

Intergenerational narratives of home and migration

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Talk argues

Historical and policy
shifts change
notions of
generational
belonging

Migration pushes
agency, belonging and
transformation by
shaping vantage point
of the world

Intersectionality is
central to
differentiating
historical generations

- Those who “share the same year of birth, are endowed to the extent with a common location in the historical dimension of the social process” (Mannheim, 1952: 290).
- Brannen Idea of generation is central but complex
- Andrews (2002 etc.) Consciousness of belonging to a generation is made visible through narratives.
- Understanding Mannheim's ‘generational units’, who respond similarly to the world requires thinking migration—one of the key issues in the (contemporary) world.

Naftali, O. (2014) 'The Filial Child Revisited: Tradition holds its ground in modern Shanghai'

“When I was young, children had to wait until the adults sat at the table before they could even touch their chopsticks!” Ms Xu, a 55-year-old retiree and a volunteer at a local parents’ school, told me. “In the past, we Chinese paid great attention to matters of seniority and propriety.... We used to respect our parents and teachers. Now it’s all different. Why, these days, people treat children as if they were adults!”

Implications of the One Child policy for filial piety

- Shift from instrumental views of children to view of (boys) as precious emotional assets - 'little emperors'/'little suns' (Goh, 2011).
- 'Filial piety' (xiao) sedimented into policies and practices in complex & contradictory ways.
- Major changes in intergenerational family dynamics – children as focus of 4-2-1 hopes (Fong, 2004; Goh, 2011).
- Trends more apparent in urban than rural childhoods (Han et al., 2014; Naftali, 2009; Zhang and Fuligni, 2006).
- Material inequalities in cities (Fong, 2004).

Intergenerational transmission consists of complex processes

- Can be reciprocal.
- Sometimes consciously intended and taken up, sometimes resisted and often implicit.
- Temporality is central –e.g. Hepner's (2015) 'Generation nationalism' and 'generation asylum' for Eritrean's
- Need not be only between adjacent generations (e.g. Bjerrum Nielsen and Rudberg, 2000; Brannen and Nilsen, 2006).
- Requires more than comparison of similarities and differences in personal capacities and social resources between parent generation and children when they come of age.

Narrative is central to the experience, potential and agency of migration

- Narrative accounts facilitate the analysis of subjective ideas about what mattered to people in their histories
- Simultaneously anchor each person to the contemporary and to shared experiences in earlier times with parents and other family members and to previous historical periods (Andrews et al., 2013).
- Part of the ongoing narrative process of making sense of the past in relation to the present and the future (Riessman, 2008).
- Narrative accounts call attention to the ways in which the subject of the there and then coincides with, as well as being separate from, the teller in the here and now.
- Similarities and differences between the parental generation and the next are points of reference.
- Necessarily intersectional—Woodman and Wyn (2015) class, gender age

Constituting different generational unit from peers and fragmentation from parents

Angela: ...I can see I think an image of myself sort of wafting through, in (area in west London), on (--) Road, going to David Gregg's bakery for bread on a Saturday morning and feeling very honoured that I was even asked to go to the shops cos wasn't really asked to do nice things like that, whereas it was about house work and that sort of thing and er, and then of course there was school and that was difficult ...I didn't understand the system and there was no support around that and the person I came to live with, my mother, she didn't understand, or didn't think that were going to be any issues with, I was quite alone and I was put in the bottom stream as well ... you've come in to that and you've got that to deal with it and it can be very vicious you know name calling, of course you're not speaking English properly so you're backwards and stupid and that sort of thing ... It's making me cry. (laugh). I think the year I came in, I came to the third year, or year 9

...

Migration as part of the consciousness of generations and cultural patterns

Angela: Mainly grandmothers brought up grandchildren, there's a whole army of them, of us, and the intention is that the parent will work, go abroad work and send money for your keep and to come and probably make house improvement etc, and at some point in the future they would, obviously become, more financially secure and be able to send for you to join the family.

- Intersectional understanding of the normative: nation, generation, migration, class and gender.

Psychosocial and metonymic signifiers of intersectional generations and future vision

HERMIONE: Yeah, they had another name for me, they used to call me Baby..., and I think my mother, my own mother resented that, she felt they treated me like a baby and everything else, yeah, because they called me that (long pause). So yeah it was great and then I came to England and it was a horrible place [laughs]! Cause when I was growing up in Jamaica I was the youngest and when I arrived in England to meet my brothers and sisters I was the eldest. And there was so much expectations, it was awful, I hated it and I wanted to go back home. And this picture that they drawn for me that I had in my head, a vision of England with its streets of gold, gleaming, everything lovely. I came in the December, it was cold, it was awful it was dark, it was coal fires chimneys, toilet was outside, it was awful, awful it was. ... I thought I was better off out there. Awful it was. I remember how it used to be with shared rented room and all this type of thing, 'No dogs, no blacks no' all this kind of thing. I thought oh god nobody's ever said that, nobody has wrote that, if I told my grandmother I thought there's no way she would ever have let me come over here to this dump. It was awful! You don't know how awful it was. And when I arrived I had a sister and three brothers and they were like little terrors!

Narrative Meaning Making processes

- Constructing migration as negatively disjunctive turning points.
- Metonymic disjunction between the Caribbean and the UK.
- Viewing intergenerational transmission as from grandparents not parents.
- Well-worn expressions narratively reformulated from adult vantage point.
- Retrospectively capturing distress and narratively constructing a different future for herself.
- Locating the past as a turning point also locates her in generation.

Narratives of space, restriction & future aspirations

DAVINA: But I missed my grandmother you know, and because it was so dull and so grey and so different to Jamaica – the quality of light was something that I really, and even to today I have problems with the quality of light in this country, because Jamaican sunshine is a really bright, the light is really bright, whereas to get used to this kind of grey, took a while to get used to it. The weather then affected the way that you felt, you know what I mean? ...And also, where I lived the houses were like spaced out, you know you weren't kind of – making a noise you had to shh shhh shhh, be quiet you might disturb the neighbours, wasn't a concept that we were used to. You know you could run around and make as much noise as you wanted to without kind of upsetting anyone, so [coughs]... excuse me, it felt quite restrictive.... And so it was (pause). You felt quite kind of (pause) ummm (pause) Confined, ummhum, you didn't have your own space. Whereas in Jamaica, although we shared rooms, the room wasn't part of the world, if you know what I mean, it was somewhere you slept ... and my mother, like a lot of Caribbean women, had one room that was kept for the visitors, umm and I was quite determined that when I bought my own home, we would never have such a room, because it's such a waste of space.

Generational consciousness formed from disjunction and narrative construction of identities

- The future she wants to make is antithetical to her mother's practices.
- Conscious generational shift— home and serial migration.
- Experience of migration is encapsulated in people –grandmother she loves.
- Inextricable interlinking of psychological experiences and social circumstances.

Intergenerational intersectional and narrative

- Haavind (2009) Marked variation in children's developmental trajectories produced through agentic transformations of the social opportunities available to them in particular cultural pathways.
- Intergenerational is central to this and so is intergenerational history (Davoine and Gaudilliere, 200; Freeman, 2010; Walkerdine et al. 2015).
- Serial migration shaped narrative constructions of the world.
- Such constructions are intersectional and so differentiate generational units from non-migrant members and other forms as well as what they see as possible.

Szewczyk, Aga (2015) 'European Generation of Migration': Change and agency in the post-2004 Polish graduates' migratory experience. *Geoforum*, 60, 153-162.

"Reflecting on the fact that 'a specific migration exists as a part of our past, our present and our future' (Halfacree and Boyle, 1993: 337), this paper highlights that socio-political change throughout young people's formative years can both: 'create' a socio-generational effect, and facilitate individualisation and human agency, which is evident in Polish post-2004 graduate migration. This is addressed by providing two key points.

"First, the paper highlights that Polish graduates' generational experience of socio-political and economic transformation that proceeded in Poland during their life span, **shaped graduates' vantage point of the world and belonging to generational units**. The paper distinguishes two generational units among the interviewed, 'Generation of Changes', and 'European Generation of Opportunities and Migration', with a mutual component that is 'change'."

Conclusion

- How the characteristics, values and resources of the parent generation are experienced as opportunities or constraints from the vantage point of their children.
- Retrospective accounts allow insights into the ways in which events and feelings may be reconsidered over time.
- Intergenerational transmission does not have fixed effects, but are part of an ongoing process of making sense of 'roots' and 'routes'.
- Narrative accounts facilitate the analysis of subjective ideas about what mattered to people in their histories
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