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The Transformations of Parenting Role Models in Families of Ukrainian Migrant Women

Ukrainian labour migration, or «zarobitchanstvo», is a phenomenon with long history, yet it acquired a wide-scale character only after the demise of the USSR. Nowadays this process encompasses from 10% t 20% of the working age population, while together with migrants' family members it reaches around 1/3 of the total population of the country. Due to such an «en-masse» scale, the labour migration from Ukraine makes a tangible impact on social well-being of the society and on its principle institutions, primarily on the family which is the first to be effected by the modernization process through the increasing economic mobility of the population. This is manifested among other things, in the emergence of new configurations of family relationships pertaining to the «age of migration» and particularly in such a new category of families as «transnational families of migrants». The transnational family (TF) is understood here as a modernized model

of family relationship brought about by the increase of international migration and the emergence of network society and based on the «imagined community» and cross-border family relationship of its mobile members, one or more of whom work abroad, but sustain regular kinship ties with the family left behind, perform their family and parenting obligations, and are involved in a distant household management (Tolstokorova 2013). Hence, not all families of migrants may be considered transnational, insofar as the latter category covers only those family units whereby the departure of one or more members abroad does not end up in the weakening or decline of family connections, but leads to their transformations on a cross-border basis. The *main goal* of the paper is to analyze the impact of labour migration on parenting role models of members of Ukrainian transnational mother-away families, as long as the research shows that such families experience the effect of transnationalism and migrancy more than others due to the roles of social reproduction prescribed to women in a traditionalist society. *Methodology of the study*: The findings of the paper are drawing from the results of a multi-staged field research which included non-participant and participant observation, 25 in-depth interviews with expert in gender issues, migration and social policy; semi-formal interviews and 2 focus group discussions with 43 Ukrainian migrants, members of transnational families and actors of migrants' networks and non-participant observation of migrants' daily practices in hosting societies. The *research findings* show that the experience of transnationalism and migrancy entail transformations in parenting role models of both migrant mothers, who assume roles of family providers, and of their husbands left behind at home who often perform their parenting roles and functions of household managers quite successfully. The transformation of the motherhood roles takes place by way of the so-called «intensified mothering» This may put forth the necessity to manage to combine the work abroad with the administration of daily life at home from a distance by controlling the use of remittances, making telephone calls, maintaining e-mail communications, sending SMS and letters, etc. Yet, the work abroad increases the double burden of migrant mothers, but may not necessarily entail a higher family status for them. Moreover,

women often face a conflict with the traditional gender order in the family and community which becomes alien to their new gender mentality and gender standards. As a result, women have either to return to the traditional gender contract they had had before migration, or their marriages dissolve because they do not want to readjust to patriarchal gender roles, while their husbands and kin are not ready to accept them in their new roles of bread-winners and family leaders. Regarding the transformations of parenting roles of fathers left behind, the field research showed that even if they take place, they usually have a short-term effect. Despite they can have impact on parenting behavior of individual fathers, they do not affect the culture of fatherhood in Ukraine overall.

Keywords: Ukrainian transnational family, labour migration, parenting role models.

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