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*DRAFT VERSION – DO NOT CITE OR QUOTE*

**IS TRANSNATIONAL PARENTING GENDERED? THE IMPACT OF PARENTS' FAMILY  
AND MIGRATION TRAJECTORIES ON THEIR PRACTICES AND ATTITUDES**

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**Abstract:**

A growing literature is focusing on the experiences of transnational families, particularly those with children involved, with results pointing to parent's possible gender specific practices and attitudes. Our study explores this aspect in the current French context using the Longitudinal Survey of Recently Arrived Migrants (ELIPA). We focus on parents with at least one child residing abroad and study the determinants of engaging in different practices (contacts, remittances and trips to country of origin) within this group. We systematically introduce the family's characteristics, as well as the migrant parent's socio-economic and legal conditions at destination, the initial hypothesis being that these factors equally influence the parents' practices, in interaction with their gender. The results point to the fact that part of the observed differences in the parenting practices arise from the different transnational family configurations male and female migrants are in.

**Keywords:** transnational families, international migration, France

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## TRANSNATIONAL PARENTING AT THE INTERSECTION OF FAMILY AND INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

A growing literature is focusing on the lives and practices of transnational families<sup>2</sup>, particularly those with young children (Salazar Parreñas 2001; Schmalzbauer 2004; Salazar Parreñas 2005; Dreby 2006; Dreby 2007; Salazar Parreñas 2008; Abrego 2009; Mazzucato and Schans 2011; Nobles 2011; Carling, Menjívar et al. 2012; Gardner 2012; Menjívar 2012; Pribilsky 2012). In a context where the nuclear cohabiting family remains the predominant model (at least in destination countries, family forms in origin countries are more diverse), one of the main questions addressed in this literature is what constitutes a family when there is long-distance geographical separation between the members. These studies analyze the practices and attitudes adopted by parents, children and their caregivers, allowing them to continue being a family despite the distance.

Family members residing in different countries engage in Initially literature on transnationalism solely focused on the migrants' economic activities, such as remittances, and this activity continues to be addressed in most studies on transnational families as well. However, the growing attention to female migrants in the last two decades has also shown the importance of non-monetary exchanges within transnational families, particularly the care work at a distance that mothers continue to carry out (Salazar Parreñas 2005). In line with this research, we investigate the following question in this paper: *Do parenting practices in transnational families differ by the migrant parent's gender?* To answer this question we draw on from different theoretical frameworks focusing on gender, integration of migrants and family reconfigurations.

Gender roles in sending and receiving societies, which continue ascribing women to the reproductive sphere and men to production, have an important impact on the ways transnational parents carry out

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<sup>2</sup> We define transnational families as families (dyade of spouses, parent – child, etc.) in which the members reside in different countries. Hereon we adopt the following definition of a “transnational family” as a family configuration in which at least one parent resides at destination (in France) and a least one of his/her children in the country of origin. We only consider children under the age of 25 years. We refer to parents residing in France in such a family situation as “transnational parents”.

their roles and responsibilities at a distance. Whereas the sending of remittances is expected from a migrant father, and studies have shown that those who fail in this mission also tend to have lesser contacts with their families, it is less so the case for migrant mothers who may or not remit, but who have a greater responsibility of providing emotional support to their children and other kin. However evidence has also suggested that in some cases, the migratory context partly levels out these gender differences as women enter the productive sphere and men take on new roles and activities to stay present in their children's lives (such as the sending of gifts on an everyday basis or for special occasions, Pribilsky 2012). Dreby also shows that there doesn't appear to be differences in the type of contacts of men and women, nor in their topics of conversations with their children Dreby (2006, 2007).

In the traditional migration model the household head, most often a male migrated alone to the destination country, leaving spouse and children in country of origin. Although situations in which the female spouse is the initial migrant in the couple exist, they are rare. Female migration is more often linked to unstable couple situations (separation, divorce) or new union formation. Literature on family formation (or marriage migration) has remained separate from that on transnational parenthood. However, the two phenomena are not incompatible: among the migrants coming to form a new union, some may already have been in a previous one and may have children left-behind. Studies on transnational families often mention the "new" family members at destination such a spouse or children born after migration. What are the attitudes and practices of these parents towards their children? And how do they differ from those who are still in a couple with the other parent or single parents? Literature on separated and reconstituted families (within national boundaries) may shed some light on this question. Contacts of children with the non-resident parent decreased when the latter formed a new union and half-brothers were born (Leridon 1995, Clément and Bonvalet 2006). Thus, we may expect migrant parents with family members already at destination (a new spouse or children born at destination), to have less time and resources to allocate to their children back in the origin country. As these situations are gender specific, they will have different effects on migrant mothers and fathers.

However, it is equally important to take into account other contextual factors, particularly the parents' socio-economic and legal situation. Some activities are subordinate to the possession of economic resources (sending of remittances, organizing a trip home), most times available through employment. The legal status has also been shown to be an important factor explaining the type and intensity of transnational practices (Fresnoza-Flot 2009). Men's and women's' situations in respect to these dimensions vary upon their arrival. Female migrants arrive more often as family migrants and are less often in an irregular status, but have also been found to have lower employment rates which in turn determines their possibilities for supporting and exchanging with their families at a distance.

Given these results, we may refine the initial research question:

- *Do parenting practices in transnational families differ by the migrant parent's gender? What are the mechanisms through which these differences result? What is role of the family and social context surrounding female and male migration such as their family and migration trajectory and socio-economic characteristics?*

To answer these questions, we focus on the contemporary French migratory context, which has been relatively under-studied up until now, but presents interesting characteristics when compared to other destination contexts studied in the existing literature (United States, Spain, Italy...) (Section 2). We base our analysis on the Longitudinal Survey on the Integration of Newly Arrived Migrants (ELIPA). Section 3 describes the survey and the variables used in the study. The following section analyses the family and socio-economic characteristics of transnational parents, while the last section looks into their practices towards their family members in the country of origin.

## **FRENCH MIGRATORY CONTEXT**

Transnational families have remained a relatively under studied topic in France despite a long history of immigration to the country. This may be explained by several reasons such as the dominance of male flows to the country and a relatively small contemporary migrant inflow compared to the 1960s and 1970s. Today France is one of the only European countries where the population size of

descendants of immigrants is actually larger than that of immigrants (Bouvier 2012). However, female migrants have represented a majority of adult migrants arriving into France from third countries starting from the 1990s (DSED; INED). Although they continue to be over-represented in family-related categories (Spouse of French, family reunification...), their migration motives and family situations at arrival have diversified and the profiles of female and male migrants have become more similar in the recent period (Beauchemin, Borrel et al. 2013). Secondly, although the rise in immigration in France in the 2000s was smaller than that in South European countries on which a number of studies on transnational mothers were carried out (Bonizzoni 2009; Banfi and Boccagni 2011; Bonizzoni 2011), an annual average of around 200,000 immigrants from third countries arrive in France every year and among them many are parents of children and potentially at risk of separation from them, for at least some period.

Another possible reason explaining why this subject has been overlooked in France is the less stringent nature of the French immigration legislation regarding family reunification. The possibilities for workers to bring their family members have existed in France since 1945, although their actual living conditions, particularly housing, may explain why relatively few families came in the 1960s and 1970s. Starting from the 1970s the criteria for the procedure have been generally restricted, particularly in the last two decades, since the immigration law of 1993. After the restrictions introduced in 2003, 2006 and 2007, France no longer has the most favorable legislation concerning family reunification (Pascouau and Labayle 2011). Despite these changes, a certain vision of France of being a relatively family friendly country and promoting family migration may explain the little attention given to transnational families.

Family migration accounts for around half of all inflows to France (from third countries), but this group is quite heterogeneous. Along the traditional family reunification model of spouse and children reuniting with the initial migrant in France, there is more family formation migration (coming most often in the legal category of spouse of French). This type of family migration among certain migrant groups has attracted great attention in Europe (Timmerman 2006, 2008, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2010, Schmidt 2011), including France (Milewski and Hamel 2010).

Despite this overlook, transnational families have long been present in France as is attested by quantitative (Tribalat 1995; Gonzalez-Ferrer, Baizán et al. 2012) and qualitative studies (Barou 2001; Barou 2001). These families have been particularly numerous among specific origins (such as migrants from Sahel Africa) and they have mainly been comprised of migrant men residing in France, with their families in countries of origin, a configuration which has been less studied than family migrations led by women. However with the diversification of migrant profiles (origin countries, sex, migration motives), we may expect that the typical “traditional” transnational family has also given way to new family configurations.

Based on the following evidence we may formulate the following hypotheses regarding the gendered nature of parenting at a distance:

- Women remit less than men due to their lower socio-economic integration and family situation;
- Women have more frequent contacts than men with their families abroad due to their greater responsibilities in their everyday lives;
- The relation between remitting and contacts with families in origin country is stronger for men than women.

## **METHOD**

Carrying out a wide-scale analysis of transnational parents’ practices requires a dataset fulfilling two main conditions: a) detailed description of family relations and practices between non-cohabiting parents and their children, and b) sufficient sample sizes of parents with children residing abroad. Whereas some socio-demographic surveys focusing on families may provide detailed information on the former topics, they often don’t meet the second criteria since transnational family arrangements are relatively rare in France and are thus few in a general survey. On the other hand, surveys over-sampling immigrant populations do not generally provide detailed descriptions of family relations and practices. We base our analyses on the Longitudinal Survey on the Integration of Newly Arrived

Migrants (ELIPA) in France, which allows to be balance the above criteria, even though it presents other limitations discussed further. After describing the survey sample, we present the variables concerning practices with family members residing abroad, as well as variables connected to the family and socio-economic characteristics of transnational parents.

*Longitudinal Survey on the Integration of Newly Arrived Migrants (ELIPA)*

The target population of the ELIPA survey were third country nationals receiving their first residence permit in 2009 and eligible for the signature of the reception and integration contract (CAI) (Régnard and Domergue 2011). This excluded several large migrant groups (EU/EEA nationals, highly-skilled workers, students), but who were less affected by the question of parent-child separations<sup>3</sup>. 6,107 migrants admitted in 2009<sup>4</sup> were interviewed during the first wave (2010), 4,756 during the second one (2011), and 3,573 during the third and final one (2013). Upon obtaining the residence permit, only 48% were “recent arrivals” (less than 2 years in France) and around one third of migrants had already been in France for more than 5 years. Whereas women and family migrants were over-represented among the latter group, men and migrants regularized (work or family reasons) were over-represented among the migrants with longer residence in France.

Module on children residing outside of the household was introduced in wave 2, so only this wave is used for the analyses and it is to this point in time that we refer to when speaking of “at time of survey” (2 years after obtaining residence permit). Each respondent provided a list of their children and their socio-demographic characteristics (age, sex, country of birth, country of residence). 1,455 respondents had at least one child born outside of France (27% of the total sample) and 784 had at least one child residing abroad at the time of the survey (14 %). Socio-demographic information was missing for some children and only parents for whom it was available (notably the age of children)

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<sup>3</sup> EU/EEA nationals benefit from free circulation and may migrate with their family members. Highly-skilled professionals may benefit from the accompanying family procedure for their spouses and children.

<sup>4</sup> The initial number of migrants admitted in 2009 eligible for the signature of the reception and integration contract was around 100,000, thus a sampling ratio equal to 6,1%.

and who had at least one child under the age of 25 were kept for the analysis (680 respondents). We refer to this last group as “transnational parents” or “transnational families”, as each of them represents one family unit.

*Remittances and contacts (dependent variables)*

As the literature review has briefly shown, previous studies on transnational families have focused on different activities carried out by their members in order to sustain their “familyhood”. In the ELIPA survey, respondents were asked a set of questions on their relations with family at origin, that we use in our analysis to characterize transnational parenting practices (table 1):

*Table 1 Questions regarding transnational activities in the ELIPA survey*

| Practice    | Question  |
|-------------|---|
| Contacts    | Since wave 1, how often have you received news from your family in the country of origin by letter, phone or other means?<br>- Once a week / Once a month / Once a year / Never |
| Remittances | Since your arrival in France, have you sent money abroad?<br>- Regularly / Occasionally / No  |

*Source: ELIPA, wave 2.*

Although some practices mentioned in the literature do not appear in the survey (such as the sending of gifts on special occasion or holidays, topics discussed during conversations, etc.) the survey nevertheless covers a wide array of ways parents stay present and connected with their family members, particularly their children. The use of this data does have some limitations, one of which is the fact that questions do not directly refer to respondent’s children (they are not phrased as “How often have you contacted your children?” or “Which family members came to visit you in France?”). Only the question on remittances is followed up by another one on its primary beneficiaries; migrants were able to declare up to two primary beneficiaries. Responses show that when children reside abroad, they are more often declared as the primary beneficiaries (74% of respondents declared children versus 44% parents and 18% spouses). Thus, despite this limitation, we consider that when activities are directed towards the family at origin and children reside there, they are the primary addressees these activities.



*Family and socio-economic characteristics (independent variables)*

To characterize the transnational families in the sample the following variables were used:

- Respondent parent's sex and conjugal situation,
- Family composition: age of children residing in the country of origin, presence of children in France
- Socio-economic characteristics: residence duration, employment status, country of origin

45% of parent respondents were women pointing to the fact that despite the importance of family-related migration to France, especially for women, many of them are separated from their children during the process. To become a transnational parent, an individual goes through two events: 1) giving birth to a child in one's home country and 2) becoming an international migrant<sup>5</sup> (in our case migrating to France). Children born in the home country, not migrating with their parent(s), are often referred to as the "left-behind". Whereas women were more likely than men to have become parents before their migration (31% *versus* 24%), they were also more likely to migrate with all of their children to France. Thus, becoming a transnational parent was a more frequent situation for fathers than mothers<sup>6</sup>: 63% of men who had at least one child born in their country of origin were in this situation *versus* 43% of women.

Given the importance of family-related migration in France and the diversity of migrants' trajectories, it was important to adopt a "family" approach to and look at the parent's conjugal situation, notably if s/he was in a union with the other parent and if so, where the second spouse resided. As in many

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<sup>5</sup> Other family trajectories can also lead to a transnational parenting situation such as migrants residing at destination sending back to their home country children they may reunified or who were born at destination: Bledsoe, C. H. and P. Sow (2011). "Back to Africa: Second Chances for the Children of West African Immigrants." Journal of Marriage and Family 73(4): 747-762. Razy, E. (2007). "Les sens contraires de la migration. La circulation des jeunes filles d'origine soninké entre la France et le Mali." Journal des africanistes 77(2): 19-43. However among the population of transnational parents in this study, these situations are probably rare as they have only recently arrived in France.

<sup>6</sup> This paper does not discuss the determinants of family reunification which is the object of the PhD dissertation of the author.

demographic surveys (Bledsoe and Sow 2008), information on the respondent's spouse and children was collected in separate modules, with no question allowing to see whether the spouse was the second parent of the children. Information on cohabiting and non-cohabiting spouses was also different, implying that certain hypotheses had to be made.

The majority of parents were cohabiting with a spouse at the time of the survey (n=377, 53% of the sample). The year of start of union was used to determine if the spouse was the parent of the children residing in the country of origin<sup>7</sup>. Only in one cohabiting union out of three, was the spouse identified as the parent of the children residing abroad (n=121, 17% of the sample). Respondents for which no spouse in the household was identified (n=303, 47% of the sample) were subsequently asked if they were in a union. 170 of them declared being in a couple. For this latter group, the spouse was residing abroad in most cases (n=138, 19% of the sample). The date of start of union was not supplied for this group, but we made the hypothesis that this was the second parent in these cases. One parent out of four in the sample was single at the time of the survey (not in a cohabiting or married union) (n=165, 27% of the sample). This latter group included 32 parents who declared being in a union, but were neither cohabiting, nor married with them.

*Table 2 Conjugal situation of transnational parents*

|                              | Sample size | % (weighted) |
|------------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| <b>In a cohabiting union</b> |             |              |
| - new union                  | 256         | 36           |
| - other parent               | 121         | 17           |
| <b>Not cohabiting</b>        |             |              |
| - spouse abroad              | 138         | 20           |
| - no spouse                  | 165         | 27           |
| <b>Total</b>                 | <b>680</b>  | <b>100</b>   |

*Source: ELIPA, wave 2.*

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<sup>7</sup> This method often leads to an over-estimation of “blended” families, or situations in which the children do not belong to the union (Chardon, O. and É. Vivas (2009). *Les familles recomposées : entre familles traditionnelles et familles monoparentales. Documents de travail*. Paris, INSEE, Direction des Statistiques Démographiques et Sociales, Unité des Études Démographiques et Sociales. **F0904**. ) This may be even more so the case for transnational families given the fuzzyness of family situations in the migratory contexte. However this is the only possible option as the questionnaire does not distinguish whether the children belong to the respondent, the spouse or both of them.

Several variables characterized the children residing in the country of origin: age of the youngest child and their number. Whereas immigration legislations place limits on which children are eligible for reunification (18 years being the limit in most cases), this is not the case for other practices. On the contrary, studies on transnational families show that support of children often continues when they become young adults due to the precarious socio-economic situations at origin. Secondly, we introduce the number of children residing abroad distinguishing one-child families and two or more children. Thirdly, we also look whether any children currently cohabit with the parent in France (these may be children born abroad and reunified in France or children born in France).

Variables characterizing the respondent parent's socio-economic and legal situation (admission motive, having been in an irregular situation in the past) were often correlated (those admitted for work reasons were often irregular in the past and had higher employment rates than family or refugees at time of survey). Due to this, we preferred using the socio-economic variables and didn't include variables related to legal conditions as such in the regression analysis. Firstly, we distinguish the duration of residence in France (and thus the period of separation from the family). Secondly, we look at the employment situation at time of survey and distinguish those working from other situations. The last variable looks at the parents' country of origin and we distinguish four regions:

- *Maghreb* (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia) and Turkey: "old" migrant flows in which family reunification has mostly been achieved and where recent migration consists of family formation migrants;
- *Sahel Africa* (the most numerous countries in this group being Mali, Senegal, Guinea): "old" migrant flow, with lower reunification levels and mostly comprised of male migrants;
- *Central Africa* (the most numerous countries in this group being Ivory Coast, DRC, Cameroun, Congo): recent migrant flow, comprising a majority of female migrants;
- *Other* (the most numerous countries in this group being China, Haiti): recent migrant flow, heterogeneous group.

## RESULTS

### *Transnational families in the French migratory context*

The transnational families observed in the sample present very different family configurations and important gender differences appear:

*Table 2. Socio-demographic characteristics of transnational family configurations*

|   | Male       | Female     | Total      | Difference Men vs. Women<br>(Design-based F prob.) |
|---|------------|------------|------------|--|
| <b>Parent's family status</b>                 |            |            |            |  |
| New union in France                           | 28         | 47         | 36         | 0.000  |
| Both in France                                | 18         | 15         | 17         |  |
| Spouse abroad                                 | 32         | 5          | 20         |  |
| Single parent                                 | 22         | 33         | 27         |  |
| <b>Children residing abroad - 12 or older</b> | 35         | 58         | 46         | 0.000  |
| <b>Children residing abroad - two or more</b> | 67         | 46         | 58         | 0.000  |
| <b>Cohabiting children in France</b>          | 37         | 62         | 48         | 0.000  |
| <b>Residence in France - 5+ years</b>         | 64         | 38         | 52         | 0.000  |
| <b>Employment situation - working</b>         | 72         | 41         | 58         | 0.001  |
| <b>Admission motive</b>                       |            |            |            |  |
| Work  | 34         | 6          | 21         | 0.000  |
| Asylum  | 16         | 13         | 15         |  |
| Spouse of French                              | 15         | 28         | 21         |  |
| Other family                                  | 36         | 52         | 43         |  |
| <b>Country of origin</b>                      |            |            |            |  |
| Maghreb & Turkey                              | 16         | 8          | 12         | 0.000  |
| Sahel Africa                                  | 39         | 16         | 29         |  |
| Central Africa                                | 28         | 44         | 35         |  |
| Other   | 17         | 31         | 24         |  |
| <b>Total</b>                                  | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b> |  |
| <b>Sample size</b>                            | <b>375</b> | <b>305</b> | <b>680</b> |  |

*Source: ELIPA, wave 2.*

The “traditional” transnational family in which one spouse is in France and the other in the country of origin accounts for only one parent out of five in our sample, but this group is over-represented among men (32% vs. 5% of women). This confirms the observation that in intact couples, women are rarely the primary migrants. In one out of six families both parents were residing in France: they may have arrived together or reunification had taken place later. Single parents represented one fourth of the sample and women were slightly more often in this situation, but the differences between the two

sexes where not as great as in the general population were single parents are predominantly women. The largest group consists of parents who are in a new union in France (not with the parent of the children abroad) (36%) and almost half of the women in the sample were in this situation (47%). Although this variable certainly captures different family situations, which later have effects on the parents' practices, one should be careful in interpreting it as family situations, especially regarding union status, may be quite complex in the process of migration. Parents identified as single may or not have been single at time of birth of child, but since there is no information on previous unions we cannot differentiate them. Equally, only one spouse could be declared in the survey and "preference" was probably given to the one in France. However, it is possible there is still some kind of relation with the other parent at origin.

In 46% of families all children are aged 12 or more years. There are also gender differences as children of migrant mothers were significantly older than those of migrant fathers. Whereas only 1/3 of mothers had left young children in the country of origin, the proportion was double for fathers. The number of children also points to the fact that transnational fathers are in different stage of family formation than mothers: 54% of mothers had only one child abroad, 67% of fathers had 2 or more children. It was also more common for women to be residing with a child in France (2/3 of women respondents versus 1/3 of men). In many cases women were able to migrate with some of their children, whereas men migrated by themselves more often.

Migration experiences of the families also varied. Separations were significantly longer for men migrants: 64% of them had already been living in France for at least 5 years at the time of the survey. Even if the duration was shorter for women (only 38% were for this long in France), we see that a significant proportion of them are separated from their children for long durations. Fathers were more likely to work than mothers: 72% were employed *versus* 41% of mothers. A large proportion of women were inactive, often linked to the birth of their child in France.

Whereas the existence of transnational families is often linked to (temporary) work migration, the results provide a more complex situation, with gender differences as well. Indeed, as has been previously noted work migration is numerically low in France today and the majority of migrants

come for family-related reasons (only 9% of all migrants in 2009 were admitted for work reasons). The proportion doubles in the transnational parent sample (21%) and constitutes 34% of fathers. Thus, a large group of them do indeed conform to the traditional (male) worker migration model. Migrants admitted as refugees represented 15% (which is close to their proportion in the overall sample). The majority of transnational parents were admitted for family reasons (2/3). Spouse of French are under-represented in the sample, which is logical in the sense that these migrants are already in a pre-existing union that they formalize upon arrival. The last category “other family” comprises different family categories: parents having come through the family reunification procedure, but also migrants who may have been in various situations upon arrival and obtained a more stable status given their family links in France (such as a new union) (admission category “Vie privée et familiale”). The admission motive described above is the one migrants obtain as a first “permanent” legal category. Some migrants may have had temporary permits and/or been in irregular situations in the past. “Work” and “other family” migrants had been residing on average 8,8 and 6,7 years in France. Almost half of all migrants had been in an irregular situation before receiving their permit and this was a more frequent situation for fathers.

A majority of transnational parents were from Sub-Saharan countries (64%). As noted earlier, migrants from Sahel Africa were over-represented among fathers, and from Central Africa among mothers. One third of transnational mothers come from other countries (mostly from Europe and Asia), which are relatively new in France. The female migrants coming from the two regions – Central Africa and Other countries - are relatively recent and have not been the object of many studies yet, but they do seem to more fit the profiles of migration flows described in other parts of the world, with a more independent women migration.

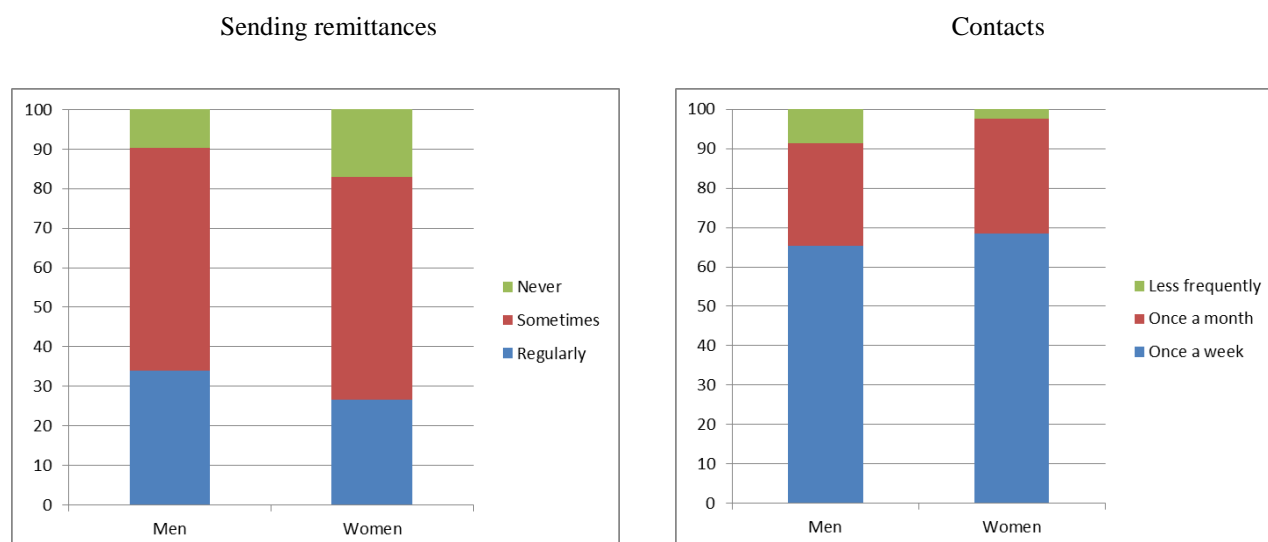
Overall, transnational fathers were more likely to have their closest family members – spouse and children – live in their country of origin, whereas transnational mothers were more often in family configurations with two “poles” – children in country of origin and spouse and/or children in France, thus illustrating more complex life trajectories. Fathers were also more often in an independent situation with employment possibilities, whereas mothers were admitted as family migrants and were

often not working at the time of the survey. This situation is expected to determine their possibilities and resources for transnational parenting. However, it is also important to keep in mind that the children of transnational mothers on average older, meaning that in some cases the parent's decision to emigrate by themselves to form a new family may have also been linked to the fact that their children were becoming more independent or they had children adolescents who did not want to come.

### *Descriptive statistics*

Sending remittances is one of the parents' main migration targets. More than nine parents out of ten send remittances to their families. 31% do it on a regular basis and 56% sometimes. The irregular nature of remittance sending is probably linked to the socio-economic situation of migrants: in order to be able to send them, one needs to have a regular income and as many migrants have only arrived, not all of them have a stable employment status.

*Figure 1 Frequency of sending remittances and contacts with family in country of origin*



*Source: ELIPA, wave 2.*

There is also a significant difference in the fathers' and mothers' remitting behaviors (figure 1), the former sending remittances more regularly, but also higher amounts (not in graph). Thus, 17% of mothers declared never sending remittances whereas only 10% of fathers did so.

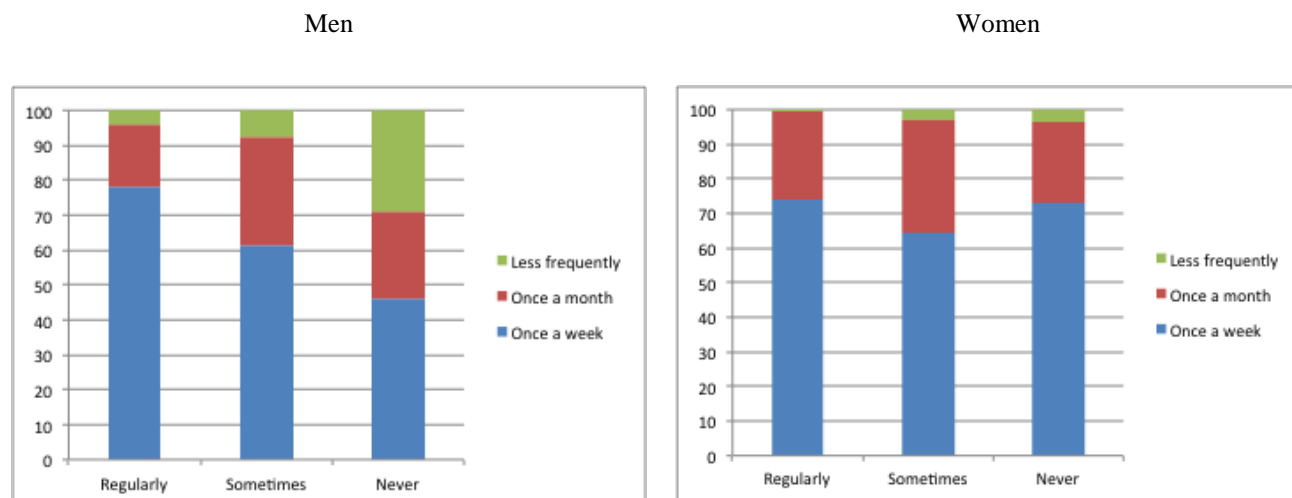
The beneficiaries of the remittances varied as well for the two groups. Whereas both men and women declared most often their children as one of the primary beneficiaries, the proportion was significantly higher for women (84%) than men (70%). This information confirms that much of the money sent to families at origin is aimed at raising the children of the migrants. Parents were the second group most often cited as primary beneficiaries of remittances: an equal proportion (around 44%) of men and women declared them (thus the children's grandparents). However important differences emerged regarding the spouse as primary beneficiary: whereas they were declared by 33% of men, less than 2% of women did so. This stems from the differences in the family situations of the two groups (couples where women were residing in France with their spouses at origin were rare), but also reveals difficulties in apprehending the family situations of migrants in a quantitative survey. Logically men cohabiting with a spouse never cited them as beneficiary of remittances and the proportion citing their spouse was highest among men whose spouse was residing abroad (77%). However, 27% of single migrants cited spouses, suggesting that they may be sending them to a former spouse who is the children's caregiver. This was never the case for women migrants.

Most migrant parents communicated with their families back home on a weekly basis: 65% of men and 69% of women declared talking to their families at least once a week. The survey does not provide additional information on the means of communication, but other studies have shown the diversity of technologies migrants resort to (phones, internet, Skype, etc.). However, there was a difference in the proportion of parents declaring to have few contacts with their families (less than once a month): less than 3% of women as compared to 9% of men.

Qualitative evidence has also suggested that there is a stronger link between the two practices (sending remittances and contacts) among fathers than mothers: whereas the former feel that they are entitled to stay in touch with their families, once their primary obligation of breadwinner is fulfilled, the relation is not so for women. We also observe this relation among the transnational parents in France:



Figure 2 Relation between frequency of sending remittances and of contacts with family in country of origin



Source: ELIPA, wave 2.

Among men, there was a clear correlation between the sending remittances and being in contact with one's family: only 4% of those who regularly remitted spoke less than once a month with their families, but the proportion was 29% among those who never remitted. For women, no such correlation was observed.

### Regression models

Given these results, it appears that fathers and mothers engage more actively in activities that gender roles prescribe them: sending remittances for fathers and caring at a distance for mothers. However, the different family and socio-economic situations they're in may obscure some of the differences between the two groups. Men and women are in different socio-economic, which will determine their possibilities in carrying out parenting practices at a distance. Also, mothers are in more complex family situations, as they more often reside at destination with their reunited or newly formed families, whereas men are more often in family situations allowing channeling most of their resources to the home country, since their closest family members reside there. Thus, in the last step of our analysis we carry out a logistic regression on the probability of each activity in order to take into account these different factors simultaneously (table 4). The first model is for both sexes, whereas in the second and

third step we carry out the regression separately for men and women. Once we introduce the other characteristics in the equation, the pattern of parenting at a distance slightly changes (table 4).

If we consider regular remittance sending, the effect of the sex disappears once we control for the socio-economic situations of both groups. Indeed, it seems that most differences are due to the fact that more than women are not working of the family and socio-economic factors. This is the only significant variable for both sexes. Contrary to our expectations, the conjugal status doesn't have a clear-cut effect for remittances: being in a new union reinforces remittance sending for men. This is surprising as it could be imagined that being in a new union would pull away the migrants from their families at origin, but this effect may be correlated with other variables (such as a better socio-economic situation or higher earnings). The positive effect of the duration residence shows that the relation doesn't deteriorate with time (migrants continue sending remittances) but may also be linked to a better socio-economic situation among those who have been in France for the longest time.

When we turn to weekly contacts, after controlling for the socio-demographic variables, the effect of sex is still significant and even stronger, despite the fact that women are in a more "disadvantaged" situation, notably due to their more complex family situations. Indeed, cohabiting with other children in the household has a negative effect on frequency of contacts with families at origin and most women are in this situation. The union status also has effects on the contacts with families at origin. Among men, they are significantly higher for those whose spouse is residing at origin. This confirms the fact that the mother's presence and her relation with the father is an important prerequisite for understanding the relation father-child. Among mothers, those in a new union in France also had higher frequency of contacts, although the mechanisms are not clear for this result.

Table 4: Logistic regression coefficients of sending regular remittances and having weekly contact with family in country of origin

| Independent variables  | Sending regular remittances |           |         |          |         |         | Having weekly contacts |           |         |         |         |          |         |
|--|-----------------------------|-----------|---------|----------|---------|---------|------------------------|-----------|---------|---------|---------|----------|---------|
|  | Both sexes                  |           | Men     |          | Women   |         | Both sexes             |           | Men     |         | Women   |          |         |
|  | Coef.                       | P> z      | Coef.   | P> z     | OR      | P> z    | OR                     | P> z      | OR      | P> z    | OR      | P> z     |         |
| <b>Reference category</b>  |                             |           |         |          |         |         |                        |           |         |         |         |          |         |
| Father   | Mother                      | -0.137    | (0.497) |          |         |         |                        | 0.723***  | (0.000) |         |         |          |         |
| Single parent  | New union                   | 0.470*    | (0.050) | 0.774*   | (0.053) | 0.268   | (0.420)                | 0.545*    | (0.018) | 0.0163  | (0.967) | 0.699*   | (0.029) |
|  | Resides with parent         | -0.119    | (0.698) | 0.135    | (0.775) | -0.382  | (0.414)                | 0.448     | (0.111) | -0.0781 | (0.862) | 0.603    | (0.147) |
|  | Spouse abroad               | 0.322     | (0.234) | 0.456    | (0.158) |         |                        | 0.876**   | (0.002) | 0.796*  | (0.019) |          |         |
| Children less than 12 y.o.   | Child 12+ y.o.              | -0.154    | (0.408) | -0.266   | (0.282) | -0.101  | (0.738)                | -0.0750   | (0.685) | -0.0165 | (0.947) | -0.298   | (0.315) |
| 1 child  | 2+ children                 | 0.217     | (0.236) | 0.136    | (0.583) | 0.133   | (0.645)                | -0.238    | (0.191) | -0.109  | (0.664) | -0.295   | (0.293) |
| No cohabiting child  | Yes                         | -0.293    | (0.151) | -0.356   | (0.313) | -0.257  | (0.381)                | -0.520*   | (0.011) | 0.0451  | (0.897) | -0.647*  | (0.033) |
| Residence in France less than 5 years                                      | 5+ years                    | 0.368*    | (0.068) | 0.539*   | (0.049) | 0.214   | (0.503)                | -0.0178   | (0.931) | -0.0230 | (0.933) | -0.0911  | (0.779) |
| Working  | Not working                 | -0.920*** | (0.000) | -0.884** | (0.002) | -0.681* | (0.025)                | -0.516*   | (0.010) | -0.633* | (0.022) | -0.207   | (0.527) |
| Maghreb & Turkey   | Sahel Africa                | -0.00538  | (0.987) | -0.147   | (0.712) | 0.397   | (0.574)                | -1.080**  | (0.005) | -0.807* | (0.083) | -1.905** | (0.009) |
|  | Central Africa              | 0.827*    | (0.010) | 0.704*   | (0.080) | 0.968   | (0.112)                | -1.326*** | (0.000) | -1.166* | (0.011) | -1.512*  | (0.025) |
|  | Other                       | 0.387     | (0.257) | 0.431    | (0.324) | 0.307   | (0.622)                | -0.991*   | (0.010) | -1.216* | (0.012) | -0.705   | (0.318) |
| Not sending regular remittances  | Yes                         |           |         |          |         |         |                        | 0.631**   | (0.002) | 0.874** | (0.001) | 0.364    | (0.289) |
| <b>pseudo R-sq</b>   |                             | 0.066     |         | 0.059    |         | 0.072   |                        | 0.082     |         | 0.098   |         | 0.101    |         |
| <b>N</b>   |                             | 679       |         | 374      |         | 289     |                        | 679       |         | 374     |         | 289      |         |
| <b>p-values in parentheses : * p&lt;0.10, ** p&lt;0.01, *** p&lt;0.001</b> |                             |           |         |          |         |         |                        |           |         |         |         |          |         |

Source: ELIPA, wave 2.

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The regression results confirm that economic success is a precondition for transnational fathers being able to stay in touch with their families: both their employment status and the fact that they remit are significant for men, whereas they have no effect of the women's frequency of contacts.

As has already been mentioned, the socio-economic variables and country of origin appear to be important determinants of these practices as previous literature has already suggested. Being unemployed or inactive has a negative effect on all activities, employment providing economic resources to make phone calls, send money home, take a trip, but also the authority and prestige

allowing a migrant to do so, the primary goal of finding work and contributing financially to the family having been at least partially achieved.

The migrant's origin has one of the most opposing effects on the different activities, while being significant in many cases. Migrants from Maghreb and Turkey were those who were more likely to communicate with their family. This may result from the facilities to get in touch with families (compared to other areas of the world). Migrants from Central Africa have higher chances of regularly sending remittances to their families.

## DISCUSSION

Most previous research on transnational parenthood has used rich ethnographic and qualitative material, often focusing on specific migrant groups, to describe in detail how transnational mothers and fathers continue carrying out their parenting roles while being at a distance from their children. While this paper also focuses on the topic of transnational parenthood and whether it is gender-specific, it has taken a different stand. Using a quantitative dataset of recently arrived migrants in France, we analyze to what extent the different practices most often invoked in the literature (sending remittances and contacts with families at origin) are gender-specific and have different determinants for women and men. It appears that the migratory context does not erase gendered differences; on the contrary, gender-specific mechanisms continue operating and determining parenting behaviors of men and women. Women appear to be disadvantaged due to their lower socio-economic integration, whereas men appear to be "trapped" in the "breadwinner" model to which they need to conform, increasing risks of rupture with family if the model is not achieved.

However this work has limitations that will need to be addressed in the future, albeit sometimes using other datasets. Indeed, despite the fact that the survey covers migrants who are most concerned by transnational family configurations, the actual sample sizes remain quite small making it difficult to analyze the different factors that may also influence the practices. Secondly, the incompatibility of the dataset for studying family relations in the migratory context also calls for further analyses on this topic. Thus, the ambiguous results pertaining to the parents' conjugal situations raise questions on

what are we actually measuring (what are situations of “single” parents who declare sending remittances to their spouses, are some spouses identified as new unions actually the parents of some of the children...). Thirdly, the families are observed in one point in time and their situations will be evolving greatly in the coming years: migrants can hope to improve their socio-economic conditions, especially women, thus giving them more resources to engage in different practices; other families may reunite in the coming years; for others still, the continuation of family life at a distance may lead to the deterioration of family relations. The longitudinal nature of the dataset will allow seeing how these practices of families at a distance will change with time and whether gender-specific patterns will prevail or disappear.

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