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**EXPLORING TRANSNATIONAL
PRACTICES OF UKRAINIAN
MIGRANTS IN SPAIN**

ABSTRACT. This work examines three areas of transnational behaviour of Ukrainian migrants to Spain: travelling to the country of origin, the frequency of non-direct contact with the communities of origin and remittances. Our objective is to examine how gender, legal status and type of family unit (multilocal / non-multilocal) affect transnational practices. Most of the statistical data presented in this article come from the Spanish National Immigrant Survey (ENI-2007). The study confirms that family ties play a crucial role in establishing and maintaining links between countries of origin and destination. It also reveals that entry and residence restrictions on Ukrainian migrants significantly reduce the transnational mobility of irregular migrants. Finally, no clear relation between gender and transnationalism was observed.

JEL Classification: F22, Z10

Keywords: Ukrainian migration, Spain, transnationalism, gender, irregular migrants, family.

Introduction*

Immediately after the collapse of the communist system, the international mobility of Central and Eastern European populations changed significantly. Along with the traditional patterns that used to predominate in these regions, such as long term migration for economic or ethnic reasons, new forms of mobility have appeared, such as circulatory migration and the flow of temporary workers (Morokvasic, 2006; Wallace, 1999). These extraordinary cross-border flows have established links between receiving and sending countries and also provided material for a thorough rethinking of the traditional nation-state-centred immigration paradigm that saw East-West migration as a lineal and unidirectional process, with socio-economic and cultural assimilation as the final outcome (Favell, 2008). In this context, the concept of transnationalism has become one of the main analytical tools used to assess the mobility patterns of Central and Eastern European populations (Morawska, 2002; Moskal, 2011; Rogers, 2004).

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Surprisingly, contemporary studies of economic migration among Ukrainians have rarely focused on this transnational perspective. Yarova (2007) carried out one of the few studies that have taken this approach by analysing how doing domestic work in Italy impacted the family life of Ukrainian women in their country of origin. Along the same lines, Tolstokorova (2010) examined the implications that Ukrainian migration to European countries has for the transnational family field, emphasising issues surrounding gender, maternity and paternity, and in a recent study, Solari (2010) compared the migratory patterns of flows to California and Italy. Although the number of studies on Ukrainian immigration to Spain has increased over the years (Hosnedlová and Stanek, 2007; 2010; Sánchez Urriós, 2010), the focus has not been on the transnational aspects of this phenomenon and therefore relatively little is known about this phenomenon. In this article we examine certain empirical indicators related to the transnational dimension of Ukrainian immigration to Spain. To be precise, we explore how gender, legal status and type of family unit (multilocal / non-multilocal) affect transnational practices of Ukrainian migrants residing in Spain. We analyse three dimensions of transnational practices: travelling to the country of origin, frequency of contact with the community of origin and remittances.

Conceptualising transnational practices

Within the past twenty years, a period that several writers date from the seminal article on transnationalism published by Glick Schiller *et al.* (1992), several migration scholars have shown that migrants maintain multiple ties with their countries of origin while they adapt to the host society. Transnationalism involves multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of nation states. Members of transnational communities move easily between different cultures frequently maintain homes in two countries and pursue economic, political and cultural interests that require a simultaneous presence in both.

Transnationalism has become a key dimension in the analysis of migration, providing essential conceptual tools for explaining and understanding the current transformations of population mobility patterns. Nevertheless, the enormous popularity of this approach has led to a situation in which according to Vertovec (2003, p. 461): *transnationalism seems to be everywhere, at least in social science*. Portes *et al.* (1999) suggests that there are dangers inherent in seeking to broaden the definition of what constitutes transnationalism because in doing so one risks diluting the efficacy of the theory; in the end, every aspect of migratory praxis could be defined as a cause or consequence of transnational activity, thus encompassing everything yet explaining nothing new. In order to avoid these risks, our study borrows from the precise definition of transnationalism proposed by Portes *et al.* (2001, p. 182) who defined the concept as *activities that require regular and sustained social contacts over time across national borders for their implementation*. One of the advantages of this definition is that it allows us to establish a series of indicators of transnational practices which maintain and reinforce ties between countries of origin and destination.

Numerous studies have indicated that one of the key elements of transnational activities is direct contact with social networks and communities in the country of origin through cross-border movement (Menjívar, 2002; Walton-Roberts, 2003). At the same time, travelling to the country of origin and face to face contact with family members or friends should not only be considered in terms of reinforcing sentimental relationships but also as an important method of transmitting information about migratory destinations, economic exchange and technological modernisation. In this sense, more or less regular visits or circulatory mobility are factors that allow direct and intense interaction between migratory communities and origin communities on various levels (homes, broad social networks, associations, political groups or churches).

Communication is another crucial dimension of transnational practices, as the vitality of transnational links relies on the strength and intensity of social contacts across national borders. A number of scholars stress the role of new communication technologies as a fundamental feature of contemporary transnational practices (Hiebert and Ley, 2006). The simultaneity and immediacy allowed by modern technologies significantly intensify and expand transnational connexions (Portes *et al.*, 2002). The telephone, internet and other ICTs open up space for transnationalism as this form of communication can cross national boundaries “without actual bodily movement” (Guarnizo and Smith, 1998, p. 14).

Remittances are another manifestation of transnationalism. Among transnational practices the importance of ‘sending money home’ has grown enormously over the past few years. This practice plays a fundamental part in improving the short term economic situation of families, although its contribution to economic development at the local and national level is still being debated (Guarnizo, 2003). What is most important in the context of our study is that remittances cause members of a family network living in countries of origin to become economically dependent on resources coming from abroad, which reinforces ties across borders.

Hypotheses

When studying the transnational behaviour of migrants our goal should be not only to determine the scope and extension of these activities but also to identify possible correlates. It has been suggested that a number of factors must be considered in order to understand what is involved in transnational practices (Portes *et al.*, 2007). First of all, one of the major consequences of migration is the dispersal of the family unit both abroad and in the country of origin. This new family structure links several local situations to an international setting and shapes what has been termed by some authors the multilocal family (Mendoza, 2005). Multilocal families can be regarded as an important factor which determines transnational practices. Due to geographic mobility, the family unit is separated into various cells that meet both in origin locations and in receiving countries. From a transnational perspective, migration involves the physical separation or dispersal of the family unit, but that does not mean that family members no longer have sentimental and economic ties with each other. This new family structure links various local realities to an international setting and configures what has been called the multilocal family (Glick Schiller *et al.*, 1992). Geographic separation and the lack of daily contact convert the family into an imagined community which requires continual effort from its members to keep the links between them alive. The possible linking mechanisms imply maintaining, reducing, reinforcing or establishing links with family members (Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002). Hence, we expect multilocal family members to be more likely to carry out transnational practices than non-multilocal family members (H1).

In addition, various studies reveal that men and women undertake transnational practices differently. Several analyses revealed that immigrant women pursue a more transnational strategy in many cases with an eye to an eventual return, while men are more engaged in the social life of the receiving communities (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila, 1997; Pessar, 1999). In this sense, transnational practices reflect and simultaneously reproduce social and power relationships that determine the sexual division of labour roles within households. Moreover, in some cases differentiated reproductive roles in the family might reinforce transnational behaviour (Itzigsohn and Giorguli-Saucedo, 2005; Menjivar, 2002). On this theoretical basis we may expect Ukrainian women residing in Spain to be more involved in transnational practices than Ukrainian men (H2).

Another key factor that shapes the ways in which transnational connections develop is the institutional and legal framework established by national and supranational policies. National regulations on foreigners and migrants can either facilitate or limit the establishment and development of transnational links in the context of migration (Waldinger and Fitzgerald, 2004). Immigration laws and the rights of migrants affect their ability to move across borders and limit other forms of transnational behaviour. Irregular status in a destination country can limit cross-border mobility and also lead to greater communication via new technologies. Therefore, we expect Ukrainian migrants who stay irregularly in Spain to be less prone to visit their communities of origin but more likely to stay in contact with close acquaintances in communities of origin using electronic devices such as telephones (H3).

Data sources and methods

Most of the statistical data presented in this article come from the National Immigrant Survey (*Encuesta Nacional de Inmigrantes, ENI -2007*) conducted by the National Institute of Statistics in the beginning of 2007 with a sample of 15,465 people born outside Spain, including 223 Ukrainian migrants. The universe of the ENI-2007 consists of foreign-born residents of Spain, 16 years of age and older, who have been in Spain for at least one year. The sampling procedure was three-stage and stratified. The first stage sample units were the census sections and the second stage units were households in each selected sample section. Finally, a foreign born person from each sampled household was selected randomly (Reher and Requena, 2009).

The National Immigrant Survey provides a set of data that complement information from traditional sources about the phenomenon of immigration such as censuses and municipal registers. *ENI-2007* contains a useful set of variables including family and household geographic distribution, frequency of visits to the country of origin, remittances, characteristics, frequency and methods of communication with family members and friends in the country of origin, all of which can be used to carry out an analysis from a transnational perspective.

Given that our study involves categorical variables the principal method of analysis is based on the use of binomial logit regression models. Nevertheless it should be pointed out that estimation may be biased due to relatively small sample size. Specifically, distributions of small samples are usually highly skewed which results in coefficient overestimation. In the extreme case of the asymptotic bias, the binary outcome variable is perfectly separated by a single covariate or by a linear combination of the covariates. This separation may lead to infinite coefficients and standard errors in estimations. In order to avoid estimation bias due to relatively small sample size in our study we apply Firth's penalized-likelihood correction which consists of introducing a bias term into the standard likelihood function which itself goes to zero as $N \rightarrow \infty$, but that for small N operates to counteract the $O(N-1)$ bias¹ (Firth, 1993; Heinze and Schemper, 2002).

In our analyses we introduce three dependent bivariate variables. Firstly, we will analyse movements between places of origin and destination. It should be pointed out that in our study we obtained data from a survey conducted in the host country. This offers only limited possibilities to reconstruct all the possible patterns of immigrant mobility, since we have no access to the people who have already returned to their location of origin after a temporary stay in Spain. On the other hand, as already mentioned, the ENI 2007 sample

¹ Additionally, small size of our sample also determined the number of covariates and the way they were defined. Firstly, in order to improve asymptotic approximations used for testing our hypotheses, the number of categories in each control variable has been reduced. Secondly, we also decided keep the number of control variables to minimum.

includes only migrants who at the time of the survey had either been in Spain for at least a year or had the intention of staying in the country for at least a year. Taking into account these limitations, we have tried to examine the issue of geographic mobility patterns of Ukrainian migrants from the host country's perspective. The second dependent variable is the frequency of telephone contact with acquaintances in the community of origin. The third indicator of transnational practices in this study is the frequency of remittances sent to the country of origin. In our analysis we also introduce several control variables such as age, time of residence in Spain, educational level and occupational situation.

Ukrainian migrations to Spain – social and demographic characteristics

The history of Ukrainian migrations can be divided into four phases. During the first phase (1897-1914) entire families headed to Canada, USA and, to a lesser degree, Latin America. The following two migratory waves (1922-1939 and during the post-war period) were predominantly political in nature. Starting in the second half of the 1980s the gradual liberalisation of the political system in the USSR led to a steady change in the destinations, intensity of flows and reasons for migration. The transformation of migratory patterns increased after the country gained independence in 1991, due to various internal crises and the deterioration of living conditions among the population (Düvell, 2007; Malynovska, 2004, 2006; Kotusenko, 2007). From the start of the 1990s immigration to traditional receiving countries such as Canada, the United States or Argentina became less common and new destinations in Central and Western Europe (Czech Republic, Poland and Germany) emerged; although traditional receiving countries such as Russia and Israel remained common destinations. By the turn of the century Southern European countries, such as Portugal, Spain, Greece and Italy, appeared on the map of Ukrainian migrations (Malynovska, 2007).

The first Ukrainian economic migrants arrived in Spain in the mid 1990s. Although we lack reliable statistical data for this period, we can assume that the influx was relatively large because after the regularisation processes in 2000 and 2001 Spanish statistics displayed a sharp increase in migrants of this origin. By the end of 2000, Spanish municipalities included 10,711 Ukrainians in their registers, of which 3,537 had residence permits. In the following years the number of Ukrainians registered in the Municipal Register increased to 69,983 by the beginning of 2007 and 82,373 by 2010 (see *Figure 1*). The period of largest influx was 2002-2004, in which the year-over-year growth rate reached 40%. During 2005-2007 the number of registered people did not increase significantly, although between 2007 and 2008 there was another substantial rise in arrivals (Hosnedlová and Stanek, 2010). For purposes of comparison, we have also included data related to Romanian, Bulgarian and Polish migrants which, along with Ukrainians, constitute the largest collectives among the Central and Eastern European residents in Spain. It can be observed that the increased weight of the population from former socialist states in the whole of the foreign population living in Spain is due mainly to the massive arrival of Romanian and Bulgarian migrants, for whom Spain and Italy are the main migratory destinations (Marcu, 2007). It is also remarkable that while the Polish immigrant population was the largest of all the groups coming from Central and Eastern European countries in the 1990s, during the first half of the 2000s, the sharp increase in Romanian and Bulgarian immigration left this group behind (Stanek, 2009).

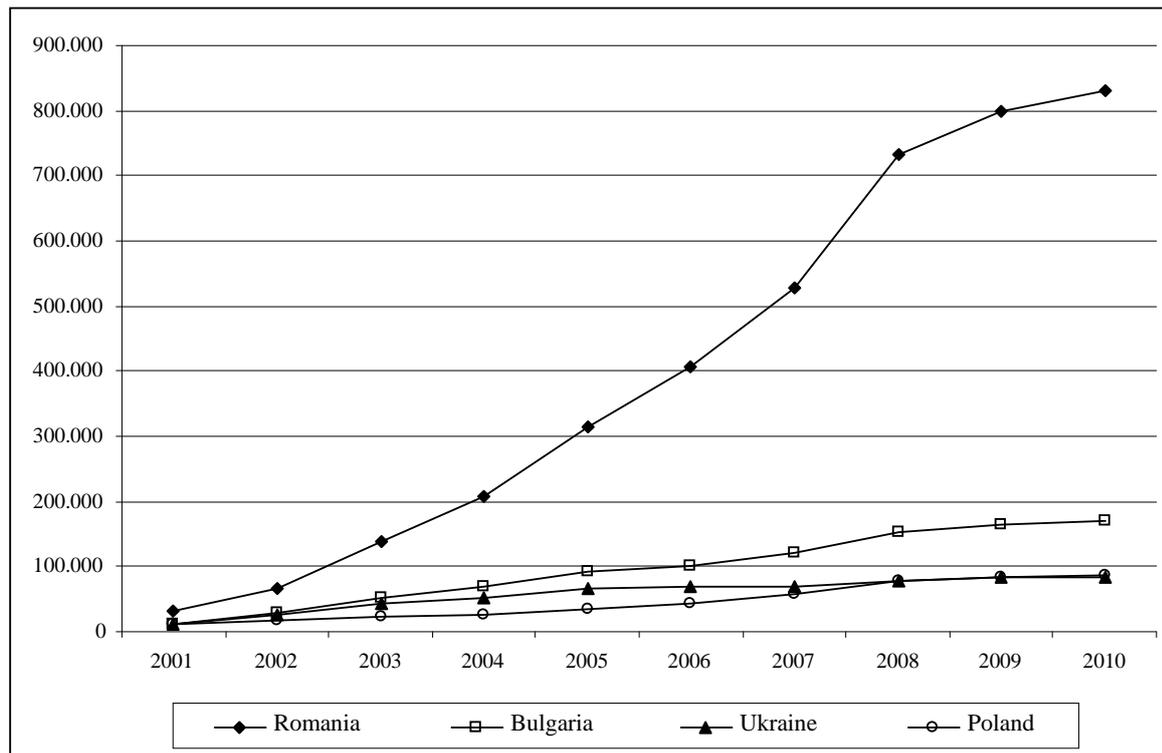


Figure 1. Changes in the number of major immigrant groups from Central and Eastern Europe in Spain 2001-2010

Source: Authors' own composition based on data from the Municipal Register 2001-2010, National Institute of Statistics (Spain).

Results of empirical analyses

This section provides answers to the questions and hypotheses presented earlier. Findings are presented as follows. Firstly, we describe some of the relevant characteristics of the sample used in our analyses. Secondly, we report findings concerning the impact of gender on transnational practices. Then we analyse the influence of geographic dispersion of family members. Finally, we discuss the impact of legal status on transnational practices.

Table 1 shows features of the sample used in our study. Firstly, we focus on transnational practices among Ukrainian migrants residing in Spain. It can be observed that visits to Ukraine are rather infrequent. Approximately one third of the migrants surveyed visit their country of origin at least once every two years. Therefore we can state that migration between Ukraine and Spain is generally long-term, with a low occurrence of circulation. In general, migrants maintain relationships with their communities of origin even after settling in Spain. The most widely used means to communicate with people who live in Ukraine is the telephone. Other means of communication are less common, although a considerable proportion of people rely on e-mails for such purposes. As recorded in *Table 1*, approximately 83% of the Ukrainians surveyed declared that they stayed in contact with close acquaintances (relatives or close friends) that live in their country of origin at least once a week. Finally, approximately half of Ukrainian migrants declared that they sent money to their country of origin at least once a year.

Table 1. Summary statistics of sample data

	Variables	total	
		N	% / mean
Dependent variable	Frequency of short stays in the country of origin (under three months' duration)		
	<i>At least every two years</i>	79	35.4
	<i>Less than every two years</i>	144	64.6
	Frequency of phone contact with family and friend at origin		
	<i>At least once a month</i>	186	83.4
	<i>Less than once a month</i>	37	16.6
Independent variable	Frequency of monetary remittances		
	<i>At least once a year</i>	105	47.1
	<i>Less than once a year</i>	118	52.9
	Geographic distribution of family unit members		
	<i>Non-multilocal families</i>	101	45.3
	<i>Multilocal families</i>	87	39.0
Control variable	<i>Persons without immediate family (no spouse/partner/offspring)</i>	35	15.7
	Gender		
	<i>Male</i>	81	36.3
	<i>Female</i>	142	63.7
	Legal situation		
	<i>Documented</i>	197	88.3
	<i>Undocumented</i>	26	11.7
	Age (mean)		36.3
	Time since first arrival at Spain (mean)		5.4
	Years of education (mean)		12.5
	Occupational situation		
	<i>Employed</i>	170	76.2
	<i>Unemployed/ non active</i>	53	23.8
	Number of cases	223	100

Regarding independent variables, the data reveal that the proportion of women is considerably higher than that of men. Only one out of three Ukrainian migrants is male. Table 1 also shows the incidence of geographic dispersion of family members among Ukrainian migrants in Spain. Following definitions presented in introductory parts of this article we consider that multilocal families are those with at least one member living outside Spain. It can be observed that in overall terms, the total number of non-multilocal families exceeds the number of multilocal ones. Of the Ukrainians surveyed in ENI-2007, 45.3% declared that all members of their families were in Spain, whereas 39% said that at least one family member was in their country of origin or elsewhere. In addition, it should be noted that data on the evolution of family composition by age and sex suggest that over the last few years an intense process of family regrouping is taking place, which is additionally confirmed by official figures on requests made for family reunification²; this explains why the proportion of people with multilocal families has been decreasing lately in the Ukrainian immigrant population.

In 2007 approximately 12% of the Ukrainians living in Spain lacked the documents required by the Spanish government for legal residence in the country. Ukrainian migrants usually enter Spain with a tourist visa and remain in the country after it expires, becoming undocumented irregular migrants (Hosnedlová and Stanek, 2010). The sample also reveals

² The Ukrainian community is amongst the first 10 countries when it comes to obtaining a work permit by the means of family regrouping (Rosario del and Manzano Sánchez, 2007).

that the average age of Ukrainian migrants is 36 years old. In addition, the level of education is relatively high; almost half of the respondents declared that they had secondary education and more than a third claimed to have tertiary education. At the time this study was carried out, the employment rate among Ukrainian migrants was 76%, making it one of the most economically active groups.

Table 2 shows results of Firth corrected binomial logit regression predicting the likelihood of participation in three specific transnational activities³:

H1 Family type

Our study reveals that family is one of the crucial links that tie migrants to their origins. In general, the pattern of effects observed in logit regression is consistent with the hypotheses we outlined earlier. Firstly, we observed that multilocal family members are substantially more likely to visit their communities of origin. Having at least one member of the immediate family in Ukraine increases the odds of visiting this country at least once after moving to Spain by a factor of 2.4. As expected, migrants with multilocal families tend to communicate by telephone more frequently than other categories of migrants. Finally, the geographic dispersion of the family is also a very significant factor when determining strategies related to remittances. Belonging to multilocal family increases the likelihood of sending money at least once a year by a factor of 3.8. The significant differences in this transnational practice between multilocal family members and migrants whose entire immediate family live in Spain suggest that the economic dependence which exists in transnational families plays a crucial role in the creation of transnational links between countries of destination and origin.

H2 Gender

Our analysis does not reveal significant differences between men and women regarding visiting their country of origin. Contrary to our expectation, our results show that immigrant men are not more likely than women to send money home. This data confirms that male breadwinner migration is not a prevalent migratory model among Ukrainians in Spain. Nonetheless, in terms of communicating with the community of origin, immigrant women are over two times more likely than men to maintain telephone contact with relatives or friends living in Ukraine. The results of the statistical analysis indicate that differences between genders in terms of transnational practices emerge when the activities do not require a considerable economic cost (such as the cost of a trip home or sending money). In this sense, the fact that women are more likely to maintain telephone contact with their communities of origin, regardless of their family situation, confirms observations in other studies indicating that women have stronger emotional ties to their countries of origin than men.

³ The statistical robustness of models was validated using standard procedures. Firstly, our models were examined by Hosmer–Lemeshow goodness-of-fit tests in order to determine whether our equations adequately described the analysed phenomenon. We observed that divergences between observed and predicted values were moderate. On the other hand, Nagelkerke's pseudo-R² value in each model is relatively low which suggests that overall predicative power of our models should be considered with considerable caution. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that the aim of our study is mainly confirmatory and we concentrate on testing hypothesis regarding specific transnational behaviour. From this point of view, we may confirm that penalized logit regression models based on Firth correction provided coherent results.

Table 2. Results of Firth corrected binomial logit regression on transnational practices (odds ratios)

	Visits to country of origin		Telephone contact		Remittances		
	<i>(Ref. at least once ever)</i>		<i>(Ref. category: At least once a month)</i>		<i>(Ref. at least once a year)</i>		
	OR	SE	OR	SE	OR	SE	
Gender (<i>Male ref.</i>)	1.81	0.712	2.04 **	0.843	0.88		0.432
Family type (<i>Non-multilocal families ref.</i>)							
<i>Multilocal families</i>	2.40 **	1.070	2.39 **	1.215	3.78 ***		1.446
<i>No immediate family</i>	0.55	0.287	0.36 *	0.182	0.26 **		0.126
Legal situation (<i>undocumented ref.</i>)	0.07 ***	0.047	0.50	0.296	0.38 **		0.166
Age	0.98	0.019	0.99	0.021	1.00		0.018
Time since arrival	1.47 ***	0.137	0.86	0.085	1.14		0.095
Years of education	1.04	0.045	1.04	0.047	0.99		0.039
Occupational situation (<i>employed ref.</i>)	0.91	0.077	0.84 *	0.074	0.86 *		0.063
Intercept	2.78	4.045	10.40 *	16.95	0.29		1.988
Observations	223		223		223		
Nagelkerke Pseudo R²	0.0679		0.1316		0.1847		

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

H3 Legal status

Regarding the impact of legal status on transnational practices, we observed that undocumented migrants have substantially lower odds (approximately 95%) of visiting Ukraine every two years or more frequently. The main factor that determines this behaviour is that Ukrainian citizens are required to have a visa to enter countries that comprise the free movement area established by the Schengen Agreement. It should be added that for irregular migrants the requirements to obtain a residence permit are important factors when it comes to devising strategies of transnational mobility. One of the main requirements for the latest regularisation that took place in the spring of 2005 was to prove that the immigrant had been living in Spain prior to August 2004 and to be in possession of a work contract for a minimum period of 6 months (3 months in the case of the agricultural sector) (Kostova, 2005). In order for an immigrant to obtain legal status through Settlement Program, which is independent of the processes of extraordinary regularisation, applicants must prove that they have lived continuously in Spain for a minimum of two years and have worked at least for one year during that time (Aguilera, 2006). Therefore, the possibility of obtaining a residence permit might reduce the transnational mobility of migrants and transform temporary migration into long term or even permanent migration. Logit regression models also show that irregular status affects the frequency of remittances. Undocumented Ukrainians are more likely to send money at least once a year to their relatives or friends in Ukraine compared to those who possess a residence permit. Finally, contrary to our expectations, irregular migrants in Spain do not tend to maintain a higher frequency of telephone contact with people close to them who remain in the country of origin. We were unable to confirm the existence of any mechanism whereby irregular migrants compensate for their lack of opportunities to visit their places of origin with more frequent indirect contact.

Conclusions

The aim of this article was to provide empirically and statistically grounded evidence about the factors that determine several transnational practices. Using the definition of transnationalism proposed by Alejandro Portes *et al.* (1999), we have established three empirical indicators of transnational practices: visits to the community of origin, indirect contact and remittances. In our analysis we try to establish how factors such as gender, legal status in Spain and the geographic dispersion of family units affect the intensity and scope of these transnational practices.

This study confirms the results obtained by other studies that revealed how family ties play a crucial role in the establishment and maintenance of links between places of origin and destination. Geographic dispersion and the absence of daily contact lead members of multilocal families to redouble their efforts to maintain links through visits, remittances and long distance communication. Our hypotheses on gender differences in transnational behaviour have been only partially confirmed. Only slight differences have been observed between men and women regarding telephone contact with friends and relatives in their communities of origin.

Finally, we observed that the legal status of Ukrainian migrants in Spain has a profound impact on their patterns of transnational behaviour. Irregular migrants face greater obstacles to visit their countries of origin and they also tend to send money to their communities of origin more frequently. This pattern could have two explanations. In the first place, visits to the place of origin (much more frequent among documented migrants, as mentioned earlier) allow migrants to make economic contributions directly. In addition, qualitative analyses of stated intentions to return suggest that because irregular migrants are less secure in their possibilities of prolonging their stay in Spain they feel more closely tied to their places of origin and this motivates them to invest or accumulate the money earned in the country of destination back home (Hosnedlová and Stanek, 2010).

In conclusion, transnational practices develop in a context in which different forces and tendencies intersect and collide. For instance, the development of global capitalism, increasingly rapid means of transportation, lower travel costs and the spread of new communication technologies allow people to travel, communicate and do business more quickly and with greater frequency. In addition, domestic immigration policies and international relations on the state level are important factors that determine the ways in which transnational links are established.

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