Family Life in the Age of Migration and Mobility:
Theory, Policy & Practice
International Research Conference

Abstracts

Loretta Baldassar (University of Western Australia)
Mobilities as a new paradigm for understanding family life: issues and challenges

This paper considers the so called 'mobility turn' in the social sciences and its relevance to research on caregiving in transnational families. Whether pushed or pulled out of homelands in search of safe asylum, better economic futures or improved lifestyles, increasing numbers of people are separated from their family by distance and national borders. Those family members who 'stay behind' also become part of social relationships stretched across time and place, even though they might never actually relocate or even move at all. In addition to migrant families, a growing number of other 'types' of families are being defined by their experiences of mobility, including commuter, fly-in-fly-out, frequent flyer, expatriate and even the multi-local families created after divorce and separation.

In this paper I am particularly interested in examining how people care for each other across distance and over time. I argue that caregiving is a useful analytical focus for an analysis of the impact of mobilities on family life because the exchange of care is one of the central processes that maintain family relationships. In other words, caregiving and its management are constitutive of family life. The increasing mobility and profound impact of new communication technologies on our ability to care across distance and to manage absence in family life makes an analysis of 'the portability of care' (Huang, Thang and Toyota 2012-a:131) a fundamental topic of our contemporary lives. I attempt to assess what I think are two key challenges to the conceptualisation of family caregiving posed by a mobilities paradigm.

Firstly, there is the methodological and theoretical question of how we examine caregiving in transnational contexts. As Kofman (2012:153) notes; 'To investigate the different forms, orientations, and directions of care, one would need (...) to adopt an approach that follows longitudinally and spatially the migrant so as to capture care giving and receiving'. To this end, a 'care circulation framework' (Baldassar & Merla 2013) is presented as a way of tracing or mapping the multiple and multi-directional care exchanges that characterise transnational family relations across the life-course. This is not to suggest that care flows unencumbered and evenly across and within in some kind of 'care-soaked' scenario. Rather, caregiving is defined as a process of asymetrical reciprocal exchange influenced by unequal power relations (cultural, social and political) both within and outside the family. The circulation lens helps to reveal just how extensive and intensive transnational caregiving activities are and underlines the importance of theorising mobility and absence as common features of family life. It is also a framework that can encompass the full range of care responsibilities that have, to date, been compartmentalised in the existing literature between analyses of the south-north chains of domestic and care-sector workers and studies of a broader set of transnational family relations and migration types.

Here Kofman's (2012:153) notion of ‚global householding', „as the nexus of the lifecycle and its diverse activities" is pertinent, as a way of contextualizing caregiving within the range of practices and institutions engaged in social reproduction, encompassing, for example, those who do not move, but who draw on the care labour of those who do.

Secondly, there is the empirical question of how people actually manage to conduct caregiving across distance and over time. Given time constraints, I will only briefly introduce this issue. Caregiving is also a window on the emotional intersubjectivities at the heart of all relationships, especially those between family and kin-like friends. Here the epistemological notion that the self is created through intersubjective relations (shared dialogue and activity) is examined in contexts where people are ‚living apart together. A central challenge posed by a mobilities paradigm is how to locate the human embodied interdependencies that characterise caring relationships in a transnational context. To this end, the concept of ‚virtual' and other forms of ‚co-presence' (proxy, imagined, ‚soft', ‚hard') are introduced to explore how people maintain a sense of ‚being there' for each other, including the special role of visits. This leads us to question the implication of these increasingly common practices of breaching mobility and overcoming distance on the development of theories of family life.

Norbert F. Schneider (Federal Institute for Population Research, Wiesbaden)
Job-Related Spatial Mobility across Europe. Individual and Social Consequences of Increased Mobility

Mobility and being mobile are key categories of modernity, which are highly ambivalent. While the positive effects of job mobility have increasingly been brought to the fore in recent years, the negative consequences for employees, their families and for social cohesion in general have so far been widely ignored. With the findings of a recent study, in which over 7200 people from six European countries were interviewed about their mobility, mobility experiences of employees in Europe as well as the consequences of mobility for families, intergenerational relationships and social integration are the key themes of the presentation.

Laura Merla (Cirfase, Catholic University of Louvain)
The role of networks in transnational care-giving: the case of Latin Americans in Belgium and Australia

This paper focuses on the ‚circulation of care' (Baldassar and Merla, 2013), defined as ‚the reciprocal, asymmetrical and multi-directional exchange of care that fluctuates over the life-course within transnational family networks subject to the political, economic, cultural and social contexts of both sending and receiving societies'. Based on case studies of Latin American transnational family networks, this paper investigates the specific role that intra-familial dynamics play in the exchange of care between adult migrants and their parents. This involves tracing the movement of personal, practical, emotional, financial support and accommodation (Finch 1989) and the unevenness of their flows, and in so doing, identifying all of the people who are involved in the social relationships that manage caring relationships. The resulting ‚map' of caregiving actors and activity provides a detailed account of one of the central ways family relationships are constituted and maintained in trans-national settings.

This paper also contributes to our understanding of inequalities in the capacity to circulate care that arise from the institutional contexts of sending (in this case, El Salvador and the Dominican Republic) and receiving (Australia and Belgium) countries. Drawing on Kilkey and Merla's situated care-giving capabilities framework (Kilkey and Merla, forthcoming, 2013), the paper indeed highlights the impact of peoples' situation in migration, gendered care, welfare and working-time regimes of sending and receiving societies on the specific roles they play within transnational family networks of solidarity. Finally, the paper discusses relations between migration and the re-negotiation of family commitments and power dynamics within transnational families.

Mirca Madianou (Goldsmiths College, University of London)
Family life at a distance: migrant transnationalism in a polymedia environment

Transnational families are becoming increasingly prevalent in the context of the feminisation of migration partly fuelled by the demand for care and domestic workers in the global North. Many of these new migrants are mothers who leave children behind. Family separation and the phenomenon of the left-behind children are largely seen as one of the hidden injuries of globalisation: the high social cost the global south must pay in return for the remittances which keep its economies afloat. Parallel to these developments is the explosion of new communications technologies over the past 2-3 years. Now a Filipina migrant mother in London can use a plethora of platforms – such as phone calls, text, email, IM, social networking sites such as facebook and Skype – to keep in touch with her children. But what are the contours of this 'connected family life' and 'distant parenting' and what role does the new environment of 'polymedia' (Madianou and Miller, 2012) play? Understanding new communication technologies is essential for understanding migrant transnationalism given that transnational families depend almost entirely on new communication technologies as the main means of keeping in touch during lengthy periods of separation.

In my talk I will report on a long term ethnography of Filipina migrant mothers in the UK and their children who remain in the Philippines (2007-2010 with a follow-up in 2012-13). By contrasting the perspectives of migrants and their left-behind children I will observe that new communication technologies, understood as an emerging communicative environment of 'polymedia', cannot solve the social problems of relationships or of separation. However, I will argue that new media have profound consequences for the ways migrants and their families experience and manage long distance relationships. Moreover, new communication technologies can have further unexpected consequences contributing to the justification of decisions relating to migration and settlement and therefore to the phenomenon of migration as a whole.

Ewa Palenga-Möllenbeck and Helma Lutz (Goethe University Frankfurt am Main)
Landscapes of Care chain: the missing male perspective

In our presentation we will look at the "male" part in transnational care chains on the example of Eastern and Central Europe. Drawing on two case studies on (stereo)typically female and male domestic work (female care work and handymen services) and care chains from Ukraine to Poland and from Poland to Germany, we analyze masculinities and fatherhood at the intersection of gender, class and ethnicity/citizenship in transnational perspective.

We start our analysis with the global trend of a "care deficit" resulting, among others, from the change and/or persistence of gender orders and policies in both sending and receiving countries. In the second step, we reconstruct the experiences of men at the "sending end" of transnational care chains, including both male migrants and men staying behind migrating female partners: What is the specific "male" part in these care chains? How does transnational migration of men and women challenge the notions of masculinity and fatherhood? What dilemmas of caring and breadwinning do fathers living in transnational relations face?

Russell King and Julie Vullnetari (Sussex Centre for Migration Research, University of Sussex)
Interrelationships between gender, care drain and migration: Albania during and after communism

This paper compares the interrelationships between gender, family structures and intra-family care arrangements during two markedly different periods of Albania's recent history: the communist era dominated by the autocratic state-socialist regime of Enver Hoxha, and the post-communist period dominated by a kind of reactive free-for-all capitalism and high rates of both internal and international migration. Since 1990 Albania has accumulated a 'stock' of more than 1.4 million emigrants, mostly living in Greece and Italy: a huge number compared to the resident population, 2.8 million at the 2011 Census. Families have been torn apart by this mass emigration - both husbands from their wives and children, and older generations left behind or 'orphaned' by their migrant children. Increasingly, however, there is a tendency for families to reunite abroad, sometimes also involving the older generation. All this contrasts with family, residential and care arrangements during the communist period when not only were families generally living in compact and close proximity, but also a minimum of state welfare was available to support vulnerable and isolated individuals. However, it would be a mistake to think of the communist era as one of complete immobility: internal migration was part of state economic and social planning, and some families which fell foul of the regime were split up and sent into internal exile. The paper provides a valuable lesson in historicising regimes of gender, family and care across dramatically contrasting social models.

Valentina Mazzucato (Maastricht University)
Children's experiences of living in transnational families: A view from African countries

Studies on the effects of parental migration on children who stay in the home country are primarily based on adult accounts. These studies indicate that parents and children suffer emotionally from the separation. Furthermore, most studies are based on data from Latin America or Asia. Yet when interviewing children in African countries a more variegated picture emerges. In the TCRA and TCRAf-Eu projects we studied children's emotional well-being through surveys conducted in three African countries in 2010-11 (Ghana N=2,760; Angola N=2,243; Nigeria N=2,168) amongst children and youths in junior and secondary schools. Different transnational family configurations are analyzed, paying attention to which parent migrates, who the caregiver is, the stability of the care giving arrangement, and the contact between parent and child to identify what situations lead to children suffering emotionally due to parental migration, and which situations instead seem to work well for children. Contextual factors such as child fostering and social parenthood practices that guide family norms in all three African countries, as well as war and post-conflict settings help to explain the similarities and differences between the three countries studied as well as the differences between our findings and those of previous studies in Latin America and Asia.

Stefan Beck (Dept. of European Ethnology, Humboldt-University at Berlin)
Biomedical mobilities – doing families, transnational lab-benches and cosmopolitan sub-politics

The talk explores instances of – what tentatively will be called – biomedical mobilities in the domain of reproductive medicine in Turkey, Germany and other European countries as a prominent example for challenges posed by recent developments in late modernity: The intertwined questions of (1) changing practices of "doing kinship" and new understandings of what this specific cultural/natural relationship entails in the domain or reproductive medicine; and (2) how to conceptualize and how to make methodologically accessible the spatiotemporal arrangements, the new modes of ordering institutional as well as vernacular practices, the new flows of expertise in the domain of reproductive medicine that are transnational or global. My contribution will propose to analyze these practices under the label of biomedical mobilities, i.e. as "civil" as well as "scientific" practices that do relations beyond the boundaries of states, societies or institutions by moving people, knowledge, ideas as well as biomedical "things". Following the "methodological cosmopolitism" suggested by Ulrich Beck and Edgar Grande, the paper will argue that biomedical mobilities afford cosmopolitan practices that have subpolitical potential.

Lise Widding Isaksen (Department of Sociology, University of Bergen)
Strangers in Paradise? Images of Care among Italians in Norway and Norwegians in Italy

Comparative research on care- and welfare regimes in Northern and Southern Europe has mainly focused on national levels. How subjective individuals and citizens in North and South compare and experience differences in the social organization of care practices has been given less attention. Here I will explore how transnational families in Norway and Italy construct and compare cultures of intergenerational care and how social meanings of public and private money is attached to images of „Norwegian" and „Italian" care. Methodologically this project draws on Georg Simmel's analysis of „The Stranger" as a social form. According to him : „the stranger (….) is the wanderer who comes today and stays tomorrow. (…) his position within the group is fundamentally affected by the fact that he does not belong in it initially, and that he brings qualities to into it that are not, and cannot be, indigenous to it". A stranger can be a person that is an active observer and an engaged participant in one person, and have a possibility to live between intersecting social and cultural circles. S/he can be both inside and outside a local family and/or a community as a „subject of rights" and as „an object of obligatory concern". Immigrants are, at least to begin with, newcomers to the societies they arrive in, and have therefore potentialities to be both outsiders and local participants. Strangers (like immigrants) might develop a double perspective on society, being able to evaluate and understand as well the societies they left behind as the societies in which they arrived and now live in. Norwegians in Italy and Italians in Norway represent in my discussion the kind of strangers being able to compare and evaluate subjective experiences from two different care-and welfare regimes (Norway and Italy).The sociological and theoretical approach is based on the idea that talking about money is talking about life („The economy of Life" - approach). The paper will analyze subjective talks and constructions of social meanings attached to money and care, and relate the discussion to images of „Italianess" and „Norwegianess" in the social organization of care.

Anna Gavanas (REMESO, Linköping University) **and Ines Calzada** (Instituto de Políticas y Bienes Públicos)
Swedish retirement migrants to Spain and migrant workers: interlinked migration chains and their consequences to work and care in Ageing Europe

In Swedish public discourse, retirees born in the 1940s are considered a growing cohort of relatively wealthy consumers, with more cosmopolitan preferences and habits, and different demands compared to previous generations. Swedish retirees are part of a growing stream of Northern Europeans who migrate to Southern Europe to retire in the sun. We here present some preliminary results of an ongoing research project on the conditions of Swedish retiree migrants in Spain and of the workers who provide care and services for them in the two main destinations for Swedish IRMs: Costa del Sol and the Canary Islands. Exploring the relations between streams of migrants who meet in Spain, and their intermediaries, this project explores issues of mobility and the globalization of care/service, of crucial importance to welfare states and the future of work, elderly care and retirement conditions in Europe.

Barbara Waldis (University of Applied Sciences Western Switzerland Valais-Wallis)
Binational partnerships under pressure. Between migration regulations and family law

Since 1920, Switzerland, traditionally multilingual and bi-confessional, is pursuing restrictive immigration politics. But still, the percentage of binational marriages in Switzerland has risen continuously since the 1960s when the first large immigration period after world war II occurred. Since 2000, a third of all new marriages in Switzerland annually are binational, which constitutes a large percentage in comparison to Germany and France where the percentages are eleven and thirteen percentages. A new phenomenon has developed in the last 20 years. Swiss-foreign couples, where the foreign partner has an African, Asian or South-American passport are increasingly forced to get married outside of Switzerland by Swiss immigration laws. Only the right of family reunification, which is based on the right to a family life as it is guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights grants the right to reside in Switzerland to such foreign spouses. The paper illustrates the characteristics of binational marriages based on national statistics. The focus is on the increasing transnationality of Swiss families despite immigration laws, how the current connection between the principles of Swiss nationality and the gender regime is developing and how Swiss immigration laws are affecting marriage and migration modalities of binational families.

Majella Kilkey (University of Sheffield)
Migration and (Social) Reproduction:
the stratification effects of developments in migration policies in Europe

While physical controls at borders and internally, and related practices such as detention, expulsion and deportation, remain important tools in European states' approaches to migration management, a further key instrument they have come to adopt operates through allocating differential rights to different categories of migrants in terms of entry, residence, labour market access and social / welfare entitlements. This has resulted in a hierarchy of stratified rights among migrants - what Morris (2002) refers to as 'civic stratification' - whose particular positioning within which is a critical factor shaping their life experiences. Less often acknowledged by migration scholars is that embedded within patterns of civic stratification for labour migrants is also a hierarchy of family-related rights, concerning for example the treatment of dependants.

Moreover, the focus of 'managed migration' strategies is increasingly being extended beyond labour migration to include family-related streams, such as marriage migration and family visits. Thus, migration policies also produce systems of what Kraler (2010: 15) terms 'stratified reproduction' - 'the ability of migrant families to reconstitute their families during processes of migration'. In this contribution to the Roundtable on 'Family Life, Migration and Mobility: Policy Challenges', I am concerned with setting out an analytical framework within which to empirically examine the patterns of stratified (social) reproduction emerging within migration policies in European (and other) states. I argue that such a framework needs to take account of the multiple circuits of migration, as well as the different processes that constitute social reproduction across the life-cycle, and needs to incorporate those who move, as well as those who do not.

Sarah van Walsum (Faculty of Law, Vrije University Amsterdam)
The Contested Meaning of Care in Migration Law

This paper discusses the changing role that work performed in private homes has played, and continues to play, in the construction and reproduction of citizenship and in processes of inclusion and exclusion through migration law in the Netherlands and at the EU level. An important theme is to what degree work performed in the home is defined as (exploitative) contractual labour or as inherent to family life, and what this distinction does or does not mean for claims to residence rights as a precursor to citizenship. After a historical discussion of the Dutch case, recent case law of the European Court of Justice (CJEU) and of the European Court of Human Rights (EctHR) will be examined. As I show, there is an inherent tension between how citizenship is being constructed at the national level in terms of the public/private divide and how it is being constructed at the level of the EU. As the historian Adam McKeown theorised, such differences in the meaning attached to labour as a qualification *for* citizenship may well reflect different perspectives on the meaning of labour for the quality *of* citizenship - i.e. for the rights that citizens, as workers, can claim vis à vis the state. Where these conflicting views relate to work done in the privacy of the home, they can moreover reflect tensions surrounding the role of the state in the reproduction of citizens.

Rhacel Salazar Parreñas (University of Southern California)
Aging and Retirement

This talk on medium and long-term views on the nexus of families, migration and mobilities focuses on the question of aging and retirement in migration. It does this by looking at the situation of elderly migrants, the aging of migrants, and migrants that care for the elderly. By looking at the elderly, I hope to disrupt common assumptions and dominant paradigms in migration studies concerning the typical age of migrants, the settlement patterns of migrants and the return migration of migrants. How does looking at the elderly migrant direct us to new patterns of migration, new labor migrant niches, and new forms of racial, class, and citizenship inequalities within the elderly population?