

Comparing transnational and local influences on immigrant transnational families of African and Asian origin in Portugal

Susana Salvaterra Trovão

Centre for Research in Anthropology - Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities / Nova University of Lisbon (CRIA, NOVA FCSH)

Abstract: The present paper aims to discuss the influence of transnational family experiences and migratory integration on the redefinition processes of family dynamics through a comparative study among selected families of migrant backgrounds settled in Lisbon. Guiding research questions are: how do migrants whose cultures have historically been examples of a particular family dynamic implement it in the Portuguese migratory context? How are these dynamics changing and what are the consequences for the families and individual family members concerned? What is the effect on family dynamics of continuing transnational connections and of different experiences of insertion and exposure to values and attitudes of the receiving society? Comparative analysis has brought to light how continuing family transnationalism and local integration do not significantly transform long-standing migrant family dynamics. While allowing transnational family members to negotiate specific family relations, these negotiations are not experienced as a project in opposition to cultural and religious family traditions.

Introduction

Transnational family studies have been gaining importance in social science research. Kinship relations, matrimonial forms and strategies, cultural constructions of gender, generation and parenting have been the focus of many anthropological works (e.g. Collier & Yanagisako, 1987; Héritier, 2002; Oyewumi, 2004) which continue to provide the conceptual basis for researchers working in this field. Just as significant is their problematic grounding in the field of migrant transnationalism, specifically in the deconstruction of paradigms which superimpose some type

of family dynamics on a nation-state (Fouron & Schiller, 2001; Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002; Grillo, 2008) or in the construction of from-below approaches to globalization processes (Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002; Sassen 2007; Vertovec, 2009).

Through yet another lens, the cultural values and practices that are believed to represent the transnational family relations of immigrant groups have not only subjected to intense public scrutiny and contestation but also the object of policy and legal initiatives in many receiving countries. Interacting with these wider debates, transnational family members themselves are also reflecting on how to manage family relationships and construct familyhood in increasingly pluralized societies (Baldassar, Baldock & Wilding, 2006; King et al., 2006; Grillo, 2008;).

Although the available literature still falls short of providing a solid comparative theory of transnational families, some concerted methodological efforts should be acknowledged. Transnational families are to be considered in relation to the organization of the world system, by which we mean a world of nation-states (Goulbourne et al., 2010). Their multi-sited placement in different national-historical contexts requires the analysis of the various contextual parameters that contribute to the reconfiguration of the experiences of those families and their members. The very capacity of migrants to redefine and practise transnational family relations stems from an intersection of social class and gender, generational, cultural, and religious resources which may be capitalized and are attributed differential values as a function of specific social spheres.

Simultaneously, transnational families are constructed between different nation states, thereby constituting imagined and reflexive, real and changing communities (Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002). These trans-boundary processes also involve creating transnational methodologies (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007) in order to understand the construction of shared memories, feelings of belonging, network ties, mutual obligations, and strategies for the

management of conflicts and power dynamics. Easily idealized as porous and cosmopolitan formations (Vertovec, 2009), transnational families become a heuristic focus to study both processes toward conservatism and homogenization and processes of contestation and pluralisation, as well as the emergence of different forms of cultural hybridity (Werbner, 2004). Therefore, they also constitute identity realities, characterized by a continuous exchange of judgements (between “us” and “them”, “here” and “there”, “then” and “now”) that are mobilized in the renegotiation of the value image of family units and their members (Bastos-Trovão, 2010).

Taking this general methodological framework as a starting point, the present paper aims to discuss the influence of transnational family experiences and local integration on family dynamics (modes of articulating gender and generation relations) through a comparative study among selected families of migrant background settled in Lisbon, who maintain transnational links with their countries of origin and/or with other spaces of diaspora. Guiding research questions are: how do migrants whose cultures have historically been examples of a particular family dynamic implement it within the Portuguese migratory context? How are these dynamics changing and with what consequences for the families and individual family members concerned? What is the effect on family dynamics, on the one hand, of the continuing transnational connections with countries of origin and diaspora and, on the other, of different experiences of insertion and exposure to values and attitudes of the current receiving society ?

Contrasting with many Northern European countries, Portugal presents a very low level of media coverage and public discussion of immigrant family values and practices and has not adopted progressive family policies with particular reference to minority communities. However, certain migrant/minority ethnic family practices are also conceived as an “obstacle” to their “integration” by the Portuguese media discourse and social service practitioners. Particular

segments of immigrant populations of African origin are associated with supposedly “dysfunctional” family configurations, where there is allegedly *too little family* (organizers). Conversely, other segments can be accused of having *too much family* because of perceived practices such as promoting extended family and parental control of women, abiding by arranged or negotiated marriages, and fostering inter-ethnic encapsulation.

This paper is organised around three main sections. First, we present the comparative strategy and the qualitative methodologies used. Second, we analyse the major findings of five comparative ethnographic studies. Finally, we highlight the common denominators and differences about the impacts of integration and transnationalism on the family dynamics of the migrant groups worked in the empirical section. In parallel, intra-group variation will be discussed according to some compositional factors (gender, generation and level of education). Without neglecting certain Portuguese specificities concerning public debate and policy towards immigrant/ethnic families[1], the conclusion section calls for a stronger analytical approach to relating integration and transnationalism with specific gendered constructions of self and family.

Operationalizing a comparative research project [2]

The research project has entailed a change from perspectives which constantly measure socio-cultural continuities and transformations among transnational families against some presumed family patterns usually associated with a homeland. Hence, we tried to analyse processes of family (re)construction through their placement within a specific national-historical context, interrogating how contextual parameters and continuing transnationalism contribute for the dynamics of reproduction and change in *situ*.

In addition, we applied a strategic comparative approach focusing on two types of transnational family dynamics whose values and practices have become a focus of public attention in Portuguese debates about immigrant integration.

Our first empirical focus was a family configuration frequently associated with transnational migrants from North Africa, the Middle East, and parts of South Asia (Gardner, 2002; Salih, 2003; Werbner, 2004; Grillo, 2008; Zontini, 2010, among others). This family model often involves a strong corporatist family ethos (i.e., promoting multiple or extended family relations and values, gender power inequalities, intergenerational stratification, and parental control) combined with a high degree of scrutiny over the sexual and moral behaviour of women (and men), and underpinned by the belief that any transgression of certain rules and principles entails shame and harm to the collective family honour.

The second focus concerned a configuration related with transnational migrants of either Afro-Caribbean origin or from certain (i.e. Creole) African societies (Barrow, 1996; Chamberlain 2004, 2009; Reynolds 2005, 2006; Goulbourne et al., 2010). Men build their masculinity, prestige and power partly through the sexual and reproductive conquest of multiple women. Erotic and reproductive social capital is also exploited by young women as a key way for the negotiation of social mobility and material security. However, due to the volatility of marital experiences, motherhood and mother-children relationships become the main identity investment and source of respectability for the women-mothers, who often assume total responsibility for the subsistence and education of their children.

The main selective criteria for migrant groups were: family values and practices characterized (by previous research) as specific socio-historical and cultural forms of the two types of transnational family dynamics mentioned above; a more or less long presence in

Portuguese society presenting, at least, two generations; the maintenance of transnational links with countries of origin and diasporas. For the first configuration, the empirical focus was on Muslims of Indo-Mozambican origin (with long historical ties with Portugal), Muslims from Bangladesh and Sikhs from Punjab region (unrelated to Portugal's colonial past). For the second configuration, we worked with migrants segments whose origins are in Cape Verde and São Tomé (two ex-Portuguese colonies) and who self-define themselves as Christians. [3]

Five multi-sited ethnographic studies were developed employing complementary qualitative methodologies. We followed a total of sixty-two transnational families: eight from Punjab region, eleven from Bangladesh, fifteen from Cape Verde, thirteen from São Tomé, and another fifteen of Indo-Mozambican origin [4]. The families were selected through snowball sampling, whilst ensuring varied profiles in terms family composition, transnational family networks, class background, social and cultural capital, integration, and family transnational processes (cf. Tables 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5). Specific sites were used to approach potential interviewees and conduct complementary ethnographic observation. Such sites included ethno-national communities and associations, religious networks and spaces of worship, as well as certain neighbourhoods in the Greater Lisbon area that are known for a strong concentration of residents of Indian and African origin.

Converging with previous research (Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002; Chamberlain & Leydesdorff, 2004; Kofman, 2004; Parreñas, 2005; Beck-Bernsheim, 2007; Olwig, 2007; Goulbourne et al., 2010), empirical comparison was made possible by the following topics of analysis: patterns of migration and settlement; transmission of family values and traditions; mutual family responsibilities (among which providing material, emotional, and moral care); matrimonial options as fundamental dimensions of exchange across multiple boundaries;

strategies to deal with family conflict and crisis; processes of (economic, social, cultural and legal) integration; community building and participation; relationships with the surrounding society and the state; multi-dimensional identity constructions and ways of belonging. As the available literature also claims (Basu & Coleman, 2008; Burrell, 2008; Frykman, 2009; Rosales, 2009), movements and object appropriations which accompany human mobility also affect the ways in which transnational experiences are produced and experienced. We have therefore devoted special attention to the consumption of commodities and gift exchanges, exploring the ways in which material values and practices co-produce and redefine transnational family relations.

Continuity and vulnerability in Sikh and Bangladeshi transnational corporatist families

While Bangladeshi migration to the United Kingdom and certain other Southern European countries has a long history (Gardner, 1993), their presence in Portugal was first recorded in the late 1980s (Mapril, 2008a). Settled in several European and Northern American countries (Knut & Myrvold, 2011), the Sikhs reached Portugal in the early 1990s. For both groups, Portugal became an attractive destination because it offered easier legalization opportunities, which in turn opened doors to further European destinations in the mid-term. However, and despite the circular migration trajectories displayed by both segments, a small group settled permanently in Portugal[5].

Unlike Bangladeshi migrants in the United Kingdom, who hail from the Sylhet region in their great majority, those living in Portugal arrived from a wider range of regions. Although the Sikh migration to Portugal often involves previously movements between different countries, a significant number also migrated directly from various Punjab districts and other regions of the

Indian subcontinent (namely, Jammu-Kashmir and Haryana). Both segments display the typical characteristics of labour migrants, with male pioneer communities. The majority became employed in construction, general trade, and restaurants; as soon as possible, they became self-employed. After an average of five to ten years of insertion of the male (needed to obtain the legal and economic requisites for reunification), families integrate a couple, their underage children, and other co-residents, connected to the central couple by kinship ties.

Our fieldwork among Sikhs and Bangladeshis shows that they are motivated by family corporatist values and duties. Their transnational connections are largely with members of the wider family network in their countries of origin. These connections are mediated by exchanges of money, goods, information, sentiments, pressures, and means of control whose aim is ensuring the fulfilment of family roles and mutual responsibilities. The widespread use of mobile phones and phone cards, but especially of Skype, enable almost daily communication. While remittances usually follow the path from Portugal to Bangladesh / Punjab / Jammu, material objects tend to follow the opposite path, with the exception of photographs and home videos, both indispensable to continued participation in the life of the extended family, which therefore travel in both directions. Spices, foods, and items of Indian clothing (suited to important ceremonies in their respective religious calendar), all mainly sent by women, contribute to inscribe the homeland in the family and community life of migrants.

In their contexts of origin, the dominant micro-family domestic cycle dictates that married sons may only have autonomous family/homes after the death of their father; emigration however makes it possible for sons to attain an early autonomy from the preceding generation. On the other hand, their families/homes in the migration context are strongly associated with the homes of their fathers in terms of both decision-making and responsibilities.

All my life I've been making plans for my family. When I go on the Internet, I define what I have to do, send money to X, give to Y and so on. I have to send money because of the family land that we bought. I contributed 90% of its value. They are all honest, but if they don't have it, what can I do. All that I want is for us to live a happy life together (Bangladeshi man, 34 years old, shop owner)

Ethnographic research shows that the authority of men over women, as well as parental authority over children, is heavily invested in idioms on the part of both groups. Gender and inter-generational relations within the family are oriented by long-lasting socio-historic dynamics which involve reciprocity and complementarity in terms of expectations and responsibilities (Khanum, 2001). Parents invest work and economic resources in their children, and instil into them the moral responsibility to ensure (in their old age or times of need) economic support, moral respect and emotional care in return. Men have the charge of the material sustenance of their family and the protection of its women. Reproductive work, (pragmatic and affective) care of the husband and other family members, a restrained and modest behaviour, and the relative absence from the public sphere are the main responsibilities attributed to the women. All members of the extended family share the responsibility for the upkeep of the reputation associated to the family name.

Despite its limitations, the migratory freedom of nuclear families influences the experience and negotiation of responsibilities within the family. In Portugal, for example, Sikh and Bangladesh women are allowed to contribute to the family income, and it is common for wives to "help out in the business", something that tends to be perceived as a sign of "modernity". The same situation in the Punjab region and Bangladesh would immediately be associated to "poverty", i.e. to a failure on the part of the males to fulfil their primary responsibilities, and would "ruin the name of the family":

In the family home, you are like a child obeying orders. I have talked to my husband about this and he says that it is alright, that he doesn't mind if I work in the family business as long as I don't neglect him and the duties of being a wife (Sikh woman, 22 years old)

In parallel, a number of women acknowledge that the foundation of a new family / home in the migratory context has increased their actual power upon several spheres in the lives of their offspring (academic, moral, religious education and matrimonial options). At the same time, they also experience an increased responsibility for their moral behaviour and its impact on the conservation of the family reputation. In fact, they are most concerned about the effects that a prolonged stay in Portugal may have upon their children, especially girls.

While a number of families are very much in favour of the education of their daughters in Portuguese schools, others are worried with the consequences that attendance of mixed schools may bring to the family's reputation family and their daughters' matrimonial opportunities. Their understanding of inter-generational relations in Portugal tends to underline the lack of hierarchical respect on the part of Portuguese youths towards the older generations. Therefore, they fear that inter-ethnic friendships may encourage their own children's rejection of parental expectations and authority. The possible future individualization of the younger generation is frequently experienced as a threat that may make it impossible to return to the country of origin or pursue other migratory projects as a family unit.

A daughter stays here five years, ten years, studies here, has friends here, then she likes it here and does not want to go back to India, or go to England or France with her father. A woman always wants to stay close to her father and then her husband. My culture is different. Cultures are different, right? When she studies here, she doesn't behave like I'd want her to (Sikh man, 43 years old, shop owner)

Sikhs and Bangladeshis initially adopted a strategy of relative social invisibility, and they then reconstructed their community and religious experiences. In a similar way to other European contexts, Sikhs recreated deep divergences. Religious, political, class and regional

differences, as well as caste and clan based categorization (in particular between *jatts* and *labanas*) have produced solidarities and reached greater confrontational intensity in the struggle for leadership of the *gurdwaras*. Additionally, issues such as the division of the Punjab, the unfulfilled aspirations to the creation of an independent Punjab state or the memory of anti-Sikh riots and deadly conflicts between Sikhs, Hindus, and Muslims in India surface repeatedly in conversations and interviews. However, when required to translate their identity, our interlocutors tend to subsume multiple tensions and divergences, defining themselves as a territorial community with its own history and religion. Recognising the importance of a positive inter-ethnicity, their attempts to integrate as a religious minority community often involve strategies of “similarity-within-difference” (Jacobsen & Myrvold, 2011).

Bangladesh migrants have developed a strong long-distance nationalism (Schiller & Fouron, 2001), as has also been recorded in the U.K. and several other European countries (Eade, 1996). This becomes a centripetal force upon the ethno-national community and a factor of intra-community competition. As upholders of Bengali or linguistic nationalism, sympathizers of Bangladesh nationalism (which combines linguistic and religious identity), or of a religious nationalism (according to which Muslimness is the criterion for belonging), a significant number of Bangladeshis have a (current or past) connection to a political party in their country of origin, and these develop periodical actions to mobilize monetary and political support (Mapril, 2010 b). The central role of the *desh* in the case of the Bangladeshis, contribute to explain why this group display the lowest cultural and political identification with the dominant population within the comparative series. Despite this, the absence of major experiences of racism and religious discrimination account for their investment in Portugal.

Concomitantly, options regarding their offspring's education have become paramount in several migrant families of Punjab and Bangladesh origin. A number of youths identify with their Portuguese classmates, and therefore pressure their parents to allow certain kinds of consumption and material practices (clothing, food, etc.). In the current Portuguese economic context of prolonged recession, it is often hard to conciliate the parents' responsibilities in their country of origin with the growing demands stemming from the educational and relational integration of their offspring in Portugal. The main impact of migration within the family which we have recorded in both groups is precisely connected to the tension of responsibilities between generations.

Managing transnational families, crossing ethnic boundaries, (re) making the self: new challenges for Indo-Mozambican women

Indo-Mozambicans of Muslim religion are part of a long lasting Gujarat diaspora. During the nineteenth century, their forefathers, mainly originating from Kutch, Khatiawar, and Surat, migrated to Africa. Since the commercial sector had diversified both in the British and Portuguese colonies of East Africa and offered more scope for expansion, the largest economic interest of Indian firms lay in international trading operations. The Indian family-based shareholding structure was maintained. A number of subgroups also invested in the secondary and university education of the youngest generations, thus laying the foundations for a diversification of professional opportunities.

After the independence of African states, in the late 1960s and 1970s, those families who had settled in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania migrated primarily to the United Kingdom. The nationalisation process implemented in Mozambique and the civil war that broke out in the mid-

1970s led to a peak in Indian emigration in the early 1980s. Most Muslim Mozambican families chose Portugal as their destination. Their network of inter-continental contacts, together with the multiple colonial capitals they had accumulated, opened the way to relatively rapid – albeit non-uniform – processes of socio-economic, cultural, and religious insertion upon arrival to Portugal or the U.K.

The Indo-Mozambican Muslims settled in Portugal [6] readily acknowledge the clear asymmetries between women and men which exist within their religious communities. Unlike Sikhs and Bangladeshis, however, they take a clearly discordant attitude to the issues of values and practices of domination upon women.

Muslim husbands give great importance to their wives, because we are the mothers of their children. We take care of the organisation of the home, and the education of children. We are the ones who prepare them to become good managers of the family business. It is well worth it to be a Muslim woman. [Sunni woman, 42 years old]

The importance attributed to the woman/mother, developed over the centuries in Mozambique, stems from a threefold process: the respect of community and family for the symbolic-religious powers of women (including moral and sexual self-control); the gradually increasing appreciation of their skills in the education of their offspring, in the local and transnational management of family relations, and their (direct and indirect) contribution to the “family business”. In Mozambique, mothering, family relations, and religion constituted the fundamental “work” of Indian women. However, of crucial importance were female attempts to avoid contaminating the masculine relations of consanguinity with typical family conflicts and the strategies they used in the preparation of their offspring to give continuity to the family business. Their role as transnational family managers also represented an important business resource. Not infrequently, their relations with relatives settled in the same or a different African territory were capitalized by their family of alliance to guarantee loans or direct banking

collateral, commercial licenses, and the trust of suppliers and customers, to exchange information and advice on investment opportunities, or to expand the transnational organization of the business.

Migration to Portugal did not substantially alter the contribution of Indo-Mozambican women within their families. A significant percentage continues to focus upon the “work” that previously structured the lives of their mothers and grandmothers; some take an active part in the “family business”, but only exceptionally do they build an independent career.

Muslim women ponder a lot whether they're going to work or not, men don't. They have to. For example, I have a university degree and I'd like to work. But my husband and his family said no. (Sunni woman, 34 years old)

Now where does religion say that a woman can't work. My mother always worked in the family business, and my grandmother managed the Emporium in Mozambique after my grandfather died. I can't imagine my future without a job, even if I may not need it. (Sunni woman, 22 years old, University student)

In contrast to Sikhs and Bangladeshis, Indo-Mozambican Muslims identify with the Portuguese and interpersonal relations between the two groups are indeed frequent. Such identification and relations began to be built in Mozambique, where – according to their own recollections – the colonial model allowed for an affective personalization of inter-ethnic relations between Portuguese and Indians, as well as for the construction of more or less hybrid forms of identity, which however always remained mediated by power relations.

Influenced by certain Portuguese middle-class values, parents encourage a more equal gender pattern in the development of the academic careers of their offspring. Simultaneously, the adoption of the vocabulary and discourse styles dominant in the surrounding Catholic religious environment and the frequent use of translation (of Muslim beliefs and practices into their Catholic equivalents) provide the younger generations with argumentative skills in the

management of inter-religious difference. Despite their cultural and religious multilingualism, youths generally accept family values and thus guarantee the continuity of “respect” associated to the family name.

Since childhood we have learned that the single act of a single person can bring shame over ten other family members. (...). This is why it's difficult to oppose certain things within the family. It would put our parents in a situation of very big shame. (young Muslim man, 22 years old, University student)

The transnational family relations of Indo-Mozambican Muslims mainly involve their relatives from East Africa who have settled in the U.K. Their micro-family debates (during visits or in their daily connections through Skype or Facebook) highlight the divergent aspects in their family lives introduced by the different colonial and postcolonial contexts of settlement. Accordingly, they evoke the existence of two separate cultural repertoires constructed during their colonial stay in Africa: that of “East African Indians”, strongly identified with “Indian culture”, and that of “Mozambicans”, “very influenced by Portuguese culture”. These two separate repertoires progressively differentiated the micro-family practices (marriage patterns, linguistic habits and domestic consumption) of the two groups, as well as their openness to inter-cultural relation.

Indians from Mozambique are a unique instance. You will not find any other community which combined so many references, Indian, African, Portuguese, in their ways of speaking, thinking, living, marrying, eating, and relating to others. Such openness to difference is impossible to those from East Africa. (Sunni man, 67 years old, pensioner)

Both in the U.K. and Portugal, the colonial past and subsequent decolonization processes have influenced discourses, policies, and practices concerning migration and post-colonial citizenship. In the U.K., a tradition of tolerance in the 1960s was gradually replaced by the public transformation of cultural and religious difference into a problem, by scepticism towards multicultural policies (blamed for the existence of “parallel lives” and practices unacceptable in

democratic societies), and by the subsequent insistence upon the absorption of the dominant national values on the part of immigrants. Portugal has been traditionally characterized by a weak social state and the almost complete absence of a dynamic civil society; however, and especially following its entry into the European Community, its policies towards the socio-cultural integration of migrants and the attribution of nationality have been generally applauded by the media and different political and institutional agents. Unlike the U.K., Portugal has not been affected by the turning of the tide against diversity which has spread across Europe after September 11th. These and other differences in the receiving contexts contribute to further set apart the post-colonial experience of East African Indians and Indo-Mozambicans, strengthening the “differences” which they reciprocally attribute to each other (Trovão, 2012 a).

East African Indians, upon their arrival in the U.K. and during the 1970s and 1980s, were confronted by constant pressure to assimilate. Social change was perceived as a threat to religious identity, to solidarity within the communities (often non-organised), and to the very Indian-influenced cultural repertoire from East Africa. Gradually integrated from the socio-economic point of view, they recognize that the presence of people of South-Asian origin (in particular, those of Muslim religion) in the U.K. has been marked by inequality and conflict. Racial tensions (Banton, 1983; Barot, 1996), worsened by the Islamophobic atmosphere of the past decade (Abbas, 2005) have a strong impact on the social integration of the younger generation. Experiences of discrimination, combined with threats of cultural and religious erosion, explain the strong involvement with the family culture of their Gujarati ancestors, as well as the current pre-eminence of their respective religious identifications over other identity referents.

Indo-Mozambicans do indeed have recollections of early experiences of racism; however, they perceive post-colonial Portuguese “racism” as differential, that is, mostly directed as black migrants from Africa. A significant difference from the U.K., where Islamophobia is on the rise, has been the virtual absence in Portugal of any significant conflict or tension following September 11th, all of which has strengthened the feelings of non-discrimination. The bi-cultural repertoire brought by the parental generations from Mozambique, and the absence of traumatic experiences of (racial and religious) discrimination thus explain the development of different family strategies when compared to their British peers: namely, the promotion of a double cultural reference among youths, and the worth attributed to their “difference” (from other diasporic nuclei) in areas of identity-related social presentation, such as family and gender relations, patterns of marriage, and degree of inter-ethnic openness.

Material exchanges and consumption practices involved in the renewal of transnational family relations also reveal differentiated family cultures. Indo-Mozambican women periodically send Portuguese foodstuffs to the homes of their daughters, sisters, or aunts married to British East African Indians. Thus, they enable them to regularly mix Portuguese and Indian food and flavours: Mozambican curry with Indian vegetables, *burfi* and Belém custard tarts, samosas, cod cakes and olives, Portuguese cheese and Indian tea. The consumption of Portuguese and Indian food influences their distant relatives physically, serves to appease homesickness, and inscribes a bi-cultural identity in growing children (especially grandchildren). Symmetrically, the women settled in the U.K. mainly send clothes, thus guaranteeing the survival of syncretic combination of elements derived from different cultural repertoires on holidays: saris with Portuguese shoes, *salwar kameez* with jeans, “knit tops with *chaniya cholis*”. Through their positive relation with the material and interpersonal worlds (Miller, 2010), these women confirm their skills in

managing their transnational family networks, and also affirm their agency in the negotiation of cultural identities and national belonging.

Plasticity of kinship ties and centrality of the mother figure in transnational Cape-Verdean and San Tomean families

Cape Verdeans and Sao Tomeans share many of the family idioms of the groups originating in the Indian sub-continent discussed above. However, they project us to a more or less distant past, in which parental authority upon children and respect for the elders were fundamental values; when the pre-nuptial virginity of brides (ritually confirmed) and their subsequent fecundity were significant conditions for the construction of male and family “honour” (Seibert, 2002; Rodrigues, 2007).

However, they also recognise significant changes that have accompanied the centuries-old migratory history from Cape Verde (Batalha & Carling, 2008), a country whose population resides mainly outside of its borders, in particular in Europe (in countries such as Portugal [7], the Netherlands, France, Luxembourg, Italy, Spain, and Switzerland), the USA, and Angola. The same changes are also apparent in the more recent migration of São Toméans (to Gabon, Angola, and Portugal) after the country’s transition to a multi-party system [8]. Among these changes, the intensification of Cape Verdean and San Tomean female migration shows that the male no longer performs the historic role of sole family breadwinner.

The majority of Cape Verdeans and San Tomeans we interviewed arrived in Portugal with the goal of improving their families’ life. Some migrant women reunite with the father of their children. Others, younger, unmarried and childless, migrated in order to help members of their close family. Others still, single mothers, have left their children in the care of relatives and

finance their education – either “back there” or in Portugal (when some degree of family reunification is finally achieved). Lastly, others, with or without children, emigrated to further their graduate or post-graduate studies and to improve their professional and family trajectories. However, the decision to migrate is generally articulated with a larger family project, which is periodically readjusted.

Some of our interviewees were administrative workers, teachers, healthcare providers, or students. Others came with far fewer resources. In Portugal, they often only found work in the construction industry or in the cleaning and domestic work sector. Those students who do complete their degrees are already anticipating a future outside of Portugal. Many live in rundown neighbourhoods where life is, as they themselves say, highly problematic. Low-income levels, unemployment, academic failure, delinquency among youths are common. These neighbourhoods have such a bad reputation that local people have difficulty finding work. The experience of racial discrimination often engenders resentment and a rebelliousness which legitimises the juvenile delinquency which produced the bad reputation.

Despite the difficulties experienced in terms of economic integration and social recognition, the most frequent narratives indicate that migration to Portugal did not bring any significant change to family relations. Family, as they say, is “numerous” and “interconnected” (according to a rationale of sharing). While children are considered “the wealth of a person” and a “long-term investment”, especially for their mothers, “São Toméan and Cape Verdean men have a habit of having many children, from different women”, and this results in the children growing up without being “accompanied by their father”, “almost fatherless”. The absence of the biological father, however, does not signal the absence of male role models and connections, frequently guaranteed by uncles, grandfathers, or older cousins. Mothers nonetheless are the

“head of the family”, the ones who “give it all up for the benefit of their kids”, “full of strength” (Ramalho & Trovão, 2010). Moreover, these representations also include traits of adaptability, tolerance and wide-ranging generosity, recorded in the multiple solutions mothers must find to support their young children, the teenage pregnancies of their daughters, and in the solidarity they invariably display in providing shelter and food to family members.

Concerning their narratives of conjugality, and similarly to the situations described by Chamberlain (2009) for Afro-Caribbeans, cohabitation is prevalent: “living together”. Males may have more than one female partner at the same time, while women must be serial monogamists. A “good husband” is a man who is not violent towards his wife and children, accepts the woman’s children from previous relationships, and provides them with material support. The lack of moral condemnation of informal polygamy even on the part of women who self-defined as practicing Christians and the “natural” acceptance of the (so often exclusive) responsibility for the support and education of their children are recreated in the Portuguese neighbourhoods where they live.

You look around and you say, my grandpa was like that, my dad was like that, and then you look at your own brother, and he has two, three, four... But if I don’t mistreat my own, I won’t mistreat others either. And so you end up adjusting. (Etelvina, 48 years old, cook)

In São Tomé, when a man avoids all that, they’ll immediately say he’s weak. They think it’s weird, because the mothers themselves, since very early on, tell their sons: a true man cannot be man to just one woman (Antónia, 21 years old, University student)

As Christians - and especially as person-mothers, these women take on greater responsibilities in the development of their communities and extended families. In parallel, the experience of racism is translated into a major incentive for socially constructive agency. Indeed, their various initiatives (mainly in the fields of mother, infant, and elderly care, education, and health) form part of a project of maternity that is widened in the name of the wellbeing,

protection, development, and improvement of the stigmatized image of the family-neighbourhood.

I raised seven children and seven stepchildren. (...) Those seven were from one, two, three different women. (...) I was often criticized when their father left, and they told me, 'you're crazy, the man dumped you with his children' and I answered, 'I do whatever I feel I should as a Christian and as a mother'. I have tens, hundreds of children in this neighbourhood. From São Tomé, Angola, or Guinea. I advise them as a mother, when something comes up, I tell them, watch out, watch what you're doing, behave yourself, because that's not right, this is what's right, you should do this or that, as a mother.' (Madalena, 63 years old, office worker)

Simultaneously, their civic lives function as models for identification within and between generations. Many young people also tend to become significantly invested in activities organised to prevent social marginalisation and inter-ethnic conflicts, both through local religious organizations and national government programmes (Trovão, 2012b).. Dissatisfied with the silence of older women-mothers towards certain cultural patterns of gender, a number of young women plan to apply their civic experience to the development of actions targeting African women, to offer them both new subsistence and social mobility strategies to support their single-parent families

Bringing the Word of God to and supporting African women is very important. Our goal is to help them become economically emancipated, create means of subsistence, and be able to educate their children. (Maria, 26 years old, student)

These values of solidarity and reciprocity also justify the main role of women in material exchanges and homesickness consumption, as well as in the gifting of objects related to the sphere of caregiving. These exchanges contribute to identify the members of the transnational extended family, and to differentiate the quality of the relationships. The construction and renewal of family ties through giving and receiving is a form of "remembering" those who were left behind or who are far away, of offering or receiving hospitality, of caregiving, or of fulfilling

responsibilities and expectations (Lobo, 2007). The circulation of people still provides the main channel for that of remittances, official documents, foods and spices (“food from back home” but also new “foods and flavours”) which cross borders.

A loss of spending power and unemployment limit material exchanges, and result in the avoidance of sending presents “for everyone”. Strategies of secrecy surrounding the circulation of people and goods have consequences in the forms of transnational construction of the extended family, gradually limiting it to the group of relatives who exchange and consume goods between themselves. These transnational domestic spheres however, by overcoming financial limitations, build devices that create proximity within the family. Telephones and computers make possible the exchange of social remittances: values, social capital, consumption practices and lifestyles. They also guarantee the circulation of care and sentiments, and at the same time store and distribute photographs sent and received to and from different nuclei of the transnational family network. Interaction within Facebook and other social networks (especially by youths) makes it possible to discover or trace family members settled in other countries, thus stimulating a certain level of emotional transnationalism (Baldassar, 2007; Trovão, 2012b). Complementarily, television and the internet contribute to the formation of imaginary repertoires on the country of origin and the destinations of other family and ethnic-group members, associating them to specific (symbolic and/or material) forms of power and distinction, which renew competitions and imagined superiorities within transnational families.

Articulating gender and generation dynamics: concluding remarks

The table 6 summarizes a number of common denominators and differences between the transnational families discussed in the empirical sections. In all cases, their migration processes

have been mediated by specific roles and expectations regarding family. Within the Portuguese context, they have encountered dissimilar economic and interethnic opportunities, and different pressures to social integration or to racist marginalization. The collectivist values reconstructed by families of Asian origin have supported affluent integration processes, while at the same time promoting and renewing family transnationalism. Characterized by the quasi-absence of nuclear families and a high degree of kinship plasticity sustained by flexible practices of transnationalism, the family patterns recreated by the two African migrant groups constitute an important resource to deal with economic subsistence, both in origin and migratory context. In sort, comparative analysis has made apparent the need to articulate family transnationalism and integration as inextricably intertwined social processes.

Furthermore, the five ethnographic studies have brought to light how family transnationalism and local integration do not significantly transform the two family dynamics under study. While allowing family members to negotiate specific family relations, these negotiations are not experienced as a project in opposition to cultural and religious family traditions. As we have just seen, the same values of family reciprocity which drive Sikhs and Bangladeshis to migration become a strategy of continuity for the corporatist family (Mapril 2008 a). Although the current Portuguese economic context contributes to conflictive areas in the management of family commitments, these very tensions confirm the persistence of a family moral agency as constructed and incorporated within specific ethical-family traditions.

Most clearly, the family lives of Muslims of Indo-Mozambican origin emphasise the multiplier effects generated between family transnationalism and integration. Centuries-old movements of family dispersion, reunification, and refragmentation, together with the development of skills in manoeuvring and combining particular systems of values and meanings,

make it possible to consolidate a family business culture. This coexistence led them to reinterpret gendered and ethnicised values, while promoting bi-cultural identities. Despite their differentiation from relatives from East Africa settled in the U.K., their forms of doing familyhood are not opposed to family traditions.

Similarly, the transnational and local family practices of Cape Verdeans and São Toméans tend to strengthen long-standing dynamics: matri-centrality, female single-parent domestic groups, extended family as the meaningful unit. While amplified by migratory circulation, experiences of co-maternity are supported and legitimized by pre-migration practices of co-parenting and child shifting (Akesson, Carling & Drotbohm, 2012). However, the mother–children relation acquires a higher centrality than the woman–man relation in the understanding of the family lives of both groups.

The impact of some compositional factors also requires a concluding remark. Although inter-ethnic friendships and specific transnational channels (television, internet websites and travelling teachers) can be used as identity references for young Sikhs and Bangladesh people, the transmission of cultural traditions and religion mostly take place on family contexts. Subsequently, parents continue to exert a strong influence over the marriage and family choices of their children. Largely uninterested in transnational ways of self-representation and belonging, young Muslims of Indo-Mozambican origin stress their bi-referential identity and feel proud to claim a Portuguese Muslimness (Trovão 2012b). Despite their recognition that certain power asymmetries within their families are in discordance with the surrounding patterns, they usually accept their parents' family values.

The identity references of young people from São Tomé and Cape Verde, their material and cultural patterns of consumption, even the *crioulo* languages they speak set them apart from

the previous generations. Inspired by the daily life of the neighbourhood where they grow up (food, family relations, celebrations, national holidays in the country of origin, etc.), they reinvent and update family-origin cultural repertoires. Simultaneously, they download diasporic references, as well as global currents of ideas (hip-hop culture for example) using them in specific ways. Their shared experiences within and out of the neighbourhoods also lead them to develop affinities beyond their families and migrant communities. However, even in the case of those who hold higher social and academic capitals, their adult family lives tend to reproduce clear asymmetries in the nurturing aspects of motherhood and fatherhood.

As has been noted, all the migrant groups studied incorporated discursive traditions and practices characterised by gender power dynamics. What seems more meaningful is the way our five groups of female interlocutors acquire different kinds of resources and strategies to build local and long-distance family interconnectivity and, further, to negotiate specific gender inequality relations without subverting them. Moreover, their capacity for action, which is developed in relation to their country-mates' gendered constructions and practices, can both bring emotional gratifications and be threatening for different groups of men and women, since different identity interests are at stake (Johnson & Werbner, 2010). Paraphrasing their own voices, self-distancing from and against significant peers also produces particularly acute vulnerabilities and emotional sufferings for women who define themselves as family- subjects.

In Portugal, as in other European countries, there has been a rapid diversification of family/household structures with the traditional nuclear family increasingly seen as under pressure, replaced by partnerships of short duration and shallow depth. Secular, liberal ideals have tended to favour gender equality and individual rights and duties. At the same time, members of migrant transnational families observe or are offered alternative modes of organising

lives, in particular gender and generational relationships, and this may lead to tension both within families and in relations between them and receiving societies. Nonetheless, our findings also reveal how certain specific gendered constructions of self and family – both those marked by extensive corporatist rights and obligations, and those characterized by a high degree of plasticity – remain important, maybe even more so for migrant transnational families.

Notes

[1] A recent migratory history, a weak welfare state combined with the quasi-absence of a dynamic civil society, an arena of inter-ethnic relations characterized by the low priority given to public debates oriented towards the promotion of means of governance of cultural and religious diversity, an incipient institutional opportunity structure for the political civic participation of immigrants, combined with a dearth of stimuli for civic immigrant participation, all introduce specificities which have influenced discourses, policies and practices concerning migration, migrant families, integration and citizenship.

[2] This paper is part of a larger research project *Immigrant Families in Dispute: “Internal” Agencies, Media Debates and Political Practices* founded by FCT (the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology).

[3] Following the independence of African colonies, Portugal became (even up to the present) a preferential destination of migrants from the PALOPs (Portuguese-Speaking African Countries). After the Schengen Treaty (and several amnesty periods of extraordinary “regularization” of illegal immigrants), it has also been part of a larger context of more globalized migratory fluxes. In certain cases, the origins of inflows of labor migrants are unrelated to Portugal’s colonial past, while in others historical ties are still maintained. This migratory specificity has been considered in the comparative design in order to address a number of other research questions not examined in the present paper, such as the legacies of Portuguese colonialism in the configuration of transnational relations between former colonies and postcolonial Portugal; the impact of mutual

representations of the colonizers and the colonized on the construction of contemporary Portuguese national representation and migrant identities; and the processes of postcolonial memory-making which involve the elaboration of the present in terms of the past, as well as reinterpretations of colonial experiences influenced by postcolonial Portuguese circumstances.

[4] The approach of Indo-Mozambican Muslims has called for a shift in perspective and method. Reacting to the colonial and racial systems of East and South Africa, the transnational families built by their ancestors gradually became disconnected from the regions of origin, strengthened the lateral interactions with relatives settled in African territories, and have mutated across several colonial and postcolonial phases. A historical comparative perspective was necessary to account for variable trajectories of adaptation and diasporic differentiation.

[5] We unofficially estimated that approximately 7,000 to 8,000 Indian Sikhs and 5,000 to 6,000 Bangladeshis live in Portugal.

[6] The Indo-Mozambicans have Portuguese citizenship and the Portuguese Constitution forbids the counting of ethnically or religiously groups. We can estimate 9,000 to 10,000 of Muslim religion.

[7] Recent estimates indicate that 22% of emigrated Cape Verdeans reside in Portugal.

[8] According to São Tomé and Príncipe Embassy, 15,000 to 18,000 São-Toméan immigrants live in Portugal.

Funding

The article was supported by the FCT (Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology) through UID/ANT/04038/2013 and PTDC/CS-ANT/102343 – CRIA, Centre for Research in Anthropology.

References

Abbas, T. (Ed) (2005) *Muslim Britain*. Londres: Zed Books

Akesson, L. Carling J. & Drotbohm, H. (2012) Mobility, moralities and motherhood: navigating of Cape Verdean lives. *Journal of Ethnic and Migrations Studies*, 38(2), 237-260

- Baldassar, L., Baldock, C. & Wilding, R. (2006) *Families Caring Across Borders*. London: Macmillan.
- Banton, M. (1983) *Racial and Ethnic Competition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Barot, R. (1996) *The Racism Problematic. Contemporary Sociological Debates on Race and Ethnicity*. Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press
- Barrow, C. (1996) *Family in the Caribbean. Themes and Perspectives*. Kingston: James Currey Publishers.
- Bastos-Trovão S. (2010) From local inter-ethnicities to the dynamics of the world-system: identity debates between Portuguese and British Sunnis in Leicester In C. Westin, J. Bastos, J. Dahinden & P. Gois (Eds.) *Identity Processes and Dynamics in Multiethnic Europe* (149-178). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press
- Batalha, L & Carling, J (Eds) (2008) *Transnational Archipelago: Perspectives on Cape Verdean Migration and Diaspora*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Basu, P. & Coleman, S. (2008) Introduction: Migrant worlds, Material Cultures. *Mobilites*, 3 (3), 313-30.
- Beck-Gernsheim, E. (2007) Transnational lives, Transnational Marriages. A review of the Evidence from Migrant Communities in Europe. *Global Networks* 7 (3) 271-288
- Bryceson, D. & Vuorela, U. (2002) *The Transnational Family*. Oxford: Berg.
- Burrell, K. (2008) Managing, Learning and Sending: The Material Lives and Journeys of Polish Women in Britain. *Journal of Material Culture*, 13 (1), 63-83
- Chamberlain, M. (2009) Identity and kinship: Caribbean transnational narratives. In M. Cervantes-Rodríguez, R. Grosfoguel & E. Mielants, *Caribbean Migration Western*

- Europe and the United States – Essays on Incorporation, Identity and Citizenship* (232-253). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Chamberlain, M. & Leydesdorff, S. (2004) Transnational families: memories and narratives. *Global Networks* 4 (3), 227-241 doi: 10.1111/j.1471-0374.2004.00090.x
- Collier, J. F., Yanagisako S. (1987) *Gender and Kinship: Essays Toward a Unified Analysis*, Stanford University Press
- Eade, J. (1996) Nationalism, Community and the Islamization of Space in London In B. Metcalf (Ed.) *Making Muslim Space in North America and Europe* (217-233). Berkeley: University of California Press
- Gardner, K. (2002) *Age, Narrative and Migration: The Life Course and Life Histories amongst Bengali Elders*. London: Berg.
- Fouron, G. & Schiller, N.G. (2001). All in the Family: Gender, Transnational Migration, and the Nation-state. *Identities* 7(4), 539-582.
- Fykman, M. (2009) Material Aspects of Transnational Social Fields: An Introduction. *Two Homelands*, 29, 105-14.
- Goulbourne, H., Reynolds, T., Solomos, J., & Zontini, E. (2010) *Transnational Families: Ethnicities, Identities and Social Capital*. New York: Routledge.
- Grillo, R. (Ed). 2008. *The family in question – Immigrant and Ethnic Minorities in Multicultural Europe*. IMISCOE. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Héritier, F. (2002) *Masculin / Féminin II. Dissoudre la hiérarchie*. [Male / Female II. Dissolve the hierarchy] Paris: Odile Jacob
- Johnson, M. & Werbner, P. (2010) Diasporic Encounters, Sacred Journeys: Ritual, Normativity and the Religious Imagination Among International Asian Migrant Women. *The Asia*

Pacific Journal of Anthropology. 11 (3-4), 205-218. [doi: 10.1080/14442213.2010.517510](https://doi.org/10.1080/14442213.2010.517510).

- King, R. *et al.* (2006) Time, Generations and Gender in Migration and Settlement. In R. Penninx *et al* (Eds) *The Dynamics of International Migration and Settlement in Europe* (223-268). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press
- Knut A. J., Myrvold, K. (Eds) (2011) *Sikhs in Europe: Migration, Identities and Representations*, Ashgate Publishing
- Khanum, S. M. (2001) The household patterns of a 'bangladeshi village' in England. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 27 (3), 489-504
- Kofman, E. (2004) Family-related Migration: A Critical Review of European Studies. *Journal of Ethnic and Migrations Studies*. 30 (2) 243-262
- Levitt, P. & Jaworsky, B. N. (2007) Transnational Migration Studies: Past Developments and Future Trends. *Annual Review of Sociology* 33 (1), 129-156
- Lobo, A.S. (2006) *Tão Longe, Tão Perto: Organização Familiar e Emigração Feminina na ilha da Boa Vista, Cabo Verde*. [So Far, So Close: Family Organization and Women's Emigration in the island of Boa Vista, Cape Verde] Brasilia: University of Brazil, Department of Anthropology, unpublished PhD thesis
- Mapril, J. (2008 a) 'Os sonhos da modernidade: migrações globais e consumos entre Lisboa e Dhaka' [The dreams of modernity: global migration and consumption between Lisbon and Dhaka]. In R. Carmo, R. Blanes & D. Melo (Eds), *A Globalização no Divã* [Globalization on the Divan] (65-89). Lisboa: Tinta da China

- (2010 b) O Pássaro de Argila: Bengalidade e Islão Político [The Clay Bird: Bengalidade and Political Islam]. In S. Trovão & M. Rosales (Eds) *Das Índias. Gentes, Movimentos, Pertenças* [From India. People, movements, belonging] (81-99). Lisboa: Colibri
- Miller, D. (2010) *Stuff*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Oyewumi, O. (2004) Conceptualizing gender: eurocentric foundations of feminist concepts and the challenge of African epistemologies In A. Signe *et al.* (Eds) *African Gender Scholarship: concepts, Methodologies and Paradigms* (1-8) Dakar: Codesria.
- Parreñas, R. S. (2005) Long distance intimacy: gender and intergenerational relations in transnational families. *Global Networks* 5 (4), 317-336.
- Reynolds, T. (2006) Caribbean families, social capital and young people's diasporic identities. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29 (6), 1087-1103.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01419870600960362>
- Reynolds, T. (2005) *Caribbean Mothers. Identity and Experience in UK*. London: Tufnell Press
- Ramalho, S. & Trovão, S. (2010) *Repertórios Femininos em construção num contexto migratório pós-colonial* [Women repertoires in construction in a post-colonial migration context]. Lisboa: ACIDI [online]:
http://www.oi.acidi.gov.pt/docs/Estudos_OI/Estudo42_Vol_II.pdf
- Rodrigues, I. B. F. (2007) As mães e os seus filhos dentro da plasticidade parental: reconsiderando o patriarcado na teoria e na prática. [Mothers and children within parental plasticity: rethinking patriarchy in theory and practice] In M. Grassi & I. Évora, *Género e Migrações Cabo-Verdianas* [Gender and Migration Cape Verdean] (113-146). Lisbon: ICS

- Rosales, M. Vilar (2009) Objects, Scents and Tastes from a Distant Home: Goan Life Experiences in Africa *Two Homelands*, 29,153-65.
- Salih, R. (2003) *Gender in Transnationalism: Home, Longing and Belonging among Moroccan Migrant Women*. London: Routledge.
- Sassen, S. (2007) *The Sociology of Globalization*, New York: WW Norton and Company.
- Seibert, G. (2002) *Camaradas, Clientes e Compadres, Colonialismo, Socialismo e Democratização em STP* [Comrades, Clients and Fellows, Colonialism, Socialism and Democratization in Sao Tome and Principe]. Lisbon: Vega
- Schiller, N. & Fouron, G. (2001) *Georges Woke Up Laughing: Long distance nationalism & the search for home*. Durham: Duke
- Trovão, S. (2012 a) Comparing Postcolonial identity formations: legacies of Portuguese and British colonialisms in East Africa. *Social Identities* 18 (3), 261-280, ISSN 1363-0296
- (2012 b) Religion and Civic Participation among the Children of Immigrants: Insights from the Postcolonial Portuguese Context. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 38(5), 851-68.
doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2012.668028>
- Vertovec, S. (2009) *Transnationalism*. London: Routledge.
- Werbner, P. (2004). Theorising Complex Diasporas: Purity and Hybridity in the South Asian Public Sphere in Britain. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 30(5), 895-912. DOI: 101080/1369183042000245606
- Zontini, E. (2010) [*Transnational Families, Migration and Gender: Moroccan and Filipino Women in Bologna and Barcelona*](#), USA: Berghan Books.

