

## INTRODUCTION

The notion of the transnational family constitutes the main topic of this special issue of the *Migration Studies-Polonia Review*. The concept brings together issues examined by family studies on the one hand, and problems raised in migration scholarship, on the other. The international labour market attracts migrants and generates significant and profound changes in family models and practices. The transnational perspective seeks to capture these transformations, rejecting the historically dominant convictions that people generally select one place to settle down, and that the meaning of a person life's is embedded in a persistent set of norms and values attached to national cultures (Morokvasic 2004: 20). The transnational lens focuses on how global processes impact individuals and families, yet also points to multi-directionality and absence of determinism in contemporary migrations (Levitt, Jaworsky 2007; Vertovec 2004; Pustułka 2012; Muszel 2013). Two assumptions within a transnational approach are especially important, since they are guiding papers published in this volume:

- 1) *A multi-level analysis*. The transnational paradigm may not only show conflicts, tensions and disintegration of families, but equally sheds light on maintaining families in spite of physical separation. It may further showcase how new family practices are created for separated family lives, thus enriching their earlier shape and functioning. Following a definition proposed by Jane Ribbens McCarthy and Rosalind Edwards and reading that transnational families can be seen as “sustained ties of family members and kinship networks across the borders of multiple nation states” (2011: 187), we move beyond the policy context, the legal framework, and the socio-economic situation (Iglicka 2008, Grabowska-Lusińska 2012). This leads us to examinations of transnationalism ‘from below’, specifically tackling the question on how migrants organize their family life across national borders (Heath, McGhee, Trevena 2011: 2). The actions of transnational family members in both the individual and the institutional context are analysed instead. Currently, we are witnessing the interest shifting from the material and financial standing of migrant families (e.g. living conditions, remittances) towards actual experiences of children,

parents and elderly in multi-generational families (Levitt, Jaworsky 2007). This fosters placing more emphasis on the gendered division of social roles and its consequences (Pustułka 2012).

- 2) *Processual/Dynamic character of a family*. The experiences of transnational families show how the maintenance of family ties and redefinitions of family roles (e.g. non-residential motherhood/fatherhood) occur, anchoring the transnational family within broader kinship structures and the local community setting. Deborah Bryceson and Ulla Vuorela point to the fact that despite spending considerable amount of time apart, members of transnational families still engage in what the authors call ‘familyhood’, defined as a sense of unity and well-being on the level of a whole family (2002). Therefore the family is seen as being socially constructed and in a constant state of flux, dynamically inter-negotiated by individuals equipped with agency (Beck, Beck-Gernsheim, 2013). In addition, a new framework concerning transnational families is provided by the concept of ‘doing family’, in which families are no longer static beings (‘being a family’) but rather constantly undergo a process of creation (Finch 2007, Morgan 1996, 2011).

As outlined by McCarthy and Edwards (2011: 2–3), we have disciplinarily moved away from singular and universal definition, now viewing the family as interrelated or interconnected with the following specific topics of interest (Pustułka, Ślusarczyk 2014; Heath, McGhee, Trevena 2011):

- partnering and childbearing,
- demographic trends and household formations,
- daily living arrangements, decision making, resources and provisions,
- parenting and care,
- intersectionality within personal relationships (dynamics of gender, age, generation),
- kinship and community relations,
- domesticity contra other social life areas such as education, health, work,
- aspects of social policy related to the above,
- diversity, inequality, especially in cross-cultural and global issues.

Each of these areas can be (and actually is) examined in the context of migration and mobility, resulting in an attempt of ‘cataloguing’ transnational family issues. It is also worth mentioning that in contemporary inquiries non-migrant family members’ perspective is as important as the viewpoints of those who are on the move (Heath, McGhee, Trevena 2011: 2).

Honing in on the catalogue of issues studied by transnational family scholars several research areas can be recognized. The first area is clearly concerned with migration decision-making processes, followed by debates about the duration of

the intended stay abroad, settlement and possible return, as well as discussion of who is the one to go abroad as well as when – if at all – and under what conditions the family shall reunite.

The second area deals with family connections across borders (type of relationships and communication, as well as remittances– Levitt 2001, Ignatowicz 2011). It also maps out practices and strategies of creating transnational family, private life and intimacy, everyday tasks, lifestyle and leisure, reconciliations of work and family, raising children, power relations between partners and in the broader kinship structure, and, finally, care obligations. The latter care problematic is especially understood as means for handling caring from afar and as the degree and shape of care, i.e. resulting intergenerational relations between parents, children and grandparents. The analysis must encompass rituals that enable maintenance of family ties regardless of borders, as well as strategies of utilizing technical possibilities and new technologies (Vertovec 2004). Adding the institutional dimension, particularly issues surrounding socialization, the education system, social and family policies of destination countries, is also indispensable.

The third problem area covers sense of belonging and identity constructions, primarily applicable to children. However, it also increasingly addresses configurations within ethnic provenience of families, cross-cultural negotiations (i.e. in mixed couples, children raised bilingually abroad, etc., e.g. Beck, Beck-Gernsheim 2013).

Finally, going back to a macro-level, the last research area comprises reflections on migration policy of both sending and receiving countries, as well as migrants' role and types of their framing, namely, to what degree are they treated as 'a problem to be solved' vis-à-vis being an actual policy subject (Ślusarczyk, Pustułka 2015: 6), contextualizing an example of consequences that a broad sociological dilemma of structure versus agency poses.

The issues listed above constitute the subject of this volume and are analysed primarily in the context of Polish migrations, though they also concern challenges faced by male and female migrants from other CEE countries. It is our great pleasure to present this special issue, which has been largely inspired by the international research project TRANSFAM: *Doing family in a transnational context*<sup>1</sup>. In this project, led by Professor Krystyna Slany at the Jagiellonian

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University, several researchers from Poland and Norway<sup>2</sup> explore multiple topics connected to migration and family processes. The project tackles a relatively novel context of Polish transnational families in Norway and their experiences of a multitude of kinship practices that go beyond the dichotomy of home-host country connections. TRANSFAM's studies examine various facets of social life, including power relations and means of negotiating values in transnational families, social capital of Polish migrant families, parenting practices, as well as migrant children's experience in school, peer groups and at home. Some of the TRANSFAM research findings are published in this volume which has been further enriched by other empirical studies, complementing the above mentioned works with vitally important and different research frameworks.

The volume is divided into three thematic sections amounting to eight research articles. The papers represent a wide range of research in the approaches to 'doing family' and studying transnational issues. The first section, '**Transnational Caring**', covers a range of topics related to the category of 'care' in the realm of paid work and child-care arrangements (Ramasawmy, *The Impact of Migration on Paid Work and Child-Care Arrangements among Polish Migrant Parents in Scotland*), care deficits, gendered trap and female mobility (Slany, Ślusarczyk, *In a Decision Trap – Debates Around Caring and Care Provisions in Transnational Families. The Ukrainian Case*), intergenerational care obligations (Bargłowski, *The Normativity of Migration and Intergenerational Care in the Polish-German Transnational Social Space*), and transnational practices and identifications (Bell, Erdal, *Limited but Enduring Transnational Ties? Transnational Family Life among Polish Migrants in Norway*).

The second section on '**Virtual Families**' comprises articles addressing the topic of doing transnational families through virtual space and new technologies (Pustułka, *Virtual Transnationalism: Polish Migrant Families and New Technologies*; Kniejska, *Between Virtual Intimacy and Transfer of Family Members to the Workplace: Strategies of Migrant Care Workers to Deal with the Temporary Separation from their Families in Poland*).

These themes bring us to the last section entitled '**Young Migrants and Family Practices**', which sheds light on lives of young migrants in the UK (Heath, McGhee, Trevena, *Continuity versus Innovation: Young Polish Migrants and Practices of 'Doing Family' in the Context of Achieving Independence in the UK*) and experiences of child-migrants in Norway (Slany, Strzemecka, *Gender*

<sup>2</sup> The research consortium of the project is composed of four different research institutions: Institute of Sociology (Jagiellonian University), Centre for International Relations, Agder Research and NOVA – Norwegian Social Research (Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences).

*Roles and Practices in Polish Migration Families in Norway through the Eyes of Children*). Again, the themes of transnational kinship and family practices and their significance for relationships take centre stage. Throughout the volume, the entanglements of ‘doing family’ on the one hand, and a transnational setting, on the other, should be seen as a key axis guiding all sections.

## TRANSNATIONAL CARING

In this section we present four different articles that examine transnational caring in four distinct receiving countries: Germany (Bargłowski), the United Kingdom (Ramasawmy), Poland (Slany, Ślusarczyk), and Norway (Bell, Erdal). Importantly, three of these geographic locations are clearly crucial destinations for Polish migrants since, statistically speaking, the UK and Germany remain the two main destinations for Poles moving abroad, while Norway tops the list of non-EU receiving countries<sup>3</sup>. Analogically, the largest group of immigrants arriving to Poland comes from Ukraine. To reiterate, this section of the special issue provides an overview of the countries which bear most significance for the studies dedicated to care and cross-border population movements within the European continent.

The first section begins with the article *The Impact of Migration on Paid Work and Child-care Arrangements Among Polish Migrant Parents in Scotland* by Lucy Ramasawmy. In her article, Ramasawmy writes about different family arrangements among Polish parents in Scotland. She focuses on how paid work and child-care are negotiated and how every-day compromises are achieved. She confronts these choices with three separate ideological frameworks: communism and Catholicism in their specifically Polish contexts, as well as the global neoliberal ideology. This helps Ramasawmy distinguish three family types with different migration backgrounds, characteristics of employment, and child-care arrangements.

Krystyna Slany and Magdalena Ślusarczyk’s article, *In a Decision Trap – Debates Around Caring and Care Provisions in Transnational Families. The Ukrainian Case* is based on an empirical research project carried out among female immigrants in Poland. The paper is anchored in a global dilemma of the ‘gendered migration trap’, which manifests in the fact that care work is commonly undertaken by female migrants and therefore yields certain challenges that

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<sup>3</sup> For more information see: *Informacja o rozmiarach i kierunkach czasowej emigracji z Polski w latach 2004–2013. 2014*. Warszawa: Główny Urząd Statystyczny.

families left-behind must deal with in the face of intensified female migrations. The authors discuss the cases of three Ukrainian migrants in Poland: Valentina, Svetlana and Nadia, and analyse their biographies through a lens of economic and socio-cultural limitations that shape experiences of women on the move.

*The Normativity of Migration and Intergenerational Care in the Polish-German Transnational Social Space*, a paper by Karolina Bargłowski takes us to another European country, mapping the problem of intergenerational care arrangements in the Polish-German context. In her multi-sited research, Bargłowski is especially interested in the normative aspects of caring and border-crossing population flows. She raises a question about social expectations towards migrants in terms of elderly care's status within the Polish landscape of 'care culture'. She further underlines the necessity of including two different aspects of care: 'taking care' of as permanent arrangements of assisting with physical presence of a caregiver and 'caring about', which intrinsically and foremost implies an emotional engagement.

An article in which care responsibilities constitute one of several dimensions that are examined by the authors concludes this section. In order to determine to what extent and in which ways the family lives of Polish migrants in Norway are transnational, Justyna Bell and Marta Bivand Erdal deconstruct the idea of the transnational family. They examine the ways of 'doing family' (i.e. cross-border practices) vis-à-vis ways of 'being a family' (i.e. self-identifications) in the context of mobility. The authors not only explore parenting practices and actual realizations of care responsibilities by both those who migrated and those who stayed, but also analyse changes within couple and family relationships that stemmed from geographical separation. The authors critically engage with writings on transnationalism and propose to make a link between transnational practices and identifications, seeing them as 'mutually constitutive'.

## VIRTUAL FAMILIES

It is increasingly noted that the broader themes of care and family practices examined throughout the first section are linked to the specificity of their execution in the face of new technologies. This section comprises two articles with their main research questions revolving around relationships between a broader framework of 'doing transnational family' on the one hand, and specifically using new technologies and virtual space to redefine, reinforce/diminish and maintain family ties, on the other hand.

The first paper of this section, *Between Virtual Intimacy and Transfer of Family Members to the Workplace: Strategies of Migrant Care Workers to Deal with the Temporary Separation from their Families in Poland* by Patrycja Kniejska, acts as a bridge between the first and second part of this volume. It brings together issues related to caring and virtual space, exploring the typical strategies for organizing family life among migrant care workers. Drawing on empirical data, Kniejska distinguishes two main paths of the arrangements which show how Polish care workers in Germany construct their family life from afar. The first path is a strategy where different family members (living in both the country of origin and the host society) construct virtual intimacy by taking advantage of using online communication. Alternatively, some commuting respondents brought spouses and children along to the destination country in a process that the author calls a 'transfer of relatives to the workplace' and views as the second path chosen by Polish migrants in situations wherein the line between work and private life is blurred (e.g. job assignment of being a 24/7 carer). In addition, the author pays much attention to the role played by employers in helping to organize migrant care workers' family life.

In her paper *Virtual Transnationalism: Polish Migrant Families and New Technologies* Paula Pustułka introduces selected results from research carried out among Polish transnational migrants in Norway, Germany and the United Kingdom. Pustułka's article has a dual lens. Firstly, she searches for preconditions and barriers that are essential for determining the use (or rejection) of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) among the members of transnational families. Secondly, she explores individual strategies concerning migrant family practices within virtual space and beyond. Her analysis also highlights the significance of relinquishing or avoiding ICT use to contact family and friends in home countries, regardless of having sufficient technological capacity.

## YOUNG MIGRANTS AND FAMILY PRACTICES

In the last section of this volume, the authors make room for the youngest generations of migration actors. Both papers give voice to children and youth expressing their experiences, views and identities across transnational spaces.

The article by Sue Heath, Derek McGhee and Paulina Trevena follows post-accession young migrants from Poland in their everyday relational and family practices. The theoretical framework for the empirical research is drawn from Bryceson and Vuorela's concepts of 'frontiering' and 'relativizing', applied to discussing everyday relational practices with both kin members and non-kin

actors for the purpose of building a sense of belonging and community. The authors conclude that for some young migrants mobility to the UK means an opportunity to live independently and execute forms of relationships and workplace environments alternative to the ones available in their home country. However, this new way of life is often accompanied by complex interdependencies within the structures of relationships with members of their extended families living in the UK.

The last paper of the volume, *Gender Roles and Practices in Polish Migration Families in Norway through the Eyes of Children* by Krystyna Słany and Stella Strzemecka, stems from TRANSFAM's qualitative and participatory study conducted among children born in Poland but living permanently in Norway. The authors emphasize how children of immigrants perceive and interpret transnational family practices performed in their home environment. The analysis depicts the ways in which gender roles and family arrangements linked to household labour and care are perceived and expressed through the eyes of children.

The final part of this special issue is a book review of *The New Minorities of Europe. Social Cohesion in the European Union* by Michael Johns (2014), written by Gabriela Cagiel.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Although there is already a substantial range of literature connecting migration and transnational studies with family research, we believe that the terms of 'doing family' – actual family practices that migrants in the transnational European space engage in – still provide fruitful and novel examinations. The three research areas presented in the volume, namely care, virtual spaces and young migrants' perspectives, might constitute departure points for moving forward when seeking to fill knowledge gaps.

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