

**Albert Kraler, Eleonore Kofman, Martin Kohli  
and Camille Schmoll (eds.): Gender, Generations  
and the Family in International Migration**

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A book about international migration of families is more than welcome. Although family flows are a significant part of migrations in Europe, research in this area is still relatively scarce. Family sociology has not been much interested in migrant families, or has studied them from the perspective of the nation-State, as the main unit of observation. Wimmer and Glick-Schiller have defined this approach as ‘methodological nationalism’, including a form of limitation, unable to catch the circumstances of families moving or living across borders. On the side of the sociology of migrations, more attention has been granted only recently to migrant families and to transnational families. This edited volume, with 14 individual contributions and a general introduction constitutes, no doubt, an important input to a better understanding of the relationship between families and international migration, taking also into account gender and intergenerational dimensions.

The introductory chapter argues the many reasons for the increased attention given to family migration. The list is not exhaustive, but it raises several relevant issues. First, the increasing diversification of family circulation and of family configurations across borders, which are very different from the ‘classical’ nuclear family living in the same household. Second, family reunification policies, one of the main legal ways of immigration in most European countries, and its recent restriction. Related to that, the authors point out the Europeanisation of family immigration policies through established common standards and policy diffusion from one country to another. Some of these are policies of openness, such as the fact of accepting relationships akin to marriage, like cohabitation and same-sex partnership as basis for reunification. These policies reflect tensions between

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globalising economic and social processes and the political restrictions imposed by states to family migrants. Third, binational marriages have also increased, raising issues of spouses' different cultural background, different citizenship and residence rights, the question of the definition of family unit, patterns of gender and intergenerational relations etc. Transnational families also represent a new object of concern among researchers: new questions emerge like care for children or old people at distance, gender roles and care, mobility and care, family reunification and its consequences after years of separation, but also issues related to relations between family support and the welfare state.

Many of these questions are discussed by the contributions in the volume, divided into four relevant sections. I will not mention the specific inputs of each chapter, but I will highlight the most significant issues raised in the book. The first section deals with family not only as an element of social and moral order, but also as a place of confrontation and of negotiation of values and norms. Questions like moral discourses and assumptions about migrant families in public debates and policies directed to migrant families are analysed in this section, the only one to introduce some historical perspectives on family studies. The section also looks at relations between parents and children from a micro-social perspective, exploring how filial obligations are constructed or the question of unaccompanied minors, at the interplay between societal, familial and individual norms.

The second section deals with the economic role of families in a migratory context, analysing from different perspectives division of labour within families, the use of different sorts of capital of family members to access employment, setting family business or the links between spousal reunification, undocumented migration and the labour market. These are certainly very interesting areas to explore, rich in diversity, but not well articulated among themselves.

The third section focuses on marriage migration and gender relations. It develops the point of view of migrants involved in marriage, highlighting how marriage (for Thai women or sub-Saharan men) is one of the singles' strategies to obtain legal residency in Europe in a context of restrictive immigration policies. But binational marriage needs also to be considered by taking into account historical, social and cultural factors, and strategies of 'national' spouses, a factor somewhat neglected by the contributors. It is also question of gendered conceptions of the marriage by State authorities, here through the Swiss and German examples: authorities decide about categories of acceptable marriage partners that are not applied to national partners. A paradox, in a context where the dominant ideology is individual choice.

Finally, the fourth section deals with the analysis of families as actors situated in a transnational setting. The focus here is on care arrangements and care responsibilities in lives across borders. Practices and strategies not only of low skilled, but also of high skilled migrants (from India) are described and analysed. One key question present in different papers is how migrant's agency interacts with structural factors.

In spite of the important diversity of the contents, a feature of many edited volumes, scholars interested in family and migration will find many stimulating inputs according to their area of specialisation.