

## New Directions in Researching Migration of Children and Youth

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### Transnational transitions within transnational socialization

The field of research focused on migrant children seems to be well established (e.g. Ni Laoire et al. 2013, Tyrell 2011, Tyrell et al. 2013, Ensor, Goździak 2010, Pareñas 2005), also in regard to Polish migration (Slany et al. 2016, 2018, Slany, Strzemecka 2017, 2018). Rather than offer an extensive review, this *Introduction* teases out some of the linking themes of the articles published in this *Special Issue*. Through investigating our collection in the context of the broader research, we sketch out the contemporary importance of (transnational) socialization and introduce a concept of transnational transitions. Importantly, this *Introduction* and the entire *Special Issue* continue the commitment of the *Migration Studies- Review of Polish Diaspora* to the topic of migrant children and youth, building on the knowledge base gathered in the similarly scoped volume edited by Grzymała-Moszczyńska and Trąbka (2014). In the *Introduction* to the 2014 issue, the editors highlight the importance of the shift from researching children of migrants (perceiving them as a “luggage” carried by migrating parents) to focusing on migrant children as independent subjects, whose experiences of mobility are unique and worth exploring. Articles in this volume indicate that this trend evolves and the migrant children have become fully-fledged research participants.

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To bind together all three subdisciplines – namely youth studies, childhood studies and migration research interested in what we refer to as **transnational socialization** (see also Duff, Hornberger, 2008), we put forward the term of **transnational transitions** means to identify a common ground and topics examined across all three subdisciplines. Both these conceptual lenses are connected with the notion of transnationalism (Vertovec 2009). While the term “transnational” has exploded in popularity in recent years (see e.g. Bailey 2001), some concerns have been raised that using “transnationalism” as a universal explanation for all migration-related phenomena obscures rather than furnishes clarity when it comes to the experiences of mobile individuals, groups and nations (Smith, Bailey 2004). At the same time, a transnational lens allows a view that is unlimited by borders and suggests that both continuity and change characterize migrants’ ties, behaviors and experiences (e.g. Boccagni 2012, Vertovec 2009, Levitt, Jaworsky 2007, Glick-Schiller et al. 2011). Drawing on this, we unpack transnationalism by applying it to socialization on the one hand, and to a life-course term of transitions, on the other. Both are prominently featured in various contributions to this *Special Issue*.

Although transnational socialization has been mostly explored in connection to language (Duff, Hornberger 2008), it is quite straightforward to see that the socialization’s core process – which is that of a symbolic transfer – differs across both the primary and the secondary realm when it is affected by migration and mobility. Specifically, it has been acknowledged that socialization happens differently in families with non-majority backgrounds, with a myriad of cultural norms incorporated into parenting practices around identity construction and belonging, educational capital or bilingualism, and many other arenas of family life (see also Erel 2015, De Valk, Liefbroer 2007, Pustulka 2016). Similarly, seeing schools as sites of socialization also elucidates a two-fold dynamic between macro and meso levels (see also D’Angelo, Ryan 2011, Popyk et al. in this volume). On the one hand, the objectives of secondary socialization seen from an institutional perspective center on making sure that all children adhere to the cultural cues and norms of the majority, with success being signaled by gaining a sense of national belonging. On the other hand, as an individually experienced process, secondary socialization in school is ridden with challenges (as explored by the articles in *Section 2* of this volume). Staying on the life-course, scholars’ interests also lie in migrant youth or young migrants’ beyond-school experiences, especially as regards labor market entry and performance (Crul, Schneider 2009, Sarnowska 2016, Sarnowska et al. 2018, Grabowska 2019 – in print). This is because knowledge base on their positions and experiences in employment can again be connected to whether earlier socialization has been successful or some sort of adjustment is required.

With this life-long nature and complexity of the transnational socialization processes, it is useful to look at it from the perspective of transitions. According to George (1992), researching transitions from a life-course perspective can shed light

on what kinds of normative and non-normative changes and shifts are experienced by individuals over time. Quite clearly, just as with socialization, we can speak of transitions that take place in transnational surroundings. As such, for younger migrant children, the core transitions are linked with a move from a primary to a secondary socialization setting, indicated by starting formal education (e.g. Dockett, Perry 2001). Additionally, the transitions of migrant children may be more complex not only due to the fact that they come from outside of the cultural majority and are said to have limited access to transition-facilitating resources (Sime, Fox 2015), but also because their transitional challenges might be exacerbated by numerous school changes resulting from mobility. The articles in *Section 2* of this *Special Issue* largely engage with these kinds of post-migration, post-transition challenges of secondary socialization linked to schooling.

Stepping forward on the life-course, the most commonly researched type of transitions entail the infamous “transitions to adulthood” (e.g. Arnett 2000, 2003, Morgan, Holdsworth 2005). These processes are also increasingly impacted by migration and examined in the context of ethnic diversity, which is seen as something that determines how young people define, order and reach various markers of transitions (Arnett 2003, Bernard et al. 2014, Punch 2015). Especially popular for the youth and – to an extent – migration studies are the transitions deemed as “school-to-work” or “education-to-work” shifts (see e.g. Crul, Schneider 2009, Sarnowska 2016). Albeit these also connect the notion of the transnational transition with that of (transnational) socialization, the key point is that they are interjected: the latter shapes and determines the former and vice versa. In the following paragraphs, we specify the key connections between socialization and transitions in the articles in this volume. Reversing the typical life-course order, we start with evidencing migration effects on the transitions and pathways of mobile young adults (*Section 1*) and then move on to the challenges within the transnational socialization of migrant children (*Section 2*).

## **Transnational transitions and socialization of migrant adolescents and young adults**

The contributions to *Section 1* of this volume broadly engage with the interplay of socialization, mobility/migration and the labor market. The fact that the researchers deal with different types of mobile individuals across continents serves as convincing evidence that despite a high degree of heterogeneity, migration’s implications for the life-pathways are quite concurrent. The articles address culturally distant groups that further represent different types of migration, from undocumented migrants (Goździak, Russell-Jenkins), to intra-European free-movers, economic migrants and returnees (Winogrodzka, Mleczko; Krzaklewska; Sarnowska).

The opening article by Goździak and Russell-Jenkins illuminates the dynamics between staying in school versus legal and illegal work among undocumented adolescents in the United States. While delaying the transition out of education is shown to positively affect youth trajectories, the respondents in the study must still individually choose “lesser of the two evils” when beginning employment. The young respondents’ journeys are marked by non-normative changes in a sense that their transitions occur in the liminal spaces of illegality. As the authors show, some youngsters might have never entered the national systems of any sort and thus did not experience the integration framework. Therefore, their first employment experiences are very telling as regards the massive exclusion of certain young lives from the educational framing. Further, though staying in school is said to benefit youngsters under the legislative, their transitions to work continue the patterns of survivalist calculations and the question is about either a transition to safer workplace that endangers immigration or an illegal work that engenders exploitation. Tying the papers from *Section 1* with those in *Section 2*, Goździak and Russell-Jenkins’ article is also a prime exemplification of why the general scholarly efforts to make the global picture of mobility in early-life less grim tend to fail. The authors show that a macro-level factor of a condition of illegality factually predetermines individuals’ trajectories in education and labor, making the decisions of adolescents nearly impossible.

On the other side of the world, also interested in the junction of migration and youth during a process of transitioning to adulthood and moving from school to work are Krzaklewska and Sarnowska. In their respective articles, the authors gauge the potential of migration as a socializing experience. Through these two contributions it becomes clear that researchers should be wondering about the generational effects of different types of socialization and how these become altered or ascertained by mass-mobility. For Krzaklewska, the key point of interest is that a particular generation of Polish youngsters has grown up under structural conditions of change. In a way, her arguments connect to the claim put forward by Botterill (2011: 53) who argued that Poles from certain age groups have been “socialized to migrate” by the pervasive migration culture. Krzaklewska also relates to the debate that youth studies have – until recently – framed transitions as sedentary (Cairns 2014) and argues that migration must be factored in when the process of entering adulthood is being investigated. In her typology, Krzaklewska argues that going abroad – especially as regards motivations – may have variable outcomes. She states that it may prolong the phase of emerging adulthood, be equivalent to youthful exploration and a celebrating of being young, or constitutes a “rite de passage” to adulthood (Eade et al. 2007) in terms of an individualized track to financial independence. The author further wonders about the prolonged transitions to adulthood, arguing that migration might have something to do with revised understandings of youthfulness and youth in the life-course more broadly.

14 Explicitly focusing on socialization/migration interplay Sarnowska’s paper ties the discussions back to the effects of primary socialization. She applies Arnett’s

concepts of broad and narrow socialization (1995) to analyze the role of migration in transitions from education to the labor market. Her longitudinal study reveals that although the interviewed cohort of students and graduates perceived different kinds of mobility during and after studies as an attractive option, the long-term consequences of migration for their career paths and lifestyle choices should not be overestimated. Along these lines, whereas in some biographies moving abroad constituted a major turning point, in other cases, particularly for those who were raised with a “narrow socialization” model, this experience only strengthened the norms and values acquired in parental homes. In turn, the implications of primary socialization were further reproduced in the decisions regarding future career paths or family plans. Thus, Sarnowska provides arguments that youth migration should not be analyzed without taking into account preceding influences of the diverse socialization agents.

Finally, discussing Polish migrants who are either returnees or continue to have repeated experiences of mobility, Winogrodzka and Mleczko show how young Poles struggle with precarious conditions on the labor market. The authors draw attention to the fact that the often hailed free-flowing and mobility of younger generations in the united Europe (see also Eade et al. 2007) may not have equally good outcomes for all. In fact, grounding their analysis in the “liquid migration” scheme, Winogrodzka and Mleczko state that migrant youngsters from Poland are prone to employment in the 6D-types of jobs. However, the authors also underline the challenges of grasping the immediate effects of migration as many “soft-skills” and informal competences may only be seen in the human capital accumulation of an individual over time. In line with what Sarnowska suggested, this paper also indicates that the outcomes of migration on the career paths of mobile youth cannot be analyzed separately from other factors, both on the macro- and the micro-levels. This brings us to the point that looking at what happens to children migrating during childhood (transnational primary socialization at home, secondary socialization by foreign schools) is vital for understanding what kinds of transitions we can expect to witness among mobile individuals later in life. Migrant children take center stage in the following paragraphs and papers from *Section 2*.

## **Children and adolescents navigating schooling in a transnational space**

It can be stated that researchers who examine the conditions and strategies within Polish migrant parenting (e.g. Slany et al. 2016, 2018, Ślusarczyk et al. 2018, Ślusarczyk 2019), inadvertently research primary socialization in a transnational context. The now established transnational turn in migration studies (King 2012) illuminates that primary socialization effectuated in the context of broader kinship networks often takes place beyond borders, thus making it a transnational socialization

process. This, for instance, can be observed when migrant children's close relationships with grandparents in the sending states are studied (Da 2003, Slany, Strzemecka 2016, 2018).

However, as children begin their journeys outside of the family settings, the secondary socialization abroad is by no means easy. Examining the transnational life-long socialization process that begins with migrant children starting or entering formal education in the destination country (see also Dockett, Perry 2001, Duff, Hornberger 2008, Sime, Fox 2015) makes it clear that the key concerns surround children's presence and performance within the education systems (e.g. Kułakowska 2014, Czerniejewska 2014, Nowicka 2014). In this volume, this is discussed by Szydłowska et al., Slany and Strzemecka, Książek, as well as Kamińska.

Before honing in on the particular contributions, it is worth mentioning that despite the *Call for Papers* announced for this issue emphasizing the search for more contributions that suggest good outcomes and positive experiences of migrant youngsters, the evidence about children's traumas and negative experiences stemming from migration continues to be overwhelming. It seems that the reasons behind it are multi-fold. First, there is a problem-oriented attitude of researchers who seek to understand the negative phenomenon before becoming able to solve it. Secondly, major research-funding bodies are also focused on the applicability and social impact of the findings. In this realm, immediate tackling of a recognized problem instead of, for example, assisting in a broadly conceived and usually strenuous, costly and long-term community development programs, might seem like a more feasible goal. Thirdly, the effects of the dominant anti-immigrant discourse in media and in the public life, both in Europe and in the USA, cannot be ignored. With progressing social numbness, societies are increasingly wary of the non-problematic look at vulnerability of migrant children. In a vicious circle of the already notable exclusion and reproduction of limited life-chances among children and youth with migrant backgrounds (see e.g. Crul., Schneider 2009, Kamińska – this volume, Książek – this volume, Szydłowska et al. – this volume), suboptimal outcomes and damaging narratives are exacerbated by the present cessations of many social efforts aimed at assisting migrant children and youth.

Going back to socialization, we can discern the ways in which school settings are crucial for this process, particularly for migrant children. Articles in *Section 2* focus on the broadly understood educational environment. This framing encompasses not only adjusting to the new language of instruction, new curriculum and norms and values transmitted through the education process, but also the relationships that migrant children forge with peers, as well as, ultimately, negotiating one's position in the host society. Although the research presented in this volume has been conducted in diverse environments (Norway, Poland, the UK), the authors unanimously confirm that in order for the integration to be seen as successful, it requires openness and efforts from both sides, namely the immigrants (in this case immigrant children, youth, and their

parents) as well as members of the host society, represented mostly by peers (majority children) and teachers. The paper by Czerniejewska and Main illustrates this in reference to Polish mothers and their children in Norwegian kindergartens. The authors argue that because of the fact that communication between parents and teachers is limited to technical and practical issues (what and how something should be done), there is a mutual lack of understanding regarding norms and values (why something should be done this way). For instance, letting children play on their own outside does not prove the lack of engagement in their education, but rather leaving them with space for self-initiated activities and training of social skills in peer-groups. Most parents are willing to modify to a certain extent their parenting goals and practices in the adaptation process but – according to the authors – better home-school communication would facilitate improved outcomes for all. If – as shown by Czerniejewska and Main – chances to catch up and adapt are not specifically presented to migrant children in the early education and care institutions, then this may permeate the next steps and their transitions to primary school. The studies seem to indicate that many school problems of pupils with migratory backgrounds may stem not from the lack of systemic solutions and support at the macro-level (such as preparatory or additional classes), but rather result from the exclusion on the meso-level, i.e. the lack of acceptance from peers and teachers (see also Popyk et al, this volume). While it seems that recently we observe a revival of interest in how friendships and peer-based social networks affect mobility outcomes for young adults in a generally positive manner (see e.g. Pustułka et al. 2018), Strzemecka and Slany present a counter stance and demonstrate that migrant background and economic inequalities may constitute grounds of ethnic discrimination and bullying in school, thus impeding children’s integration in other domains. Moreover, it must be emphasized that certain experiences for children may not be easy to capture. For instance, Sara Young demonstrates in this volume how the Polish 1.5-generation migrants are negotiating their sense of belonging in the UK in the face of anti-immigrant atmosphere in the months following the Brexit referendum. She convincingly shows that children may be hesitant to speak up about racism, which – in our view – attests to the fact that there are no easy ways for addressing the more complex experiences of children feeling marginalized or mistreated. At the same time, Young depicts the ambivalence of navigating belonging because, on the one hand, the Polish school children seem to have a high degree of agency and underline their right to remain in the UK, on the other hand, they cannot ever escape the stereotypization that characterizes discourses around the adult CEE migrants.

It must be also highlighted that it is not only the migrant children’s and youth’s adaptation process abroad that yields itself to a critical and concerned analysis. In fact, the problems are not restricted to the experiences in the receiving country but may equally refer to the re-adaptation in the home country. In this issue, Szydłowska et al. suggest that lack of fluency in Polish or having slightly different cultural codes among

children and adolescents returning to Poland may hinder their adaptation, both to the school environment and to the peer-group. Apart from the diagnosis of the challenges faced by the young returnees, the authors put forward some good practices. According to Szydłowska et al, a lot of problems encountered at the initial phase of adaptation to the new school environment could be avoided by preparing the teachers and children earlier and providing them with relevant information beforehand.

The adjustment is even more difficult in the case of children repatriating from Kazakhstan, described in this volume by Książek and Kamińska. Repatriation programs are addressed to ethnic Poles whose ancestors (usually involuntarily) migrated to one of the Soviet Republics. Therefore, for the repatriating children, Poland is on the one hand a mythical homeland of their grandparents and, on the other – it is a completely strange land because most families had a very limited contact with contemporary Polish culture from afar. On top of that, as native speakers of Russian, the children are often bullied by their peers in the Polish schools, either because of their accent or because of economic inequalities reflected in their school equipment or clothes. Kamińska highlights that another major challenge they face is a disruption in their biographies split between “then” / “in Kazakhstan” and “now” / “in Poland”. Although they most often make efforts to assimilate, their identity as “real” Poles is recognized neither by peers, nor by teachers, at least at the beginning of the adaptation process. Similar problems with forging peer relations were diagnosed by Książek. She argues that Polish schools are not prepared for dealing with children of foreign background. In the researched case of repatriating children, the teachers should recognize their particular situation, provide other pupils relevant information on Kazakhstan and on the Poles living there etc. Both authors agree that expecting assimilation from these children detaches them from their past and from their cultural heritage.

Brightening this dark picture of migration in childhood and youth, it must be said that most of the above mentioned studies nevertheless show a degree of resilience and resistance among migrant children. The kids are often supported by their parents as Young, for instance, shows that the adults have their children change schools, presumably in connection with the negative experiences. Further, when the migrant children face discriminatory actions of their peers, they take a stand and become vocal about having every right to be in their destination country (Strzemecka and Slany, Young – both in this volume). In doing so, migrant children carry out a lot of “peer work” (Strzemecka and Slany in this issue) to earn acceptance and belong in their new environment.

As already teased out briefly above, all aspects of both primary and secondary socialization’s (spatial) sites and (personal) agents necessitate analyses of migrant identities and sense of belonging (Ní Laoire et al. 2011, Lähdesmäki et al. 2016, see also Popyk et al. in this issue). To underscore, although it seems that contemporarily the concept of identity is less often than before used as an overarching theoretical frame, the children’s and youth’s identifications and sense of belonging remain an important



theme (see for example papers by Young, Książek, Kamińska and Szydłowska et al.). It is noteworthy that more and more often the positions and belonging of children are analyzed in a relational and dynamic perspective, which paves the way for a more nuanced approach (see Popyk et al. in this issue). As argued by Popyk et al., cross-semination of disciplines is also evident in that it is now understood that children and youngsters not only experience mobility differently than adults and that their point of view should be taken into account, but also that they are active subjects in the co-creation of the broader mobility landscape of a given family, a particular migratory flow, or even at a national policy level. Therefore, in a continuation of the trends noted few years back for this research realm by Grzymała-Moszczyńska and Trąbka (2014), children need to be fully-fledged partners in the research process. This evinces a shift from studies *about* children's experiences conducted with adults (parents, teachers or retrospectively with adults talking about their mobility – see also e.g. Trąbka 2014, Czerniejewska and Main in this issue) to the research *with* children. The latter is exemplified in this volume by the works of Young, Kamińska, Szydłowska et al., as well as Strzemecka and Slany. A participatory character of these studies allows us to better grasp issues that are of key importance for children themselves. Moreover, they may show us a different face of migration that is not shared with adults. This may equally entail peer pressure, bullying, ethnic shame and discrimination in the school environment and networks, yet may also elucidate strategies for coping with negativity and build knowledge on peer-work and – more broadly – transnationally understood socialization and transitions.

To conclude, while many 'classic' themes are still present in the contemporary studies on migrating children and youth, it seems that several new research strands are emerging and seek to connect various disciplines in a more explicit manner. This is suggested by the upsurge of research situated at the intersection of migration and youth studies and children studies, which tends to be interdisciplinary and places migration in the context of the life-course. Secondly, we observe an increase of participatory research with children aiming to understand their experiences of migration and adaptation process. The latter results in the in-depth and nuanced understanding of the factors influencing the outcomes of migration for youngsters, emphasizing for example their sense of belonging and the role of peer relations. Finally, in terms of future research directions, analyzing children's and youth's adaptation process at the meso-level seems to be an interesting path because it focuses on the so far neglected themes, such as for example the role of hobbies, extracurricular activities and participation in different activities in the host society. Additionally, it could pave the way for a more positively oriented picture of the children and youngsters' transnational transitions focusing on the factors facilitating adaptation to the changing environment.

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