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## Introduction

### Beyond borders: The everyday life of transnational mixed families

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I always try to repeat the same thing: I'm Moroccan-Turkish. [...] I take pleasure to live in Morocco and to live in Turkey, no problem. [...] I think it's normal when you have one nationality, ethnicity, to automatically think that everyone must have only one and believe in only one, but when you have two nationalities, you have this possibility to think about and to live in both of them.

Adil, 20 years old, Moroccan father and Turkish mother

During a symposium on transmission in mixed families and the construction of mixed individuals' identities, held in Ifrane, Morocco, in October 2018, of which this book is the result,<sup>1</sup> young individuals who identify themselves as mixed were invited to participate in workshops to report on their experiences. The above excerpt was taken from one of their interviews during a later research project on children of mixed couples in Morocco, which is part of a comparative project in Quebec.<sup>2</sup> Their accounts allow us to highlight the diversity of experiences of mixedness. For example, while some of these young people had one European and one Moroccan parent, others had two parents from an Arab country or from two African countries. They also bear witness to the presence of mixedness in countries of the South which, because they have long been considered countries of emigration, have been less studied from that angle. Lastly, they highlight the historical links that connect various countries, the racial categories that arise from them, and the transnationalism that is central to the daily lives of these mixed individuals. These themes are at the heart of this book.

Indeed, due to the intensity of recent migratory flows, the rapid developments in transport and communication technologies and the processes of globalization, opportunities for and occurrences of transnational relationships and marriages have multiplied in different societies (Alba, Beck & Basaran Sahin, 2018; Aspinall & Song, 2013; Geoffrion, 2016; Ministère de la Famille, 2020), involving individuals from a wide range of backgrounds. Couples and families worldwide increasingly defy national, cultural, linguistic and religious homogeneous norms and boundaries (Cohen, 2003) leading to

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an ‘internationalization of intimacy’ (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2014). This has contributed to new forms and modes of belonging set in specific, yet globalized national and local contexts, as well as to the development of kinship-related transnational networks and specific forms of mobility practices across national borders. It has also led to shifting and multi-layered experiences of discrimination and privilege in transnational fields.

This book is an attempt to shed light on the ways by which transnational processes impact mixed families and the identity of children growing up with mixed backgrounds. The chapters highlight the various elements that influence the identity projects of children whose parents are from different ethnocultural and national backgrounds, the identity choices made by mixed children and the contextual social realities of racism, discrimination and privilege that impact both parenting dynamics and identity construction. They seek to shed light on the articulations between transmission, agency and context-specific social constraints. By showcasing nine innovative ethnographic case studies that examine the everyday lives of mixed families in different regions of the world, the book questions how socio-historical and political-economic structures shape the experience of the actors, their subjectivity and their agency, thus connecting micro-level experiences to meso and macro structures and processes. It also seeks to provide contrasting and challenging scholarly perspectives on the local and transnational identity dynamics fostered by the experiences of family mixedness.

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Mixedness, in this book, refers to the multiple identity markers—spoken languages, religious beliefs and practices, ethnic and racial affiliations, traditions and other cultural rituals, nationalities, etc.—that shape the diversity of mixed couples and families. It is important to stress that not all types of ‘differences’ in families are meaningful or theorized. For mixed families, markers that often constitute important factors of inclusion and exclusion in various social groups—e.g. ethnic or religious community, peer groups, etc.—and in specific contexts—e.g. schools, workplace, extended family settings—may not be a source of concern in their everyday life and routines, especially in urban contexts characterized by social and ethnic diversity (Song, 2016; Vertovec, 2007). In other words, family mixedness, for the individuals concerned, may be seen as *ordinary*. Its importance seems to come back into focus during key moments of the life cycle, such as a marriage or the birth of a child (Bernstein, 2015), but also through the questioning gaze and social perception of people and institutions who are often part of, or represent, the ‘non-marked’ majority.

We prefer the term ‘mixedness’ to ‘hybridity’ or ‘mixed race’, not only because of the biological connotations of the last two terms, but also because they make it difficult to account for the variability of the ways in which actors experience and conceive of mixedness (Therrien, 2009). On the

contrary, these terms tend to obscure the diversity of possible forms of mixedness (Collet & Philippe, 2008; Varro, 2003). Although the term ‘mixed’ has rightly been criticized by scholars and biracial activists (Aspinall, 2003; Choudhry, 2010; Gullickson & Morning, 2011), the umbrella term ‘mixedness’ has the advantage of referring to the texture of ‘mixing’ and not to an essence that stems from ‘origins’ or ‘pure’ ethno-cultural substances. As a result, it is gaining traction in the field of research (Varro, 2008). As for the term ‘mixed race’, although widely used, it integrates only one dimension of the identity of individuals at the expense of other identity markers. It also tends to make certain configurations, that do not necessarily translate into distinctive signs in the physical appearance of an individual, invisible. In our approach, mixedness is conceptualized as a social and historical construct in such a way that what constitutes a mixed union varies across time and national contexts (Varro, 2012; 1995).

We can distinguish two main schools of thought in the literature on mixed families and identities. What we call the French school has mainly looked at binational and religious intermarriages in Western Europe. It has a specific focus on the dynamics of the relationship and (gendered) power inequalities, and more recently, on identity transmission to children. This body of literature in France and in other Francophone countries has been primarily published in French (for an extensive review of the literature, see Le Gall, 2003). Starting in the 1980s, Varro’s pioneering work, focusing on various aspects of the everyday life of mixed families, is largely unknown in the Anglo-Saxon world. Her foreword in this book reflects a long and fruitful career devoted entirely to the issue of mixedness.

The second school of thought emerged in the tense racial context of the USA, as pressure for official recognition of mixed-race individuals grew—e.g. in the national census (Thompson, 2012). It focuses on racial identities, racialization processes and experiences of discrimination in ‘mixed-race’ families and ‘mixed-race’ individuals. It has also dominated the Anglophone scientific literature in the UK and Canada (for example, see Mahtani, Kwan-Lafond & Taylor, 2014; Root, 1992; Sims & Njaka, 2019; Song, 2017; Spickard, 1996; 1989). Recently, studies on mixed-race individuals and families have expanded beyond the Western world to include Asia (Rocha & Fozdar, 2017) and Latin America (England, 2010; Telles & Garcia, 2013; Wade, 2010). Though this body of research examined black and white ‘interracial’ families and ‘biracial’ persons (Chito Childs, 2005; Dalmage, 2000), the literature increasingly points to the complexity of racial identification in contexts of mixedness and to the way they intertwine with other factors (gender, race, religion and social class) (Ifekwunigwe, 2001). Although the boundaries between these two schools of thought were never rigid, nor their research interests exclusive, our book proposes to purposely bring them together in a series of studies on family mixedness that acknowledge both the processes of identity transmission, as well as of

identity construction. The objective is to broaden representations and understandings of the realities of mixed families through an array of national and local contexts, and to produce an approach to mixedness that takes into account the multiplicity of differentiating markers—ethnicity, race, religion, nationality and language—in a meaningful and holistic manner for the actors concerned.

### **Situating mixedness**

History, geography and biography matter when situating family mixedness (Mahtani, 2014). Taking the geography of mixed families seriously means we use an inter-scalar perspective<sup>3</sup> to make sense of the various ways that the different levels and locations of experience and analysis (the body, the family, communities, regions, nation-states and transnationality) are interwoven and shape individuals' mixed identities and the lives of mixed families. To acknowledge the role of the different scales through which identities are constructed and manifested allows us to highlight the flexibility of individual and family negotiations and strategies, the broader social constraints and opportunities that structure these identities, as well as group inclusion and exclusion processes. This perspective is the basis for a broader conversation on mixedness, a concept that is fluid and shaped by context-specific realities.

The notion of historical time is also crucial when analysing social perceptions of mixedness. In this regard, Gasperoni, Gourdon and Grange (2019) skilfully demonstrate the changing nature of the definition of mixedness—and the categories that define it—according to the historical contexts in which mixed couples evolve. As Morokvasic-Muller's (2004) study of inter-ethnic marriages in the former Yugoslavia illustrates, individuals considered to be in the same group may, in times of conflict, suddenly find themselves in the group of 'the Other' (Varro, 2008). As Tanu also reports: 'the way people of mixed descent negotiate identities can change over time, in accordance with the evolution of national narratives as governments and policies change' (2017, 211).

National and sometimes postcolonial contexts, with their inter-group histories of domination and conflict, also affect the way mixed relationships and identities are being constructed and received in society. Some types of mixed unions have been illegalized, such as marriages between black and white people during the apartheid era in South Africa and, until recently, in the USA. In other contexts, mixed children—e.g. of Japanese women and American men during the US occupation of Japan (1945–1952), were shunned as symbols of oppression (Koshiro, 2003). These dynamics, stemming from uneven power relations, colonization and war, are further complicated by globalization processes, Western imperialism, strong nationalisms and transnationalism, all of which contribute to shifts in the definitions and meanings of difference (King-O'Riain et al., 2014; Romo, 2011).

In their work in Asia and Australia, Rocha et al. (2019) emphasize the importance of studying the everyday, lived experiences of mixed families and individuals in contexts less studied in the past, without making sweeping generalizations about mixedness. By exploring mixed families in regions such as Quebec, Belgium, Italy, Switzerland, France, the Philippines, Thailand, Morocco as well as in Israel, our book moves away from the research spotlight traditionally put on the USA and the UK, and contributes to the recent efforts of researchers who are trying to understand the sometimes very different ways in which mixedness is understood and experienced around the world (Chito Childs, 2018, Edwards et al., 2012; Fozdar & McGavin, 2017). Looking at countries that have not been the focus of much scholarly attention so far, allows us to illustrate the complexity of ‘ethno-racial’ identities where religious markers, languages spoken, physical appearance, ethno-national affiliations and migration histories are entangled in varied and complex ways depending on socio-historical and geo-political contexts (Aspinall, 2012; Edwards, 2008).

Several of the chapters in this book take a transnational stance that connects two or more local/national contexts. Fresnoza-Flot (Chapter 1) applies a multi-sited methodology to highlight the transnational connections and forms of belonging that mothers in mixed couples develop and transmit to their children. Geoffrion (Chapter 3) studies Canadian women’s transnational mobility trajectories and their impact on identity transmission. Le Gall and Therrien (Chapter 2) and Gillieron (Chapter 4) use a comparative perspective to emphasize how the transnational experiences of mixed families and mixed individuals in different national settings impact processes of identity transmission and identity formation. Kiessar-Sugarman (Chapter 8) and Unterreiner (Chapter 7) explore how the violent histories of domination and war that bound two countries or groups of people together affect the subjectivities of mixed individuals living in that transnational space.

Since the studies showcased here are grounded in a wide range of national and transnational contexts, the reader is led beyond methodological nationalism (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002), one of the main limitations of the existing literature. Our focus on transnationalism highlights the concurrent forces that exist in identity transmission processes for mixed families that are not confined to a single national context. A transnational lens also permits examining mixed individuals’ multiple and sometimes overlapping or antagonistic dynamics of group inclusion and exclusion.

North–South power dynamics are also an important dimension of this book. Apart from Kiessar-Sugarman’s contribution (Chapter 8) that links Israel and countries of the former Soviet Union, all of the chapters explore family dynamics that involve interactions within contexts of the Global South. Indeed, the studies included in the volume also connect narratives of mixedness to other settings and countries located in West Africa (Senegal,

Ghana, Ivory Coast), North Africa (Algeria, Morocco) and Southeast Asia (the Philippines, Thailand).

All the studies delve into context-specific realities that shape social definitions of mixedness and what constitutes significant ‘differences’. The description of the broader socio-political and historical configurations that structure, to some extent, the elaboration of strategies of transmission, identification and belonging for mixed couples and their children, contributes to creating links between micro (lived experience) and macro (social structure) levels of analysis. The chapters also consider other diverse social factors that impact mixed subjectivities and family dynamics, such as—but not limited to—class, gender, age, community, social representations, living and schooling environments, family dynamics and socialization, the extended family and family networks, transnational networks, the (im)migration experience of parents, physical appearance and national settings.

This collective book concentrates on specific case studies and expands the discussion on the importance of place, colonial history, transnational connections, politics of (national) belonging, and articulations and overlaps of identity markers. In order to contribute to existing knowledge on mixedness and to capture the rich diversity and complexity of identity transmission and construction processes in an increasingly transnational world, all the chapters of this book are based on qualitative studies. The ethnographic, long-term fieldwork studies provide grounded empirical material and dense descriptions of the everyday experience of mixed families and individuals and of the social realities examined. Before introducing the different chapters, we will engage in a brief discussion of the main transversal themes of this volume: mixed families’ everyday lives and identity trajectories (that include transmission and construction processes), transnationalism, and racialized/racializing experiences.

### **Mixed families’ everyday life and identity trajectories**

While family dynamics surrounding identity transmission and construction have recently received attention in studies on mixed families (Nakamura Lopez, 2017; Nazarinia Roy & Rollins, 2019; Pang, 2018), our objective was to compile, in one volume, studies that examine the perspectives of parents as well as that of mixed children. Identity transmission and construction are understood to be two entangled processes informed by specific historical, socio-political and transnational contexts, but always happening in the here and now of ordinary family life. Our book thus contributes to the literature through thick descriptions of mixed families’ everyday lives, allowing us to grasp the richness of mixedness. Focusing on the family life of mixed families through an approach rooted in everyday life, and where the reproduction of social structures is at stake, makes it possible to take a different look at mixedness, while at the same time being aligned with studies that place the subject at the heart of their analysis (Therrien & Le Gall, 2012).

The arrival of a child is particularly significant for mixed couples, who are then obliged to reflect upon and negotiate identity transmission. Intergenerational identity transmission in contexts of family mixedness is a relatively new focus of interest in the social sciences (Britton, 2013; Edwards et al., 2010; Gaspar, 2011), although still insufficiently studied in comparison to research on mixed individuals. This literature has examined different aspects of identity transmission, in particular concerning languages (Addisu, 2014; Joshi, 2014; Kim, 2014; Lacroix, 2014), naming practices (Collet 2019; Edwards & Caballero 2008; Le Gall & Meintel, 2005), religions (Allouche-Benayoun, 2008; Arweck & Nesbitt, 2010b; Cerchiaro, Aupers & Houtman, 2015; Cerchiaro & Odasso, 2021; Mathieu, 2010; Therrien, 2020a), and the impact of the national political and religious context (Therrien & Le Gall, 2017).

Studies on parenting practices in mixed families show how mixedness is the locus of varying degrees of attention and conscious effort. These practices range from family settings grounded in two (or more) cultural universes to privileging the cultural markers of one parent over the other. Scholars have observed various parental approaches adopted by mixed couples in raising their children. These include the marked absence of making a decision or taking a definite stance, deferred decisions (Barbara, 1993) and the transmission of cultural markers. The latter often comes from one parent (from the majority or minority society) but cultural signifiers from both parents can also be transmitted, in the hope that the children will make an informed decision later on in their lives (Caballero, Edwards & Puthussery, 2008). For example, Le Gall and Meintel (2014) have shown how identity transmission for mixed couples in Quebec is often thought of as a 'pluralistic project' by parents, who will then make efforts to transmit both the cultural references of the majority society but also those of the minority parent. In a study on how mixed couples name their children in Italy, Cerchiaro (2020) emphasized the impact of stigmatization on parental choices. Parenting strategies and identity transmission are a focus of this book. Parents transmit ethno-cultural elements of their backgrounds by way of a name with a symbolic or religious connotation (Le Gall & Therrien, Chapter 2), an embodied connection to place through food preferences and travel experiences (Geofrion, Chapter 3) or an exposure to dance or cooking (Fresnoza-Flot, Chapter 1). Sometimes, parents purposely avoid the transmission of a certain tradition, name or religion to better conceal stigmatized markers, as in the case of Jewish/non-Jewish families in the former Soviet Union (Keissar-Sugarman, Chapter 8). However, though the role of parents in identity transmission should not be underestimated, children do not always agree with or retain what has been transmitted to them (Allouche-Benayoun, 2008; Unterreiner, 2015b; Yeoh et al., 2020). The increasing numbers of people who identify as mixed-race around the world has resulted in the publication of numerous articles and books in recent years.

If many of these publications still emphasize mixed-race identities (e.g. Champion, 2019; King-O’Riain, 2021; Rocha & Aspinall, 2020; Sims & Njaka, 2019), an increasing number of scholars are integrating the dimensions of ethnicity and religion into their research (Cerchiaro, 2020; Osanami Törngren, 2020; Rodríguez-García et al., 2021, to name only a few). It is now recognized that, on the whole, people who have mixed backgrounds do not necessarily reject part of their heritage, and often develop multiple affiliations (Arweck and Nesbitt, 2011; Mahtani, 2002).

Many factors influence identity construction for mixed individuals and account for the wide variety of configurations observed (Le Gall, 2003; Song, 2010). Among the most studied we find peer groups, ‘phenotype’, languages spoken and understood, and experiences of discrimination (e.g. King-O’Riain et al., 2014; Osanami Törngren & Sato, 2021). The experiences of mixed-race individuals are inevitably influenced by the social and political contexts in which they operate, hence the importance of international comparisons. Transnational ties are another factor that influences the identity of mixed individuals, although this dimension has received less attention in the literature. Indeed, transnational lives and experiences often transform the relationship with place, and nuance national identification processes (Akyeampong, 2004).

### **Mixed and transnational families**

Family dynamics are studied here using a transnational perspective that connects identity transmission to the mobility trajectories of mixed families and mixed individuals, and to broader group dynamics and social structures (family, national and transnational) that are sometimes situated in more than one setting. As mentioned by Anthias, it is difficult to think about the contemporary world ‘as bounded by national boundaries alone’ (2008, 13). Indeed, ‘ethnic and cultural ties are increasingly operating at a transnational rather than merely national level’ (2008, 6). The transnational dimension of identity and sometimes of parenting, is a crucial element to consider in the analyses of mixed families (Le Gall & Therrien, 2013). For many migrants, maintaining close ties and relationships with people while being separated physically by two or more nation-states is the norm (Olwig & Sorenson, 2002). Innovations in communication and travel technologies have a key role in intensifying transnational commitments and relationships (Sun, 2013). They make it possible to overcome physical distance between family members (Le Gall & Meintel, 2011) and facilitate cultural transmission (Basch, Glick Schiller & Szanton Blanc, 1994).

In 2005, Le Gall already differentiated between transnational parent-hood—family forms characterized by the geographical dispersion of children and parents—and transnational kinship, which refers to the maintenance of links between members of a kinship group across borders. Studies of

transnational families have emphasized that family networks are constantly being recomposed. Links are maintained by loyalty and obligation to kin (Beck-Gernsheim, 2007; Geschiere, 2020), but could also be strategically chosen. Indeed, individuals both establish, maintain or avoid certain ties with family members according to their needs, and actively pursue, passively neglect, or even invent kinship ties (Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002). Transnational connections not only impact the identities and practices of migrant parents but also those of their children (Sun, 2013).

Research on the transnational practices of the so-called second generation of migrants can also be relevant to our reflections. Falicov (2005) uses Wolf's concept of 'emotional transmigrant' (2002) to highlight the fact that their cultural attachments are mediated through their parents' attachments. As she argues, transnational practices are ways to recharge emotional batteries, a measure that is crucial when living a transnational life. Second-generation migrants are trained for transnationalism (Nyíri, 2014), experience shifting identities (Somerville, 2008), develop (or not) a plural sense of home (Levitt and Waters, 2002), maintain reverse transnational links (Jain, 2019), while their cross-border kin ties enable them to resist racial discrimination (Purkayastha, 2005). These findings are certainly applicable to many individuals socialized in a mixed family. The categorization of the different transnational practices of the first and second generations can also be relevant to our studies on mixed individuals, as Fresnoza-Flot shows in her contribution (Chapter 1). In order to show the diversity and complexity of transnational practices found in mixed families, she takes up the distinction made by Lee (2011, 308) between forced ('given out of obedience and family loyalty') and indirect transnationalism (when there is no direct contact with the parent's country of origin), as opposed to 'linear transnationalism', the practices that allow people to maintain links with their families and country of origin (Itzigsohn & Saucedo, 2002, in Fresnoza-Flot, Chapter 1).

Although cross-border links and practices have been studied by scholars interested in family migration, they have rarely been explored by scholars working on mixed families, and so are often treated as two distinct types of families as in the recent book edited by Crespi, Giada Meda and Merla (2018). A number of recent studies on mixed families have highlighted the importance of transnational activities, especially the transnational dimension of family life. Through a case study of Thai women married to Belgian men in Belgium, Fresnoza-Flot and Merla (2018), for instance, bring to the fore the important role that migrants' partners play in the maintenance of transnational family relations. Other studies have shown how the country of origin often remains the preferred holiday destination, in order to maintain and strengthen connections and bonds (Le Gall & Meintel, 2014) or how regular remittance links the migrant partners in mixed couples to their country of origin (Fresnoza-Flot, 2017; Yeoh et al., 2013). The sense of a transnational home made possible by affective, multiple and deterritorialized connections

that mixed couples maintained beyond borders (Therrien, 2013), mothering techniques (Fresnoza-Flot, 2018), the role of the extended family in religious transmission (Arweck & Nesbitt, 2010a; Meintel & Le Gall, 2009) and cultural socialization (Le Gall & Meintel, 2015; Unterreiner, 2014) are some of the topics explored. This process of transmission within mixed families necessitates dealing with multiple localizations (*here* and *there*) (Rodríguez-García, 2006, 426), which makes identity transmission more complex. In the same vein, in an ethnographic study on Japanese-British families, Nakamura Lopez (2017) shows that both the Japanese and British kin play an active role in the transmission of culture in the mixed children's lives, but in different ways due to their geographic location (see also Le Gall & Therrien, Chapter 2). Apart from these studies, we still know very little about how transnational ties impact mixed couples' experience and parental transmission (Brahic, 2018; Goulbourne et al., 2010).

Some studies show that mixed individuals also navigate transnational spaces. Because of their specific family history, mixed individuals are predisposed to bridging two universes and become part of the growing internationalization of the world. They are what Le Gall and Therrien call *border crossers* (Chapter 2). Their transnational ties impact different aspects of their lives. An important dimension of transnationalism that has been highlighted is the centrality of emotions, and the role of parentage and extended families in the identification process of mixed individuals, shown in the way they identify (or not) with a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group (Chito Childs, Lyons & Jones, 2021). Unterreiner (2015b) talks about the symbolic identification built through the quality of the relationship kept up (or not) with the extended family through different means of communication and transnational mobility. The quality of the relationship with the extended family also impacts the identification of mixed individuals with the country of origin of their migrant parent and language acquisition (Unterreiner, 2015a). When Slany and Strzemecka compared the transnational links of Polish-Polish versus Polish-Norwegian families living in Norway, they discovered that the 'transnational intergenerational arch' (2017, 101) between mixed individuals and Poland was not as vivid as that of children of migrants, but they did not analyse the reasons behind that emotional distance, an aspect explored by Unterreiner in Chapter 7 and one that needs more attention.

### **Racialized mixed bodies, racializing the mixed family**

Race and racialization processes constitute the third transversal theme of this book. Despite the fact that our approach to mixedness is broad and includes identity markers and signifiers that are not always tied to race, mixed people's phenotype is often one of the most important sources of differentiation and marginalization, and contributes to mixed individuals' identification as 'mixed'. Phenotype here refers to the way their bodies or parts of their

bodies (Haritaworn, 2009a) are being racialized on an everyday basis through the gaze of the unmarked 'white' or majority population (Fanon, 1986; Paragg, 2017), the black majority population (Geoffrion, Oduro & Prah, forthcoming), and sometimes their own family members (see Haritaworn, 2007). Race and racialization are especially significant in identity construction processes for people of mixed backgrounds worldwide (Joseph-Salisbury, 2019; King-O'Riain et al., 2014; Sims & Joseph-Salisbury, 2019). The (in)visibility of mixed people's bodies informs processes of group inclusion and exclusion, as well as their sense of belonging (Brunnsma, 2006). For example, the tone of their skin, whether it is considered too dark or not dark enough (Adhikari, 2005) affects the person's choice of friends, affiliations and inclusion in peer groups and ethno-cultural communities, as well as experiences of racism and discrimination. Romo (2011), whose study focuses on 'Blaxicans', shows just how much skin colour impacts identity. Jackson (2009; 2012) also describes how light-skinned girls of black and white parentage experienced rejection by black girls, and how this experience shaped their identity trajectory as they grew up and fostered a sense of racial reflexivity. Such experiences based on perceived racial identity and forms of non-belonging even structure racially mixed people's choice of conjugal partner and family projects later on in their lives. For example, in Geoffrion et al.'s study of mixed-race Ghanaians (forthcoming), many participants living in Ghana chose to marry a 'full Ghanaian'—in other words, a black-skinned Ghanaian of two black Ghanaian parents—so as not to transmit the racial stigmatization they experienced on an everyday basis to their children (also see 'whiteness as stigma'; Storrs, 1999).

Racial socialization in interracial families has been the focus of much scholarly interest (Chang, 2016; Doucet, Hall & Giraud, 2019), especially in the US and UK contexts. Most studies have examined the case of white mothers of mixed-race children whose father is black. If some warn that the mothers might not be equipped to sensitize their children to the realities of racism (Rockquemore, Laszloffy & Noveske, 2006; Twine, 1999), more recent studies have shown the extent to which white mothers try to transmit the ethno-cultural background and racial identity of the father through various strategies such as learning how to braid their girls' hair (Allen, 2017; Edwards & Caballero, 2011; Harman, 2010; McKenzie, 2012). Brun's and Lajus and colleagues' chapters (Chapters 6 and 9) both show the extent to which parents try to negotiate racial categories in their daily lives and how experiences of discrimination inform racial socialization. However, even though race shapes mixed individuals' everyday life and experiences of racism and discrimination (even in cases where it is in a positive way such as when and where whiteness becomes a privilege), it never stands alone in the identity configurations of people of mixed heritage.<sup>4</sup>

The degree of 'ethno-racial' diversity in the community where a person grows up also impacts the lived experience of mixed-race people. In their

study in the UK, Caballero and colleagues (2012) emphasized the importance of the neighbourhood in experiences of racism and discrimination: the more diverse the area, the less the stigmatization attached to racially ‘ambiguous’ (Haritaworn, 2009a) phenotypes. As seen previously, socio-historical context is of prime importance when discussing mixedness, and the same applies to racial identity, which may shift depending on the location around the globe (see Gilliéron, Chapter 4). Since the studies in this book use a transnational lens, the fluid and situational reality of racial identity comes into sharper focus, as racial ideologies and race relations differ from one national context to another, from one family reality (one that is also classed and gendered) to another, even from one temporality to another (historical and biographical), which Brunsma called ‘shifting racial terrains’ (2006, 6). The nature and intensity of transnational linkages also affect the understanding of ‘ethno-racial’ identity. As Osanami Törngren and colleagues contend, ‘one factor that poses some of the biggest challenges to the comparative examination of global mixed experience is the varying understandings of race and ethnicity across contexts?’ (2021, 766). This becomes even more complex when the comparison takes place within the biography of a single person across transnational contexts.

According to Tanu, whose work is situated in the postcolonial context of Indonesia, most research on mixed-race identities has focused on specific national contexts. However, his study shows that the experiences of people ‘with childhoods that often traverse multiple national boundaries’ (2017, 211) vary according to shifting contexts: ‘sometimes they become “white” and sometimes “Asian”’ (2017, 222). Therrien (2020b) shows the relevance of intersectional and transnational perspectives in analysing the symbolic boundaries of mixedness in Morocco. Racial categorization is more complex than the black/white binary classification. Indeed, some factors like social class, gender, an ‘undesirable foreigner status’, and a ‘noticeable accent’, become significant when it comes to defining who is accepted as an in-group member and who is considered an outsider; and even this may shift depending on context-specific situations. Her work highlights the intersection of national and transnational social structures that make racial hierarchies and unequal power dynamics more complex and more visible. These studies confirm that the significance of social and racial boundaries is not in decline in our contemporary, transnational world (Tanu, 2019).

Embodied experiences of place (and class) inscribe new meaning into racial identifications of mixed-race individuals. Sometimes socio-historical power dynamics are overtly discussed (such as on university campuses) and, in other circumstances, they are made invisible, such as in white middle-class neighbourhoods (Khanna, 2011; Pratt, 1997; Twine, 1996), compelling mixed-race individuals to reflect on their place and position in the world. Racialization processes do not only affect individuals who have a white and a black parent, but increasingly, people whose religion has become racialized,

such as Muslims or Hindus (Cerchiaro, Chapter 5). As such, it is crucial we continue to de-centre whiteness in studies on mixedness (Rondilla, Guevarra & Spickard, 2017), as Mahtani and Moreno noted 20 years ago (2001).

Questions of race, phenotype and discrimination are articulated differently in the different national contexts we cover in this book (for historical perspectives on mixed-race families in contexts of the Global South see: Bost, 2010; Ipsen, 2015; Ray, 2015; 2009). We draw on scholarship that highlights the necessity of looking at racial categories that go beyond black and white, and at ethnicities that are often subsumed in broader racial categories, including white ethnicities (Haritaworn, 2009b; Song & Parker, 2001; Teng, 2013). For example, the chapters by Cerchiaro (Chapter 5), Lajus, Picart and Bergonnier-Dupuy (Chapter 9), Brun (Chapter 6), Unterreiner (Chapter 7) and Kiessar-Sugarman (Chapter 8) all show how concepts of race and racism are rearticulated in contemporary societies. The growing stigmatization attached to Islam and Muslims has led Muslim-Christian families to consciously think about how to minimize the impact of cultural markers that have the potential to create discrimination in the future lives of their children, such as first names (Puzenat, 2008; Therrien, 2014). In the case of mixed families in which one parent is Muslim and *maghrébin* or Black, discrimination in school, at the workplace and in the job market informs processes of belonging, as well as family and individual life strategies (Unterreiner, Chapter 7; Cerchiaro, Chapter 5). Contributors to this book discuss how race, religion and ethnicity are interwoven and subject to negotiations and modulations, especially in mixed families and mixed individuals' transnational trajectories.

### Chapter overviews

The contributions found in this volume show that, in mixed families, both parents and their children share 'trans-bordering' social capital (Le Gall and Therrien, Chapter 2) that allows them to negotiate their everyday life in a dynamic that goes beyond the concrete borders of nation-state and symbolic borders.

Part I, entitled 'Transnational relatedness: Transmission and belonging through and beyond borders' is concerned with emotional and family relatedness at a transnational level. In this section we look at both the process of identity transmission and feelings of belonging from a cross-border perspective. The chapters illustrate the diverse transnational links parents maintain in order to forge strong connections between their children and another significant country/culture, how mixed individuals build up their identity in a transnational setting and how this impacts their sense of belonging.

Asuncion Fresnoza-Flot (Chapter 1) opens the discussion by considering the links that children of Filipino-Belgian and Thai-Belgian individuals

maintain and reinforce with their migrant mothers' country of origin. Children who show an interest in their mother's country of origin are those whose mothers maintain dynamic transnational ties and transmit their culture. Le Gall and Therrien (Chapter 2) also examine the experience of transmission within mixed families, but this time by comparing the parental identity transmission projects of mixed couples in Morocco and Quebec. The authors highlight the influence of the national context on the process of identity transmission by focusing on the choice of first name and family name, educational system, language and nationality. Like Fresnoza-Flot, they provide evidence of the centrality of transnational mobility and connections, both as a competence and as a resource used by parents in mixed couples. Geoffrion's (Chapter 3) study focuses on Canadian women who lived in a country of the Global South and who are mothers of mixed children. It highlights the significance of the women's transnational trajectory on identity transmission processes. Geoffrion discusses the impact of the women's stay on their subjectivity and shows that food habits and travelling to that place of emotional significance are key domains where cultural identity is reflected upon, negotiated and transmitted. Gilliéron (Chapter 4) brings our attention back to identity construction from the mixed individual's perspective. The author highlights the importance of the transnational experience on identity formation by comparing two case studies from Morocco and Switzerland. She argues that binational children's mixedness can be devalued in one national context but become a privilege in another because of perceived whiteness. This reinforces the point that identity construction of mixed children changes over time, but also across space.

Part II, '(In)visible affiliations and racialization processes in tense (trans) national group relations', is more concerned with how parents and mixed individuals negotiate the symbolic borders (racial, ethnic, religious) they face in their daily life and how they cope with the tensions raised by processes of social and racial categorization. Whether at a national level (between minority and majority groups) or at a transnational level (between different countries that are perceived/experienced as 'enemies'), the chapters show that historical and political contexts must be considered when analysing trajectories of transmission and belonging, which often involve processes of (in)visibilization by both parents and children alike.

Cerchiaro (Chapter 5) explores the theme of identity construction and the confluent narratives of religion, ethnicity and race for mixed individuals raised in Christian-Muslim families in the Italian context. The author's analysis questions the notion of ethnic, racial or religious 'dilution' and 'loss'. Results suggest that mixed individuals reshape their identities: individuals either choose one group of belonging from their parent's affiliations, shuttle between the two, or move beyond the ethno-religious symbolic group boundaries of their parents and develop cosmopolitan forms of belonging. Brun (Chapter 6) examines white French parents' degree of sensitivity to the

racial identity of their internationally adopted children. The author argues that the ideology of colour-blindness, which characterizes the French national context, shapes parents' ways of socializing their children. Lajus, Picart and Bergonnier-Dupuy (Chapter 9) also focus on parents' approaches to race and racial discrimination. They examine the specific case of families composed of a parent who migrated to Italy from Sub-Saharan Africa and a native, white Italian parent, with a focus on the experiences of racism undergone by the migrant parent and how these actively shape their approach to race and racism with their own racialized children. Unterreiner (Chapter 7) explores the impact of conflictual transnational relations between Algeria and France based on the everyday experiences of mixed French-Algerians. Using a socio-historical perspective to make sense of their contemporary experiences, the author shows the significance of transnational spaces in their experiences of discrimination (at school, in the job market and within their own extended families). The transnational space between the two countries is also central to participants' trajectories of empowerment. In a similar fashion, but grounded in a different transnational context, Kiessar-Sugarman (Chapter 8) shows that hostile intergroup relations between Jews and non-Jews bring forth strategies of avoidance and invisibilization in two national contexts: Israel and the Former Soviet Union (FSU). The author's work shows that families tend to conceal their Jewish identity in the FSU and their non-Jewish affiliation in Israel; aspects which, however, eventually re-emerge in the individual narratives.

In sum, the chapters in this volume make it clear that mixedness refers to a multiplicity of differentiating markers such as ethnicity, race, religion, nationality and language. If mixedness is not always tied to race, phenotype is often a defining factor in processes of group belonging and identity construction. The different contributions allow us to nuance the relevance of race in studies of mixedness by showing that, when pertinent, it is tied to one or more of the aforementioned markers. In agreement with other scholars in the field, it seems important to better document the complexity and richness of mixedness, but also the way its definition—and the articulations between its different markers—shifts in transnational terrains, provoking real-life consequences for all members of the families concerned. The ethnographic contributions in this volume thus reveal the significant impact of contemporary transnational connections on the processes of identity transmission and identity construction, while highlighting the renewed impact of local, national and global historical and sociopolitical contexts and intergroup relations on the everyday life of these families. The transnational perspective turned out to be an efficient and original analytical tool. This reflection on mixedness has also demonstrated the relevance of studying contexts of the Global South in addition and in relation to contexts of the Global North. We hope these avenues will be further explored in future research in the field of mixedness.

## Notes

- 1 Many of the chapters included in this volume were presented at this symposium.
- 2 'Plural Identity of Mixed Children in Morocco: Transmission, Agency and Social Constraints', Research Project Funded by Ibn Khaldoun Program (CNRST 2019–2022). Catherine Therrien (PI). Comparative project research with a Canadian team led by Josiane Le Gall. <http://identiteplurielle.com/>.
- 3 Our perspective on scales is grounded in an approach developed by feminist geographers that highlights the interconnections between the global and the intimate. Scales are 'discrete categories best understood as constitutive of one another' (Mountz & Hyndman, 2006, 447). Such an approach acknowledges that all scales of analysis, from the body to global processes, are political and interwoven. It highlights the complexity of power relations (Mahler & Pessar, 2001). Integrating various scales is particularly helpful in understanding how transnational spaces are constitutive of the everyday life of mixed families and individuals.
- 4 Race and ethnicity are often conflated in national discourses, as shown by census categories in countries such as the UK and Canada (see Aspinall, 2003; Mahtani, 2002).

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Part I

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**Transnational relatedness:  
Socialization and belonging  
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