

INTRODUCTION



Transnational perspectives on intersecting experiences: gender, social class and generation among Southeast Asian migrants and their families

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ABSTRACT

This Special Issue engages two strands of scholarship in dialogue in a meaningful way: intersectionality and transnational studies. This introductory article outlines the ways in which we envision this project as a part of the ongoing process of cross-fertilisation between these two camps and build on these debates. As a step in this direction, we pay special attention to gender, social class and generation as main intersecting categories, while also considering others. These three are flexible categories rather than dogmatic ones. To this end, we critically reflect on the 'feminisation' of gender, proposing to expand the scope of analysis to social constructions around masculinities in relation to femininities and their experiential dimension. We will then discuss the neglect of social class and the importance of generation in the transnational migration scholarship. The introduction ends with discussing the contributions in relation to the key theme of the present Special Issue.

KEYWORDS

Transnational studies;
intersectionality; gender;
social class; generation

Introduction

The pioneering work of Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller, and Cristina Szanton Blanc (1994) on migrant transnationalism and the subsequent literature on this theme questioned the conventional understanding of migration as a linear process, which presumed that migrants and their offspring would assimilate into their new society of residence while their ties with their home countries would weaken with the passage of time. Feminist scholars greatly contributed to this body of knowledge by considering migrant women's experiences and by visibilising gender-related themes. We take stock of these developments, further progressing the intersectional analysis (Crenshaw 1989) of migrants' cross-border engagements through a transnational lens. This Special Issue is our undertaking to engage two strands of scholarship in dialogue in a meaningful way: intersectionality and transnational studies. We envision this project as a part of the ongoing process of cross-fertilisation between these two camps (Mahler, Chaudhuri, and Patil 2015) and

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build on these debates. As a step in this direction, the present Special Issue pays special attention to gender, social class and generation as main intersecting categories, while also considering others. These three are rather flexible categories and not dogmatic ones, as the later section of the introduction and the original contributions shall show.

This emphasis on gender, social class and generation is based on three observations. Firstly, there is a need to critically reflect on the predominant tendency to equate women and gender in feminist migration scholarship. Joining other scholars, we propose in this Special Issue to expand the scope of analysis to social constructions around masculinities in relation to femininities and their experiential dimension to better understand the transnational practices and belongings of migrants and their offspring. Secondly, there is an urgent need to question the primacy of economic class attached to transnational migration. Although the issue of social class has been implicitly included – and in some cases thematised – in scholarship, it has either been discussed as something encompassing economic class or has occupied a rather marginal position in the analysis. Thirdly, the issue of generation rarely plays a part in intersectionality debates although it is one of the major foci in migration scholarship (Bartley and Spoonley 2008; Bauer 2010; Becker 2011; Foner and Dreby 2011). In short, this Special Issue brings to the fore the issue of gender, social class and generation as intersecting social divisions in transnational relations.

The case studies in this Special Issue on Southeast Asian migrants and their families arise from the dynamic migration into and out of Southeast Asia and its feminisation, which is an important feature of labour migration within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (UN Women 2013): 73% of labour migrants in this region from 2000 to 2003 were women originating from the Philippines and Indonesia. In 2010, the top Southeast Asian countries of emigration were the Philippines followed by Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Thailand, Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia (Gaetano and Yeoh 2010; World Bank 2011). The recurring temporary labour migration programs are the institutional driving forces behind these circular dynamics and the resulting financial remittances of migrants, in which the state (Rodriguez 2010) and placement agencies (Guevarra 2010) play an essential part: in 2014, the Philippines was ranked 3rd and Vietnam 9th among the 10 major recipients of migrant remittances in the world, receiving 28 billion and 12 billion U.S. dollars, respectively (World Bank 2015). However, state policies are not only shaped by economic rationales: instead, gendered morals dictate who are considered to be legitimate international labour migrants (Oishi 2005). Southeast Asian migrants are mostly concentrated in the service sector where they work as domestic workers, health professionals, factory workers, and so on. Moreover, their dynamic movement has also been steadily extending towards North America and Europe: in the latter, Italy and the UK are the main destinations for Filipinos, whereas a growing number of Vietnamese migrants are going to the UK (see Barber, 2017).

Given these gendered mobility dynamics, it is hardly surprising that a rich scientific literature has accumulated on these migrants, particularly on women originating from the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam and more recently from Indonesia. Their transnational practices have been investigated against the backdrop of global capitalism, predominantly through the gender analysis of their experiences as well as those of their family members (Gamburd 2000; Parreñas 2001; Silvey 2006). Many studies demonstrate the agency of Southeast Asian migrants by examining their ways of making sense of their situations

and the transnational and local strategies of resistance by which they try to improve their position within their family and their societies of origin and destination (Yamanaka and Piper 2005; Suksomboon 2009; Bélanger and Linh 2011; Thai 2014).

We begin this paper by explaining the major contours of gender and migration scholarship and feminist scholars' critical reflections on their own field. We discuss in the later sections of this paper our observation about the neglect of social class and the importance of generation in the transnational migration scholarship. Following this, we outline some ways forward drawing on our literature review and observations about gender, social class and generation. Finally, we present the articles comprising the Special Issue by comparing their major findings, thereby illuminating the similarities and contrasts between them.

'Feminisation' of gender?

In the past two decades, feminist scholars have pointed out a tendency that when gender is analysed, primary attention is paid to women instead of to the relationality of women and men and to the social constructions around femininities and masculinities (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1999; Pessar and Mahler 2003; Donato et al. 2006). We want to reflect upon this tendency by drawing from observations about what is now established as gender and migration scholarship.

When Mirjana Morokvašić (1984) brought together three decades ago a series of works on migrant women in a special issue of the *International Migration Review*, scholarly interest in migrant women was beginning to emerge in different parts of the world. It coincided with an increase in awareness among feminist migration scholars that the male bias in migration research was inadequate to account for the experiences of migrant women and for migration in general. According to the then conventional wisdom influencing policymaking, media presentations and studies of migration, labour migrants were mostly males and their migration was presumed to be economically driven. This male migrant would then later be joined by his family dependents, that is, women and children. This gendered bias was in part predicated on the gendered division of labour, that is, a male breadwinner versus a female housewife with (perceived) marginal income-earning activity, which permeated migration policy and the migration literature (Morokvašić 1984). Alternatively, this gender bias resulted from the failure to recognise the gender dimension, that is, neglecting the significance of migrants' gender altogether (Willis and Yeoh 2000). Although this kind of bias appears gender neutral at first sight, it nonetheless has repercussions on the way we think about migration since migration theories tend to operate within conventional wisdom.

While much migration research had still been gender-blind even a decade later (Kofman 1999), research on gender and migration grew exponentially under the influence of the emerging feminist research in social sciences. Reviewing the key literature in the U.S. context, Pierette Hondagneu-Sotelo (2003) observed how this strand of scholarship had developed in three stages. The first stage, 'women and migration', took place from the 1970s to the early 1980s and was focused on 'writing about women' (Willis and Yeoh 2000, vi) and 'adding and stirring women' (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2003, 7) into the larger migration literature. The second stage, from the 1980s to the early 1990s, can be called 'gender and migration' as it was moving away from an exclusive focus on *women* to a broader focus on *gender*, defined as 'a set of social practices shaping and shaped by

immigration' rather than the two clear-cut sex role attributes (7). The unit of analysis in this stage expanded from individual migrants to social institutions, mainly households and families (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2003). This approach recognised gender as a set of contested, dynamic power relationships but did not encompass practices, wider politico-economic structures and other social institutions. Since the early-mid 1990s, this shortcoming has increasingly been rectified in the third stage, which highlights 'gender as a constitutive element of immigration' (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2003, 9). Issues examined in this current round include employment and labour markets (Anthias, Kontos, and Morokvasic-Müller 2013), labour migration and recruitment policies (Oishi 2005), migration and development (Piper 2008; Bailey 2010), and citizenship (Ong 2006; Shinozaki 2015a). Still, some authors have pointed out that gender remains effectively replaced by women in most studies of gender and migration (Pessar and Mahler 2003; Donato et al. 2006; Mahler and Pessar 2006).

Why is this the case? We think that there are at least three reasons for this. First, at a general level, it may result from the 'ongoing [...] cross-fertilization of developments in two separate epistemologies, each initially questioning monolithic and essentialist visions of a "migrant" on one hand and a "woman" on the other' (Morokvašić 2014, 355). Because of this, the focus of the subfield of research 'migration and gender' has not completely yet shifted from migrant women to a more general examination of the gendered processes of migration (see the above discussion on the three-stage development of this field). Second, studies on women are more noticeable due to the rise of interest in transnational families in general (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002; Baldassar and Merla 2014) and transnational motherhood in particular (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997; Parreñas 2001; Hochschild 2004; Fresnoza-Flot 2009; Lutz 2011), which should not be taken as an indication that the family is the sole social institution where gender relations unfold (see our earlier discussion). Arlie Hochschild's conceptualisation of 'global care chains' based on Rhacel Parreñas' (2001) study triggered a large volume of literature on transnational families, focusing on migrant mothers. This tendency has, however, been criticised by authors studying fathers and men, who showed that men equally constitute families in migration (Parreñas 2008; Thai 2008; Pribilsky 2012; Fresnoza-Flot 2014; Kilkey, Plomien, and Perrons 2014; Shinozaki 2015a), as well as from a queer perspective that sees the debates around global care chains as reaffirming 'normative universalising notions of gender scripts and domesticity' (Manalansan 2006, 241), in which 'mothers with children are the only possible and logical links in this "chain of care"' (Manalansan 2006, 238; Kosnick 2011).¹ Third, the main focus on women may be the result of feminist migration scholarship's engagement with the 'low'-skilled sectors of labour markets, in which migrant women are a numerical majority (see Kofman and Raghuram 2005; Shinozaki 2014). Such scholarly engagement could lead to an 'essentialist association of "gender" with "women"' (Sarti and Scrinzi 2010, 5). The brief, selected review of the main contours of gender and migration research presented above suggests that gender should be treated as power relations in multiple and connected spatialities in larger mobility processes.

Making social class visible

Next to the relative neglect of gender in its fuller sense as a relational concept imbued with power relations (see our discussion in the previous section), Nicholas van Hear (2014)

recently remarked that social class has been ‘underplayed in much of migration studies in recent years’, as ‘[f]orms of social difference, affinity, or allegiance such as ethnicity, gender, generation, and lately religion have rather become the key concerns’ (101) in social sciences. Nonetheless, the desire to maintain one’s class position (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1992) or to claim and valorise ‘status and power’ (Goldring 2004, 175) are among the driving forces of the transnational practices, suggesting that an important link exists between social class and migrant transnational engagement. Although the signification of class for migrants is often economic and financial, there are also cases demonstrating that class goes beyond this economic dimension to include cultural, political and symbolic kinds of capital. As Reay (1998) succinctly puts it: ‘[Our u]nderstandings of class need to be much broader than the economic; they need to integrate sociological and psychological perspectives with conventional views’ (266).

Revisiting the concept of social class

The relative absence of systematic discussions around social class in the literature on migrant transnationalism is surprising, as the concept of class has been the object and the analytical tool of many studies in the social sciences since its apparition in the writings of Marx and Weber in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The popularity of the concept then gained momentum through the works of scholars such as Wright (1980), Bourdieu (1997), Goldthorpe (2000) and recently of Skeggs (2002), Savage (2000) and Devine and Savage (2000). Behind this development, the exact definition of the concept of class and its applicability in the study of social phenomena such as globalised migration has been enormously debated. Bottero (2014) identifies two current schools of class analysis: one follows traditional class theories by taking a ‘precise and contained approach to the meaning of “class”’, whereas the other builds on recent works and encompasses both ‘social and cultural formations’ (985).

In the first school, class is viewed as ‘collective, explicit and oppositional’ (987). Inspired by traditional class theories such as those of Marx and Weber, works of this school consider class as a social category pertaining to individuals or groups sharing comparable behaviours, characteristics and way of life. We can easily distinguish in these studies ‘class for itself’ from ‘class in itself’. The former means ‘a collectivity with certain identifiable attributes and interests in common’, whereas the latter is ‘regarded as a collectivity that acts in pursuit of those common interests’ (van Hear 2014, S113). In the second school of class analysis, however, class is treated as ‘cultural, individualized’, ‘implicit’ and ‘hierarchical’ (see Bottero 2014). Drawing on recent perspectives on class, particularly from Bourdieu, scholars of this school focus on the ‘processes of culture, lifestyle and taste’ (986). They rethink economic inequalities, hierarchies and identities, and argue that class exists but in an inconspicuous and individualised manner. Savage (2000) remarks that ‘people now have to achieve their class positions: their futures are linked to their own, as much as other people’s, actions’ (69). Hence, in dealing with class issues, it appears important to consider the invisible forces at work that reproduce social divisions by looking closely at individual practices, subjectivities and perceptions. This is because the ‘issues of hierarchy extend well beyond issues of “class”’ (Savage 2000, 1000), as there are other social stratifying factors that create inequalities such as gender, regional origin and generation.

It is with this logic that we pay attention in this Special Issue to the influencing power of not only class but also of gender and other structuring forces on migrants' transnationalism, while considering migrants' perspectives and experiences. The existence of the current two schools of class analysis attests to the polysemic nature of social class and to diverse approaches available to study it. Drawing on this wide range of conceptualisations, we attempt to contribute to the on-going debate about social class, its meaning(s) and its empirical usefulness as an analytical lens alongside gender and generation.

The social class–transnational migration nexus

The migration studies literature is replete with examples of how including the social class factor in an analysis helps to uncover the salient but otherwise unnoticeable phenomena going on at different levels of social life.

In transnational migration research, social class has been shown to play an important role in many transnational migratory flows involving elites (Beaverstock 2002), peasants (Kyle 2000), men (Thai 2014), women (Kingma 2007) or children (Nagasaka and Fresnoza-Flot 2015). It connotes more often than not the possession of economic as well as political power, as Sklair (2001) demonstrates in his study of the 'transnational capitalist class'.² The cases of skilled and highly skilled professionals suggest an interesting link between social class and social capital, that is, 'the ability to secure resources by virtue of membership in social networks or larger social structures' (Portes and Landolt 2000, 532). For instance, Gold (2001) describes how middle-class and educated Israeli immigrants in the U.S. and in Britain maintain distinct social networks and have 'greater legal and economic access' (87) to (return) migration than migrants of the same origin but with limited human and financial resources. However, even though migrants have little economic capital, they are also embedded in large social networks that provide a form of social capital that allows them to become mobile and cross frontiers just like their privileged counterparts. This is what van Hear (2014) describes as the 'fungible quality of class' (S105). Social capital has also been proven to play a crucial role in migrant transnational entrepreneurship (Kyle 1999; Portes, Guarnizo, and Haller 2002), in many forms of transnational social movements (Piper and Uhlin 2004; Bennett 2005) and in the dynamics of caregiving in transnational families (Baldassar and Merla 2014). This highlights the importance of including social capital in the analysis of migrants' class belongings and practices.

Some studies of transnational families also indicate how important social class is in maintaining relationships across national borders or simply in allowing geographic mobility. For example, well-off families in Hong Kong (Waters 2006), South Korea (Orellana et al. 2001) and Taiwan (Zhou 1998) send their children abroad to study in reputable schools and universities. Likewise, migrants with good economic resources send their children back to their countries of origin to be exposed to the cultural and social norms there (Whitehouse 2009). Among migrant children, those of working-class background tend to disregard the maintenance of transnational ties with their parents' countries of origin (Menjívar 2006). In their study of Latin Americans in the U.S., Guarnizo, Portes, and Haller (2003) find that the more assimilated and educated these migrants are, the more likely they are to engage in transnational political activities.³ Rumbaut (2002) observes among the second generation of Central and Latin American migrants in the U.S. that

socioeconomic status alongside ethnicity and national origin determines the degree of their transnational ties.

In the context of parental migrations, studies indicate that class matters when it comes to the transnational maintenance of social linkages. In her study of Filipino transnational families, Parreñas (2005) remarks that limited material resources made the transnational communication between migrant mothers working in the domestic service sector and their children left in the Philippines particularly difficult. An irregular migration status makes it even more challenging for working-class migrants to maintain or reinforce their transnational ties, as shown in the case of Salvadorians and Guatemalans in the U.S. (Menjívar 2006) and of Filipino domestic workers in France (Fresnoza-Flot 2013) and in Germany (Shinozaki 2015a). In the case of ‘transnational motherhood’⁴ (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997), the low pay, substandard place of living and very often irregular migration status of migrant women in their receiving country shape their modes of transnational mothering (Fresnoza-Flot 2009; Madianou and Miller 2011; Shinozaki 2015a).

What is striking in many studies of migrations is their tendency to either collapse or use interchangeably the concepts of social class and economic class. However, having attained a high level of education or having a profession is not the same as being wealthy. Likewise, ‘occupations cannot readily be seen as the building blocks of class’ (Savage 2000, 69). Parreñas (2001) illustrates this with the ‘contradictory class mobility’ of Filipino migrant women domestic workers: they improved their class position in the Philippines by accumulating socially valorised resources, while at the same time occupying a disadvantaged position in their receiving country where they engage in paid domestic work. We also observe in the ‘transnational expenditure cascade’ of low-wage Vietnamese migrants in the U.S. how the sending of remittances to their relatives back home allows them to give meaning to their hard work in their receiving country and to obtain a kind of self-worth in terms of class (Thai 2014). These studies suggest that the meaning of class has become increasingly attached to the economic resources of migrants and their capabilities to acquire desired objects or to realise individual projects in their transnational social space. Nevertheless, this is not a straightforward process, particularly when we take into account migrant’s educational qualifications as one form of ‘cultural capital’⁵ that acquires a different signification in the immigration country. As Erel (2010) argues, cultural capital is not something that can be put into a ‘rucksack’ and simply taken out when migrants are in a new country; migrants need to validate their cultural capital based on the standards of their receiving society.

In summary, the use of the concept of social class in migration research appears aligned with the current schools of class analysis discussed above. It is also evident that social class has different meanings across geographical spaces in different time periods, which underlines the importance of considering the context of the study and the lived experiences of the migrants in the analysis.

Generation: what transnational studies can contribute to the debates on intersectionality

Aside from its biological connotation as a birth cohort, ‘generations’ refer to groups of individuals ‘who are endowed [...] with a common location in the historical dimension

of the social process' (Mannheim in Kecskemeti [1927/28] 1972, 290). These people share with one another a 'particular type of social location' ([1927/28] 1972, 291), determined by 'the way in which certain patterns of experience and thought tend to be brought into existence' ([1927/28] 1972, 292). In transnational migration scholarship, generations have been a key theme or category of inquiry shedding light on the relationality of experiences, emotions and trajectories among migrants in a particular period of time, or between them and their family members. Less common, but increasingly important, are analyses of intra-generational differences within and between the diverse cohorts that comprise migrant diasporas (see Baldassar and Pyke 2014; Baldassar, Pyke, and Ben-Moshe, 2017).

Most of the works to date that take into account the 'generation' factor are focused on migrants ('first generation') and their children ('1.5', '1.75', '1.25', 'second' or 'third' generations). The field of transnational family studies in particular is replete with ethnographic accounts and empirical analyses of their lived experiences (Pribilsky 2007; Bauer 2010; Dreby 2010). Parent-child separation in the context of parental migration has received strong scholarly attention, notably the questions of how migrant parents fulfil their family obligations from afar and how their migration affects their 'left-behind' children (Bryant 2005; Parreñas 2005; ECMI-CBCP, AOS-Manila, SMC, and OWWA 2004). In the immigration perspective, children of migrants have been investigated in many studies focusing on their social incorporation, identity formation and relations with their parents (Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Attias-Donfut and Wolff 2009; Fresnoza-Flot 2015). In recent years, an increasing number of works have examined their transnational ties and practices (Levitt and Waters 2002; Lee 2009; King and Christou 2011) as well as their mobility experiences linking them with their society of origin and destination (Nagasaka and Fresnoza-Flot 2015).

Although the intensity and scale of the transnationalism of migrant parents and that of their children have been shown to be different, previous works shed light on the inter- and transgenerationality of the transnationalism phenomenon. They also helped illustrate the meaning of 'social location' emerging in a particular socio-historical process, as Mannheim's classical work talked about almost a century ago. We re-discover this meaning at the present time when a particular kind of identity is nurtured, reconstituted and invented in and across multiple geographical locations. In the present Special Issue, we observe how the distinct social locations of migrants and of their children produce differing viewpoints, attitudes and transnational practices.

Contrary to the increasing tendency in transnational migration scholarship to use a generational framework of analysis, the issue of generation has not yet been robustly theorised in the intersectionality debates (Utrata 2011; Mahler, Chaudhuri, and Patil 2015). Gender, 'race' and social class remain so far the main categories widely taken into account in intersectional analyses. As an attempt to illuminate other social divisions, our Special Issue includes generation in the intersectional analysis of transnational practices, engagement and identity in the case of Southeast Asian migrants and their families.

Some ways forward

Our review of the transnational migration literature focusing on gender, class and generation, albeit admittedly selective, suggests three important tasks. Firstly, joining a number of scholars, we aim to advance our analysis of gender not as an isolated category or

variable, but instead as a social relationship entailing a power hierarchy within which gender intersects with other categories of difference. Understanding the relational aspect of gender requires paying attention on the one hand to its social constructions around masculinities and femininities and on the other hand to what Patricia Pessar and Sarah Mahler (2003) call the 'gendered geographies of power'. Paying attention to power relations when studying transnational practices and engagement implies taking stock of the formation of our research subjects as open-ended processes (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Pessar and Mahler 2003; Donato et al. 2006; Faist 2010), rather than assessing them against some predetermined schemas or a set of fixed variables. This calls us to analyse the transnational practices and experiences of migrants and their families through an intersectional approach, paying attention to gender, social class and generation in particular.

Secondly, it is necessary to take seriously the *contextuality* of an intersectional analysis. The categories or axes of social divisions that get prioritised and acquire importance are neither given nor generalisable but rather context-specific (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1983; Yuval-Davis 2006; Anthias 2008; Lutz, Herrera Vivar, and Supik 2011; Marx Ferree 2011). By creating and operating in 'transnational social spaces' – social practices sustained along with artefacts, symbols, and values shared by people and other involved actors in multiple geographical locations across nation-state borders (Faist 2000, 45–46; Pries 2010, 30) – migrants interpret differently their experiences. This in turns gives rise to the formation of 'transnational frames of reference' (Shinozaki 2015b, 38) spanning nation-state borders. The lives of migrants and their family members are also both locally and transnationally embedded within different domains and realities. In this Special Issue, they are embedded within transnational families (see contributions by Christ; Fresnoza-Flot), (parental) homebound activities (Barber), non-homebound diasporic communities (Baldassar, Pyke, and Ben-Moshe) and cross-border political organising (Rother). Thus, rather than limiting our intersectional analysis to the framework of nation-states, we build on scholars who have recently challenged the often-unquestioned tendency attached to 'methodological nationalism' (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002) in feminist migration scholars' intersectionality debates (Patil 2013; Mahler, Chaudhuri, and Patil 2015).

Thirdly, we pay attention to the issue of simultaneity in analysing transnational experiences and practices, which are mediated through intersecting social divisions. By 'transnational', we refer to two conceptualisations: as an empirical phenomenon, and as a perspective. The form and degree of the simultaneous embeddedness of migrants as agents in multiple spaces (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004) is regulated or influenced by different areas of policy (e.g. those related to family unification, migrant labour rights and remittances, see Rother (2017)) and by a set of interacting gendered, social-class and generation-related moral expectations (see the other contributions in this Special Issue). This suggests that migrant structural embeddedness is mediated and configured at the same time through social institutions and political and economic structures spanning across borders. Nevertheless, while the issues of embeddedness, structure and agency, address the empirical dimension of transnationalism, in analytical terms, it is to be distinguished from the 'transnational lens' (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, 1003), or 'transnational perspective' (Faist 2010, 1672), which is an analytical framework allowing us to capture the empirical phenomenon of sustained multilocal and cross-border engagements and its changing nature.

Contributions

This Special Issue comprises five empirical contributions that examine migratory movements out of and into Vietnam, the Philippines and Indonesia. They demonstrate that the transnational engagements of migrants and their families are mediated not only through the interaction between social class and the construction of ideal femininities and masculinities, but also through struggle between these and other intersecting social divisions including generation.

The two articles on Vietnamese migrants and their succeeding generations in the UK and Australia unveil intersecting factors that are central to understanding their transnational practices – or lack thereof. For example, Tamsin Barber's (2017) paper highlights a stronger narrative of 'ethnic authentication' through 'return' visits to Vietnam among UK-born Vietnamese women than among their male counterparts. She argues that parental homebound transnational engagements, such as charity activities, provide the most effective strategies for constructing an ethnic identity. Young women view their visits as emotional investments and as ways to acquire a Vietnamese femininity, whereas men's visits are seen as symbolic and challenge their sense of masculinity. At the macro-level, Barber explains that the politically and economically driven (forced) migrations from Vietnam have resulted in heterogeneous and fragmented ethnic communities in London, which makes identification with a particular Vietnamese community difficult for young UK-born Vietnamese. In addition, British multicultural policies appear to overlook numerically small ethnic minorities such as these Vietnamese youths, who turn to Vietnam in search of a strong and authentic ethnic identity.

On the other hand, Australian-born youths of Vietnamese origin hardly engage with their parents' natal country, as Loretta Baldassar, Joanne Pyke, and Danny Ben-Moshe (2017) demonstrate in their study. While it is hardly surprising to find that their parent's generation show a low level of transnational ties to Vietnam owing to their political refugee history, these youths' repeated exposure to 'negative stories about Vietnam' explain their limited interest in homebound transnational engagement and identification. These stories have turned Vietnamese migrants and their descendants into a 'hybrid "victim/culture"' diaspora characterised by their active participation in the local Vietnamese community, a strong sense of a Vietnamese identity and global diasporic ties with their kin in countries other than Vietnam. By contrast, recent Vietnamese migrants, mostly students coming from a privileged economic and social-class background, sustain dynamic ties with Vietnam at many levels (familial, professional, social). The authors found little in the way of gendered patterns of cross-border activities among Vietnamese migrants and their children, whereas class, generation and regional background (i.e. the North or South of Vietnam) more strongly influence their transnational practices, as exemplified by homebound connections among recent international students and global, diasporic networks among Australian-born or raised youths.

In a way, these cases all examine 'most similar' groups in the sense of national origin and waves of migration across geographic spaces (Bloemraad 2013, 33, 39). Still, we notice a striking contrast between UK-born Vietnamese youths in London, and their counterparts in Australia in terms of transnational engagement, although both countries have experienced similar waves of political, economic and student migration. This different outcome can be attributed to the limited possibility for Vietnamese youths to cultivate

a meaningful ethnic identity in London, prompting them to validate their ethnic identity through transnational practices, whereas these local constraints do not seem to exist in Australia, possibly attributable to the stronger and longer history of multicultural and ethnic policy there.

The remaining three papers originate in two very different contexts: one on the global cross-border marriage phenomenon, in which the Philippines plays an important role, and the other on the active labour deployment policy of the Philippines and of Indonesia. In the first context, Asuncion Fresnoza-Flot (2017) demonstrates in her article that the transnational practices of migrant Filipinas in binational unions in France are fashioned by their simultaneous class belonging in their countries of origin and of destination as well as by the dominant gendered expectations on mothers to be providers and on daughters to be dutiful to their parents. Women of working-class background with a child 'left-behind' fulfil the gendered expectations on them to be 'good' mothers and daughters through the sending of remittances back home. Contrastingly, economically privileged women are not obliged nor asked by their families to do such transnational caregiving. However, they put enormous effort into being 'dutiful daughters' by making regular visits and voluntarily sending material help back home and by protecting their natal family from worrying about them by concealing their true feelings and situation. In times of need in France, the natal family of these women occasionally provide them with transnational material support. The economic difficulties they experience do not affect their subjective perception of their privileged social class belonging, as they emphasise the cultural and symbolic capital that their binational families possess.

In the second context in which migration takes place as part of the labour deployment policy of the state, transnational family relationships are differently experienced by migrant children. Through an in-depth analysis of the narratives of two daughters of middle-class families in her long-term ethnographic fieldwork in Southern Luzon, Simone Christ (2017) critically examines the idealisation of 'return' and the realities of family reunion. Despite their parents' transnational caregiving and their appreciation of their comfortable middle-class lifestyle as well as educational opportunities, migrant children still express resentments towards not only their migrant mother, as widely quoted in the care chain literature, but also towards the father. These resentments are rooted in the family, gender, generation and class ideologies of the Philippines. What is striking is that transnational parenting through regular communication and visits does not prevent an emotional and intergenerational gap to form; instead, this gap persists even after family members reunite. Christ concludes that children idealise their migrant parents' return, while reunification brings a reality marked by disunity and affective distance. Her two cases, although not claimed to be representative, call for an examination of the construction of idealised fathers as caring, affective persons aside from their widely recognised role as breadwinners (Kilkey, Perrons, and Plomien 2013; Shinozaki 2015a).

The last empirical article in this Special Issue is also set in the context of state-sponsored labour exportation. In analysing Indonesian female domestic workers' political organising in Hong Kong, Stefan Rother (2017) shows how these migrants find avenues to counter their disadvantageous intersecting position along the social divisions of gender, migrant status and skill level, which have taken shape across the borders of Indonesia and Hong

Kong. Using Kelly's (2007) concept of four class dimensions, he shows how Indonesian migrant women empower themselves and protest by generating political capital through their Association of Indonesian Migrant Workers and their transnational/trans-local activism. These migrant domestic workers define themselves as a transnational social class with multiple class identities. Their case highlights the importance of positionality, which, according to Rother, 'influences the way social class intersects with gender, economic status/occupation, ethnicity and transnational status'.

Overall, the contributions in this Special Issue reveal the ways in which the interaction of gender, social class and generation shapes the modes of transnational engagement of Southeast Asian migrants and their families in multifarious ways. At the same time, conceptually, the contributions attest to the value of conducting intersectional analysis in multiple spatial contexts across nation-state borders, for instance in family relations involving different generations (see the papers by Baldassar, Pyke, and Ben-Moshe 2017; Christ 2017; Fresnoza-Flot 2017). Moreover, as some of our contributions demonstrate, a transnational perspective on intersectionality can and should also be explored further outside the familial to include wider social settings (see Baldassar, Pyke, and Ben-Moshe 2017; Barber 2017) as well as political organising at the meso level (see Rother 2017).

Notes

1. Interestingly there is a similar tendency of focusing on mothers, rather than on fathers, in the feminist social policy literature, although a more recent literature also investigates the role of fathers in families.
2. It is composed of 'globalizing bureaucrats and politicians (the state fraction), globalizing professionals (the technical fraction), and merchants and media (the consumerist fraction)' (Sklair 2001, 145).
3. An exception is the case of Colombians, whose country of origin is politically unstable.
4. This refers to the 'organizational arrangements, meanings, and priorities of motherhood' (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997, 548) in migration context wherein the mother of the family leave to work abroad while her children are left in her country of origin.
5. Bourdieu (1997) considers three forms of cultural capital: embodied ('in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body'), objectified ('in the form of cultural goods' such as 'pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.') and institutionalised (in the 'form of objectification' such as educational diploma) (47).

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