Mapping the role of 'transnational family habitus' in the lives of young people and children

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Abstract   In this article, we develop the concept of 'transnational family habitus' as a theoretical tool for making sense of the ways in which children and young people from a migrant background are 'doing families' transnationally. Drawing on over a decade of cumulative research on Caribbean and Italian families in the UK, as well as on a new joint research project, we first investigate the opportunities and consequences of a transnational family habitus on family arrangements, kinship relationships and identity within a transnational context. Second, we analyse the role of these young people's structural location in Britain in shaping the boundaries of their transnational family habitus. We argue that one should see a transnational family habitus as an asset that can potentially disrupt conventional understandings of belonging and processes of inclusion and exclusion. However, we also detail how social divisions of class, race, and increasingly migration status, shape such a habitus.

In recent years there has been a plethora of studies addressing the transnational experience of families (Baldassar and Merla 2014; Bauer and Thompson 2006; Carling et al 2012; Charsley and Shaw 2006, Christou and King 2010; Goulbourne et al. 2010; Mazzucato and Schans 2011; Reynolds and Zontini 2006; Ryan et al 2008). In this article, we develop the concept of 'transnational family habitus' as a theoretical tool for making sense of the ways in which children and young people from migrant backgrounds are 'doing families' (Morgan 1996) transnationally. Influenced by Bourdieu's (1986) notion of 'habitus', we define a 'transnational family habitus' as a structured set

of values, ways of thinking and 'being' within the family built up over time through family socialization, practices and cultural traditions that transcend national boundaries. It is our intention to provide a more nuanced understanding of how these children and young people experience transnational family life than is currently present in the literature. We illuminate understanding, first, by investigating the opportunities and effects of a transnational family habitus on family arrangements, kinship relationships and identity within a transnational context. Second, we analyse the extent to which the structural location of young people and children in Britain shapes such a transnational family habitus.

Research background

We have developed our analysis from more than a decade of cumulative research on Caribbean and Italian families in the UK, which began in 2003 in the Families and Social Capital Research Group at London South Bank University in the UK. The focus of this group's work was on the dynamics of family change and processes of accumulating social capital, with attention paid to identities, values, trust, reciprocity, and caring for and about others. Our broad perspective on understanding transnational families led us to examine the lived experiences of family members scattered across national boundaries and the issues this raised over matters such as migration, identities, communities, resources and relationships in the contemporary world. We collected the material through in-depth interviews with various family members and through participant observation in the UK, Italy and the Caribbean.

Despite the marked racial and ethnic differences between Caribbean and Italian people, a key finding of both studies was the significance of transnational and cross-cultural family networks, rituals and celebrations in shaping ethnic identity. This earlier work has since developed into new and collaborative studies that extended out and broadened the scope of our studies to focus on Italian children living in transnational families. In 2015, we undertook multiple narrative interviews and arts-based activities with 12 children aged between eight and seventeen of Italian origin living in the East Midlands region of Britain. We focused on the children's transnational experiences and sense of identity and belonging at the time of the referendum on EU membership when hostility towards EU migrants in the UK increased. A related project 'Youth Matters' investigated how a transnational identity manifests itself in an embodied and physical way with a group of young adults from diverse racialized and ethnic minority communities (including Pakistan, Angola, Ghana, Norway and Ireland). From January to April 2016, weekly three-hour workshop sessions took place with a group of 12 young adults (aged between 19 and 25). These sessions consisted of group interviews and reflections; they also involved the young adults working with a consultant drama therapist (Erene Kaptani) in undertaking a series of physical exercises and movements drawn from forum theatre techniques (Kaptani and Yuval-Davis 2008) based on principles of collective empowerment and emancipation (Boal 1979). In that study, we utilized forum theatre techniques as a tool to help the young adults stimulate their creativity and thinking around how their transnational family relationships shape trust,

identity and belonging. That study was part of a broader body of research funded by the AHRC (Erel and Reynolds 2013–14)[1] and ESRC (Erel et al. 2016–18)[2] that focused on the potential of participatory research methods – specifically forum theatre – to investigate the identity and experiences of individuals belonging to minority ethnic, migrant and transnational communities. It is not our intention in this article to discuss the ongoing analysis of this project in detail. Nonetheless, later in the article, we draw on some of the preliminary data to elucidate our analysis on the importance of transnational family habitus in overcoming the experiences of social exclusion that particularly young, black, adult males encounter.

Examining the experiences and practices of migrant youths through the framework of a transnational family habitus has encouraged us to readdress our original and later studies on transnational families to establish to what extent the resources, values and practices circulating within transnational families either create or exist as a by-product of a 'transnational family habitus'. Reframing our analysis in the present poses certain methodological challenges. Perspectives on reanalysing and revisiting one's own and others' data over time, with new theoretical insights and awareness and with an altered 'cultural habitus' (Bornat 2005) have been much debated and contested, particularly in qualitative longitudinal studies (Bornat 2005; Henderson et al. 2006, Mauthner et al. 1998; Thomson and Holland 2003). This literature has been especially insightful for us in terms of reflecting on the journey and process involved in recontextualizing and reinterpreting data for a purpose other than the one for which they were originally collected.

A key strength in revisiting data with a different methodological lens is that we are able to observe and document how much of the young adults' experience of 'doing families' is embodied, sensory, physical and visceral. We generally overlooked this factor in our original analysis and reading of the data. However, a key limitation of this approach is that it might make us lose sight of the importance of the meaningful interaction that took place between us as the researchers and the participants during our original phase of data collection and analysis. The original interviews, which took place in multiple locations across the UK, Caribbean and Italy, happened at a specific moment in time when the study of transnational families was new in migration and family studies. As a result, our original research reflects that historical juncture.

To offset some of the challenges of revising data in a new period, we have deliberately chosen to introduce new and emerging research alongside our original studies. This also allows us to offer a long view on these processes and to notice the significance of social divisions, such as class and migration status, which we overlooked in our original study where gender and ethnicity were at the forefront. In terms of ethnicity, revisiting the data over time allowed us to observe a contradiction in the transnational family literature that has emerged over the past twenty years. On the one hand, analyses of transnational families present them in a broadly positive light. This also applies to studies offering a nuanced exploration of transnational family practices that expose the contradictions and difficulties inherent in these families' arrangements (Baldassar and Merla 2014). On the other hand, however, and what some may argue is an uncomfortable and unpalatable view, much of the discussion emerging during this period

failed to acknowledge that, regardless of the increased literature recognizing differences, diversities, complexities and contradictions in transnational family life and practices, pathological and inadequate understandings of transnational families persist in policy and media debates, especially vis-à-vis families that are structurally positioned as the 'racial-ethnic other' across many western societies (Mazzucato and Schans 2011). The continuum of such pathological models also extends to the way in which these families are continually positioned as displaying, engaging with and accessing the 'wrong' type of capitals. In the UK context, public and policy discourse has been suspicious of those with dual nationality with the government increasing its efforts since the early 2000s to emphasize shared values and to ask minority youth to demonstrate 'a clear primary loyalty to this Nation' (Cantle 2001: 20). This has continued in recent years with mobility and cosmopolitanism being devalued and multiple identifications seen as dangerous and unwelcome (Goodhart 2017; May 2016).

The transnational relationships and practices of children and young people

The transnational social fields in which contemporary migrants are embedded (Levitt and Glick Shiller 2004) span different countries and form a significant context for the everyday lives of a growing number of children and young people in Europe and beyond (Haikkola 2011; Mand 2010; Moskal 2015). Despite a growing body of research highlighting the transnational relations and practices of children and young people (Haikkola 2011), how these young people understand their transnational family lives and what this means for their identity development is still a relatively under-researched area in the interdisciplinary scholarships of migration, family, childhood and youth studies.

When scholars examine migrant children, there is a tendency to emphasize their neediness and difference (White et al. 2011) and so, consequently, to focus on those from particularly vulnerable categories such as refugees, trafficked or separated children (Gardener 2012). By contrast, the experiences of migrant children who fall outside these categories – for example, having no language difficulties, living with their immediate family and enjoying long-term residence rights – remain largely unexplored. Similarly, in terms of migrant youths, the focus of much research seems to converge around three key areas. The first concerns the 'integration' of migrant youth into the nation and their social mobility in different countries (Crul and Vermulen 2003). In the UK this goes hand in hand with policy concerns over the supposed crisis of minority ethnic youths, specifically their perceived marginalization and social exclusion from wider society. Over the past twenty or so years in the UK, events such as rioting between whites and Asians in the former industrial towns of northern England; the 7/7 bombings in London; the violence and riots following the police shooting of the black youth Mark Duggan, and the broader issue of the disenfranchisement of youths from black and other minority groups have amplified such concerns. More recently, the public and media interest have shifted to the loyalty and identity of young British Muslims who travel abroad to join movements such as ISIS, the radicalization of Muslim children and young people, and the problem of 'home grown' terrorists. A

common feature of these debates is their explicit or implied assertion that such behaviour results from the 'wrong' type of bonding (Putnam 2001) within families and communities, with young people's continued links to a spiritual or physical homeland discouraging their full acceptance of British societal norms and values. In the contemporary political and public discourse, migrant youths from certain ethnic, religious or racial groups – such as South Asians, Africans, Caribbean and British-born Muslims – have become strongly associated with crime and criminal disorder, extremism and religious intolerance. Such attention overlooks other important dimensions of young people's lives and identities. Peggy Levitt (2009) suggests, for instance, that transnational ties and networks offer young people sources of potential empowerment, particularly through their engagement in practices that transcend national borders. The young people she studied have skills and social contacts in both the countries in which they live and those from which their families came. They can master several cultural repertoires, which they can use to respond to challenges and opportunities arising in their lives. By growing up in transnational families where people, goods and ideas circulate between different countries, these young people acquire membership and knowledge of their homeland community, which she sees as a potential source of power, information and support that could become mobilized at different points over the course of their lives.

The second area of research examines the transnational trends of migrants' children and the extent to which they engage in concrete transnational practices (Portes et al. 1999). In this context, the primary focus of the debates is on understanding what factors foster or hinder such transnational ties. Louie's (2006) study of 'second generation' Chinese and Dominican youth in the USA, for example, highlights the importance of factors such as the quality of parent–child relationships, the maintenance of ethnic language and the frequency of contact with the parents' country of origin in determining the degree of these young people's transnational identification. For Menjivar (2010), state policies and social class emerge as crucial factors in shaping transnational lives. State policies affect the chances of people travelling across borders and thus maintaining and renewing their long-distance connections; class not only shapes the resources available to different families but also the ways in which people see their transnational links. In her study of children of Guatemalan-origin living in the United States, Menjivar (2010) noted that middle-class children were more inclined to see transnational connections in a positive light. Levitt (2009) also highlighted this point.

The focus of the third area of research is on the transnational experiences of youth who grew up separated from their parents, or who spent long stretches of time circulating between two or more countries (Mazzucato and Schans 2011). The emphasis here is on the care arrangements that transnational parents set up and how these affect the wellbeing of their children, especially the economic and psychological effects of the separations on parents and children (Dreby 2007; Mazzucato and Schans 2011; Parrenas 2005; Schmalzbauer 2008). These studies point out that children might benefit economically from such arrangements while suffering emotionally. Gender plays a role here, as children seem to find it harder to cope with separations from their mother than from their father. This area of research is critical of studies on transnational children

and caregiving practices that approach the issue from the perspective and voices of adults. Recent studies drawing on the new sociology of childhood have started to take children's and young adults' agency seriously and to explore their subjective experiences of belonging and transnationalism (Ní Laoire et al. 2010). Coe (2012), for instance, has explored how children in Ghana imagine transnational migration and how they are (or not) socialized into a culture of migration, whereas Ní Laoire et al. (2010), looking at the experiences of a diverse group of children migrating to Ireland, have concluded that the lives of children and youths can be embedded in local as well as in global/transnational places (Moskal 2015).

In our analysis, we start from the premise of acknowledging that there are variations in children's and youths' transnational experiences – for instance, some are born in the homeland and migrate as young children, others are born in the host country to immigrant parents, while others still stay behind, or their migrant parents send them back for extended periods. Despite these differences, however, we maintain that all these groups, including those born or raised in the host country, have a link to their parents' homeland that is more than just symbolic. It is real and embodied in the sense that these individuals maintain communication across national borders; they express emotional as well as material attachments and allegiances to their parents' (or grandparents') homeland. They express this through everyday interactions with others in their daily lives.

Influenced by the work of Levitt (2009), we see transnational children and youths as embedded in a social field created by cross-border connections between sending and receiving society, irrespective of the frequency of physical travel to their country of origin. These children and young people form a transnational identity through a series of material and symbolic flows across the borders of different countries. Migrant children and young people engage in frequent Skype/Facetime calls, phone calls, email correspondence and annual visits to their homeland, and this transnational communication activates the transnational social field and shapes their identification processes. Like other scholars (Goulbourne et al. 2010; Wessendorf 2010), we recognize that transnational family relationships are a valuable social resource in reaffirming notions of cultural, ethnic and family belonging. 'Doing family' for these children and youths with strong transnational connections often entails transcending the boundaries of the nation-state, and crossing cultural divides and spatial distances. Emerging out of this is a transnational family habitus that manifests itself in an embodied and physical way.

Transnational family habitus framing ideas about families beyond borders

Structural location and the ability to access and mobilize resources shape everyday 'family practices' (Morgan 1996) and result in 'family habitus' – a structured set of values, ways of thinking and 'ways of being' built up over time within the family through socialization and traditions (Archer et al. 2012). In this article, we develop the concept of a transnational family habitus to make sense of the experiences of children and young people who are of migrant origin and embedded in transnational fields. Attempting to apply a Bourdieusian lens to the study of transnational migrants is not

new. For instance, Vertovec (2009: 67) refers to a '*bifocal habitus*' and a '*transnational habitus*' as a dual frame of reference through which migrants constantly compare their situation in the 'home' country with that of the 'host one'. Kelly and Lusis (2006) use the concept of a 'transnational habitus' to show how Filipinos in Canada assign value and exchange and accumulate economic, social and cultural forms of capital across borders. Erel's (2010: 644) work on cultural capital builds on these ideas about converting capitals and focuses on how Turkish and Kurdish migrant women in Britain and Germany adapt and apply their own meanings, knowledge, customs, achievements and outlooks to their new environment. Her argument is that migrants create new forms of capital and validation in migration. Kelly and Lusis (2006) note that habitus is a social/collective as well as personal phenomenon but that the social (as well as spatial) boundaries of habitus formation are somewhat unclear in Bourdieu's work. Kelly and Lusis (2006), however, heuristically explore transnational habitus at the level of the ethnic group (as in Canadian-Filipino transnational habitus).

We, by contrast, explore transnational habitus at the level of family group formation by focusing on how a particular (transnational) habitus is passed on to subsequent generations of family members. Taking the family as our unit of analysis allows us not only to move beyond methodological ethnicity (Glick Schiller 2008) but also to see similarities between our distinct groups. Our concept draws attention to the collective everyday practices, including mundane and unconscious activities, that occur in families, thus extending the analysis beyond the active speculations in cultural capital that individual migrant parents conduct across borders and that the literature has started to explore (Erel 2010; Weenink 2008). The focus on a transnational family habitus allows us to explore what it means for children and young people to grow up in a migrant family with transnational connections.

Our use of the term 'transnational family habitus' draws attention to the types and levels of youth participation in family relationships that are transnational in nature and to the ways in which families (and their resources, values, sense of identity/self) inform children and young people's practices, notions of identity and opportunities within and beyond national boundaries. In doing so, we move beyond homogenizing accounts of transnational families that depict all migrants as transcending geographical boundaries in their everyday life. Through our use of 'transnational family habitus', we elucidate how the maintenance of transnational connections rests upon relations of privilege, emerging out of the interaction between capital, habitus and field.

One way in which children and young people's transnational connections shaped their habitus relates to their ideas of what and who constituted families. In their accounts, families emerged as broad, deterritorialized units where presence/absence and spatial proximity/distance were normalized. They also expressed a clear sense of belonging to these units irrespective of the intensity or frequency of the contact they had with other members. For Keisha, as for many of our interviewees, having close family members in other countries and maintaining close relationships but often infrequent contact with them across borders was assigned an important social value because it enabled her to be part of a globally dispersed network of family members. Members are able individually and collectively to define a family identity that is not constituted

by geographical, generational or cultural borders but rather is defined by their ability to maintain close familial connections that transcend these borders. In Keisha's case, the ability to invoke 'the family' on the basis of frequent physical absence but a shared history and heritage, represents a normative unquestioned and taken for granted 'way of being' with regard to 'doing family' and understanding her own sense of self. Her transnational family habitus enabled Keisha to construct a Caribbean diasporic identity, unrelated to country of residence and citizenship. She utilized these kinship connections and practices as a resource in claiming allegiance and belonging to her kin's country of origin. Keisha (aged 23 and of Caribbean origin) suggests this is the following quotation:

> I would say my family is important to me. … We live in different parts of the world and we don't see each other often. But to me that's not important because we all identify with each other because of our history. My family makes me the person I am today, and my identity comes through that family history and cultural heritage. We don't need to see each other every day but knowing that they're out there supporting me helps me to understand who I am. When we do meet up you wouldn't think that it's been ages since we last got together because we just pick up where we left off.

Our respondents showed familiarity with presence–absence and had direct experience of conducting close family relationships across distances. Bob (aged 14 and of Italian-German origin), for instance, has experienced his relationship with his dad through long-distance separation, which involved regular visiting in both directions and daily online communication. As the quote below suggests, geographical mobility is embedded in his everyday family life.

> OK, so I'm 14 years old, I live with my twin Hugo, whose is also 14 years old because he's my twin and my mom. My dad is normally in Italy, because he works there, [be]cause we also have a house there, where we go in the holidays, but he comes here every few weeks for the weekend, it's been like that for quite a while now. He used to work here as well for a year, I think, or so, and before that we all lived together in Italy and even before that we all lived together in Germany, I'm not sure for how long. I think our dad is coming here, he has a job here, he got a job here so that means yeah! We'll be together again, reunited.

Many of the young people noted that absent family members were just as important as physically present ones. Absent members are made present in a variety of ways, for example through video and phone calls (Madianou and Miller 2012), but also through material objects that often occupy central places in migrants' homes (Anzola n.d.) and through family narratives and memory. The parents usually talk about these 'absent' members and this establishes a link between them and the young people. In addition to family narratives involving 'absent' family members, rituals act as a crucial way of affirming a collective transnational family identity. Our participants demonstrated a

sense of belonging to their transnational families through their commitment and participation in such rituals. We have written at length about this in some of our earlier publications on transnational families (Reynolds 2010, 2011; Reynolds and Zontini 2006, 2014). To summarize here, our research showed that family rituals involve children and youths' participation in structured activities such as, for example, to celebrate life-cycle rituals such as baptisms, confirmations, weddings and family reunions. Sometimes this meant physically visiting family members geographically dispersed across the globe, but increasingly the use of virtual technologies meant that they were also able to be 'remotely present' and participate in family gatherings through means such as SKYPE and Facetime.

It is also important to note the other family rituals in which they engage, which are mundane and often go unnoticed, such as travelling to the airport to meet or say goodbye to family members, for they too represent a dimension of young people 'doing families' and normalize travelling as an aspect of family life. During the theatre sessions we did some physical theatre work in which we asked the young adults to recreate physical images and dramatic scenes of themselves in families. It was interesting to observe how the airport represented a symbol of absence–presence and how movements backwards and forewords featured as an important aspect of the young people's lives – either as the travelling person or the one waiting to collect or drop off family members travelling to or from other destinations – reinforcing transnational relationships. However, the routine, unremarkable and mundane nature of this activity meant that they did not mention it during their interviews. It was only when we asked the young people to construct physical scenes and physical movement around 'their own family' as opposed to 'their ideas of the family' that this issue came to light. During the following reflection of one such 'airport' scene, one participant (Inga, aged 21 and of Norwegian origin) noted:

> Coming home [to Norway] from [the UK] it's the exact same routine. It's a bit cheesy but I love it secretly and its part of looking forward to going home. We have the same routine. My brothers, mum and dad always come to meet me [at the airport], they always stand and wait for me in exactly the same spot [at the airport], and we sort of do this silly wave [mimics wave], which only our family get and is unique to our family.

The young people regarded family visiting across borders as an important aspect of their family life. For Italian young people, especially, it is the main way of 'doing family' transnationally and keeping strong family ties. Due to the geographical proximity between Italy and the UK, the young Italian participants noted that they visited family members in Italy at least three times a year, sometimes more, and have done so throughout their lives. They would often spend their entire summer vacations in Italy, sometimes with their parents or, if they were working, with their grandparents. The young people derive a positive social value and powerful sense of identity from these visits and saw them as part of multi-directional and intergenerational caregiving. In addition to the family visits to Italy, the children and young people were directly

involved in other types of care activities, including telephoning or skyping family relatives in Italy, exchanging small gifts with family members, hosting kin-members in the UK when they visited from Italy and attending regular family celebrations in Italy such as birthdays, christenings and other celebrations. They generally viewed this type of care giving as a positive, taken for granted and important aspect of their family life. These visits fostered strong family values centred on the maintenance of emotional ties across the generations. Interestingly, free movement within the EU is now under threat because of the Brexit vote in the UK, potentially challenging these practices.

The above examples suggest that a 'transnational family habitus', that is values, practices, cultural discourses and identifications, as well as resources that transcend national boundaries, shape young people's actions, regular activities and everyday lives. In the next section we explore the impact of such a habitus on their lives.

Transnational family habitus and its impact on capitals

Possessing a transnational family habitus was largely positive for our participants. This applied to Italian young people and children who experience a 'white' privileged status in British society and to Caribbean, African and South Asian youngsters who encounter a racialized 'black' subordinate one. However, these racializing processes, which lead to systems and structures of inclusion and exclusion, result in our 'white' (Italian) and 'black, minority ethnic' (Caribbean, African and South Asian) migrant young people and children accessing, using and representing their habitus in divergent ways.

Our analysis, for example, indicates that overall those individuals with a transnational family habitus are better able to circulate cultural capital resources within their networks to further increase the social assets and social capital of group members. Yet, because of racialized differences, young 'black, minority ethnic' and Italian people utilize and access different markers of cultural capital as representing a transnational habitus. For Italian young people and children, the ability to speak languages other than English is a key marker of transnational family habitus, in ways that it is not for young people from black and minority ethnic groups. Italian parents and children regard multilingualism as an important asset in that it offers the potential for intercultural communications and skills. As Hugo, the 14-year-old of Italian–German origin, put it:

> Well, being multilingual, I find that amazing, if you can speak different languages then you know a whole different way of communicating with another human being, and I find it a bit saddening that some people only know one way and what happens if that one way fails? And, also that one way some people don't know that way of communication, so you need other ones. …
>
> It is a good thing and sometimes overlooked a bit because when you think about it, it's just … because with a language, once you know a whole new language, say with the three languages I can speak, I can think of three times as many things to put things in so if I can't say something in one language plenty more languages, well two more languages that I can put things, try to choose

from, see what's working. Also, it kind of … changes the thought process because you can think in whichever language suits your needs best.

Language competence is thus not only an asset for cross-cultural communication and a potential advantage, but it also strengthens a sense of belonging within families. Families, for instance, develop their own language practices, which sometimes mean mixing languages or words. As Hugo's twin brother Bob explained:

> Mhm, I speak English most frequently, and obviously, well, I'm best at English since I go to school there. I learn all the grammar in English, I have English classes, maths classes, all the vocabulary comes from English. But [I] speak German with my brother and my mom and Italian with my dad, so I'm more often, more regularly speak German than Italian, but once we get to Italy, after a few days the Italian returns and flowing out maybe, yeah and the same for Germany.

Knowing a different language, any language, is potentially advantageous, as Bob highlights:

> Also, if you understand, even if they are not connected, if you understand one language you can understand another language quite a lot better because you can translate a phrase or a word in that other language, not only into feelings or something, but you can translate it into words you can understand better, yeah.

One could argue that this aspect of family habitus has the potential to generate social mobility for young people of migrant origin. However, this applies only to those 'white' migrants who speak fluently in high-prestige European languages (Italian, French, German and Spanish). One can regard their ability to do so as a cultural asset that facilitates their capacity to move freely within and across class-based boundaries.

It is important to recognize, however, that knowing a second language and the potential advantages this bring operates within a racialized context and within the context of white privilege. Bilingualism in other languages can be less rewarding and used to draw a 'bright' ethnic boundary (Alba 2005) between the majority and migrant populations. The way in which young black and ethnic minority people use and perceive language, and their ability to speak multiple languages, as a cultural asset and marker of transnational family habitus reveals itself differently. The young people of African and South Asian descent recognize that nobody values their ability to speak a second language and that it in fact disadvantages them by reinforcing their status as 'other'. Nonetheless, a transnational family habitus allows black (African and Caribbean) youths who in policy terms the society conventionally marks out as 'other', to respond strategically to their position as 'outsiders' or 'ethnic others' in the UK by acquiring social and cultural capital resources through which to affirm and validate their cultural belonging. During interviews, we observed how common cultural signifiers such as food, and sports (for instance athletics via the key figure of Usain Bolt

and the Jamaican flag as a commercialized product on Puma sports brands) represent broader makers of black youth identity, itself heavily influenced by these young people's diasporic and transnational connections to their African and Caribbean heritage. In an era of advancing neo-liberalism, they could use this understanding of cultural identity as an asset by developing small and medium enterprises to ease the economic recession. Victor provides one such example. Victor, a 20-year-old black youth of Angolan descent with familial links to Portugal, decided to develop an ethnically specific social enterprise initiative across neighbouring London boroughs where large numbers of black ethnic-minority communities reside. He explains:

> It was one of those *'Dragon's Den'* [TV programme] kinds of things where you basically pitch a project and during the Olympics they [London 2012] wanted something to create a legacy, so I had an idea and I applied. It had like panel members that were all judging who was the best kind of concept and whatnot and Young Stars won. Basically, my project Young Stars is a concept, it's like a movement, a culture, it's about black youth empowerment and basically bringing up or helping young people trying to find themselves through youth empowerment, focusing on the positive black youth out there instead of the negative one or two per cent. My plan is to take the business model globally, developing franchises in Lisbon and Brazil, where I have family connections.

In Victor's case his motivation to set up his business model was a direct result of two factors. First, his extended family across the generations consisted of business people and professional traders. In Victor's words, he has 'business in his blood' and went on to explain how:

> My great-great-grandfather was a market trader who couldn't read or write, but he made sure his children could; my great and grandparents were market traders too. Now my mum and uncles and aunts [are] all university educated; they went to university in Lisbon, Toronto, São Paolo, Brazil but all have successful businesses and I've got many cousins doing the same thing and they live all over the world. What they tell me is if you want to succeed in life it's important to have your own business, that way you are in charge of your own destiny.

Victor utilized his connections to his globally dispersed family members, as well as regular family visits to Angola and Portugal, to learn from and draw on these family members' skills, values, knowledge, networks and financial capital. Victor's transnational family habitus has given him the ability to transcend and traverse geographical borders to access resources and capital from his transnational family networks to establish an entrepreneurial opportunity in the UK. Of course, it is important to acknowledge that the use of these ethnic markers for commercial purposes does not always result in ethnic minority youth accumulating capital. Treitler (2013) makes this very point by arguing that the appropriation of black cultural resources feeds into neo-liberal economic projects without in many cases empowering the black youths who develop these cultural forms.

Second, Victor's decision to set up a business enterprise is also influenced by what many perceive to be the limited professional employment opportunities available to him as a black male in Britain. Indeed, it is important to understand the value of having a transnational family habitus for Victor, as for other black youths, within the wider context of social exclusion (EHRC 2010). The collective relationships provided by these transnational kin-based connections, unconstrained by national boundaries, gave Victor a sense of security and belonging against feelings of racial discrimination and social exclusion experienced as part of his daily life (Goulbourne et al. 2010; Reynolds 2006a, 2006b, 2010; Zontini 2010). In these austere times, unemployment is on the rise generally across all ethnic groups. Nonetheless, this problem has been more acute for black and other minority youths, of which a high number are in no form of employment, education or training (Department for Education 2010; IPPR 2010). Statistics show that nearly 50 per cent of black people aged 16 to 24 are unemployed. Such is the scale of the problem in socio-economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods that those with social capital and active links to the homeland are returning 'home' to the Caribbean (Reynolds 2011), as well as to other countries of origin, leaving family members behind in the UK. It is important to stress, however, that a transnational family habitus was central to this process. The opportunity to 'return', set up a business or even study in countries where kinship connections exist, operates in the context of young people understanding and valuing their ways of 'doing family' across geographical boundaries as normative family practices.

Limitations of transnational family habitus

Having a transnational habitus might create several opportunities, but with these can come challenges. The young people of Italian origin in our study often commented on their transition between the different, multiple and complex worlds they inhabit through having a transnational family habitus. These children must learn to inhabit different worlds, and this involves knowing how to move effortlessly between them. These can be the worlds of Italy vs the UK, as well as the world of school vs the world of home. They develop ways of coping with being in various places and use each place to meet separate needs. Hugo talks about moving from Italy to England after his holidays:

> It's kind of like I tighten up again when I come into England, and when I go to Italy I loosen up a bit, kind of … because I feel more relaxed there because of the weather and because [there is] no school and [we are on our] holidays and also I get to see my dad and that's nice and … also … this is difficult, mmhh I'd say mainly I just let go of my worries, it's half to do with the holidays and half to do with actually Italy, but also the Italians kind of make you feel more at home than the British people kind of ish.

Belonging in different contexts, however, is not always easy and at times young people might experience processes of distancing and lack of acceptance (Valentine and Sporton 2009). When asked what she did not like about the visit, Silvia (aged 13 and

of Italian origin) gave a very common answer for a so-called 'second generation' returnee:

> What I don't like? I don't like that things are slightly different, so I arrive all 'Inglesina', many people call me 'Inglesina', I hate that! I know that they do it in a friendly way, but I feel a bit … they all think, I mean when I'm in England they all say that you are Italian and when I'm in Italy they all say I'm English, it's very strange.

Hugo's middle-class status affords him the advantage of having two houses, which consolidates his feeling of having two 'homes'. Some of the other Italian participants were also similarly aware of their privileged (class and racial) position. Here is Hugo again responding to a question about how he thought the media in the UK speak about people who come from abroad.

> Mmhh, depends from where they are because if they are from some war-torn country they are not seen as very … not seen very nicely, which is a bit stupid, because you'd think that there would be some sympathy for someone who's just escaped with their life from a country whose been bombed and which has a civil war going on or something, but that's yeah, for people like, who are just moving from a European country or something they are just kind of absorbed, I guess, engulfed into the Englishness and they just say like 'oh hi what's up? You can be English now! [with a mocking voice]' They don't really notice too much, I guess.

Working-class migrants are less likely to have a transnational family habitus because they face greater constraints in keeping these important transnational practices going. This is clear from our interviews with post-war working-class Italian migrants who recounted their travelling practices over the years. As Maria explained, they had to endure lengthy periods of no visits because their economic circumstances and working schedules did not allow them to move.

> Yeah, you not do anything else, no holiday, only to the village to see the family cos you had that to do … [I went] the first time [after] eight years and then after four years and then after two years and then, after the girls married, every year. My mamma was there, and I think: 'well after next year she might not be there' and err … we went every year.

By contrast, however, middle-class youth are more likely to have a transnational family habitus because they possess more financial resources to travel and their parents have jobs with more flexible schedules that enable them to travel more frequently. Their better education also means that they have access to modern technologies that allow them to stay in contact with families and friends back home. Migration status is also increasingly significant in shaping transnational family habitus. Our analysis suggests

that in the current political climate, which racializes some migrant groups (namely those from regions in the Global South such as Africa, South America, the Caribbean and Asia) while 'westernizing' and privileging others by removing them from stringent immigration legislation (such as those from the Global North, including places like North America and Australia), facilitates and frustrates efforts to practice families across distance. One example is that of inter-generational relations and practices of care. While, as EU nationals, Italian families can continue this practice with ease and frequency (though this might change after Brexit), Caribbean families, whose racialized status subjects them to increasingly stringent controls, face greater barriers. Newly arrived migrants to the UK with an irregular status and asylum seekers are barred from travelling, thus showing how the state, through its policies, can affect family practices and even deny family life to some groups (Madziva and Zontini 2012).

The differing treatments accorded to families from the Global North and from the Global South show that although a transnational family habitus is not the prerogative of the better off, access to broader social and economic resources do shape the process. The transnational family habitus also reveals important issues about gender divisions, gendered power dynamics and gendered processes of inclusion and exclusion in trans-national family relationships. Despite the current rhetoric of family democratization, the issue of the gendered division of labour was a source of tension and conflict for the young people we interviewed, with girls and young women still expected to carry the larger share of 'doing family' transnationally, including the maintenance of family connections and the related care-giving activities previously mentioned.

Gender, however, also links with generation, for older women may have more power and control than younger ones, while boys usually have more freedom and autonomy from the family than girls do. In our studies, some young Italian women saw family 'protection and support' as a double-edged sword because those giving support wanted to influence the choices of those receiving it, and that the support was tied to obligations and adherence to shared norms and values. Some of our interviewees dis-covered that departing from such expectations resulted in a decline in support. These strong and often tense relationships of dependence, especially between mothers and daughters, occurred both locally and transnationally (Goulbourne et al. 2010). Age also emerged as a critical issue. For example, young people have little influence over the transnational mobilities of their families. Whether this is to do with the fact that one of their parents might 'choose' to work abroad or with what should happen during the summer holidays, these are decisions that the adults tend to take. Overall, however, our participants seemed to accept them without question.

Conclusion

In this article, we developed the concept of transnational family habitus to understand the consequences of the persistence of transnational networks across the generations. Studies on transnational habitus and transnational capital have so far been on first generation migrants (Erel 2010; Kelly and Lusis 2006). Our concept shifts the attention to the consequences of transnational family living for the migrants' offspring. This

enables us to shed light on the experiences of young people from a variety of ethnic groups who might themselves not be mobile but who have grown up in transnational families. It also shifts attention away from the individual and takes the focus to the relational nature of these young people's habitus, which their family connections shape. This allows us to see the similarities and differences between different youth, which not only ethnicity but also other structural positions such as class and gender influence.

Through use of this concept we have shown that children and young people of migrant origin 'do families' beyond the borders of the nation-state and that this has implications for their lives and opportunities. We see such a transnational family habitus as an asset that can potentially disrupt conventional understandings of belonging and processes of inclusion and exclusion. However, we have also detailed how social divisions of class, race, gender and, increasingly, migration status, shape such a habitus. This enables us to expand debates on young people of migrant origin beyond a focus on the impact on separation from parents, the extent of their transnational engagement and the impact of the latter on their integration in receiving societies.

Our research looks at migrant children and young people as members of wider family networks that go beyond the nuclear ones privileged by much family research and thus expand our understanding of transnational youth experiences beyond the prevailing focus on the effects of parent–child separations (Mazzucato and Schans 2011). The real and symbolic transnational engagements are pervasive taken-for-granted aspects of family life. They might vary in intensity from family to family and from time to time, but they remain latent and can be activated or reactivated at various times. Rather than measuring the frequency of such engagements we believe that a more fruitful approach centres on exploring how young people frame their collective relationships in ways that may or may not transcend national borders and the effects that a transnational family habitus might have on their experiences. Contrary to popular perceptions, having a transnational family habitus and being integrated into the receiving society is not a zero-sum game. What we offer in this article is a framework that seeks to depathologize this family experience, seeing it as a potential asset, while at the same time highlighting the stratifying consequences such experience might have for different groups of youths.

Notes

1. Migrant mothers caring for the future: creative interventions in making new citizens, http://www.open.ac.uk/socialsciences/migrant-mothers/index.php.
2. Participatory Action Research (PAR): Participatory Theatre and Walking Methods' Potential for Co-producing knowledge, funded by ESRC and National Centre for Research Methods (2016–2018) http://www.ncrm.ac.uk/research/PASAR/.

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