The Politics of Relocation and the Negotiation of Family Relationships across Transnational Space

Janet Muthoni Muthuki

Abstract

Expeditious global changes such as urbanisation, international migration, increasing educational opportunities and socio-economic change have led to shifts in contemporary family relationships. As a result of migration, family members are increasingly finding themselves in situations where they have to conduct relationships across different countries. These kinds of transnational relationships entail negotiating communication between spouses, the distribution of household tasks and living arrangements among others. The impact of transnational migration on family relationships and intimate relationships is however often underplayed and even overlooked. Though some researchers are committed to exploring the changing dynamics within transnational families, they have not paid attention to the consideration that transnational family ties cannot function across different worlds without the recognition of family members in different countries. The examination of the complex processes whereby family relationships are cultivated and negotiated transnationally is therefore crucial. Through the use of in-depth interviews, this study analyses how foreign African students residing in KwaZulu-Natal navigate the complex process of renegotiating family relationships across transnational space. It also examines the changing gender relations and the degree of autonomy, empowerment and/or disempowerment these students experience as they engage processes of transforming the meanings of family relationships across space and time.

Keywords: Transnational space, family relationships, gender relations, gender identities, foreign African students

Janet Muthoni Muthuki

Introduction/ Background of Article

The early nineties have seen a change in migration studies from migrants' assimilation or integration into host societies to maintaining multi-stranded links between two or more countries. This transnational perspective shifts the analytical focus from country of origin and country of destination to mobilities involved in sustaining cross-border livelihoods (Sørensen & Olwig 2002). Initially, the transnational paradigm focused on the movement of commodities and capital, communication and transport of people and people's movements across borders with limited focus being given to family dynamics (Bryceson & Vuorela 2002). Likewise within diaspora studies, the focus was mainly on dispersed communities (see Brah 1998; Clifford 1994; and Cohen 1997) and their relationship with the nation-state. It is only within the field of gender and migration studies that family relations have emerged as a subject of critical enquiry.

The concept of family is highly contested in anthropological studies and is seen as suggesting western notions of nuclear, extended or patriarchal ties that do not take into consideration diverse forms of family structures in different cultures (Harrell 1997). Within social theory, the concept of family usually denotes a domestic group comprising of individuals related to one another by blood, sexual mating or legal ties. Feminist theory has conceptualised the family as a gendered unit of reproduction and cultural transmission or a space for gendered relations (see Anthias 2000). In migration research the identification of the family with the domestic group has given rise to notions of family disintegration as a result of family separation due to migration as well as negative consequences as a result of migrant women leaving their children and husbands behind (Hochschild 2003).

Pribilsky (2004) however argues that the focus on disorganised households or family relations misses out the nuances surrounding men's and women' mobility, their reactions to it and the various ways in which migration challenges, reconfigures and transforms family relationships in transnational space. Levitt and Schiller (2004) in rethinking migration approach transnational family life as a 'socio-economic strategic unit' for whom familial connections are 'worked and reworked over time and space'. This is in alignment with Bryceson and Vuorela (2002:3) who define transnational families as, 'families that live some or most of the time

separated from each other but yet hold together and create a feeling collective welfare and unity'. These families maintain transborder kinship relations that span over two or more states. Grillo and Mazzucato (2008) advance that there are three main areas in which kinship and family relations have been directly affected by transnational migration namely: the separation of family members, gender relations and the role of non-kin relationships.

Research on transnational families however remains limited with few studies focusing on areas such as transnational partnering (Pribilsky 2004), transnational motherhood (Hondagneu-Sotello & Avila 1997) and transnational childhood (Parreñas 2005). These studies are interested in the gendered aspects of transnational family life and transnational parenting. The focus of these studies has however been on transnational families especially in the European context with limited attention being given to transnational African families. This paper aims to contribute to the limited research by examining ways in which migrants of African origin are articulating family relationships as a result of migrating to South Africa. With the opening up of South Africa to the outside world as a democratic country in 1994, there has been a steady increase in the number of international students seeking access to its higher educational institutions. Recent data indicate that over two thirds of international students at South African universities originate from the African continent (Rouhani 2002). The findings of the paper are based on a qualitative study which sought to examine the discursive and social practices through which the foreign students of African origin come to perceive South African gender norms and how these new gender norms either challenged or supported their own gender norms. Contesting gender roles and relations in transnational families come under scrutiny when people leave their home country and move to a different country which may have a different gender regime (see König & de Regt 2010; and Muthuki 2010).

In conducting in-depth interviews over a period of one year from March 2008 to March 2009, I used open-ended questions to enable the students to reflect on and give detailed accounts and perceptions of the myriad contradictions and complexities of their experiences of renegotiating their family relations across transnational space. The study sample comprised of twenty two foreign African students (both men and women) hailing from Kenya, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda, Cameroon, the

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Liberia. The study employed a geographical scales concept which captures the understanding that gender operates on a multiple spatial, social and cultural scales such as the family and gender hegemonies *inter alia* across transnational spaces. It is within the context of these scales that gender ideologies are either reaffirmed, reconfigured or both. This concept enabled me to examine how gender identities and consequently family relations are constituted in various geopolitical and social contexts.

This paper examines the changes produced by migration on gender relations in the family structure by examining the role of information communication technologies in transnational family relationships; the impact of the transnational space on gender role renegotiation in the areas of sexual division of labour; wife/husband relationship and parenthood.

Virtual Family Relations

Transnational families though living in different countries converge in one social space by emotional and financial ties and they stay in touch with one another through the use of information communication technology and by occasional physical movement between sending and receiving societies. Information communication technologies which were previously only available to the rich elite have now become more accessible enabling migrants to maintain transnational ties with their families across borders. These technologies include social media such as *Facebook, Twitter, LinkeldIn, You-tube* as well as audio communication tools such as *Skype*. Much research has however focused on the potential negative impact of the modern technologies on the 'normalcy' of a healthy family rather than the benefits of these technologies in enabling transnational families to maintain connections and negotiate barriers posed by distance and time. This phenomenon can be observed in the cases of Maina, a forty five year old Kenyan man and Pauline a thirty five year old Tanzania woman both of whom are doctoral students in the faculty of Humanities.

Maina highlights the role of communication technology in conducting the relationship with his family transnationally. He recalls that when his father went abroad in the seventies they had to wait for weeks before they could receive any mail from him. In his case however, he can

communicate with his family daily on mundane as well as key issues via e-mail, cell phone and skype. Through these forms of communication technology Maina coordinates his business interests with his wife back in Kenya while he is in South Africa. He has also entrusted his mother with some of the family businesses. As a result of this Maina expresses that borders are artificial and that the only thing absent in his family set up is physical contact. He further says that his family probably appreciates him more because they do not see him often. Maina appears to concur with researchers such as Baldassar (2008), Castro and Gonzalez (2009), and Vertovec (2004) who advance that information communication technologies can connect family members in a way that facilitates virtual closeness.

Pauline also appears to concur with this notion by expressing that communication with her husband who is currently working in Sudan has improved greatly. She says that her husband was not open while they were living together in the same space in Tanzania and would only tell her what he felt was necessary for her to know while keeping some personal information to himself. For instance Pauline's husband would not disclose to her his financial status as well his concerns about his career. He felt that it was not proper for a husband to share such information with his wife. This was frustrating to Pauline who preferred an open style of communication. Pauline's husband displays what Tannen (1990) characterises as 'report talk' associated with 'public' speech contexts, a masculine communication style. This is in contrast with 'rapport talk' which is associated with 'private' speech contexts a feminine communication style which Pauline seems to resonate with. Being in different countries and conducting their relationship transnationally had however served to change their communication dynamic. Pauline advanced that her husband, who is in Sudan while she is in South Africa, had become more open and expressive communicating with her almost daily via *Skype* and *Facebook.* This mode of communication extends to their ten year old daughter who lives with their relatives in Tanzania.

From these examples it appears that information communication technologies can be used to connect thus challenging the notion that constant physical presence is the only way one can maintain family relations. Whereas these technologies do not replace face to face interactions, they provide new ways of maintaining family relations transcending geographical proximity and hence creating 'virtual co presence' (see Horst & Miller 2006) where the

real and virtual are integrated in the lives of these families. Of great significance however is the kind of impact that this spatial arrangement has on gender role renegotiation within the transnational family.

Gender Dynamics in Transnational Spousal Relations

The transnational space is a site which provides migrants with opportunities for exploring and redefining their ideas, perceptions and understanding of gender roles and expectations. Gender roles refer to behaviours, expectations and role sets defined by society as masculine or feminine. These behaviours consist of personality aspects such as aggressiveness and gentleness and social roles such as domestic roles, conjugal roles and parenting roles (Pleck 1981). Sociocultural norms that prescribe what men and women should or should not do are inculcated through the process of socialisation. Within the transnational space, circumstances of necessity and opportunity may force a shift of traditional gender roles for immigrants. The reorientation as a result of spatially fractured family arrangements impacts on the division of labour within the household, the husband-wife relationship and the parent- child relationship.

As a result of migration some men migrants assume some traditional gender roles such as cooking while women take over tasks previously performed by their husbands. This kind of shift highlights the gendered nature of work that might have otherwise been considered natural. This can be observed in the case of Phillip a thirty four year old man in his final year of his doctoral degree in Culture and Media studies whose wife remains in Zimbabwe. Phillip advances that since coming to South Africa he has changed his view on gender roles and he has embraced some female traditional gender roles. For example, in South Africa he has learnt how to cook a task which he never used to perform in Zimbabwe and one that men from his community are discouraged from carrying out. However after interacting with various people from diverse cultures in South Africa and observing how they handled food, Phillip said that he has become a very good cook and he even surprised his wife with his culinary skills when he visited his home in Zimbabwe. He has also further discouraged his wife from playing the subservient role of serving food to guests and instituted the practice of guests serving themselves while visiting his family. Phillip

however said that women should not abdicate the cooking role by saying that gender equality did not mean that women should not cook but that men must also learn how to cook. This position was a reaction to the pervasive perception that embracing gender equality implied that women 'abdicate' their designated gender role of cooking.

The process of negotiating their relationship transnationally has also led to Phillip's wife taking over the roles that he used to perform while he was in Zimbabwe. Prior to his coming he would consult his wife on major family decisions but would make the final decision himself. Since moving to South Africa he entrusts his wife with decision-making and has realised that she executes tasks previously assigned to him them more effectively in comparison to him. For this reason he said he had come to respect her much more and now regards her as an equal and in some cases superior to him. This change of attitude was encapsulated in the following relevant statement:

> I have changed in the way I view gender roles because my coming here (South Africa) made my wife take over the roles I used to play such as taking care of my parents and other roles 100%. We could consult but I made a choice to let her take control and I have come to see that she has a lot of potential. It is not that I thought that she could not do it but I have come to see that she has certain qualities. So in a sense my view of women has changed. As I was growing up my father used to tell me that women are more intelligent than men and coming here has proven that to be true. My wife as so much potential, for example when I go home I find that she has initiated some projects and I just let her continue with them without my interference because she can do it better than me. Sometimes the workers come to ask me for something and I tell them to go ask my wife and they do not understand why. I would say that we now treat each other as equals. It is not that I never used to treat her like an equal but I used to find myself more equal than her. We are now treating each other like colleagues; we consult on a lot of issues. Sometimes she takes a decision without consulting me for example this time I went home and found out that she had decided to make a granary without asking me whereas if I was there she would have consulted me or listened to me if I told her that we should not

> construct it. I however told her specifically not to ask me and when she would sometimes ask me and I would not answer. She then has to make the decisions and hence I respect her more (Phillip Zimbabwe).

Phillip continues to say that his wife currently manages all their resources including paying the farm workers and sending him money on a monthly basis. The fact that he trusts his wife with the family resources including his salary surprises many men in his community who perceive him as having abandoned traditional gender roles as a result of becoming too 'westernised' on account of his education and coming to South Africa. His community members further view him as having allowed himself to be dominated by his wife since he now spends time in the kitchen with his wife and cooks with her whenever he is in Zimbabwe. Phillip however explained that he would not relent on his newly acquired perspective on gender roles.

Interestingly, whereas Philip felt that the transnational space had given his wife room to be involved in management of family resources, his wife while on a visit to South Africa expressed that he had 'absconded' family responsibilities especially raising the children. It then appears that while Phillip respects his wife's abilities more and she on her part enjoys more autonomy, the transnational negotiation has left her with the greater responsibility of raising their children. While women may be celebrated for effectively managing households, it raises the question as to whether this is empowering or it is a form of re-constituted subordination. It is significant to note that Phillip's wife had to postpone furthering her education so that she could take care of the children while Phillip pursued his doctoral studies in another country.

Jasper a thirty nine year old man from Botswana taking his Masters in Music expressed that though the transnational space had brought about a shift in the gender role dynamic in his family the change was temporary unlike in Phillip's case. Within the transnational space, Jimmy has also found himself having to cook a task he did not have to perform while back home in Botswana. Upon returning home however, Jasper intended to revert to traditional gender roles as elucidated below:

> Actually it is not a question of changing because if you change it

means forever but what I have done is to alter my personality and behavior to suit the situation while I am here. Back home as a man I do not have to cook because according to my culture that is the women's department but here I find myself cooking washing for myself. When I go home I adjust back to the situation because there are some gender role expectations that I am expected to fulfill. It will be funny for the wife to see me taking over her roles. Okay, these days we know that there are some changes but you can only assist when you are asked and when it is necessary but you cannot take over the women's department. I have to be careful and that is why I say I have not changed but I have adjusted to the situation to survive so to speak (Jasper, Botswana).

Jasper continued to hold onto traditional gender roles and engaged in what I would call *situational transformation* in order to negotiate his current circumstances without the intention of changing completely. In so doing, Jasper displays the dialectic between maintaining traditional gender roles and addressing necessity. Even while at home in Botswana, Jasper invokes culture and tradition to legitimise his minimal support of his wife in household chores since culturally, household chores are perceived to be a woman's responsibility and he could only assist his wife but not 'take over her role'. Interestingly, Japser advances that men and women are the same in terms of thinking and performance in their academic pursuits and should be accorded equal opportunities in terms of education. At the household level however, he maintains that gender difference should be reinforced because traditional gender roles bring a semblance of order in the household.

According to Jasper ambiguity in terms of gender roles or reconstructing gender roles would lead to chaos in society. Even though at some point Jasper acknowledges the unjust dual work role for women, that is at the work place and at home, his greatest concern is the loss of power on men's part if gender roles are to be re-structured. Jasper is clearly opposed to restructuring of gender roles which he construes as loss of power for men. Men such as Jasper are opposed to gender equality because for them it implies the loss of the patriarchal dividend which Connell (2002) defines as the benefit to men as group from maintaining an unequal gender order. This benefit includes economic advantage, prestige, authority and access to

institutional power among others. The patriarchal dividend is universally distributed among men though this distribution is not uniform but is mediated by economic class, social status, race, ethnicity, sexuality and age.

Women migrants also gave accounts depicting the dialectic between maintaining traditional gender roles based on their culture and modern roles occasioned by their western education. Mariam a forty four year old lecturer at the University of Dar es Salaam pursuing her doctorate in History highlighted that her coming to South Africa had provided her with an opportunity to inspire other women to fund their own education rather than rely on government support. Mariam had accumulated some savings and with additional financial assistance from her husband she was able to fund her studies. She asserted that women should aspire to advance in their studies since they were capable of performing much better than men.

> Most of the women in Zanzibar for a long time did not think that it is okay to pay for their own studies. They think the work of educating them belongs to the government but when they saw me going to pay for myself at the university level they asked themselves, 'Why not pay for myself?' They are confident of themselves now and as I said before our island is very small and a lot of people know that I am paying for myself. I think for me I can say that women can do as much or much better than men. So women should continue with their studies. What can be helpful for a family woman it can help if they plan together and even apply to go and study together (Mariam, Tanzania).

Though Mariam expresses that the best case scenario is for spouses make plans for study migration together, she did not hesitate to leave her husband and four children in Tanzania while she pursued her doctoral studies in South Africa. On negotiating between her educational achievements and traditional gender roles, Mariam maintained that upon her return to Tanzania she would still carry out her traditionally prescribed gender roles while at home. While Mariam in line with her belief that women should pursue education to the highest level has pursued her doctoral studies, she is quick to assert that education has not changed her and that she still carries out her traditionally

prescribed gender roles while at home. Ngcongo (1993) advances that African women experience a dilemma as a result of the cultural upbringing of an ideal of a 'good' African woman who is subservient to male authority and is a home maker versus being an ambitious, independent career woman as a result of western education.

The perception of educated women as strong-headed and independent minded and the possible consequences of being alienated in a patriarchal society maybe a contributing factor to Mariam's assertion that education has not changed her much. Though Mariam upholds traditional gender roles, in practice she knows that she cannot meet the requirements of a demanding career and of homemaking at the same time and so she is willing to delegate the latter to paid help. Mariam is also being strategic in not depicting herself as not having changed as a result of her education because in this way she can be able to interact with her research participants in the rural areas for purposes of data collection. Mariam engages in traditional gender roles in a way to portray herself in positive light with the people in her community but she does not let this interfere with her career aspirations.

Transnational Parenting

According to Pribilsky (2004), it is not only relations between husband and wife that change when negotiated transnationally but parental relationships to children are also altered. Transnational parenting is however gendered in the sense that society's treatment of transnational mothers and fathers varies to a large extent. As Pribilsky (2004) points out, since fathers are expected to be absent, their migration abroad is in many ways a continuation of their absentee role. The independent migration of women in pursuit of further studies however goes against the norm of the present mother, domesticity and passivity. The following narrations show the experiences faced by both men and women in negotiation their parental roles transnationally.

Jasper, whose views as earlier mentioned has changed out of necessity rather than actual transformation, expressed that his role as a decision maker and father to his son had been adversely affected. This in turn affected his son's development. Jasper was concerned that his son would not grow up in the way he wanted while he was away and he further expressed

doubt that his wife would raise him properly. Jasper said that though he would phone his wife in Botswana and delegate his decision making role to her, he preferred to be there in person to make decisions especially those one's that concerned his son. Unlike Phillip who had grown to trust his wife's capabilities, Jasper felt that his wife could not cope with the decision-making and childcare responsibilities in his absence.

Maina on the other hand asserted that his wife carried out the role of a disciplinarian and was even more of one than Maina since she was the one who spent more time with the children. This is despite the fact that Maina had undergone circumcision, a traditional rite of passage to adulthood, and was appointed a junior elder in his *Kikuyu* community which served to affirm his position as the head of his family. As the family head he was supposed to be the disciplinarian but the transnational negotiations had led to his wife carrying out that responsibility. While Maina drew from his ethnic identity in terms of affirming his masculinity in the transnational space he also in some cases presented himself as transcending traditional gender roles within the same space. Maina consequently presented himself as a bearer of a hybrid identity of oppositional discourses of modernity and tradition.

Purity a forty five year old student from Malawi and currently pursuing her Masters in nursing opined that as a result of having a first degree she was empowered enough as a woman to make the decision to come to South Africa. She had previously accompanied her husband to the United Kingdom where he had gone to pursue his Masters degree. She now felt that it was her husband's turn to offer her support in terms of her pursuit for further education. Purity also expressed that as an empowered woman she could not just depend on her husband but she needed to be able to fend for her family incase anything happened to her husband. With a higher level of education, she felt that she could be able to get well paid employment and take better care of her family. Dei (1994) and Pellow (1997) attest to the fact that having access to money and complete control over it is very important because it contributes to a woman's empowerment. Education is therefore seen as a cornerstone of women's empowerment because it enables them to respond to opportunities, to challenge their traditional roles and to change their lives. This educational empowerment and hence economic empowerment extends the role of a mother from just being a nurturer to being a provider previously considered a man's responsibility.

On conducting her family relationship transnationally, Purity highlighted that though the transnational space had brought about reversal of roles with her husband being the children's caregiver while she pursued further education, she expressed that she felt part of the home when her husband consulted her on the phone concerning the children's medication. It is significant to note that she highlighted that her husband consulted her on matters to do with children health while she did not mention other family issues they may have consulted on. It was possibly her way of affirming her identity as a mother even though she was in another country and away from her children. The fact that she did so transnationally however denoted a different kind of mothering known as *transnational mothering*.

Sylvia a thirty two year old woman from Uganda who came to South Africa to pursue her doctorate in Community development explained that her relationship with her husband had fallen apart though she did not attribute this to her coming to South Africa. There had been indications that it would happen even before she came to South Africa. It appears that her partner may not have been as supportive of her as she was of him in terms of their individual career aspirations. She first came to pursue her doctoral studies while she was eight months pregnant with her second child leaving her first born and husband in Uganda. She had to exercise great resolve in holding on to her decision to come to South Africa despite discouragement from friends and some family members. She however expressed that her mind was resolute with or without her husband's support. Sylvia asserted that the transnational space has enabled her to detach from the various roles she played back home as a wife and a mother. She described her life in Uganda in the following manner:

> At home things become roller coaster, just spinning, you have children, and you have a man, a job and other community obligations. You are like a spinning machine, you never stop to think about your life but when you step out of that space you are like wow. I want to be my person apart from a mother and a wife then this fulfillment can filter into other areas of my life. Of course this takes a lot of time away from my children but it has been good for me. A stressed mother near children is not good. I do not want to look at my child and say 'If only I did not have you I would have achieved so

much'. I would like to say 'Yes I had you but look at what I have achieved'. My child should not have a reason not to achieve because I have achieved even after having them' (Sylvia, Uganda).

Coming to South Africa had given Sylvia space to disengage from familial obligations and to focus on her own career and the direction she would like her life to take. She expressed that though this was selfish she had decided to live her life on her own terms and not according to other people's expectations. Other people such as members of her community and her relatives would then have to accept her on her own terms and not the other way round. Though Sylvia described her decision as selfish, a quality contrary to the traditional definition of a good mother which emphasises self-sacrifice, she does not detach herself from her role as a mother. She expresses that being selfish is beneficial in the sense that her children would be proud to have a mother who had attained her level of education as a role model. Sylvia like Purity also depicts a kind of *transnational mothering*.

From the above, the transnational students in negotiating between challenging and reinforcing existing gender relations ended up acquiring new forms of gendered identities. Ojong (2005) notes that the freedom of constructing new identities is made possible by the less rigidly defined social and cultural conditions these students encounter in post- apartheid South Africa. From the findings of the study it can be observed that as the foreign African students encounter multiple levels and forms of social and cultural contradictions which act to challenge, shape and transform their ideas, thoughts and sense of self they end up brokering new gender identities. Gender identity and relations are then framed as a social and cultural constructions which are negotiated through social behaviour and performance (see Butler 2001, Freeman and McElhinny 2001). The struggle and tension between challenging existing notions of gender on the one hand and the reinforcing the same on the other hand ended up enabling the transnational foreign African student to acquire the mark of cultural hybridity thus brokering new gender identities. Gender identity then as opposed to being a fixed identity can be observed to be a fluid and contextualised process of 'unfolding' and constant 'reconstitution' (Hall 1996).

Conclusion

This paper set out to interrogate the politics of relocation on conducting family across transnational space and the impact on gender relations and identities by examining how foreign students of African origin were interpreting and re defining their gender roles and expectations in a new cultural space. The paper examined the renegotiation at various levels namely; communication, household division of labour, spousal relations and parenting. This paper has also examined the possibilities and constraints occasioned by these negotiations.

By the using information communication technologies, these transnational families demonstrated new ways of doing family without actually being physically present but by being virtually present. This kind of negotiation served to alter a gendered communication dynamic for instance with men who may have been previously closed in communication style opening up to their partners so as to accommodate the temporal spatial arrangement. The transnational space provided an opportunity for both men and women to traverse gender roles with men ending up performing traditional female gender roles such as cooking and childcare while women's role in decision–making home became much more valued in some cases. The above mentioned experiences illustrate cases in which traditional gender roles have somewhat been reconfigured as a result of conducting family relationships within the transnational space.

Though the foreign African women students in this study still upheld some traditional notions of gender roles, the fact that these women have migrated to South Africa in pursuit of education autonomously and were conducting family relationships across transnational space indicated that they were traversing gender roles and creating new ways of doing gender. For instance the concept of mothering had undergone considerable change in the context of transnationalism where women could mother across transnational space creating a type of *transnational mothering*. Westwood and Phizackelea (2000) advance that the subjective mark of a transnational would be cultural hybridity that is the ways in which transnationals challenge the notion of a fixed identity. From the narrations of these women, one can observe a hybrid of gender identities in one person such as a *mother, a home maker, a leader, a professional, risk taker and independent minded*.

Connell (2002) contends that a great majority of people combine

both masculine and feminine characteristics in varying blends rather than being all one or another. Thorne (1993) in resonance observes that gender difference is situational and that it is created in some situations and ignored or over ridden in others. As can be observed in the foreign African migrant students' gender difference was least emphasised in the area of educational attainment with both men and women expressing that women were as intelligent as men and were as capable as men if not more capable. Connell (2002) further advances that men and women display similar traits but that it is not an individual decision, it is socially regulated. In this study, it is at the household level where gender difference was emphasised though the transnational negotiations provided a space for the reconfiguring of gender roles and relations.

References

Anthias, Floya 2000. Metaphors of Home: Gendering New Migrations to Southern Europe. In Anthias, Floya & Gabriella Lazaridis (eds): *Gender and Migration in Southern Europe: Women on the Move.* Oxford: Berg Publishers.

Baldassar, Loretta 2008. Missing Kin and Longing to be Together: Emotions and the Construction of Co-presence in Transnational Relationships. *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 29, 3: 247 - 266.

Brah, Avta 1998. *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*. London: Routledge.

Bryceson, Deborah & Ulla Vuorela 2002. Transnational Families in the Twenty-first Century. In Bryceson, Deborah Ulla Vuorela (eds): *The Transnational Family: New European Frontiers and Global Networks.* Oxford: Berg Publishers.

Butler, Judith 2001. Imitation and Gender Insubordination. In Seidman, Steven & Jeffery C Alexander (eds): *The New Social Theory Reader.* New York: Routledge.

Castro, Luis & Victor Gonzalez 2009. Hometown Websites: Continuous Maintenance of Cross Border Connections. Paper presented at the Fourth International Conference on Communities and Technologies, University Park, MD.

Clifford, James 1994. Diasporas. *Cultural Anthropology* 9,3: 302 - 338.

Cohen, Robin 1997. *Global Diasporas: An Introduction.* Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Connell, Robert 2002. *Gender.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Dei, George 1994. The Women of a Ghanaian Village: A Study of Social Change. *African Studies Review* 37, 2: 121 - 146.

Freeman, Rebecca & Bonnie McElhinny. 2001. Language and Gender. In Sandra, Lee McKay & Nancy Hornberger (eds): *Sociolinguistics and Language Teaching.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Grillo, Ralph & Mazzucato Valentina 2008. Africa <> Europe: A Double Engagement. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 34,2: 175 - 198.

Hall, Stuart 1996. Introduction: Who Needs 'Identity'? In Hall, Stuart & Paul du Gay (eds): *Questions of Cultural identity*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Harrell, Stevan 1997. *Human Families: Social Change in a Global Perspective.* Oxford: Westview Press.

Hondagneu-Sotello, Pierrette & Ernestine Avila 1997. I'm here, but I'm there: The Meanings of Latina Transnational Motherhood. *Gender and Society* 11, 5: 548 - 571.

Hochschild, Arlie Russel 2000. Global Care Chains and Emotional Surplus Value. In Giddens, Anthony & Will Hutton (eds): *On the Edge: Globalisation in the New Millennium*. London: Sage Publications.

Horst, Heather & Daniel Miller 2006. *The Cellphone: An Anthropology of Communication.* Oxford: Berg Publishers.

König, Reinhilde Sotiria & Martina de Regt 2010. Family Dynamics in Transnational African Migration to Europe: An Introduction. *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal* 3,1: 1 - 15. Available at: http:// www.tandfonline.com/loi/rabd20.

Levitt, Peggy & Glick Schiller 2004. Conceptualising Simultaneity: A Transnational Social Field Perspective on Society. *International Migration Review* 38: 102 - 139.

Muthuki, Janet Muthoni 2010. *Renegotiation of Gender Identities in Transnational Spaces: The Case of Foreign Students of African Origin at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban South Africa*. Saarbrücken: Lambert Academic Publishing.

Ngcongo, Rejoice. 1993. 'Power, Culture and the African Woman'. *Agenda* 19:5-10.

Ojong, Vivian Besem 2005. *Entrepreneurship and Identity among a Group of Ghanaian Women in Durban, South Africa.* Saarbrücken: Lambert Academic Publishing.

Parreñas, Rhacel Salazar. 2005. *Children of Globalization. Transnational Families and Gendered Woes.* Quezon City: Ateneo De Manila University Press.

Pellow, Deborah 1997. *Women in Accra: Options for Autonomy*. Michigan: Reference Publishing.

Pleck, Joseph 1981. *The Myth of Masculinity*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.

Pribilsky, Jason 2004. Aprendemos a Convivir: Conjugal Relations, Co-parenting and Family Life among Ecuadorian Transnational Migrants in New York City and the Ecuadorian Andes. *Global Networks* 4, 3: 313 - 334.

Rouhani, S 2002. African Student mobility to South African Universities. Paper presented at the CODESRIA International Symposium on African Universities in the 21st century on April 25-27, 2002 in Dakar, Senegal.

Sørensen, Ninna Nyberg & Karen Fog Olwig 2002. *Work and Migration: Life and Livelihoods in a Globalising World.* London: Routledge.

Tannen, Deborah 1990. *You just Do not Understand: Women and Men in Conversation.* New York: William Morrow and Company.

Thorne, Barrie 1993. *Gender Play: Girls and Boys in School.* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Vertovec, Steven 2004. Cheap Calls: The Social Glue of Migrant Transnationalism. *Global Networks* 4:219-224.

Westwood, Sallie & Annie Phizacklea. 2000. *Transnationalism and the Politics of Belonging.* London and New York. Routledge.

Janet Muthoni Muthuki
Department Gender Studies /School of Social Sciences
University of KwaZulu-Natal
muthuki@ukzn.ac.za