

Małgorzata Szyszka
Institute of Sociology
Faculty of Social Sciences
The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin
mszyszka@kul.lublin.pl

Transnational families in the light of the practice-based approach

Abstract

Today, international migration is one of the main factors that determine functioning of families. Transnational families and transnational parenting are becoming increasingly more common and have been gaining considerable interest of researchers and social practitioners. One perspective that may be useful for examining transnational families is the practice-based approach. The concepts put forward by Morgan and Finch ('doing' and 'displaying' family) help to analyse families not as structures, but as everyday practices which constitute them (Morgan) and which must be associated with a system of meanings to be displayed (Finch). In the article, the analysis of transnational family practices will focus on the 'tools' for displaying (Finch) that are characteristic of transnational family life, and it will be based on the results of Polish and international studies. The article will discuss the tools proposed by Finch, such as physical objects or the use of narratives, as well as the use of technology in communication and taking care of children, as these practices are specific to transnational families. Those 'tools' for displaying show that transnational families are flexible, they are constantly happening, and by being embedded in broader systems of meanings, they become acceptable.

Keywords: economic migration, transnational families, family practices, practice-based approach, 'doing' family, 'displaying' family

Introduction

International migration has changed Polish families and the ways they function, affecting the family structure, position and roles of family members, organisation of family life and parenthood (Danilewicz, 2010; Fiałkowska, 2019; Krzyżowski, Slany, & Ślusarczyk, 2014; 2017; Nosek, 2018; Pustułka, Struzik, & Ślusarczyk, 2015; Slany, Ślusarczyk, & Pustułka, 2016; Urbańska, 2009; 2015; Walczak, 2016; White, 2011; White, Grabowska, Kaczmarczyk, & Slany, 2018). Transnational families (families whose members are separated by migration) are increasingly more common mainly married young people). In the case of families with children, it is mostly fathers that migrate. The situations when both parents leave in order to work abroad are definitely less frequent and usually parents alternate. More parents migrate for a short time. We can also observe high dynamics of parental mobility (the total time of separation becomes longer but a migrant parent frequently visits the family left behind) (GUS, 2013; 2018; Walczak, 2016). The decision to migrate is mostly economically-driven.¹ Parents decide to migrate for the welfare of the family, to secure better future for their children, or to achieve financial stability (Danilewicz, 2010; Kaczmarczyk, 2006; Slany et al., 2016; Urbańska, 2008; 2015; White et al., 2018). Therefore, international migration is a factor that defines the life quality of transnational families, affecting their everyday family practices.

The aim of the article is to examine the practices of transnational families in relation to the concept of 'doing' and 'displaying' families that was developed by Morgan (1996) and Finch (2007) (practice-based approach). The analysis will be narrowed down to families with one migrant parent, i.e., to non-co-residential parenthood (Urbańska, 2015) (keeping in mind the diversity of types of migratory families). The article will examine the tools for 'displaying' transnational family and an attempt will be made to point out which of them are of particular importance in the context of socially acceptable patterns of family behaviour of transnational families. In the first part of the article, the practice-based approach and its relevance for analysing transnational families will be discussed, while the second part will focus on family practices of transnational families and especially on the tools for 'displaying' family.

¹ Other motivations for migration include: family matters, education, treatment/rehabilitation (GUS, 2013), as well as work and travel (migration gives an opportunity to earn money and explore the world – this motivation is common among those who are still learning) (Romaniszyn, 2003). There may also be other reasons: escape from domestic violence, the husband's alcoholism or ostracism of the local community that does not accept, for example, divorce (Urbańska, 2009).

Practice-based approach

Significant changes that have taken place in family life require new approaches of analysing them. Nowadays, the structural-functional paradigm and modernist family theory have been replaced with the paradigm of new family studies. According to Sikorska, this change can be described as a transition from the perspective of *being family* to the perspective of *'doing' family* (Sikorska, 2019).

This new approach is based, among others,² on the theory of family practices put forward by Morgan (1996; 2011; 2019) and on Finch's (2007) concept of *displaying families* based on Morgan's theory (2011). Morgan suggests that the family should be analysed not as a structure, but rather as sets of activities which have a particular meaning, associated with the family, at a given point in time. Practices "are often little fragments of daily life which are part of the normal taken-for-granted existence of practitioners. Their significance derives from their location in wider systems of meaning" (Morgan, 1996, 190). Practices are, therefore, "open-ended, spatially dispersed and temporally unfolding bundles/sets/arrays of doings and sayings" (Schatzki, 2012, 14), encompassing bodily practices and discursive practices that are related to material objects (Sikorska, 2019). These could be *practices-as-entities* (i.e., social patterns of how practices should be carried out) and *practices-as-performances* (specific behaviours) (Reckwitz, 2017). They perform a socialising function as certain habits are acquired and consolidated (Kaufmann, 2004), and they 'constitute' the social order by regulating the actions of practising actors (Schatzki, 2012). *Doing family* refers to the daily routine activities of individuals as family practices.

Finch develops Morgan's theory emphasising that "families need to be *displayed* as well as *done*" (Finch, 2007, p. 66). The concept of *displaying* is used by Finch to "emphasise the fundamentally social nature of family practices, where the meaning of one's actions has to be both conveyed to and understood by relevant others if those actions are to be effective as constituting 'family' practices" (Finch, 2007, p. 66). At the same time, she points out that *displaying family* requires linking family practices with 'wider systems of meaning' to enable them to be fully understood as such (Finch, 2007). According to Sikorska, the existence of dominant meanings is a prerequisite, because individuals must know what family practices are socially acceptable and what behaviour patterns of family life exist in the social space. It is not just family members that are involved in family practices, but also people who observe these practices as well as institutions,

² According to Sikorska (2019), the practice-based approach includes also feminist theories, sociology of the couple, configurational perspective and the perspective of intimacy and intimacy practices.

which may indirectly affect families (Sikorska, 2019). Hence, *displaying family* is the process by which doing family things enables us to define our own family and to confirm existing family relationships. Viewing our family in terms of belonging, practices, family relationships and emotions, is based on our subjective delineation of the family. This means that the family (and constructing the family) may be subject to change over time and is deeply rooted in individual biographies. Family life is an ongoing dynamic process and family relationships constantly evolve, which does not mean that they cease to be important for family members (Finch, 2007; Sikorska, 2019).

The practice-based approach assumes that families are constantly constructed and reconstructed in their family and parenting practices involving family members. It is the individuals that shape their families, despite their often routine and thoughtless doing of family things. Practices take place in the family and constitute the family, defining meanings, determining the social order and nature of family relationships (Finch, 2007; Heaphy, 2011; Morgan, 2011; Reckwitz, 2002; Sikorska, 2019; Silva & Smart, 1999; Szlendak, 2010; Williams, 2004).

Why is the practice-based approach useful for examining the situation of transnational families? It seems to be obvious to use the concept of *displaying family* when studying family ties in relationships that are not formalised (cohabitation, Living Apart Together couples, homo-parental families), or relationships related to changes in the family structure and starting a new family (divorced families, patchwork families). In transnational families, relationships also get re-organised, which follows from temporal spatial separation of family members. At the same time, family members “hold together and create something that can be seen as a feeling of collective welfare and unity, namely ‘familyhood’, even across national borders” (Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002, p. 18). Thus, it is not the structure that defines families, but family practices of their members. This means that “families are defined by the qualitative character of the relationships” (Finch, 2007, p. 71), because family members are “energetic moral actors embedded in webs of valued personal relationships, working to sustain the commitments that matter to them” (Williams, 2004, p. 41).

Moreover, according to Finch, “display is a potential feature of all families, but the need for it becomes more or less intense at different points in time, as circumstances change and relationships need to be renegotiated” (Finch, 2007, p. 72). This is the case of transnational families where temporary absence of one or two parents is a condition affecting family relationships. Hence, in the context of migration and the displaying approach, it is more useful to understand families as fluid and constantly reconstituted and negotiated, adapting across spaces and through time (Evereti & Ryan, 2011).

Taking into account fluidity of familial and caring relationships, it may be useful to adopt the *doing and displaying* perspective emphasizing how international migration

influences doing family things in transnational families. This analytical concept may show how family relationships are redefined, renegotiated and actively demonstrated by members of the family.

Furthermore, the concepts of ‘doing’ family and ‘displaying’ family can complement the theory of trans-nationality, which studies the relationships and social activities that are embedded in everyday life of actors involved in the migration process (Apitzsch & Siouti, 2007). Transnational families have two characteristic features: spatial separation of family members and a sense of community (Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002; Chee, 2005; Danilewicz, 2010; Goulbourne, 2002; Kordasiewicz, Radziewinowiczówna, & Kloc-Nowak, 2018; Krzyżowski et al., 2017; Parreñas, 2005; Slany et al., 2016; Urbańska, 2009; 2015; Walczak, 2016; White et al., 2018). Physical separation between family members does not determine loosening or breaking of the emotional bond between them (Danilewicz, 2010), but it encompasses varied processes, practices, as well as activities and strategies in everyday life. The transnational paradigm allows for, on the one hand, showing migration-driven tensions for family, and on the other hand, shows mobility as a force creating the potential for new practices in families (Biernacka, 2018; Krzyżowski et al., 2017; Parreñas, 2005; Pustułka et al., 2015; Slany, Ślusarczyk, & Guribye, 2018; Urbańska, 2009; 2015). Looking at the family through ‘transnational lens’ results in perceiving it as different from the traditional family. It is emphasised that the family life can be organised in multiple ways and it is like a process, the context of which is geographical distance. “Transnational migrants tend to merge into a single social continuum (that is, transnational social field), rather than separate their settlement ‘here’ and their communities ‘there’” (Guarnizo, Sanchez & Roach, 1999, p. 369). Therefore, trans-nationality treats the family as spatially separated, but maintaining family-like relationships. In this way, no assessment is made, and difficulties and dilemmas connected with spatial separation of family members are acknowledged.

‘Doing’ and ‘displaying’ family things in transnational families

Transnational families are primarily defined by a network of family ties that function across the borders of the states (McCarthy & Edwards, 2011). That gives them some specific characteristics that are conditioned by international migration. In transnational families, childcare is exercised by a parent staying in the home country and so the organisation of family life is flexible depending on the absence of a migrant parent. Relationships with other family members and the closest community get strengthened.

Transnational families develop individual strategies for maintaining family ties, especially since they are often strongly migration-oriented, with migration being part of the family biography and a permanent element of its functioning. This may lead to reunification of families in the country of migration (Danilewicz, 2010; Muszel, 2013; Slany et al., 2016; White, 2011). Transnational families are, therefore, in a constant state of flux or process due to diverse practices, strategies and everyday life activities.

What family practices are typical of transnational families? How do transnational families perform daily activities? How do they 'display' family practices? The analysis will be based on the results of (Polish and international) research on transnational families in relation to the concept of 'doing' and 'displaying' family. In order to show what family practices are characteristic of transnational families, the tools for display category (Finch, 2007) will be applied. The aim is to reflect on the nature of these practices and on their importance for the actors of transnational family life and for relevant others. The situation of transnational families is fairly specific, this being connected with the way parental migration is viewed and the so-called moral panic (Urbańska, 2010). Firstly, it is important to determine what tools for display are characteristic of transnational families; and secondly, to what extent *practices-as-performances* used in transnational families contribute to recognising them as socially acceptable (constituting the social order) models of family practices in the situation of parental migration.

According to Finch, tools which can be used for displaying families include physical objects (like photographs, domestic artefacts, or gifts) and the use of narratives (distinctive types of family talk); however, as she claims, "this certainly does not exhaust the range of tools available for display." That is why it is necessary to "examine the tools which people deploy in the process of conveying that 'these are my family relationships and they work'" (Finch, 2007, p. 78). An overview of the research and stories told by transnational family members allows us to extend the list of tools for displaying transnational family that was given by Finch and to add to this list, for example, the use of communication technologies and childcare. These practices are specific to transnational family life. The remaining part of the article will be devoted to these different tools for 'displaying' family.

Physical objects

In order to examine and understand social practices, it is necessary to examine and understand how they relate to material infrastructure (Schatzki, 2012), all the more so because material objects are treated as a constituting part of social practices, as 'non-human' actors operating together with human actors (Reckwitz, 2002).

According to Finch, physical objects that are important for 'displaying' family include photographs and domestic artefacts. However, she treats these as keepsakes that are passed on in the family and symbolise the relationship with an individual who has died (Finch, 2007). In transnational families, the role of keepsakes can be played by items that migrant parents take with them (e.g., photos, gifts from children /spouse) because these items are emotionally important for them and remind them of home. By carrying them or having them in a new place, migrants 'display' family and close family ties. Such a display of family life can be important both for migrants themselves and for relevant others.

Another tool that Finch mentions in the category of physical objects is giving of gifts, especially carefully selected for a particular individual to convey the meaning of the relationship. She treats this as an important part of the process of display (Finch, 2007). Indeed, giving presents is a common practice in transnational families. However, "introducing this 'consumption frame' into interactions with children cannot be interpreted only as spoiling children. (...) The necessity of separation should be somehow compensated in relations with the child, as this can prevent breaking the bond" (Urbańska, 2015, p. 234). Consequently, although this practice may have some other, deeper basis, this is a way of 'displaying' family and maintaining family ties.

Remittances (money as a physical object) can be perceived in a similar way. Obviously, they are connected with the economic character of migration as a way of providing for family and investment in a better future. This in turn can translate into family ties, as sending money home has also a social context – it expresses love and faithfulness (White & Grabowska, 2018). Just like giving gifts, remittances make it easier for family members to understand separation (rationalisation strategy). Research shows that children are less emotionally affected by separation if it is motivated by the necessity (or desire) to improve the family's economic status (Bogucka, 2017). In this context remittances can be treated as 'displaying' family.

It seems that there is another physical object that may be even more important for transnational families, namely home – owning, building or buying it. The place of living is inseparably connected with the family. Doing family things is symbolically and practically interwoven into home (Rabikowska, 2010; Ślusarczyk & Pustułka, 2017; Wiles, 2008). Very often, home (which is treated as an investment in the home country, but also a place connected with some dreams) is the reason behind international migration. Building a house or investing in a house/flat already owned, symbolises a higher status and improved standard of living. Migrants make improvements to their homes and gardens (Grabowska, 2018). Home is of particular importance to migrants living outside their homeland. This is a place where family and cultural rituals are maintained, a place that provides the basis for continuing or

redefining the family's identity by incorporating new elements of the host country. As Ślusarczyk and Pustułka emphasise in their study of Polish emigrants in Norway, "home is never abandoned (in Poland) and recreated (in Norway) in one moment, but rather it is constantly being re-created by everyday activities in which certain places are negotiated and recognized as close, which ultimately transforms them into the domain of home" (Ślusarczyk & Pustułka, 2017, p. 33).

How do children of non-co-residential parents perceive their home? Walczak's research shows that although they are less likely to choose positive and neutral terms when describing their home, these differences are not statistically significant. Nevertheless, they tend to spend their free time outside home more often, especially when both parents migrate (Walczak, 2016).

Thus, home is a special tool for display for transnational families. It requires specific practices, depending on the type of migration. Home is displayed differently by short-term migrants (who treat home in their own country as something very important), differently by long-term migrants and reunification families (we are building a new home, we miss the old one), and still differently by families left behind in the home country (home as a territorially dispersed household). Nevertheless, daily activities as routine family practices constitute home as a family space that is important for its members.

The use of narratives

According to Finch, a narrative is yet another type of a tool for 'displaying' family. "Stories or narratives about family relationships provide a vehicle through which 'my family' and its character can be communicated. (...) Narratives are seen as stories which people tell to themselves and to others about their own family relationships, which enable them to be understood and situated as part of an accepted repertoire of what 'family' means" (Finch, 2007, pp. 77–78). Generally speaking, narratives enable us to formulate and communicate our own perception of the social world (Roberts, 2002), including family life. Thus, stories or narratives about family relationships are a tool through which 'my family' and its character can be conveyed. Undoubtedly, narratives are linked with emotions (if we want to understand practices, we need to understand specific emotions that are built into those practices; Reckwitz, 2017) and the language symbols (in discursive practices the participants ascribe, in a routinised way, certain meanings to certain objects (which thus become 'signs') to understand other objects, and above all, in order to do something (Reckwitz, 2017).

A number of qualitative research studies show how members of transnational families present their families. Their narratives display great commitment, love,

dedication, help and support (Abrego, 2009; Abrego & Schmalzbauer, 2018; Biernacka, 2018; Danilewicz, 2010; Fiałkowska, 2019; Muszel, 2013; Parreñas, 2005; Phoenix, 2019; Pustułka et al., 2015; Slany et al., 2016; Ślusarczyk & Pustułka, 2017; Urbańska, 2015; White et al., 2018). However, there are also narratives that reveal unhappiness or life difficulties of women (Urbańska, 2015). Overall, these narratives are full of emotions, feelings, affections, excitements or tensions, which shows the importance of the family for its members. Narratives are undoubtedly a means through which transnational families 'display' their family life.

What should also be noted is the importance of mother tongue for migrants. It is the basis of their identity and it fulfils communicative functions which are vital for building family ties. It can be observed that emigrants (especially mothers) are increasingly more aware of the importance and benefits of using the native language at home (Pustułka, 2016). Knowledge of the language, meanings, patterns and symbols makes it easier to learn family stories and to have a family talk.

The use of technology in communication

Nowadays, technology plays a crucial role in communication between spatially separated family members. By making direct communication possible, it strengthens emotional ties, a sense of loyalty and belonging (Vertovec, 2012). Levitt strongly emphasises that thanks to direct and frequent virtual contacts, migrants are actively involved in the daily life of the family left behind, in a way that is fundamentally different than in the past (Levitt, 2001). Virtual participation in everyday practices (cooking, doing homework with children, giving advice or disciplining children) allows migrants to keep up to date, to maintain family ties and reduce emotional and educational costs (Danilewicz, 2010; Madianou & Miller, 2012; Ryan, Sales, Tilko & Siara, 2009; Urbańska, 2015; Vertovec, 2012; Walczak, 2016).

This is possible thanks to new features and functions of modern technologies, in particular mobile phones (Cabanes & Acedera, 2012; Pertierra, 2006) and computers with the Internet access (Hiller & Franz, 2004). The power of mobile phone lies in that it combines the characteristics of both speech (calling) and writing (text messaging). It provides people with the opportunity of saying things that usually cannot be verbalised face to face (Pertierra, 2006). Telephoning practices are developed. For example, calling is preferred over to writing text messages, because text messages can be left unnoticed, calls demand immediate attention (Cabanes & Acedera, 2012).

Research shows that the importance of communication technologies varies depending on who is a migrant. Mother-away-families tend to maximise the mobile

phone and the computer as a tool of surveillance (Cabanes & Acedera, 2012; Chee, 2005; Madianou & Miller, 2012; Vertovec, 2012; Walczak, 2016). This supervision may take the form of rigorous control, for example ‘ambush calls’, i.e., surprising mother’s calls to check if children are actually helping out at home (Cabanes & Acedera, 2012); or it can be more of a partner conversation and negotiation with children (Urbańska, 2015). Generally, the mothers are certainly able to use their transnational mothering rituals via the mobile phone to parlay accusations that they might have abandoned their children. The technology helps to alleviate their ambivalent feelings that often accompany the decision to migrate abroad.

But then again, transnational family relationships via the mobile phone can sometimes end up being a mere tool to maintain the illusion of co-presence, rather than a way to deepen familial bonds (Cabanes & Acedera, p. 2012; Madianou & Miller, 2012). The mobile phone tends to “discourage deep and extended conversations in favour of immediate and often ritualised exchanges”³ (Pertierra, 2006, p. 11). So, communication technologies do not always contribute to building deep relationships, but this is most often because of the weak relationships between parents and children in the pre-migration period.

Nevertheless, it is true that the technology can mitigate some effects of migration by providing more frequent and instantaneous communication. It is also an effective tool for ‘doing’ and ‘displaying’ transnational family through “dispersed practices and family ties” (Morgan, 2011). It is much easier to maintain family ties through the telephone or Internet. Therefore, despite spatial separation between its members, the transnational family performs its caring and upbringing and emotional-expressive functions, in some way, limited as it may be (the direct physical presence of the parent is the norm of care). Emotional intimacy turns out to be more important than physical presence, and the former can be built in many ways, also at a distance (Pawlak, 2012; Urbańska, 2015), especially since the physical absence of a parent is not equal to their emotional absence (Avila, 2008). Therefore, maintaining active and frequent communication between the migrating parent and children and the spouse /partner is a displaying practice. Maintaining transnational family ties involves other family members as well (especially grandparents). These practices create a transnational intergenerational arch, i.e., a social space where a sense of security, support and love is felt (Slany & Strzemecka, 2018). Finch states that “the activity of display is an important part of the nurturing and development of relationships so that their

³ An example from the research conducted by Cabanes and Acedera: “Eddie’s son Joshua says that there are times when he texts his mother ‘I miss you’ only because he feels obliged to make her happy. He says that in truth, he never really misses his mother anymore because he has become used to her absence” (Cabanes & Acedera, 2012, p. 927).

‘family-like’ qualities are positively established” (Finch, 2007, p. 80). Referring to her statement, it can be concluded that the use of technology in communication as a tool for ‘displaying’ transnational families is successful.

Taking care of children

Organising childcare and taking care of children is extremely challenging for transnational parents. It is especially in this aspect that ‘displaying’ families can be visible, as if to confirm that my family is still there. Parenthood, and in particular motherhood, has the form of transnational relationships (Urbańska, 2015). Parents (especially mothers) work hard to maintain a sense of ‘familyhood’, collectivity and kinship when they migrate and continue to be central to the process of intergenerational ‘care circulation’ (Merla & Baldassar, 2016). They also rely on the help of the closest or extended family (mainly grandparents) (Urbańska, 2015; Pawlak, 2012; Walczak, 2016).

Taking care of children is organised differently depending on who migrates. In Mother-Away-Families, women are more involved in helping their husbands take care of children. In fact, transnational motherhood is characterised by constant preoccupation of women with home life and their sense of responsibility for the practical organisation of family life, despite spatial separation from their children and family (Evergeti & Ryan, 2011; Muszel, 2013; Pustułka, 2016; Slany et al., 2016; Urbańska, 2015). “The traditional family model, where the woman’s domain is home and taking care of the family, and the man is intentionally moved away from activities perceived as typically female, is reproduced also in a migration situation” (Muszel, 2013, p. 99). Studies do not show any changes towards egalitarian relations, but rather the consolidation of traditional gender roles. Research into caring practices in transnational families points to their matrifocal character and transfer in matrilinear structures (Walczak, 2016).

Moreover, migrant mothers encounter social ostracism which is connected with criticism for abandoning their children (Urbańska, 2009). Two conditions must be met to legitimise transnational motherhood: migration must be justified economically and adequate care must be provided for children left behind in the home country (Urbańska, 2015; Muszel, 2013). Therefore, migrant mothers, being aware of the consequences of their absence, strongly emphasise their care practices. What is more, mothers themselves are not willing to change their traditional beliefs and practices connected with being a wife, and especially being a mother (Muszel, 2013; Abrego, 2009).

In Father-Away-Families, the situation is quite different. Responsibility for organising childcare rests on the mother, while fathers are not really involved in home life, which, in turn, has other consequences – migrant fathers “becoming

nominal fathers” (Fiałkowska, 2019, p. 9). Fathers focus on working, and when they return home, they take on the role of a disciplining figure or try to gain the favour with children by bringing them gifts. This can be explained by emotional separation between fathers and children. Migrating fathers experiencing emotional estrangement from their children hold on to financial means as a way to substitute for their lack of other involvement into family matters (Fiałkowska, 2019; Parreñas, 2008; Pustułka et al., 2015). Some fathers do not want to be only economic providers and the growing societal pressure on active and engaged fatherhood only aggravates their stress (Pustułka et al., 2015; Ślusarczyk & Pustułka, 2018). However, the father’s visits home often disrupt the daily routine, as his absence (especially long-one) changes relationships in the family. Fathers themselves admit that they feel alienated, and so they treat migration as a rest from family problems (Abrego, 2009; Fiałkowska, 2019; Schmalzbauer, 2015).

The new norm for the life of transnational family is to be apart. This is reflected in doing family practices, especially those connected with taking care of and bringing up children. Research shows that the functioning of migrant parents between the homeland and the country of migration, attempts to meet the expectations placed upon them from traditional perception of gender roles (Fiałkowska, 2019; Parreñas, 2008; Pustułka et al., 2015). Migrant mothers successfully reconstitute mothering by always ‘being there’ despite the physical distance, while migrant fathers tend not to do caring work that would increase their intimacy and familiarity with children (Parreñas, 2008). Transnational motherhood, therefore, is displayed by caring and communication practices, while transnational fatherhood – by practices of providing for the family and maintaining the authority of the head of the family. This way of ‘displaying’ parenthood indicates greater activity and involvement of women, which is probably connected with higher societal gender expectations that are placed on women.

Conclusion

The practice-based approach enables us to examine inter-family interactions and everyday family life. It views the family dynamically, as a process. It is individuals, their practices and family relationships, their sense of belonging to the family and their emotions that construct the family (Sikorska, 2019). The family is constantly happening, it is a process, with family ties being rooted in family practices. The aim of this analysis was to identify family practices typical of transnational families (‘doing’ family things). Finch’s framework of tools for display was applied in order to indicate whether these practices constitute the social order of transnational families.

In the case of transnational families, 'doing' family things means maintaining family ties, redefining parenting roles and linking to an extended family. This can be seen in practices such as communication between family members, taking care of children (or of other family members), and through physical objects, especially remittances. As Bryceson and Vuorela claim, migration does not diminish the importance of previous rituals and family practices (Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002), but rather makes them more dynamic and flexible. The main task of transnational parents is to build strong family ties; however, this task is done differently by migrant mothers and migrant fathers.

In general, practices in transnational families are somewhat routinised and regular (cyclical), embedded in daily rituals, and they serve to prove 'long-distance family life'. They are multi-dimensional and multi-faceted, in this way fulfilling a number of family functions (caring, educational, economic, or emotional and expressive). They do not exist only in the minds of members of transnational families (Finch, 2007), but are displayed. 'Displaying' practices in transnational families shows others relevant that they are rooted in the family situation, which is determined by international migration. They sanction the reality of transnational families by reflecting wider systems of meaning (the role of home, communication, or support). The fact that they are embedded in the contexts of meanings (culturally defined) makes them socially acceptable.

Is, therefore, displaying transnational family's things enough to recognise them as socially accepted models of family practices? Some tools for display are easier to be accepted (communication technologies), others meet with social resistance (distance parenting). Their use varies depending on the stage of the family life cycle (pre-transnational, transnational, post-transnational; Muszel, 2013), they are negotiable and adapted to the current needs of families.

Drawing on Finch's concept and Sikorska's analysis of family practices (Sikorska, 2019), questions remain about the inconsistency between how transnational families are displayed and how they are done when the relevant others are not present. How is the transnational family presented, and how would family members like it to be presented? Who ascribes meanings to family practices, especially in the context of transnational family life? Are these meanings negotiated between the participants of practices themselves, or perhaps, more broadly, when confronted with relevant others? Notwithstanding these questions, the practice-based approach is very useful for analysing family relationships in the transnational dimension.

References

- Abrego, L. (2009). Economic well-being in Salvadoran transnational families: How gender affects remittance practices. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 71(4), 1070–1085.
- Abrego, L., & Schmalzbauer, L. (2018). Illegality, motherhood and place: Undocumented Latinas making meaning and negotiating daily life. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 67, 10–17.
- Apitzsch, U., & Siouti, I. (2007). *Biographical analysis as an interdisciplinary research perspective in the field of migration studies*. Frankfurt am Main: Johann Wolfgang Goethe Universität. Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242222997_Biographical_Analysis_as_an_Interdisciplinary_Research_Perspective_in_the_Field_of_Migration_Studies (accessed: 10.07.2019).
- Avila, E. (2008). *Transnational motherhood and fatherhood: Gender challenges and coping*. University of Southern California. Retrieved from: <http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/ref/collection/p15799coll127/id/192976> (accessed: 6.11.2019).
- Biernacka, M. (2018). Transnational families in Spain. Marriage, nationality and gender. *Studia Migracyjne – Przegląd Polonijny*, 2(168), 189–201.
- Bogucka, K. (2017). Funkcjonowanie społeczno-emocjonalne dzieci w okresie późnego dzieciństwa w rodzinach migracyjnych. Ilustracja empiryczna. *Roczniki Pedagogiczne*, 9(3), 217–242.
- Bryceson, D., & Vuorela, U. (2002). Transnational families in the twenty-first century. In: W.D. Bryceson, U. Vuorela (Eds.), *The Transnational Family. New European Frontiers and Global Networks*. Oxford: Berg Publishers.
- Cabanes, J.V.A., & Acedera, K.A.F. (2012). Of mobile phones and mother-fathers: Calls, texts, and conjugal power relations of mother-away Filipino families. *New Media and Society*, 14(6), 916–930.
- Chee, M.W. (2005). *Taiwanese American transnational families. Women and kin work*. New York–London: Routledge.
- Danilewicz, W. (2010). *Rodzina ponad granicami. Transnarodowe doświadczenia wspólnoty rodzinnej*. Białystok: TRANS HUMANA.
- Evereti, V., & Ryan, L. (2011). Negotiating transnational caring practices among migrant families. In: A. Kraler, E. Kofman, M. Kohli, C. Schmoll (Eds.), *Gender Generations and the Family in International Migration*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Fiałkowska, K. (2019). Remote fatherhood and visiting husbands: Seasonal migration and men's position within families. *Comparative Migration Studies*, 7(2), 1–17.
- Finch, J. (2007). Displaying families. *Sociology*, 41(1), 65–81.
- Goulbourne, H. (2002). *Caribbean transnational experience*. London: Pluto Press.
- Grabowska, I. (2018). Social remittances. Channels of diffusion. In: A. White, I. Grabowska, P. Kaczmarczyk, K. Slany, *The Impact of Migration on Poland. UE Mobility and Social Change*. London: UCL Press.

- Guarnizo, L., Sanchez, A., & Roach, E. (1999). Mistrust, fragmented solidarity and transnational migration: Colombians in New York city and Los Angeles. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 22(2), 367–396.
- GUS. (2011, 2013). *Migracje zagraniczne ludności. Narodowy Spis Powszechny Ludności i Mieszkań*. Warszawa: GUS.
- GUS (2018), *Informacja o kierunkach i rozmiarach czasowej emigracji z Polski w latach 2004–2017*. Warszawa: GUS.
- Heaphy, B. (2011). Critical relational displaying. In: E. Dermott, J. Seymour (Eds.), *Displaying Families. A New Concept for the Sociology of Family Life*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hiller, H.H., & Franz, T.M. (2004). New ties, old ties and lost ties: The use of the Internet in diaspora. *New Media and Society*, 6(6), 731–752.
- Kaczmarczyk, P. (2006). *Współczesne migracje zagraniczne Polaków – skala, struktura oraz potencjalne skutki dla rynku pracy*. Warszawa: Fundacja Inicjatyw Społeczno-Ekonomicznych.
- Kaufmann, J.C. (2004). *Ego. Socjologia jednostki. Inna wizja człowieka i konstrukcji podmiotu*. Warszawa: Oficyna Naukowa (translated by K. Wakar).
- Kordasiewicz, A., Radziewinowiczówna, A., & Kloc-Nowak, W. (2018). Ethnomoralities of care in transnational families: Case intentions as a missing link between norm and arrangements. *Journal of Family Studies*, 18(119), 76–93.
- Krzyżowski, Ł., Slany, K., & Ślusarczyk, M. (2014). Demograficzne i społeczne aspekty poakcesyjnych migracji rodzin. In: M. Lesińska, M. Okólski, K. Slany, B. Solga (Eds.), *Dekada członkowska Polski w UE. Społeczne skutki emigracji Polaków po 2004 roku*. Warszawa: Warsaw University Publishing House.
- Krzyżowski, Ł., Slany, K., & Ślusarczyk, M. (2017). Care issues in the transnational families. A Polish research review. *Polish Sociological Review*, 199, 367–385.
- Levitt, P. (2001). *The transnational villagers*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Madianou, M., & Miller, D. (2012). *Migration and new media: Transnational families and poly-media*. London–New York: Routledge.
- McCarthy, J.R., & Edwards, R. (2011). Transnational families. In: J.R. McCarthy, R. Edwards, *Key Concepts in Family Studies*. London: Sage.
- Merla, L., & Baldassar, L. (2016). Concluding reflections: “Care circulation” in an increasingly mobile world: further thoughts. *Papers. Revista de Sociologia*, 101(2), 275–284.
- Morgan, D.H.J. (1996). *Family connections. An introduction to family studies*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Morgan, D.H.J. (2011). *Rethinking family practices*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Morgan, D.H.J. (2019). Family troubles, troubling family and family practices. *Journal of Family Issue*, 40(16), 2225–2238.
- Muszel, M. (2013). Tradycyjna rola w nietradycyjnej rodzinie. Transnarodowa migracja polskich żon i matek – studium przypadku. *InterAlia. Journal of Queer Studies*, 8, 91–103.

- Nosek, K. (2018). *Migracja zarobkowa a poczucie jakości życia rodzin transnarodowych*. Olsztyn: Centrum Badań Społecznych UWM.
- Parreñas, R.S. (2005). *Children of global migration. Transnational families and gendered woes*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Parreñas, R.S. (2008). Transnational fathering: Gendered conflicts, distant disciplining and emotional gaps. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 34(7), 1057–1072.
- Pawlak, A. (2012). Matka-migrantka kontra matka-Polka. Normatywne i nienormatywne modele macierzyństwa w społeczeństwie ryzyka. In: A. Pawlak, E. Hyży (Eds.), *Rodzina – terra incognita? Przemiany rodziny w XXI wieku*. Łódź: Medical University of Lodz Publishing House.
- Pertierra, R. (2006). *Transforming technologies: Altered selves, mobile phone and internet use in the Philippines*. Manila, Philippines: De La Salle University Press.
- Phoenix, A. (2019). Situating children's family troubles: Poverty and serial migration. *Journal of Family Issue* (in press). Retrieved from: <https://core.ac.uk/reader/227336380> (accessed: 8.11.2019).
- Pustułka, P. (2016). Ethnic, gender and class identities of Polish migrant mothers: Intersecting maternal narratives with transnationalism and integration. *Social Identities*, 2(1), 44–61.
- Pustułka, P., Struzik, J., & Ślusarczyk, M. (2015). Caught between breadwinning and emotional provisions: The case of Polish migrant fathers in Norway. *Studia Humanistyczne AGH*, 14(2), 117–139.
- Rabikowska, M. (2010). The ritualisation of food, home and national identity among Polish migrants in London. *Social Identities*, 16(3), 377–398.
- Reckwitz, A. (2002). Toward a theory of social practices. A development in culturalist theorizing. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 5(2), 243–263.
- Reckwitz, A. (2017). Practices and their affects. In: A. Hui, T. Schatzki, E. Shove (Eds.), *The Nexus of Practice: Connections, Constellations and Practitioners*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Roberts, B. (2002). *Biographical research*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Romaniszyn, K. (2003). *Kulturowe implikacje międzynarodowych migracji*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL.
- Ryan, L., Sales, R., Tilko, M., & Siara, B. (2009). Family strategies and transnational migration: Recent Polish migrant in London. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 35(1), 61–77.
- Schatzki, T. (2012). A primer on practices: Theory and research. In: J. Higgs, R. Barnett, S. Billett, M. Hutchings, F. Trede (Eds.), *Practice-Based Education. Perspectives and Strategies*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Schmalzbauer, L. (2015). Temporary and transnational: Gender and emotion in the lives of Mexican guest worker fathers. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 38(2), 211–226.
- Sikorska, M. (2019). *Praktyki rodzinne i rodzicielskie we współczesnej Polsce – rekonstrukcja codzienności*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe SCHOLAR.
- Silva, E.B., & Smart, C. (Eds.) (1999). *The "new" family?* London: Sage Publishing.

- Slany, K., & Strzemecka, S. (2018). Children as kin-keepers of a transnational family: Inclusive understanding of a family in the eyes of children. In: K. Slany, M. Ślusarczyk, P. Pustułka, E. Guribye, *Transnational Polish Families in Norway. Social Capital, Integration, Institutions and Care*. Viena: Peter Lang.
- Slany, K., Ślusarczyk, M., & Pustułka, P. (2016). *Polskie rodziny transnarodowe: dzieci, rodzice, instytucje i więzi z krajem*, Kraków-Warszawa: Komitet Badań nad Migracjami PAN.
- Slany, K., Ślusarczyk, M., Pustułka, P., & Guribye, E. (2018). *Transnational Polish families in Norway. Social capital, integration, institutions and care*. Viena: Peter Lang.
- Szlendak, T. (2010). *Socjologia rodziny*. Warszawa: Polish Scientific Publishers PWN.
- Ślusarczyk, M., & Pustułka, P. (2017). Transnarodowość w przestrzeni domowej polskich rodzin migracyjnych w Norwegii. *Studia Humanistyczne AGH*, 16(1), 23–37.
- Ślusarczyk, M., Pustułka, P. (2018). Ekonomiczna nieracjonalność i emocjonalny zysk: decyzje migracyjne w polskich rodzinach. *Społeczeństwo i Rodzina*, 57, 122–136.
- Urbańska, S. (2008). Transnarodowość jako perspektywa ujęcia macierzyństwa w warunkach migracji. In: K. Slany (Eds.), *Migracje kobiet. Perspektywa wielowymiarowa*. Kraków: Jagiellonian University Publishing House.
- Urbańska, S. (2009). Matka migrantka. Perspektywa transnarodowości w badaniu przemian ról rodzicielskich. *Studia Migracyjne – Przegląd Polonijny*, 1(31), 61–84.
- Urbańska, S. (2010). ‘Cała Polska liczy eurosieroty’. Panika moralna i płęć w wykluczeniu oraz stygmatyzacji rodzin migrantów. *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, 3, 61–88.
- Urbańska, S. (2015). *Matka Polka na odległość. Z doświadczeń migracyjnych robotnic 1989–2010*. Toruń: Nicolaus Copernicus University Publishing House.
- Vertovec, S. (2012). *Transnarodowość*. Kraków: Jagiellonian University Publishing House (translated by I. Kołbon).
- Walczak, B. (2016). *Rodzina transnarodowa. Konteksty i implikacje*. Warszawa: Scholar.
- White, A. (2011). The mobility of Polish families in the West of England: Translocalism and attitudes to return. *Studia Migracyjne – Przegląd Polonijny*, 1(139), 11–32.
- White, A., & Grabowska, I. (2018). Literature review and theory: The impact of migration on sending countries, with particular reference to Central and Eastern Europe. In: A. White, I. Grabowska, P. Kaczmarczyk, K. Slany, *The Impact of Migration on Poland. UE Mobility and Social Change*. London: UCL Press.
- White, A., Grabowska I., Kaczmarczyk, P., & Slany, K. (2018). *The impact of migration on Poland. UE mobility and social change*. London: UCL Press.
- Wiles, J. (2008). Sense of home in a transnational social space: New Zealanders in London. *Global Networks*, 8(1), 116–137.
- Williams, F. (2004). *Rethinking families*. London: Calouste Gulbenkin Foundation.