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Precarious Transnationalism among Displaced Populations during Wartimes: Ukrainians in Canada and Germany

Aryan Karimi & Yuliya Byelikova

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Ukrainians in Canada and Germany**

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Abstract

In peace or conflict, the well-established diasporas identify with the myth of their nation and mobilize their socioeconomic resources to practice transnational nationalism to support the economy and politics of their origin countries. During wartimes, what is the shape of transnational identifications and practices among the recently displaced populations? Based on a mixed-methods approach to data collection with displaced Ukrainians' in Canada (45 semi-structured interviews) and Germany (423 qualitative survey responses), we examine the evolving nature transnationalism in real time as Ukrainians emigrate and arrive in host countries. We find strong evidence for transnational national identification with a gendered pattern showing that, among our participants, women have stronger and men weaker nationalistic sentiments. We also find varying rates of transnational practices among the recently displaced populations. Our findings contribute to the debates on temporal and material aspects of transnational nationalism.

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Introduction

There are now 6.5 million displaced Ukrainians (UNHCR 2024) who are trying to manage their daily lives with an eye to the unfolding war in Ukraine and another to their futures. As of the summer of 2024, about 4.25 Ukrainians have received temporary resident permits under the EU Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) (Eurostat 2024), and nearly 1 million have received three-year visas for stays in Canada under Canada's Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET) program —about 300,000 Ukrainians had arrived in Canada at the time of writing this paper (Government of Canada 2024). Their unique temporal and material uncertainties amidst an ongoing war invoke important questions about loss, maintenance, and reconstruction of transnational identities and traditions vis-a-vis their homeland. The main question is whether displaced populations, who live precarious lives, engage in transnational practices and identifications with their origin countries.

Transnational lives of immigrants, refugees, and displaced populations are central to migration studies (Lacroix 2022; Wahlbeck 2002). Early research examined the ways that diasporic populations maintain their ties with their nation-states instead of abandoning them in favor of building new lives in their host countries (Basch, Glick-Schiller, and Blanc 1994). Consequent debates added more precision by differentiating between gendered patterns of transnationalism (Itzigsohn and Giorguli-Saucedo 2005; Pessar and Mahler 2003) and by distinguishing transnational identifications with homelands from the proactive practices of demonstrating one's belonging to home culture and networks (Levitt and Glick-Schiller 2004; Vertovec 1999). Transnational practices that provide steady rates of sending socioeconomic remittances and political lobbying were said to be impacted by macro-level mobility regimes on emigration (Adamson 2023; Fröhlich and Müller-Funk 2023) and on immigration-integration (Waldinger 2015; Portes, Haller, and Guarnizo 2002), by diasporic networks and infrastructures (Kopchick et al. 2022; Riano-Alcala and Goldring 2014), and by émigrés' micro-level socioeconomic capital and political engagements (Soehl, Stolle, and Scott 2024; Guarnizo, Portes, and Haller 2003).

Although immigrants and refugees alike engage in transnationalism (Koser 2007; Shami 1996), the limitation of transnational practices is most visible among those who flee international and civil wars since they are likely to leave documents and assets behind, lose contact and temporal presence with their families under displacement and refugee conditions, and reinstate origin-country ethnonational divisions in their diasporic lives (Kalantzi 2024; Carling, Erdal, Talleraas 2021; Østergaard-Nielsen 2003). As such, depending on individuals' access to macro- and micro-level resources, transnationalism is not a certain feature of diasporic life but a temporally and materially contingent practice with rising and falling rates over time (Brun 2015; Fitzgerald 2012; Kivisto 2001).

Building on the transnationalism scholarship and mixed-methods data (45 semi-structured interviews in Canada and 423 qualitative survey responses in Germany), we show that displaced populations' transnationalism evolves as individuals find ways of reconnecting with their origin-countries and diasporic communities and integrate into the housing and job markets of their new countries. Specifically, we show that transnational identification is imbued with a gendered pattern among our participants with women having stronger and men weaker nationalistic sentiments. We argue that this pattern emerges as a result of an emigration selection bias rooted in Ukraine's exit ban on military-age men. We also find relatively low rates of transnational practices, with moments of upsurge, that we argue is due to the slow progress of resource accumulation, especially among the recently displaced populations. In the following sections, we will review the transnationalism literature in relation to gender and mobility. Next, we connect this scholarship to research on Ukrainian diaspora. We proceed to outline our

methodology and findings on transnational identifications and practices, and conclude by discussing the implications.¹

Transnationalism: Gender & Mobility Regimes

Transnationalism forms among immigration populations since they carry with them their home-country identities and values, their nationalisms, while, at the same time, the receiving nations also ascribe and reinforce those identities onto the immigrants. Such identifications and practices in host countries are inevitably transnational since they traverse national borders to “sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (Basch, Glick-Schiller, and Blanc 1994: 7). This origin-country orientation is, in many ways, the continuation and embodiment of origin-country nationalism only from the long distance (Anderson 1992: 13). As such, it is important to understand how nationalism affects individuals before they emigrate and become transnationals.

Both feminist scholarship and mobility studies have shown that nationalisms affect and arbitrate social groups in disparate and unequal ways. Notably, nationalism sanctions different gendered functions for men and women. Modern nationalisms mobilize the historical family roles, the differences between public and domestic spaces (Sinha 2020; Hill Collins 1998) to locate women “in the private domain, which is not seen as politically relevant... they are therefore excluded from the social and remain close to ‘nature’” (Yuval-Davis 1993: 622-23). Women, as mothers and daughters of the nation, are tasked with, literally and symbolically, reproducing and nurturing the nation while remaining as the symbolic representations of national identities (Najmabadi 2005). Comparatively, men are tasked with protecting national identities and, hence, women (Nagel 2019). Men embody the nation since “the male role in the nationalist scenario is typically ‘metonymic’, that is, men are contiguous with each other and with the national whole” (McClintock 1993: 62).

These gender role differences crystalize particularly in times of national crises when “traditional family values are called on to shore up a nation under siege” (Miller-Idriss 2024: 4). In these periods of nationalistic effervescent (Gorski 2024), women embody the motherland and men are rallied up as the soldiers who must defend the literal and symbolical boundaries of the motherland (Enloe 2014; Najmabadi 2005). Even in their diasporic lives, immigrants remain constrained by such gender role expectations in which men are the household heads and soldiers who will need to return to homeland when called upon while women continue to embody the origin-nation’s cultural values in terms of dress codes and family ethics of care (Anthias 2020; Pessar and Mahler 2003; Fouron and Glick-Schiller 2001). Whether in origin or host country, failing these gendered roles can lead to individual feelings of shame and guilt but also to social stigma and, at times, to legal punishment (Wojnicka 2023; Shields et al. 2017; Enloe 2014; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005).

Similarly, mobility and border studies have underlined that, considering those who aspire to emigrate or those who already reside outside the national boundaries, the nation-state deploys a variety of mobility control strategies to ensure the nation’s ethnic, economic, and political continuity (Adamson 2023; Fröhlich and Müller-Funk 2023; Gamlen 2019). From this macro-level viewpoint, the first step for the sending countries is to patronize their national

¹ Throughout, we refer to our participants, those who left the country because of the war, as displaced populations since, legally, they are immigrants in Canada and protected individuals in the EU (see Crawley and Skleparis 2018 on the blurry boundaries of migration-refugee categories).

borders to regulate who and how many of the national citizens are permitted to leave.² These are gendered decisions in that men, as breadwinners, are encouraged to leave for labor work in peace times but prevented from departing in wartimes while women, as the bearers of family values and national identities, are highly constrained to staying (Christou and Kofman 2022; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Cranford 2006). At a second step, some states maintain cultural and political ties with their émigrés with the intentions that these immigrants will then send socioeconomic remittances to support the economic and political stability of the origin country. Others states also facilitate their émigrés' return by implementing policies and infrastructures that provide access to employment, housing, and retirement (King and Kuschminder 2022; Gamlen 2019).

Overall, origin-country nationalism shapes host-country diasporic transnational identifications and practices (Nowicka 2020; Levitt and Glick-Schiller 2004). Basch, Glick-Schiller, and Blanc (1994: 7) initially defined transnationalism as “the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement.” They underlined the equal role of micro-level agency and macro-level factors on transnationalism (Glick-Schiller 2018). To delimit transnationalism for operationalization purposes, subsequent scholarship reformulated transnationalism to ongoing identifications and sustained or long-term practices of sending remittances, lobbying, and political engagements in homeland affairs (Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004; Portes, Haller, and Guarnizo 2002). As such, transnationalism does not mean a disconnection from the cultural life of the host country. Instead, once well established in the host country, diasporas build on their host country resources “here” to participate in transnational practices “there” in origin countries (Karimi, Thompson, and Bucerius 2024; Kyei et al. 2022). Fitzgerald (2012) argued that there is indeed a tandem between national belonging here and transnational identification there in the form of “dissimilation” (see also Waldinger 2015).

Transnationalism, whether identification or practices, is time consuming and depend on the presence or absence of material resources as well as temporal consistencies so as to prevent the decline of transnational ties and sociopolitical interests or common worldviews (Carling, Erdal, Talleraas 2021; Karimi 2020; Pascucci 2016). These temporal and material resources include home countries' emigration (and re-integration) policies and host countries' integration policies (King and Kuschminder 2022; Portes, Haller, and Guarnizo 2002), the quality and quantity of diasporic networks and infrastructures (Kopchick et al. 2022; Riano-Alcala and Goldring 2014; Faist 1998), and immigrants' and refugees' pre-emigration socioeconomic capital and political orientations and experiences (Soehl, Stolle, and Scott 2024; Østergaard-Nielsen 2003). Transnationalism often manifests in the revival of social networks across national borders (Crawley and Skleparis 2018; FitzGerald and Arar 2018), use of information and communication technologies (Baldassar et al. 2016; Van den Bos and Nell 2006), sending sociopolitical remittances (Kyei et al. 2022; Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2011), and acting as agents of political change in origin countries (Miller 2011; Koser 2007).

Although it is not always easy to disentangle the participation rates of immigrants versus refugees and displaced populations (van Hear 2006), research shows that both groups engage in transnationalism. At the same time, it is important to note that displaced populations and refugees “are often much less resourceful than more established diasporas or migrant communities” (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003: 8). Those who flee wars often risk their lives and experience sudden and unplanned departures. They leave family members and socioeconomic assets behind, experience long periods disconnections from homelands and from diasporas, and, in many cases, resurrect their origin-country national and ethnic divisions in their diasporic

² States may also “use emigration as a safety valve to defuse political unrest as those critical of the regime are encouraged to improve their livelihood elsewhere” (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003: 10).

lives and fall short of engaging in consistent long-distance nationalism (Kalantzi 2024; Adamson 2023; Müller-Suleymanova 2023; Koinova 2018). Above all, to the detriment of some individuals, transnationalism and affiliations with co-citizens from the origin country can potentially prevent refugees' from overcoming war traumas and developing roots in their new home countries (Skrodzka et al. 2024). Overall, transnationalism is not a certain feature of immigration and displacement but an outcome that depends on a range of temporal and material variables (Karimi 2020).

Ukraine & its Diaspora

For the most part, during the 20th century, ethnic Ukrainians and the modern-day Ukrainian territory were part of several polities including the Habsburg and Austria-Hungarian empires. These empires' political instability, particularly during the Nazi and Bolshevik Soviet Union occupations, did not create political infrastructure and, instead, have left a legacy of sociopolitical volatility in Ukraine (Kubicek 2008). In the past three decades, Ukrainian governments have addressed their national socioeconomic matters to the point that, currently, the female-to-male gender ratio of attaining a bachelor's degree is 1.047 and 0.944 for the master's degree with 60.7% of working-age women and 69.9% of working-age men holding full-time employment (ukrstat 2024). These gender parity figures have yet to make their way up the sociopolitical ladder given that, for instance, Ukraine's parliamentary body consists only of 21.2% female representatives (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine 2024).

From a macro-level viewpoint, Ukrainians' emigration and, in turn, transnational involvements in their home country was regulated by the Soviet Union's emigration policy for almost the entirety of the 20th century (Aleshkovski, Gasparishvili, and Grebenyuk 2023; Salitan 1989). Ukrainians could leave gradually and only in small numbers, most of whom had different linguistic and religious backgrounds upon emigration. Consequently, the majority of the Ukrainian diaspora are the second- and third-generations born in the Western host countries. For instance, in the 1980s, 92% of the Ukrainian-Canadians in Canada had been born in Canada (Satzewich 2002). Since Ukraine's 1991 independence, a new wave of labor emigration has increased the numbers of Ukrainians in diaspora, in EU in particular. The majority of these labor migrants, about 70%, have been Ukrainian men and women shape unskilled migration mainly to Italy and Poland (Andrews et al. 2023).

From a micro-level perspective, Ukrainian diaspora's young generations, born in host countries, have historically shown low levels of transnational national orientation towards Ukraine given that the possibilities of return and socioeconomic participation were negligible under the USSR (Satzewich 2002). Meantime, the first generations, import the home country differences with them and, despite some lobbying efforts and transnational remittances, their differences have led to a lack of diasporic cohesion and organization. These differences are rooted in identities such as the pre-1991 "old diaspora" and post-1991 "new diaspora", political ideologies, attachment to different denominations, and linguistic and folklore variations (Lapshyna 2019; Satzewich 2002). Additionally, Ukrainian governments have not welcomed the diasporas' long-distance nationalism since their economic contributions are conditioned upon implementing the rule of law and liberal values (Oleinikova 2022; Lapshyna 2019). Although the diaspora find some common grounds for political organization at times of national crises such as the 2013 revolution and the 2022 war (Voytiv 2024; Oleinikova 2022), research in Canada and Germany shows that Ukrainian diasporas have low levels of transnational practices (Nikolko 2016; Melnyk et al. 2016).

Methodology

Our findings in this study are based on 45 semi-structured interviews in Canada, and 423 qualitative survey responses in Germany (Karimi and Byelikova 2024). We received ethics approval from the University of British Columbia (H22-03532) and conducted the survey in Germany in the summer and winter of 2022 and the interviews in Canada in the early spring of 2023. We have triangulated our Canadian data by collaborating with an NGO settlement service provider, Operation Ukrainian Safe Haven (OUSH) at Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of BC, and their nationwide survey data which were conducted with the support from the Federal Government’s Immigration Refugee Citizenship Canada.

In Germany, we constructed the survey in Ukrainian³ and made it available online via Google Forms and on Ukrainian newcomers’ Facebook and Telegram channels. The survey consisted of both close- and open-ended questions. The former focused on participants’ demographics and the latter asked about their departure and arrival journeys and sentiments towards Ukraine. In Canada, with the help from a Ukrainian research assistant, we followed purposive sampling to find Ukrainian participants who had arrived in Canada since 2022 through the CUAET program. We posted our call for participation in Ukrainian newcomers’ Facebook and Telegram pages, asked a Ukrainian church to disseminate our call, and collaborated with a local NGO settlement organization to promote our project. We conducted the interviews in both English and Ukrainian. The interviews, on average, lasted about 60 minutes. We recorded the audios and transcribed them verbatim. Figure 2 provides the demographic details of our participants in the two countries.

Table 1- Demographic description of participants in Canada and Germany

Country:	Gender:	Age:	Education:	Language Skills	Origin-country class:	Family status:
Canada:	Female: 35 Male: 10	Mid-20s to mid-40s	Bachelor's degree or higher	mid- to fluent English	Middle-class	Single / married couple without children*
Germany:	Female: 372 Male: 47 Other: 4	Under 25: 80 26 to 45: 279 Over 46: 64	Mix of educational attainments	Low language skills (German, English)	Working- to middle-class	Single / Families with dependents

* In Canada, two participants were single mothers with children

Table 1, on the left, shows the participants’ gender.⁴ We believe the gender ratio gap is due to two reasons. First, at the time of fieldwork, apart from a set of exemptions, Ukrainian men could not legally leave the country which means that they were few and less likely to participate in our project. Second, understandably, some men have left the country without the proper paperwork and would likely prefer not to participate in research projects (see Mickelsson 2023). Table 1, under the age column shows that the 25-45-year-olds comprised the largest portion of participants in Canada. The survey data and analyses provided by our NGO data (2023a) also show that out of nearly 65,000 Ukrainians who had interacted with settlement services across Canada, about 5,000 or 7.5% were under 18. In Germany, for those who have arrived between February 2022 and June 2022, it was estimated that nearly 48% of the female Ukrainians have arrived with minor children (Brücker et al. 2023: 3). More recent updates support this by showing that by early 2024, “adult women represented 45.6 % of beneficiaries of

³ We have translated the data into English.

⁴ We had included the “other” category in the survey (see also Shevtsova 2024).

temporary protection, 54.8 % of them were women aged 35 to 64 years. Children represented 32.5 %, while the proportion of adult men in the total number of beneficiaries of temporary protection was 21.9 %” (Eurostat 2024). As the table shows in the middle and right-side, participants in Canada were educated, self-identified as middle-classes, were fluent in English, and mostly did not have dependents. In contrast, Ukrainians in Germany had a mix of educational and class backgrounds and most of them had low German language skills (see also Brücker et al. 2023 and van Tubergen et al. 2023).

We analyzed both the interview and open-ended survey data according to transnationalism framework. We coded our data for the impact of macro-level emigration and immigration policies on Ukrainians departures and arrivals and their connections to the existing diasporic organizations. We also coded for micro-level home-culture identifications and sentiments, gendered tropes and patterns, and socioeconomic transnational practices and integration intentions. Our findings are in line with transnationalism scholarship with the exception of the gendered patterns that we observed among participants with men showing low rates of transnational identification or nationalism and women showing much higher levels of identification with and concerns for their homeland.

Findings

Ukraine’s Emigration Policy

Ukraine’s military services consist of both male and female members. There are about 60000 women in civilian positions (Ukraine.war.ua 2024) which implies that the Ukrainian state maintains the military as part of the political and public spaces in which women can play limited roles under the guardianship of the male officers and titleholders. Importantly, since the start of the 2022 war, Ukraine has invoked two waves of mobility control laws. The main law, implemented through a presidential decree in February 2022 (rada.gov.au 2022), bans 18-60-year old men from exiting Ukraine. A second policy, implemented in the April of 2024, revokes these military-age men from accessing consular services such as renewing passports or marriage documents. In effect, the policy, as a unique form of forced return migration, seeks to push the men to return to Ukraine should they require such documents. Those who need consular service should provide up-to-date documents on their military exemption status.

The exemption list, part of the first decree, envisions eight categories including disability and medical reasons, men who have three and more children under the age of 18, and single fathers. A similar policy has temporarily exempted women from military trainings and services. The blanket exit ban on military-age men was not applied to women meaning that women could leave and are expected to return to Ukraine without legal repercussions. At the same, the two waves of mobility controls mean that some men leave the country illegally and that, if they are not able to renew their passports, they might risk becoming undocumented immigrants in their host countries. The combination of the gendered policies maintain women and children as the civilian bearers of national values and identities and deploy men as the sociopolitical pawns in defense of the nation-state.

Visa Regimes in Canada & Germany

In March 2022, Canada implemented CUAET program that gave Ukrainians three-year visas akin to work permits. CUAET gives immediate access to healthcare, education, and employment. The visa holders are entitled to a lump sum of 3000\$ in financial support per

person, settlement services, and, in some cases, unemployment income assistance. The program accepted new application until July 15th, 2023 and new arrivals until March 31st, 2024. Overall, 298,128 CUAET visa recipients have landed in Canada (Government of Canada 2024). From there, akin to Canada's Express Entry program, Ukrainians are eligible to apply for Permanent Residency status. All applicants receive points for education, age, language skills, employment history, and Canadian education-work experience. Canada's point-based immigration, in addition to the high distance and travel costs from Europe selects for the young and educated while leaving behind the elderly and the less-resourced (Elrick 2022). Despite the CUAET's benefits, it is likely that, similar to other immigration categories, Ukrainians will experience housing and employment difficulties and deskilling trends (Karimi and Byelikova 2024).⁵

Similarly, Germany has implemented the EU TPD to extend the arrival and stay rights to Ukrainians. As of 2017, Ukrainian nationals had visa-free entry rights to the Schengen area for stays of up to 90 days. Eurostat's (2022) pre-war assessments reported the presence of about 1.57 million Ukrainian resident permit holders across the EU. Given that Ukraine does not recognize dual citizenship, about 180,000 Ukrainians had acquired an EU citizenship in the decade leading to the 2022 war (Eurostat 2022). In the summer of 2024, the EU extended the TPD to 4 March 2026 (Eurostat 2024). The TPD permits give residency rights to Ukrainians on par with German citizens in terms of access to healthcare and employment support and allows them return visits to Ukraine—these right sets Ukrainians apart from refugees (Sauer et al. 2023)⁶. Even though Germany has provided integration courses and vocational training to help Ukrainians convert their TPD permits to other long-term immigration categories, previous research has underlined the impact of strong integrationist policies on immigrants' social exclusion-inclusion and access to employment and inclusion in Germany (Kruse and Kroneberg 2019). These difficulties are particularly important for the displaced Ukrainians who arrive as female-headed families with children.

Transnational Identification

Nationalism, the narratives that shape consciousness and loyalties to a nation (Calhoun 1997), travel beyond national borders when individuals leave their origin nations and settle elsewhere. Immigrants and forcibly displaced populations carry with them their shared stories and folklore, national languages and symbols, and memories. Indeed, as reflected in Figure 1, the overwhelming majority of our participants expressed high rates of feeling pride in being Ukrainian.

⁵ In October 2023, the Canadian government announced that CUAET visa holders “can apply for the new permanent residence pathway for Ukrainians if you're a Ukrainian national who is in Canada and the family member of a Canadian citizen or permanent resident” (Government of Canada 2023). This decision deviates from Canada's Express Entry program which regulates permanent residence applications (cf. De Coninck 2023 on Western Governments' treatment of Ukrainian and racialized populations).

⁶ Norway does not allow the TPD holders return visits to Ukraine.

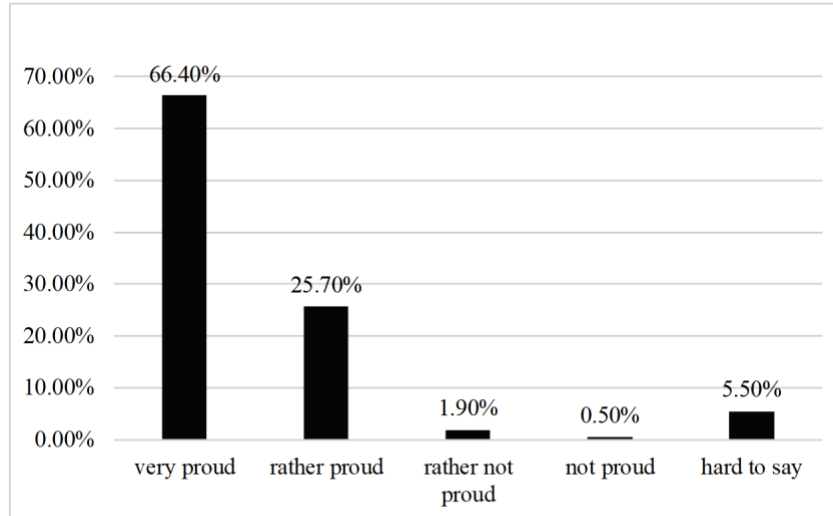


Figure 1. Survey responses among displaced Ukrainian participants in Germany to the question on "how proud or not proud are you of being Ukrainian?".

Figure 1 shows that displaced Ukrainians who participated in our project in Germany had strong connections and sentiments about their homeland and culture since, in responses to "how proud or not proud are you of being Ukrainian?", over 92% of them said that they felt very proud or proud to be Ukrainian. The survey responses in Germany was supported by qualitative findings in Canada and Germany on transnational identification and sentiments towards Ukraine. Participants talked about missing their culture, *"It is so hard to be away from Ukraine and feel pain for Ukraine... [Ukraine] is the best country and we are not in our native Ukraine. [But] I feel pride for our land and people, and I really miss my homeland. Victory of Ukraine."*⁷ Others, more specifically, mentioned the role of language in their lives. One participant said *"[challenge is the] lack of Ukrainian-speaking communication in everyday life, constant fear for relatives, as my city holds the defense of the entire south of Ukraine"*. Another participant added that *"I miss native language, my soul remains in Ukraine. It is extremely hard to accept this: feeling that you made a mistake coming here, thoughts that all your close ones stayed in Ukraine"*.

Our participants' transnational sentiments towards their origin country was imbued with individual-level patterns of guilt (see also Mickelsson 2023). Both men and women perceived their geographical distance from the homeland as a sign that they have failed their national roles in defending their family, their national territory, and thereby the continuation of the Ukrainian nation-state. One participant underlined the shame as result of the *"feeling that you can hardly help the armed forces, your family, and friends who remained there"*. Another participant mentioned his struggles surrounding *"forgiving myself for going abroad. Living outside of Ukraine and not sharing in the sorrow of our land"*. Such feelings were indeed prevalent among all participants who explained that *"you are not in Ukraine and cannot help... [I have tried to] find a way to help relatives and friends who remained in the occupied territories... there is still a sense of guilt"*.

To counter these ruminations and emotional challenges and to remain connected to the national home culture, our participants mentioned that they use national symbols such as food choices and the Ukrainian flag, listened to Ukrainian language songs, and contacted their family members who remain in Ukraine via phone apps such as WhatsApp and Telegram.

⁷ We use the quotations that best reflect the range of our findings.

“The first thing I do every day is to check the news in Ukrainian, and call my parents in Ukraine. They decided to stay there because of their old age and love of the country and encouraged me to leave. I have also connected with a new Ukrainian group on Facebook and we arrange to go for hikes and small trips to stay connected with our culture”.

“I go to the Ukrainian church here. The priest and the ladies who are now helping with the Ukrainian newcomers in Canada are all Ukrainians from Ukraine, we speak in Ukrainian, bring homemade borshch and cakes, and it’s as if I am still back in Ukraine for a day”.

“Many people here, Ukrainians and Canadians, put the Ukrainian flag on their balconies and their cars. It’s a symbolic behavior but that makes feel at home when I see the Ukrainian flag”.

These practices are in line with the predictions transnationalism research which outlines the ways that individuals, depending on the available institutional and technological resources, use their old and new networks as well as digital technologies to remain connected with their home cultures (FitzGerald and Arar 2018; Baldassar et al. 2016; Vertovec 2004).

Gender Differences

Despite the universality of transnational identifications and feelings of belonging, we observed unique gendered patterns among our male and female participants. As discussed above, in times of national crises, nationalisms mobilize men into soldiers and women into the symbolic mothers of the nation who are to be protected by men (Enloe 2014; Najmabadi 2005). The expectation is that men show higher rates of transnational nationalism and identification with the origin nation. Yet, we observed lower levels of nationalism among men compared to our Ukrainian female participants. These differences were most visible in terms of transnational identification with Ukraine, expressions of pride about the Ukrainian nation-state, and intentions of return to rebuild the families and the country. Figure 2 reflects our survey findings in responses to the same question of “how proud or not proud are you of being Ukrainian?”.

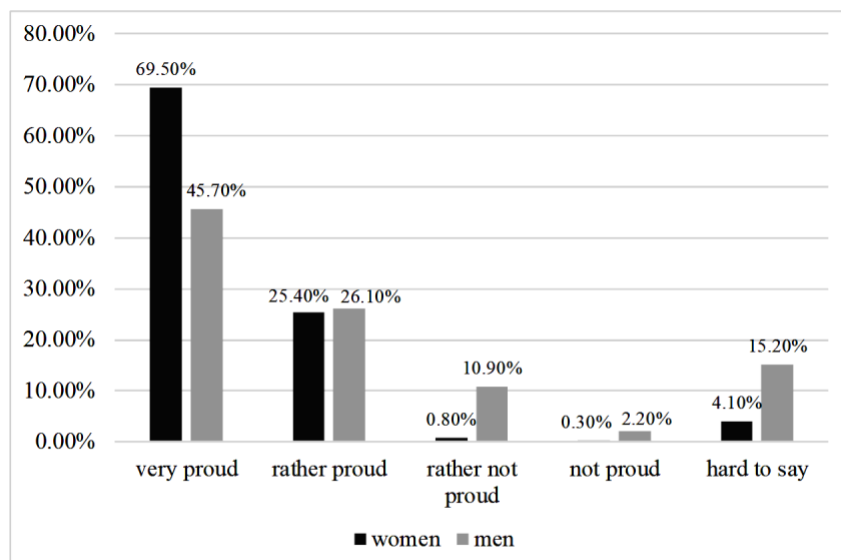


Figure 2. Gender patterns in survey responses among displaced Ukrainian participants in Germany to the question on "how proud or not proud are you of being Ukrainian?".

Figure 2 shows a gendered pattern in survey responses among displaced Ukrainians. Considering the question of “how proud or not proud are you of being Ukrainian?”, 69.50% of women said they are very proud while about 45% of men said they are very round which shows a difference of about 24%. Similarly, a rather negligible percent of women said they are not proud of being Ukrainian while about 10% of men expressed their lack of national pride. Again, these survey responses in Germany were supported by qualitative findings in Canada and Germany. Male participants said that, due to personal and socioeconomic reasons, they preferred not to participate in the war and not return to Ukraine even though they identify with the country:

“I am an artist and work in the film industry. I have come here with girlfriend... because I am not inclined to conflicts and wars. They bring mass casualties and traumas to both sides. I had medical conditions and used my documents to leave to come here”.

“I know that I am Ukrainian. I am also an adult and decided that I do not want to be part of a war. This does not mean that I do not feel sad and guilty about my county and my people. I have always had plans for my future, career and family one day, and want to move ahead with that”.

One participant emphasized his frustration with his homeland and lack of return plans:

“Yes, also I decided to come here because life here is stable in general. In Ukraine, even though this is our native country, and we really love Ukraine, but over the last 10 years, there wasn't a time when you could have a peaceful life. And you can't count on anything, can't count on the government, on your own financial resources, so that was more of a rational decision, because emotionally we would like to stay in Ukraine but we understand that in Ukraine there wouldn't be peace for us, so we also left to support our parents because our parents stayed there”.

We argue that Ukrainian policies on exit ban on the military-age men create a selection bias. Women are encouraged to leave the country, but expected to return to the country after the war (Andrews et al. 2023). For men, the vast majority of the 18-60-year olds have remained in the country. Those who are outside of the country have benefitted from the family exemptions and left the country with their families (Mickelsson 2023; Brückner et al. 2023), were outside of the country prior to the war, or left the country so not to participate in the conscription (Chevtayeva 2022). For example, our participants explained that some families *“managed to come here with their whole family because some families had a husband outside of Ukraine when the war started, so mom and daughter could leave and husband could join them”*. Indeed a male participant said:

“Well, it happened so that my profession is sport, and for the last 10 years I have been working abroad. And I work in different countries. And the last 2 years I had a contract with Uzbekistan. I was there when the war started. To take my family, I went to Poland and then we flew to Canada”.

Another male participant talked about leaving the country without proper identification documentations:

“I left Ukraine because it was not safe to stay there, because of my psychological state. There are a lot of people from my city here. Also, my sister really helped me. When there was no point of contact with me, she organized my trip to Europe so that I could go there without documents because I didn't even have documents, so that I could stay somewhere and she was giving me steps that I need to do next”.

Overall, as reflected in the previous section on transnational sentiments, our participants shared the feelings of national identification and guilt about their inability to participate in the military defense against the invasion. Yet, because the many ways that Ukraine's exist ban has shaped the demography of the displaced populations and, therefore, our study sample, the male participants in our sample showed lower levels of transnationalism and stronger orientations towards a future life outside of Ukraine.

Transnational Practices

Considering transnational practices, we observed a connection between our participants' practices and Ukraine's (lack of) engagement with its diaspora as well as Canada's and Germany's short-term residence permit regulations. Transnational practices are shaped by pre-departure resources, length of residence in the new country and the availability of well-established diasporic networks, as well as host countries' immigration policies. Indeed the links between the material and temporal aspects of transnational practices were central to our participants' experiences of departure and arrival in their new countries. Participants mentioned that their departures were mentally and emotionally sudden and unexpected, that they had to leave belongings behind, and that they had not had the time to contemplate the practicalities of supporting their homeland.⁸ Participants' said:

"In the first day of the war, we woke up because at 4:50 in the morning, [Russian] tanks were already in Kharkiv. On the 2nd of March, the soldiers called us and they told us that if we are ready in 15 minutes they will try and evacuate us. I have my mother in the family. She's 85 years old, she's in wheelchair. We gathered our things in 15 minutes. They called us at 5:50 and at 6:10 we already left. We couldn't take anything with us. I had only documents and diapers to stay in the tunnels and train stations".

Participants pointed out that the consequence of having been unprepared for such departures means that:

"It's very difficult to build any plans at the moment. There's a lot of variables that we don't understand: the documents, the jobs, life in general. Honestly, I would like to return. Everything was good there. But at the same time you understand that it will never be like before. Ukraine will not be the same as it was before the war".

Considering the role of connecting with the Ukrainian diaspora, our participants explained the challenges and ways of connecting with Ukrainian cultural or religious groups so to use their potential resources. Some participants mentioned that Ukrainians, from the old waves and their offspring but also the recently displaced groups, had online presence on social media to spread information about emigration and life in Europe and Canada. One participant said "[social media] is pretty good, like in the sense of informational support...if you want to find information you can find it". Some participants also mentioned that the more established Ukrainians and non-Ukrainians united to provide limited but vital help with housing:

"The friends of our friends for hosted us and didn't take any money from us. It was for 3.5 months. And when we started looking for housing, I couldn't find anything. We went to the apartment building and they said they'll take us".

Similarly, in Germany transnational practices saw periods of surge among Ukrainian diaspora through activism, donations, and volunteer activities. For example, the displaced Ukrainians have established "Ukrainian Houses" to open spaces for bringing the diaspora together and to promote engagement with the host society. Further, in 2022, Ukrainians donated about \$10 million to buy drones for the Ukrainian army (Fortune 2022), a substantive figure which remains below the high levels of remittance sent globally by the well-established diaspora to other countries (World Bank 2023).

During our fieldwork, beyond these micro-level support systems, we could connect with only one Ukrainian church that had shouldered the entire process of providing arrival and integration services to the displaced Ukrainians. The church team was also leading the tasks of lobbying with the local and federal policymakers to receive funding for their integration program and to receive further support for their donation strategies to Ukraine. The team talked about how they started their project:

⁸ This temporal aspect of our findings is essential given that we conducted our project within the first of the 2022 Russia-Ukraine war. As such, our participants' practices and thoughts might evolve over time.

“With a team of five, some employed and some volunteers, we created a website where [housing] hosts could offer their houses. A word of mouth is probably top performer in this sense. I would say [the hosts are] Caucasian Canadians. I guess we have a couple of Filipinos family here. And the second part of the work is to manage the new volunteers, these displaced Ukrainians who have come and want to volunteer, want to do a lot of fundraising to help their brothers and sisters back in Ukraine”.

The priest at the church said that, considering the settlement requirement as well as financial aspect of transnational practices, there was a lack of macro-level agreement between Ukraine and Canada since:

“The hope of Ukraine and the president and the government of Canada is that these people go back home. The reality is that a lot of these people will not go back home. Because if the government of Canada wanted these people to stay here, they would create a refugee program for Ukrainians. And they would have done it differently, but they created temporary program for displaced Ukrainians”.

Our findings with the Ukrainian church, as a form of diasporic organization, reflects the consolidation of community transnationalism in times of crises (Voytiv 2024), but the lack of diasporic cohesion and infrastructures to sustain transnationalism —and newcomers’ integration— over time and with a more expansive reach.

Relatedly, considering the role of government and integration policies, our participants mentioned that the temporary nature of Canada’s CUAET and EU’ TPD resident permits foreclose and challenge Ukrainians’ ability to make long-term plans for their occupational and linguistic integration and accumulation of resources for future transnationalism. Participants recounted the challenges in Germany as:

“I don’t know German, so it’s very difficult to talk to locals who don’t always know English. And the need arises almost always: starting from the conversation at the shop and ending with the governmental services when we go for a job interview. The experience I gained in Ukraine and the diplomas are not recognized here”.

Others, in the Canadian context, also pointed to the limitations of the CUAET program:

“It’s difficult for me to find a job because I didn’t live here, I don’t have a [credit] history. Can’t do anything without that history. Being a cleaner doesn’t count towards your history. And a minister back then said that we gave you a work permit and a work permit allows you to get PR. The only thing that they added is that it’s an open work permit, because without an open one it would be very difficult”.

In sum, our findings underline that how an individual emigrates, in terms of preparedness, as well as their access to diasporic community resources and governmental supports will shape their capacity engage in time-consuming and resource-dependant transnational practices, particularly in the context of forced migration and displacement.

Discussion & Conclusion

In this paper, we examined the ways that the recently displaced Ukrainians navigate transnational identification and practices vis-à-vis their origin country amidst an ongoing war. Our participants’ lives resemble those of refugees since they flee an international war and devastation of their homes and national infrastructure while, at the same time, their experiences also resemble those of immigrants since they receive work permits from host countries and can return to Ukraine should they choose to do so. As such, our participants fall in between these categories and, as such, their experiences and our findings point to the blurry boundaries between various immigration categories (Crawley and Skleparis 2018). Further, because we conducted our research project when the war has been unfolding and as Ukrainians arrived in

Canada and Germany, our findings underline the temporally and materially evolving nature of transnationalism.

Our main findings are twofold concerning transnational identifications and practices. First, we find that transnational identification with the homeland is a near universal feature among the recently populations. At the same, such identifications are weighed down by feelings of shame and guilt since our participants, under the nationalistic gendered codes of conduct and expectations (Enloe 2014; Kandiyoti 2000), could not physically and socioeconomically support the defense of the nation-state. Such emotional statuses, the perceptions failing one's gendered expectations, are directly tied to their sudden departures and the ongoing war in their homeland (Wojnicka 2023). These factors are not readily pertinent to other forms of immigration and, hence, we argue that immigrants' peacetime transnational identification is qualitatively different from such identifications among refugees and displaced populations (cf. Karimi, Bucerius, and Thompson 2019).

Relatedly, we find that transnational identification among our sample of displaced populations is highly gendered in the ways that do not align with the previous predictions of gendered nationalism and transnationalism (Pessar and Mahler 2003; Kandiyoti 2000). To explain these unexpected gendered patterns of transnational identification, we argue that these gendered differences correlate to the macro-level Ukrainian policies on military drafts and the current exit ban on the military-age men. These policies create a selection bias in terms of who can leave and, thus, participate in transnationalism. Women are mostly kept from participating in the defense of the country and are encouraged to leave the country with their children, but expected to return to the country after the war. Their male family members remain in Ukraine, and for these women such family ties form strong bonds and orientations toward the nation. Meantime, the vast majority of the 18-60-year olds have remained in the country, whether voluntarily or not. The men who are outside of the country have either received exemptions from military services due to their family or health conditions, or were outside of the country prior to the war and did not intend to return, or left the country without the appropriate documents so not to participate in the conscription.

A second main finding concerns transnational practices. We find that, as previous research shows (Nikolko 2017; Melnyk et al. 2016; Satzewich 2002), the lack of consistent relations between the diasporas and their home states or governments, Ukraine in this case, becomes a hindering factor in developing diasporic infrastructures that can bring individuals together and facilitate transnationalism in times of national crises. Our findings underlines the temporary consolidation and rise of transnationalism in periods of crises (Voytiv 2024), but the lack of diasporic organization due to origin-country differences and government-diaspora disconnect. Additionally, the impacts of negative approaches, such as cancelling consular services for Ukrainian men to force their return, on transnational practices and contributions to homeland remain an open question for future research.

Similarly, we find that the temporary nature of Canada's CUAET and EU' TPD resident permits foreclose and challenge Ukrainians' ability to make long-term plans for their occupational and linguistic integration and accumulation of resources for future transnational practices. Previous research has underlined that transnationalism requires individuals' time and resources (Carling, Erdal, Talleraas 2021) and depends on the policies and conditions under which individuals emigrate (Adamson 2023), arrive and connect with their co-ethnics in diaspora (Kopchick et al. 2022; Riano-Alcala and Goldring 2014), and benefit from the immigration and integration policies of the host country (Portes, Haller, and Guarnizo 2002). We find that these factors have visible impact on displaced populations' capacity to navigate their sudden displacement, their loss of families or contact with them, and their new socioeconomic challenges all of which slow down capital accumulation and community embeddedness and, hence, the options to practice transnationalism.

In sum, our findings point to the nuances of transnationalism. Such identifications and practices vary within, and likely between, displaced populations of international and civil wars at the individual level and also along gender lines. Further, displaced populations' transnational practices remain dependent on home country's emigration and diasporic policies and on host countries' immigration and integration approaches. We underline that transnationalism does not emerge organically nor does it remain steady over time, but that transnationalism is a temporally and materially contingent outcome that depends on macro- and micro-level resources.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors do not have a conflict of interest to declare.

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