# Transnational Families, Children and the Migration–Development Nexus

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# Transnational Families, Children and the Migration–Development Nexus

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## Introduction

Research on the effects of migration on the development of migrant-sending countries has largely focused on the economic effects of remittances on households and treated the household as a single unit. This paper explores the possibilities of including a broader array of effects of migration on development by focusing on the effects of migration on 'the family' and in particular on family members located in different countries. Increasingly families are living apart-together. On the one hand, high rates of urbanization, modern production systems and an increase in transport technologies make migrating internationally in search for higher paying jobs attractive and accessible for many more people than was previously the case even just fifty years ago. On the other, increasingly stringent migration laws restricting entry into countries and the feminization of migration have led to families 'splitting' with at least one member migrating while the others stay behind. This creates families living apart-together, or transnational families, with members living in different nation-states facing the challenges of organizing care of family members transnationally. Through this process roles and relationships between spouses, parents, children and elderly parents change. What effects do these changes in relationships have for the different actors? And what development outcomes do these effects have for sending country societies? These questions remain largely under researched due to theoretical and methodological gaps in the study of transnational families yet different disciplines are beginning to address these gaps. This paper reviews some of the most recent contributions to our knowledge on transnational families in the fields of transnationalism, family sociology, gender and psychology studies and identifies some gaps. It then proposes an approach to build on these most recent theoretical and methodological innovations in order to bring the effects of migration on the family to bear on the migration and development nexus.

## 1. Families in migration and development research

The focus of research and debates on the effects of migration for developing countries has largely revolved around remittances (Adams and Page, 2005; Ratha, 2003), with the main questions being why do migrants remit, how much and what is the effect of their remittances on poverty levels of people

back home. How migration impacts the various family members however, is left open yet it too, will have development outcomes. If children or elderly lose care as a result of migration, this creates social costs for society, in the first case because children may not be able to act as productive citizens of a sending country, in the latter case because an entire generation is left without care. If, on the other hand, children are given better prospects and elderly care can be organized in other ways, paid for by migrant remittances, migration may have positive outcomes for families. Yet studies focusing on remittances do not consider non-economic effects such as psychological, emotional and health outcomes for spouses, children and elderly who stay behind. Furthermore, economic studies on migration treat the household as one homogenous unit with one set of preferences (Alderman et al., 1995; Becker, 1981). Even New Economics of Labor Migration (NELM) studies, which conceive of migration as a family decision to explain why migrants remit, do not distinguish between who receives remittances within the family and whether their use benefits some members more than others. Mostly these studies are based on migration or living standards surveys in which only households back home are interviewed, usually represented by the household head, and with no data from migrants. These studies thus say little about the impacts of migration on the various family members.

Research and statistics on how remittances are used by recipients are scarce however, and effects on family and community well-being, as well as the contribution of remittances to reducing poverty and inequality remains unclear. Apart from the uncertainty in estimates of remittances, assessments of impact need to be sensitive to the complexity in which this is embedded. Data on remittances need to take account of reverse flows (Lipton 1980; Findley 1997, Mazzucato 2006), of initial investment, and, from a home country public policy perspective, remittances need to be off-set against the (public) investment in education, elderly care and other forms of publicly funded investments.

Some recent studies have begun to look at differential effects and show that split families do have an impact on the distribution of resources between migrants and the stay-behinds. For example, Chen (2006) uses a household bargaining model to study migrant husbands and their stay-behind wives in China using the China Health and Nutrition Survey. She argues that mothers seem to consume more leisure when fathers migrate as they reduce their labor supply in income-generating activities as well as in household activities. Another example is De Laat's (2006) study of split families between rural and urban areas in Kenya, which argues that asymmetric information leads migrant husbands to spend considerable resources on monitoring their rural wives through rural-based siblings. He finds that better information through monitoring does not lead to different behavior of wives, but it does

allow husbands to reduce remittances to their wives.

In the remainder of this paper we will review studies on the differential impacts of migration on family members and focus on the case of children being separated from their biological parents due to migration by way of illustration. However, much of what we find for the case of children and parents is also applicable to other relationships such as migrants and their elderly parents or other elderly members of the extended family (Baldock, 2000). It is also important to note that although the focus is on the nuclear family, we also consider examples of wider kinship relationships such as uncles and aunts as well as non-kin relations such as can exist between a child and his or her caretaker.

## 2. Transnationalism studies

Transnationalism studies emerged in the early 1990s in reaction to the bi-focal conceptualization of migration studies dominant at the time. These studies were fundamental for drawing researchers' attention to the linkages that migrants maintain with their home regions (Glick Schiller 1992; Levitt 2001; Smith and Guarnizo 1998; Vertovec 1999; Watson 1977). Although not a new phenomenon, transnationalism scholars argue that modern production relations, and greater and cheaper travel and communication technologies make it easier for people to move and maintain linkages with the regions they come from, as well as other regions they pass through. These linkages result in flows of people, goods, money and ideas that affect the way migrants conduct their lives in the new country as well as the lives of people back home.

Surprisingly, transnational families only became a topic of focus after the year 2000. Various authors on transnationalism mentioned some of the issues facing transnational families, but more by way of side information rather than the focus of research. Levitt (2001; 74-89) discusses the challenges that come with raising children transnationally. Focusing on children left behind by their parents, and especially mothers, she highlights the emotional consequences, the problems with managing decision-making and power sharing between parents and grandparents, and the problems that occur if parents start a new family in the host country.

Smith (2006) on the other hand, devotes one chapter of his book *Mexican New York: Transnational lives of new immigrants*, on how gang life flows back and forth from Mexico and New York through children of Mexican immigrants brought up in New York who visit Mexico in the summer holiday or are even send back by their parents to escape New York gang life.

Kyle (2000) emphasizes the historical context when discussing migrants from Ecuador in his book *Transnational Peasants* and says little about children. He does comment on gender relations in transnational families, by explaining the predicament stay-at-home wives are placed in because the emigrant men create a "code of silence" in which they "actively conspire to reveal as little information as possible to their wives and other female relatives regarding their activities abroad" (p. 107).

Bryceson and Vuerela (2002) were the first to have transnational families as the central focus of research. The studies in their compilation show that transnational families have to cope with multiple national residences, identities and loyalties. Like other families, transnational families are not biological units *per se*, but social constructions or 'imagined communities'. And like other families, transnational families must mediate inequality amongst their members, including differences in access to mobility, resources, various types of capital and lifestyles (Bryceson and Vuerela 2002:3-7).

Yet there are two significant gaps left by transnational family studies. The first is that they are small-scale and do not collect data systematically on the topic. It is difficult thus to assess and verify the information found in these studies. The second relates to a criticism made more generally of transnationalism studies: they study cases of the phenomenon itself so it is difficult to say anything about the extent of the phenomenon and whether it is increasing (Portes 2001). Furthermore, as there is no comparison group it is not possible to determine if what is being observed is particular to transnational families or is a wider phenomenon affecting more people than just those with split families.

We therefore now turn to specific disciplines in which split or transnational families have begun to be researched to see what can be learned from their theoretical approaches and methodologies in order to make the study of transnational families more systematic.

## 3. Family sociology and gender studies

Recent developments in family sociology and gender studies have drawn the consequences of a transnational approach into their conceptualization of the family and into the methodologies used to study migrant families. In this section we look at the findings and methodological approaches of these two, inter-related disciplines.

Family sociology typically emphasizes proximity as a prerequisite for interaction and exchange within families thus ignoring family ties that cross borders. Recently, some scholars have taken up the challenge to incorporate

transnational families by analyzing the ways that families increasingly organize their productive and reproductive labor across borders and more specifically, by addressing the consequences of a transnational lifestyle for children who are left behind by migrant parents.

Schmalzbauer (2004) draws on data from a 2-year two-country study that included 157 people to explore the survival strategies of poor Honduran transnational families. She notes the gendered structure of the transnational division of labor. When women migrate, their care work is handed over to 'other-mothers', usually grandmothers or other female relatives. Schmalzbauer also notes that transmigrants endure great sacrifice in order to accumulate a surplus to send to their families back home. Not only do they face the emotional burden of separation from their families and home country, they also have to deal with the economic and physical insecurity that comes from working in low paying jobs. Many of Schmalzbauer's informants also told her of living in cramped, rundown apartments and skimping on food and goods for themselves in order to have the necessary extra money to send home (2004: 1326). Although for many migrants being able to send home remittances was one of the main reasons for migrating, some frustration is present among migrants if they feel their family back home expects too much. At the same time, unrealistic expectations among those who stayed behind can lead to resentment on their part if they feel remittances are not sufficient. In some extreme cases, this mutual resentment resulted in a break down of family ties.

Dreby (2007), using ethnographic fieldwork and interviews with a total of 141 members of Mexican transnational families describes that parents expected their children to be grateful for their sacrifices, but instead often found that children were ambivalent about joining their parents in the host country. This finding was related to the fact that children felt abandoned by their parents and in some cases responded by detaching from the parent that left. Such feelings might lead to unwanted behavior as for example dropping out of school or getting involved in gangs (Smith, 2006). For migrants who migrated to ensure better opportunities for their children this means that the unintended consequences of migration might include a strained relationship with their children and even a loss of educational opportunities.

The above mentioned studies present important steps forward in the research on transnational family life and its consequences. The authors made use of different data collection strategies like ethnographic fieldwork, structured surveys, time diaries and open interviews to gain better insight into transnational family life. Nevertheless, reporting is still largely based on rather small-scale studies predominantly based on qualitative evidence. Moreover, although data from family members in the country of origin is

included, the focus remains on informants in the host country. None of the studies collected data simultaneously from family members in different locations.

Finally, some research questions can only be answered by collecting longitudinal data. For example, Schmalzbauer (2004) is concerned about the transnational second generation that remains in Honduras. Because of family remittances, many of these children have been afforded a Honduran education, yet few employment opportunities await them upon graduation (p.1329). It remains to be seen if this higher educated 2nd generation will follow the path of undocumented migration into low status jobs in the U.S.


*3.1 Gender*
Recently, the demand for immigrant labor in the West shifted from a demand for male workers in manufacturing to a demand for female workers in the service industry, especially in the care industry. According to scholars in the area of gender studies, this shift has led to the emergence of 'care-drained' transnational family forms; as in conventional supply-push and demand-pull theory, global care chains are being created by the importation of care and love from poor to rich countries, in which the transfer of services associated with the wife/mother's traditional role leads to a 'care drain' in the countries of origin (Hochschild 2000; Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2003; Parrenas 2001). This signifies a potential change in family care structures, because women, who historically migrated for reasons of family reunification, are now moving to seek work independently (Hochschild 2002).

Migration may serve to reorient and question normative understandings of gender roles and ideologies by altering traditional roles, divisions of labor and other meaningful categories of gender and generational construction. Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994) found that in the case of Mexican migration to the U.S., several women embarked on migratory projects in order to change their relationships with spouses or other relatives that oppressed them back home. Their migration often involved leaving behind a set of limiting family relations and finding in the U.S. opportunities to question their more traditional roles as mothers and housewives. Yet other scholars argue that gendered expectations of women and especially of mothers remain unchanged when they migrate.

In her work on Filipina migrant domestic workers, Parrenas (2001; 2005) notes that emotional suffering and feelings of abandonment of children left behind are common in cases where mothers migrate and that mothers try to compensate for their absence by staying in close contact through phones and by sending money and goods. Nevertheless, many, transnational mothers

suffer because they were unable to live up to their own (cultural) expectations of providing care. Aranda (2003) concluded that to alleviate their emotional struggle transnational mothers had to return home, but this option is only open with economic resources and legal protection; two qualities rarely found among the often undocumented female immigrants.

These studies of transnational family life have made clear the importance of gender. Nevertheless, although categorized as *gender* studies, most research in this area focuses only on mothers and the mother-child bond. Adding fathers to the picture, not just on the sideline but as main actors would be a useful contribution in trying to get a complete overview of transnational family life. The same is true for adding the perspective of the mostly female caretakers of the children who stayed behind. They play a key role in maintaining family unity and in easing the anxiety or emotional burdens borne by children who are separated from their parents. So far, little attention is paid to care-takers.

## 4. Psychology

Migration has never been a core issue in psychology (Berry 2001). Although recently attention has been directed towards the types of psychological problems migrants face while integrating into the host society, few studies address the potential impact of family separations arising out of the immigrant experience for parent-child relationships and psychological well-being.

An exception is the study by Suarez-Orozco et al., (2002) among 385 immigrant adolescents in the United States in which they show that extended periods of separation of parents and children caused by migration can lead to conflicts and depressive symptoms. The impact of separations related to immigration were measured for several sub scales such as depression, anxiety, hostility and cognitive functioning. Family reunification - sometimes not possible until many years later – does not automatically solve these problems but can be an additional source of stress when parents and children have grown apart or when additional family members were added to the parental household during separation. Moreover, when children are left in the care of extended family members such as grandparents or aunts, children are confronted with two separations from loved ones; first the separation with the parents and later the separation with the care-taker to whom the child became attached.

The psychological research described above does try to quantify the occurrence of and effects of transnational family life however it does so by studying children who have migrated and been re-united with their parents.

A transnational perspective is thus missing in psychological research on immigrant families. The focus is solely on parents and children already in the destination country and little attention is paid to the countries of origin. Moreover, psychological concepts and scales to measure certain effects are mostly assumed to be universal and cultural differences are rarely taken into account.


## 5. Legal studies

All of the above-mentioned studies focus on the micro-level effects of split families, that is, how do split families affect individuals, their roles and responsibilities vis-à-vis each other. A focus on structural causes of split families can be found in legal studies, especially in legal anthropology. Here too studies are just at the beginning.

While there are various factors that can induce people to migrate and to decide to split the family, migration laws are increasingly shaping the length of time families are split, the possibilities for physical visits to each other, and the possibilities of living together. This then shapes the kinds of roles and relationships that evolve, the strategies that are devised to unite a family or not, and the effects that split families have on individual members. Transnational families are a form of family life that is not yet recognized by migration policies, health care policies or educational systems in most migrant receiving countries. Transnational relations give raise to increasingly complicated legal issues. In international private law the problem is seen as a question of what law applies when people live in several countries. Research looks at how the choice of laws correspond to complex transnational life situations and women's right to equality in marriage and family matters. Although according to international human rights law families have a right to live together, nation-states often make it extremely complicated if not impossible for families to reunite. Bernhard et al. (2005) show how legal barriers preventing or delaying the migration of dependents in Canada come at a tremendous human cost for couples, extended families and children. Family members are often separated for years, while waiting for a decision on their application for family reunification. Van Walsum (2003) investigates the implications of international human rights law (the right to life with a family) for family reunification possibilities under Dutch immigration policies. These policies assume that after a certain period of time, there will be no real bond anymore between immigrants in the Netherlands and their children abroad and hence no reason for admission on the grounds of family reunification. Van Walsum states that especially single mothers from developing countries are affected by these restrictions since it takes them longer to get established in the Netherlands and therefore they are separated from their children longer. Some of these women appeal to

international human rights law with mixed results. Van Walsum shows that immigration policies rely on notions of 'genuine mothers' that provide fulltime care even though such notions do not apply to autochthonous mothers anymore.

A migrant's ability to care is also affected by migration policies that hinder free access to family members in the country of origin. Transnational care should be a factor taken into account in the debate about dual citizenship, as dual citizenship allows people greater freedom to travel home to see their families.

In general, little is known about how immigration policies affect immigrants' decisions about and possibilities for family life. Undocumented immigrants have little legal options to reunite with their children but even for legal immigrants family reunification can be a lengthy and stressful process. Future research should take into account how policies affect migration decisions, but also psychological well-being of both parents and children.

**6. Ways forward**
Research questions investigated by the different disciplines remain important to investigate as all of these studies are just at a beginning stage. How do migration and split families change roles and responsibilities that different family members have towards each other and how are these changes negotiated between members? How do split families affect the distribution of resources between migrant sending and receiving countries? What are the non-economic effects of split families on children, parents, the elderly and caretakers? How do structural factors, in particular laws, affect family formation practices and shape the way families split and reunite and how do people respond to different legal systems in shaping their family life? And we add to this list, how can these economic and non-economic effects be up-scaled so as to have a more complete assessment of the impact of migration on development of migrant sending countries than the current focus on remittances is giving us? From the approaches and gaps identified above, we propose here important elements that an agenda for future research on transnational families in our view should contain.

*6.1 Cultural contextualizations: the importance of anthropology*
Transnational studies have highlighted the importance of taking both sending and receiving countries into consideration. Yet we have seen that many studies on split families either focus on the migrants in the receiving country or on the family members back home. An equal focus on both sending and receiving countries allows the researcher to gain a thorough

understanding of the institutions and cultural norms guiding family relationships in the migrant sending country. This is something that is still lacking in the studies reviewed above as they mainly assume a Western model of 'the family', without explaining the culturally relevant notions of family that are pertinent for understanding family relationships in the particular case under study. Anthropologists have long been studying child fostering systems and the workings of reciprocal relations within extended family systems. Anthropological insights thus need to be incorporated into transnational family studies in order to contextualize familial relations within a culturally relevant context.

*6.1.1 Shifting norms and institutions*
While it is important to embed studies of transnational families in cultural understandings of norms guiding family life, it is also important to recognize a change in these norms that occur as a result of migrating families. The study of child fostering systems is a case in point. Child fostering systems have been studied by anthropologists, especially in the West African region where the system is an age-old institution (Allman 1997; Bledsoe and Isiugo-Abanihe 1989; Goody 1982; Isiugo-Abanihe 1985; Lallemand 1993; Page 1989; Schildkrout 1973; Shell-Duncan 1994). Similar to family sociology studies, these studies give attention to different actors in child fosterage systems, yet to date, most studies focus on the 'traditional' system of fostering children between rural and urban areas of the same country: either parents migrate to cities for work, and entrust their children to extended family members in rural villages, or parents send their child to extended family in the city, hoping that a brighter future will await the child in an urban context. In this case, parents are often poor rural dwellers that foster their children with family in the city who use them as household help (Goody 1982). These studies show that conditions of fosterage arrangements are based on informal agreements of rights and responsibilities of each of the actors. These rights and responsibilities are subject to negotiation and are based on reciprocal relations and trust between extended family members (Alber 2003; Goody 1982; Isaac et al. 1982).

Long-distance, international migration poses some interesting questions because many of these conditions are not present. First, geographic distance and costs of travel make it difficult to maintain relationships of trust between parents and caretakers through regular visits. Second, caretakers tend to be in urban contexts where they cannot rely on the help of extended family with child-raising tasks, as is done in a rural setting. At the same time, migrant parents do not want their children to be used for household help, but rather want them to get high-quality education. Third, migrant parents are perceived as having more economic resources than caretakers and therefore

are expected to provide financial help to the caretaker and his or her family. Research on transnational families can contribute to these anthropological studies by considering how local institutions guiding family norms change as a result of modern conditions of international migration.

*6.2 Multiple methods, multiple sites and inter-disciplinary approaches*
The most insightful studies of those reviewed above are those that integrate large-scale quantitative methods with in-depth qualitative understanding of how relationships work. Yet the integration of methods is challenging and one often finds that even when both are used, findings are mainly drawn from one part of the study or the other, with little integration of findings. Recent developments in anthropological demography seem to offer some interesting possibilities although still at a beginning stage.

*6.2.1 Anthropological demography*
Anthropological demography is a specialty within demography, which uses anthropological theory and methods to provide a better understanding of demographic phenomena in current and past populations. It asks how population processes and socio-cultural practices affect each other (fertility, mortality, migration). Turning specifically to migration, the former emphasizes economic and social factors as causes of migration and sharply distinguishes between receiving and sending communities. The latter reflects a move away from bounded units of analysis and localized community studies towards an interest in the complex articulation of sending and receiving areas and in the migration experience of individuals as part of nuclear and extended families. Incorporated into anthropological demography, this approach attends closely to the perception of the actors involved in the production of vital events such as births and marriage in the life course, to transregional and transnational movements of individuals and families, and to health and ageing.

The combination of demographic and anthropological theories and methods is not straightforward though. Whereas the largest innovations in anthropology have been theoretical, the major advances in demography have been in the domains of data and method. Whereas contemporary anthropology focuses largely on ideology, power, and phenomenological experience, demography in the last ten years has been dominated by the statistical analysis of variation within western populations. As Coast et al. (2007) say:

> "What most interests demographers, and yet simultaneously is most traumatic for them because it undermines the whole positivist, empirical platform on which demography is built, is the

utility of qualitative data to investigate "problematic behaviours" that do not fit in with the philosophy of reasoned action, a notion that underlies much of the demographic enterprise (for example, survey questions on ideal family size). Qualitative data are also seen as a solution to researching 'sensitive' topics (such as abortion, teenage sexual activity, sexual practices) in which demographers are very interested but where responses formal questionnaires are unreliable for a variety of reasons".

However, demographers tend to have a mechanistic and ill-informed use of ethnographies (Coast 2003). Quotes are often poorly grounded when used by demographers (Randall, 2006). On the other hand, anthropologists tend to present poor or inadequate use of quantitative data. Often anthropologists do not use data collected and analyzed by demographers as their representation of a demographic context, and are more inclined to collect their own data thus using demographic data without the methods, theory or epistemology. Finally, when anthropologists represent demographic change it may be based on a few examples that stand out in their minds (probably because of the fact that they are different) rather than on population level data. They also tend to be unaware of biases and omissions (Keenan 2006; McKinnon 1997; Charsley 2005).

Innovative research at the Max Plank Institute for Demography is working at bridging this gap. Bledsoe (2006) investigates how family reunification dynamics affect mother-child relations. She analyzes demographic data that show that Gambian migrants in Spain seem to have much higher fertility rates than other populations. She then compares the definition of family used in European family reunification policies with African notions, and in this case, Gambian notions of family. She argues that the narrower European definition excludes co-wives and their (foster) children. This, she hypothesizes using her anthropological understandings, leads Gambians to replace one wife with another, while accumulating children from different wives to live with the father in Spain. This configuration would be legitimate in African kinship practices and it falls within the legal boundaries of family reunification policies: a man can legally bring a 2nd wife to Spain as long as he only has one wife at a time in Spain and have as many children from different wives in his household. Whether the 1st wife is send back to Africa, or remains in the household –undocumented- is not always clear, although it might be the case that mothers become separated from their children against their will. This implicates that women become more vulnerable under the family reunification laws in Spain than they were in Gambian society. These anthropological understandings have served to formulate a hypothesis about the reasons for the high fertility rates recorded statistically. More fieldwork would be needed amongst Gambians in Spain to verify this hypothesis.

*6.3 Intergenerational, longitudinal research*

Migration is a long-term process of which the outcomes can only be seen much later than when the actual act of migrating is conducted. Furthermore, a focus on different family members means an inter-generational approach in which the effects of migration on children, parents, grandparents and caretakers are all taken into consideration. Yet the effects of splitting on these people, how they are cared for, what results this has on their health, educational and/or emotional outcomes can only be assessed over a longer period of time. Even from an economic point of view, whether migration allows households to accumulate assets and capitals necessitates a longer-term perspective. Here recent work conducted by Caroline Moser and colleagues (forthcoming) is particularly illuminating. In their study on intergenerational asset accumulation in Ecuador, Moser and Felton (forthcoming) studied income and asset accumulation histories of families interviewed three times between 1978 and 2004. Of interest here is their comparison of those families who had someone migrate in that period nationally, internationally and those who did not migrate. For all of these categories they looked at asset accumulation as defined by financial-productive capital, human capital and social capital using what they term 'narrative econometric methodology' in which people's narratives about their lives are used to explain econometric trends in asset indexes. They show that migration is not a cure-all solution to poverty; rather its effects depend on the portfolio mixes of households and the reciprocal relations between children (often migrants) and their parents. At the community level, they show that children now have better access to education than their parents, yet this has also raised children's expectations in terms of consumer durables. Some resort to drugs and theft, making the community a much more dangerous place in the 26-year period.

*6.4 Follow the actors*

Transnational families, as all transnational phenomena, encompass different national contexts and thus present a methodological challenge. As Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002) explain, most research has had a national bias, in which units of analysis are located in one nation-state. This they call methodological nationalism. We have seen this in some of the studies above, such as in psychology and economics in which the dominant focus has been on families living in one location or data is collected from the portion of the family located in one nation-state. One way to get beyond methodological nationalism proposed by Marcus (1995) is to follow the people. In the case of split families, this means following the various family members to where they are located: where migrants live and where their family members reside. This way enables researchers to understand the effects of split families on all family members. In some of the studies reviewed above, especially in the

fields of family sociology and gender studies this is done, yet the focus has been primarily on few of the members, namely, mothers and children. More attention needs to be given to other members of transnational families such as fathers, caretakers of children and elderly and siblings.


*6.5 Up-scaling: incorporating transnational family effects in the migration – development nexus*

Ultimately, with reference to this conference on migration and development, we are interested in seeing how research on transnational families can be brought to bear on the migration – development nexus. If migration helps families, despite the distance of their members, to construct better futures for their children and allows them to care for their elderly, then this contributes to a positive outcome for inhabitants of developing countries. If, on the other hand, migration leads to difficult upbringings for children leading to unproductive or less productive lives for them, or to elderly who are abandoned in their old age, this implies social costs for a society. Furthermore, numerous remittance studies have shown that remittances are predominantly private transfers sent to family members for their upkeep and maintenance, covering costs for food, education and health. As such, transnational family relationships guide the allocation of resources, including remittances, between migrant sending and receiving countries. The question, thus, is how can studies on transnational families be up-scaled so that their impact on development can be assessed? Until now, most studies on transnational families are small-scale and focus solely on the phenomenon thus they do not give an idea of the extent of the phenomenon nor of the difference it creates with respect to a control group. These characteristics have kept research on transnational families separate from economic approaches to migration and development.

We argue that while there is an emerging literature on transnational families that has been central for raising the issues encountered by such families, there is a need to collect more systematic data on transnational families, in order to understand their extent and effects in migrant-sending countries: how pervasive are transnational families? What effects do they have on all of the actors, not only children, and how do effects and issues affecting transnational families differ from those of families living together? Another purpose of more systematic analysis is to try to distinguish between different types of transnational families. For example, although there are many different types of transnational child rearing arrangements, none of the literature reviewed above makes a systematic categorization of these types. Child rearing arrangements can take on different forms: those in which children are raised by a caretaker in the extended family, those in which children are raised by either their biological mother or father, and those in

which children are raised by a non-kin caretaker. What are the different types of transnational child rearing arrangements and do they have differential impacts on the various actors?

The study by Suarez-Orozco and colleagues (2002) is a step in this direction as it provides a large-scale assessment on the effects of migration on children's wellbeing. Anthropological demography is also of interest because it incorporates large-scale systematic data collection with in-depth anthropological knowledge of migrant-sending contexts. Future research could adapt these methodologies to a transnational perspective.

There are studies that take a transnational perspective directly into account in their methodologies by studying multiple, linked sites. Douglas Massey's (1987) ethnosurvey methodology, which has been applied to study Mexican communities as well as their migrants in the US, is a promising avenue. Its use of both in-depth anthropological work with large-scale surveys is of interest, although the component in which migrants and people back home who are tied to each other has not been conducted at such a large-scale as was originally hoped. It is precisely this component that is needed for the study of transnational families, their relationships and resources that cross national borders. A number of studies use matched sample methodologies (with medium-sized samples of around 150 people), which are particularly suited for the study of transnational families as they draw samples of people who are tied to each other across multiple sites. This has been done by Osili (2004) to study remittance behavior for housing construction, Dreby (2007) to study family relationships between Mexican migrants and their children back home and Schmaltzbauer (2004) for the case of Honduran migrants and their children. Mazzucato (2008) conducted such a methodology simultaneously, in which a team of researchers was employed to study a matched sample of people *at the same time*. This enabled the study of small, every-day actions and transactions that influence the way transnational relationships take shape. Further development of such methodologies can help up-scale research on transnational families in order to broaden our assessments of migration's contribution to development by bringing the effects of migration on families to bear on the migration and development nexus.

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