations of functional solidarity in contemporary societies for the population of foreign origin that has often been neglected or limited to a specific (ethnic) population. This chapter thus focuses on intergenerational functional solidarity patterns between migrants and natives as well as within migrant families using the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE). Overall, the empirical analyses prove that European families are strongly connected by different forms of functional solidarity. However, migration does matter. In addition to differences between natives and migrants, the analyses also highlight specific patterns within migrants according to household composition, duration of stay, and country of origin.

Transversal Reflections

Through the various contributions to this book, we invite you to embark in an in-depth exploration of the complementarities between two fields of studies, the transnational families and the ‘mixed families’ literatures, that have largely grown separately, but that can together generate a renewed and more comprehensive understanding of the interconnections between migration and family life in the EU, both within *and* across borders. We believe that this dialogue can illuminate in particular how family-migration dynamics are shaped, squeezed, and developed

across and between family cultures, multi-cultural experiences, family ties, and (trans)national contexts.

The contributions we have collected in this book reflect the large array of studies, research methods, and conceptual approaches that currently concern the study of families in migration. While not being homogeneous, these contributions bring out some cross-cutting issues, first of all the transformations of people and relationships as a result of being exposed to or immersed into a different culture. These transformations never come alone, nor take place without problems: they are often accompanied by negotiations, balancing acts, and compromise that concern all the members of either a mixed or a transnational family. The various authors in fact show how current theoretical perspectives and research findings exceed migration *per se* and the focus on migrants or mobile individuals, to include family members who remain in the country of origin, as well as native partners and their family members. This encourages scholars and policy makers to take into greater account the complexity of human mobility, but also to be prepared to challenge their definitions of families.

Intergenerational practices, relationships and solidarities were a key transversal theme in this book, and were apprehended by the authors through various lenses, including 'duties' towards older generations (Chap. 2); negotiations regarding child-raising decisions (Chaps. 5 and 6); solidarity for those 'left behind' (Chaps. 2 and 10); as mediated by various forms of co-presence and by geographical distance (Chaps. 10 and 13), and as key dynamics for family memory and identity (Chap. 11) and the transformation of gender norms (Chap. 8). Many chapters contribute to a better understanding of the dynamics and challenges of the maintenance and circulation of care relations, forms of solidarity, and resources (including cultural) in a migratory context. They show that the typically unequal distribution of the attendant tasks and obligations runs along lines of ethnicity, gender, and generation, and that migration creates new patterns of inequalities along those lines that affect power relations, and the way people renegotiate (and manage conflicts around) pre-existing and new care arrangements and the cultural assumptions underlying them.

The main results of the studies presented in this book suggest that the size, composition, and relevance of network ties in the migration process also serve to challenge or reinforce cultural forms of organization, particularly gender relations. Gendered identities, relationships, and power dynamics shape network ties, while network characteristics and macro changes brought about through migration, in turn, influence cultural expectations about gender. This circular process can reinforce gender inequalities or bring about change. Through this circular process, networks of meaningful social ties, defined by identity, obligation, and trust, can reinforce, challenge or re-shape gender inequalities (see for instance, Chaps. 9 and 12). Finally, the various case studies and testimonies presented in this book vividly illustrate the importance of taking into account the way members of transnational and/or ethnically mixed families make sense of their experience of mobility, transnational family life, and cultural plurality (Chap. 11), include them in their own biographies (Chap. 4), negotiate their generational and gender positions (Chaps. 2, 3, 7, and 8), and re-appropriate them in their daily lives. The two central dimensions of this book—gender and intergenerational relationships—prove to be strong analytical axes that allow us to see family processes in their making, and that bring to the fore the reflexive skills that families experiencing mobility and pluricultural contexts develop when confronted to change processes and identities.

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