

kinship networks with goals that go beyond what bureaucracies acknowledge and accept. Anthropologists have much more to say on this.

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KINSHIP, MIGRATIONS AND THE STATE

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Anthropologists have long studied ‘exotic’ kinship patterns in distant places that differed from what was seen as the traditional nuclear family. The second half of the twentieth century witnessed a number of changes (new patterns of birth and marriage, new reproductive technologies, the increased visibility of step- and adoptive relations) that changed scholars’ perceptions, convincing them that the traditional—even in Europe and North America—was no longer a helpful concept in understanding contemporary family dynamics. Accordingly, anthropologists reformulated their analytical tools to take stock of the variety of contemporary understandings of family life, placing the emphasis not on sexual procreation and blood connections, but on an enduring sentiment of diffuse solidarity: relatedness (Carsten 2000).

Transnational migration is another late twentieth-century phenomenon that has revolutionized the way people live their relationships, challenging researchers to think beyond terms of discrete cultural values. Whereas, in many instances, specific kinship dynamics continue to influence people’s moves, organizing their migrations in particular diasporic patterns (Jardim 2009), geographic mobility underlines widening possibilities for individual conduct (e.g. ‘mixed marriages’, transnational adoptions). At the same time, technological innovations have facilitated the articulation of transnational networks of sociability, often accompanied by financial remittances, creating daily household routines that span continents and cross oceans. Nation-states are forced to deal with the challenges of this bustling scenario, attempting to define citizenship and regulate residence within their borders.

Amidst the innumerable transnational flows of money, jobs, goods and people, the ‘family’ has remained a notion of continuing concern. Until the tightening of borders during the 1970s, migrant workers in Europe and North America tended to be men who were either single or who had left their wives and children in the homeland. As women joined the migrating labour force, mostly as nannies and maids, the problem of ‘transnational parenting’ began to gather attention (Mummert 2005). What was happening to the children these men and women left behind? The humanitarian concern that highlighted ‘family’ as a core value took on increasingly concrete form. Although just

about every human rights document since the UN Declaration of 1948 contains some mention of the ‘right to a family’, the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, stipulating a child’s right to ‘preserve his or her identity, including nationality, name and family relations’ (Art. 8), is most commonly cited as the inspiration for different national policies of what came to be known as family reunification. By now, the principle of family reunification has been written into the national laws of most signatories of the Convention. However, the actual mechanisms used to implement consensual concerns vary from one nation to the next, producing enormous differences. Precisely because the inclusion (or exclusion) of new citizens has profound consequences for the idea of sovereignty, policies of immigration involve a constellation of issues, which goes well beyond the more visible questions of job markets and school capacity.

Various anthropologists have commented on how rigid state definitions of family may divert family reunification from its original humanitarian intentions, producing a form of symbolic violence that separates rather than unites kin. Hautaniemi’s (2007) work provides a good example. His ethnographic description focuses on nomadic Somali whose social dynamics are based on a wide kinship network and multigenerational households that have provided vital support (a sort of *de facto* welfare system) during recent periods of political upheaval, armed dispute, and the mass displacement of entire populations. As immigrants to Finland requesting permission to bring in close relatives, they are submitted to an immigration policy inspired by notions of the nuclear family that tend to ignore these dynamics, impeding at times the reunification of people who consider themselves to be intimate relations (foster children, classificatory siblings) and, at other times, encouraging the reunification of people who feel no particular connection.

One can only puzzle at the use of increasingly sophisticated technologies such as DNA testing to guarantee strict compliance with the law. The use of biotechnology does more than simply marginalize the importance of relations of affect and reciprocity, central to family belonging. Based on the idea of the freestanding individual, this ‘scientific’ form of identification ignores the migrant’s social trajectory, rendering irrelevant the relations that make and reveal the real-life person. The use of DNA testing to produce the ‘ultimate truth’ of kinship ties also casts suspicion on other forms of evidence—such as documents issued by another country—that attest to the immigrant’s personal biography. In short, the use of new technologies to define reunifiable elements of the family runs the risk of producing ‘more kin and fewer relations’ (Strathern 1992).

New technologies of state continue to be churned out not only to determine who qualifies as kin, but also—in some cases—to evaluate how well the potential immigrant will adjust to his or her new circumstances. Thus, alongside DNA testing, other routine medical exams and home studies to check on adequate housing arrangements, some states are proposing ‘integration tests’ for children over twelve (Bledsoe and Sow 2010).

Yet, reminding us of the importance of the various actors’ creative practices, ethnography brings home the point that ‘few states achieve anything close to pure domination or even governmentality, which exacts compliance less by force than by enrolling individuals into disciplines of the self’ (Bledsoe and Sow 2010: 182). And immigrants are far from passive, often mastering local legal logics in order to devise strategies to adapt the host country’s restrictions to their own projects. Collard (2009) provides an apt example in her study of transnational in-family adoption in Quebec, where people from war-torn and

poverty-stricken areas (Haiti, India, Philippines and the Congo) appear to lead the list of applicants. Family reunification is not an option for most these people, since, according to Canadian law, the person sponsored must be not only a close relative (brother/sister, niece/nephew, grandchild...), he or she must also be a double orphan, under the age of 18, and dependent (i.e. not married). Ironically, most of these restrictions do *not* apply to in-family adoptees who may be older and who may have living parents, as long as they sign a consent to adoption. Illustrating the resourcefulness of certain immigrants, Collard describes the case of a Congolese couple who, while still in Africa, had taken into their family two youngsters rendered homeless by the upheavals of civil war. Under Canadian law, the children were not close enough relations to qualify for family reunification, but they were available for 'in-family adoption'. Restrictions imposed by the adoption laws prevented the wife in the sponsoring couple (who was only nine years older than the potential adoptee) from adopting one of the youngsters. But the husband could and did adopt, and so the couple succeeded in reuniting their family.

Ethnographic studies suggest that in most cases, state regulations operate a radical reconfiguration of immigrants' reproductive lives in unforeseen ways. Policy planners should take stock of how state policies fashion new kinship patterns and individual subjectivities—modifying patterns of emotional attachment and identities of the self. For example, since most European states grant residence rights to only one spouse (supposing monogamous arrangements), immigrant men who seek to maintain their polygamous household are obliged to 'rotate' their wives (sending one back to the homeland so as to bring in another one), or to divorce a first wife in order to gain resident status for a second (Sargent 2010). The influence of state policy on immigrants' reproductive lives begins, in fact, long before the 'reunification' stage. For instance, in order to gain legal residence in Germany, certain Cameroonians—particularly men—resort to marriage strategies (wedding a European citizen), whereas others—particularly women—attain their ends by giving birth to the child of a local citizen (Bledsoe and Sow 2010). State intervention may also force families to denigrate their own conduct, as in the case of Moroccan youth in Spain, bargaining for the status of 'unaccompanied minors', who must prove that their original families are somehow abusive in order to avoid being sent back to the homeland (ibid.).

We conclude our comments with two caveats concerning the anthropologist's role in these discussions. First, in order to contribute to reflections on the question of family reunification, anthropologists should begin by interrogating the political import and timing of the notion itself. Certain scholars (e.g. Bledsoe and Sow 2010) suggest that it is only with the closing of borders in the Northern hemisphere that family reunification became an issue. It is significant that this theme appears to be of little interest to governments in the Southern hemisphere despite growing flows of migrants. Comprehending the circumstances that produced such a concern would help contextualize demands on, and uses of, current policies of family reunification, and would make it easier to evaluate the whys and wherefores of the pertinent legislation.

Second, as they go about 'translating' the practices of foreign residents into terms that are intelligible to policy makers, anthropologists should avoid the trap, often posed by administrators, of presenting their subjects as 'exotic others'. Recognizing the effects of globalization (which is hardly an entirely new phenomenon), anthropologists no longer

speak in terms of self-contained ‘cultures’, as though people’s symbolic universes—anywhere—could be geographically isolated or stopped in time. This approach is even more relevant in the case of transnational migrants who are, in general, people who have innovated, who have broken with ‘traditional’ trajectories and sought out alternatives that, even if they do not erase, at least radically change their original cultural horizons.

Certainly ‘cultural differences’ do exist and anthropologists will continue to play a key role in highlighting the intricacies of value systems and forms of social organization that appear odd to local administrators. But they should take care to distance themselves from reified notions of otherness that are liable to reinforce discriminatory attitudes. Sarkozy’s 2006 gaffe attributing blame for the Parisian street riots to immigrant youth serves as apt illustration of this danger. While France’s Minister of the Interior, he held that although these young people were legally ‘completely French’, their parents’ polygamy and (inadequate) acculturation made it difficult to integrate them into French society (Sargent 2010). ‘Polygamy’ serves here as a rhetorical device to cast moral suspicions over an entire population, justifying increased barriers to immigration on the premise that such people experience difficulties in ‘integrating’ into the national polity. The exotic element (which, in this case, is accompanied by distinct phenotypic traits) manages to overshadow other issues linked to racial prejudice, housing and the job market that might be more relevant for the understanding of youth rebellion.

It would seem that the more we speak of ‘integration’ and related problems, the less we attend to the transnational dynamics of families and subjects, and the ways they are able to establish ongoing connections despite geographic distances. Such dynamics do not easily fit into the neat moulds of national legislation. But it is perhaps these dynamics—that speak of creative, constantly renewed forms of social relations—that should most interest not only anthropologists but the policy-makers with whom they seek to enter into dialogue.

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CARE AND CONNECTIVITY IN LABOUR MIGRATION

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Until quite recently notions of kinship have been treated as localized modes of social organization and classification systems. Moreover, as forms of organization and as ideational relational structures, kinship systems have been considered to exist outside colonial administrations and economies, nation states and the market. An early non-typical example going against this trend is Esther Goody's study of fosterage practices among West-Africans in London. Her study is a prolongation of studies she carried out in Ghana on different types of institutionalized child-care arrangements which implied child circulation (Goody 1982). The study of fosterage, wardship and apprenticeship practices in West Africa has contributed to a newer research current which thematically links West Africa, the Pacific region, the Caribbean and parts of Latin America. Situations of multi-local families and kinship groups, relational and changeable socialities and the circulation of children have been shown by ethnographic accounts and social history studies to exist parallel and prior to the period when conditions of economic globalization turned transnational migration into a relevant research topic. Ethnographic insight from these studies can contribute to the study of kinship and the structuring of kinship relations in transnational contexts.

The new kinship anthropology contributes additional analytical possibilities to the study of transnational kinship. The approach leaves behind formalistic models of substance transference, inheritance, entitlements and genealogies, and reconsiders the