Gender Based Variation In Migratory Experiences

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Abstract The results of a cooperative research project seeking to better understand re-migration potential provides a unique opportunity to compare the gender differentiated experience of migrants living and working in the Czech Republic. The data includes a range of individuals who originate from both the proverbial 'East' and 'West', focusing on three linguistic groups representing the various migrant communities in this Central European country. We find that particular groups demonstrate variation internally that is missed when gender based analysis is not undertaken. In order to shed light on this atypical outcome this paper provides an overview of gender differentiated responses and stipulates how a gendered understanding is imperative if we are to better understand migrant decision making or re-migration trends.

Keywords Migration, Central Europe, gender pay gap, linguistic group, migration intentions

1. BACKGROUND

Past work, which sought a better understanding of migratory flows in Central Europe, revealed that rationales and experiences vary greatly along both linguistic and gendered lines. The gendered patterns described herein indicate that research involving migratory decision making, that discounts gender as a factor, would fail to incorporate a richer understanding of how individual experience shapes and guides action. Although not a comprehensive evaluation, this work demonstrates that there is often as much variation within as between groups.

In an attempt to contribute to our understanding of the regional flow of highly skilled and highly educated individuals this project seeks to clarify the rationale and experience of highly educated migrants in the Czech Republic. There exist only a handful of studies which deal exclusively with skilled migrant flows in the Czech and Slovak Republics as this group of migrants is relatively understudied. (European Commission 2010, Baláž and Williams 2004, Williams and Baláž 2002, Consortium 2009)

The Czech labour market has long been party to a regional migratory network that was heavily regulated pre-1990. (Kaczmarczyk and Okólski 2005) These historical flows were disrupted during the period of transition in the early 1990's yet were later re-established due to persistent economic inequalities within the Central European Region as well as demand within the Czech market.

Significant flows include cross border migration for Ukrainians who come to work as labourers in the Czech construction industry or in domestic and lower skilled occupations. This movement, although well-established remains understudied. (Association for Integration and Migration / Sdružení pro integraci a migraci 2012) (Valentová 2012) In addition to this historical flow of Ukrainians who have often been coming to work in the Czech labour market for decades as temporary or pendular migrants (spending several months a year at home in the Ukraine) there are also several other significant flows of foreign workers on the Czech labour market. (Horáková 2000)

Slovaks, for example, have historically been granted, and still utilize, special status to live and work in the Czech Republic due to a variety of bilateral agreements agreed upon by their respective countries in the early 1990's. (Horáková 2000, Strielkowski 2007) This particular group could be deemed 'nearly' invisible migrants given the shared history and mutually intelligible languages. While Slovak nationals are commonly seen as economic migrants in the eyes of the local Czech citizenry as a result of the historical underdevelopment of the eastern regions, these individuals do not always consider their experience in the Czech Republic as migration at all. They are simply 'going to Prague' the capital city of their birth country.

A survey distributed via online media generated a large data set on which the current paper is based. Due to time and space constraints, this paper will only briefly describe the survey design and its implementation. Recognizing the limitations of the data, which is based on a relatively small snowball sample, the authors do not claim to be able to make broad assumptions about migrant behaviour. Nevertheless, this work provides a unique gendered perspective of migrant experience.

This project has provided a rich contextual basis from which we are better able to understand the determinants of current and future migration. While we recognize that mobility is a deeply personal experience, which is often part of an ongoing/evolving process, the researchers seek to clarify inter group variation. We understand that current migrants have greater potential to re-migrate than non-migrants as a result of their particular characteristics, life experience and life choices. (Chiswick 2000, 69) The authors take into consideration that there are a plethora of explanatory factors that impinge upon individual decision making while also considering the various power relationships that may impact upon decision making relating to 'movement' as conceptualized by theorists such as Salt. (2008) Indeed migration is often only one step in the long journey

individuals undertake during their lifetimes and the authors recognize that individuals are often in the process of creating and living their itineraries. (Rallu, 289)

2. THEORY

Traditional theoretical models have argued that migratory flows can be explained by utilizing network effects, rational choice or economic based arguments or even explanations based on segmented labor markets which 'pull' individuals into making a migration related decision. (Massey.et.al. 1998, Piore 1979) This work espouses the view that there are a variety of factors that must be taken into account when discussing migration; however, there is no single theoretical perspective clearly corresponding to the variety of flows in the region. Network based approaches can be applied in the case of individual respondents from particular linguistic groups; rational choice models clearly fit with other groups under study, but fail to clearly encompass all respondents.

A model of rational expectations provides the best 'fit' to the multiple streams included in this study. Individuals make rational decisions based on personal preferences in tandem with calculated risk aversion strategies in the face of regional economic imbalance. Individuals move with the expectation of improvement in living conditions or employment after a migration decision has been made. (Massey.et.al. 1998) The vast majority of theoretical construction has historically been biased toward seeing males as primary agents in migratory processes with women being relegated to the function of 'family', a generic passive participant in the migratory process. This work breaks with this bias which is a clear reflection of the dominant patriarchal discourse applied in much academic work. The authors recognize the need to incorporate a gendered understanding of migrant agency.

3. SURVEY DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

Results from a survey distributed via online media to potential respondents between June 2012 and May 2013 forms the basis of this paper. Russian, Ukrainian, Slovak and English versions of the survey were released and distributed online. An extended snowball sample was generated through the utilization of online forums, email and list servers. By virtue of the sampling method the majority of respondents are of the same social cohort and therefore the results form a representative convenience sample of respondents.

During the project a total of 343 responses were collected via four online surveys in the various working languages. Respondents with a university level qualification represent a full 88 per cent of the original sample. The majority of respondents currently reside in the capital region and close surroundings, in part due to the large number of foreigners living in the capital and in part due to the snowball sample method applied to data collection. Much in line with research from other European countries, we find that migrants exhibit high participation rates in the labour market. (Niessen and Schibel 2005)

For the purposes of this work we have merged the various respondents into three distinct linguistic groupings in order to standardize the analysis. The English language group includes individuals from the proverbial 'West' and includes respondents from a number of North American and European countries. The Russian language group includes individuals from the Russian Federation, the Ukraine, and several other post-soviet states, the proverbial 'East'. Slovak nationals are clustered according to their nationality and represent a discreet sample for analysis. Analysis occurred primarily through the use of the Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS) which provided robust statistical correlations.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Salary Gap

According to Eurostat the Czech Republic exhibits the highest pay gap between genders within the European Union. The private sector and public sector exhibit a pay gap of 26% and 22% (respectively) while the "highest pay gap within the financial and insurance sector [in all of the European Union] was recorded in the Czech Republic (45%)" (Eurostat 2013) Possible explanations for existing differences are outside of the scope of this paper, however, it is clear that the salary gap which is demonstrated within our data replicates that within the wider labour market of the Czech Republic.

It is indeed indicative of latent gender discrimination that we find gender playing a significant role in shaping earning power. Gender discrimination when combined with linguistic factors and the simple fact of where ones alma mater is located (within the EU or outside) seriously undermine female earning potential. When comparing the various linguistic groups we find that females in all groups demonstrate reduced earning potential in relation to their male counterparts. In particular a large majority of females within the Russian group earn far below the average wage, whereas women in both the Slovak and English cohorts earn roughly the average wage within the marketplace, yet still less than their male counterparts.

Figure 1 graphically demonstrates that the majority of Russian females earn less than the average wage. In contrast English speaking females earn roughly average wages while their male counterparts earn significantly more. Sector of employment appears to play a significant role in earnings for these two groups. English speakers have difficulty integrating into the local labour force due to linguistic reasons; we find that a large number of female English speakers are employed in the educational industry where wages are substandard for the most part. In contrast a large number of English speaking males are employed by multinationals, often in managerial positions. Russian speaking females are primarily employed in research institutions and non-governmental organizations which tend to pay less than the private sector even if they provide more flexibility to women; in contrast their male counterparts are self-employed or involved in contract work.

It is clear from the data presented in Figure 1 that wages are skewed in favor of male respondents and that significantly more Slovak males earn over fifty thousand Kč than women. (roughly two thousand Euro) The majority of Slovak female respondents indicated that they make close to or slightly more than the Czech average of 24,436 Kč (Czech Statistical Office 2012) From the data it is clear that the earning gap for this group aligns with that of the local Czech population which is indicative of their capability to integrate into the local workforce. Lower than average salaries among Russian speakers indicate difficulty in integration into the workforce on an equal footing with locals.

Results demonstrate that there is a clear statistical correlation between salary and gender with Russian speakers showing a very strong correlation, (Pearson Correlation of 0.544 with a two-tailed significance at 0.002) Slovaks a moderate correlation (0.386 with a two-tailed significance at 0.000) and English a weak yet significant correlation. (0.298 significant at the 0.05 level) This statistical correlation supports our understanding that females earn less than males and in particular that linguistic ability is a predictor of salary level. For a graphical representation of salary see Figure 1.

We find that an additional factor that can be attributed to or influence wages negatively for female respondents is where their alma mater is located. That is to say whether they have a degree from an EU or non-EU based institution. We find that having a non-EU degree has a negative effect on earning potential. (negative two-tailed Pearson correlation of -0.30 significance at the 0.05 level) In contrast there was no clear statistical significance in the case of male respondents in terms of where they completed their formal education or their earning potential.

Figure 1Salary in Thousands by Gender

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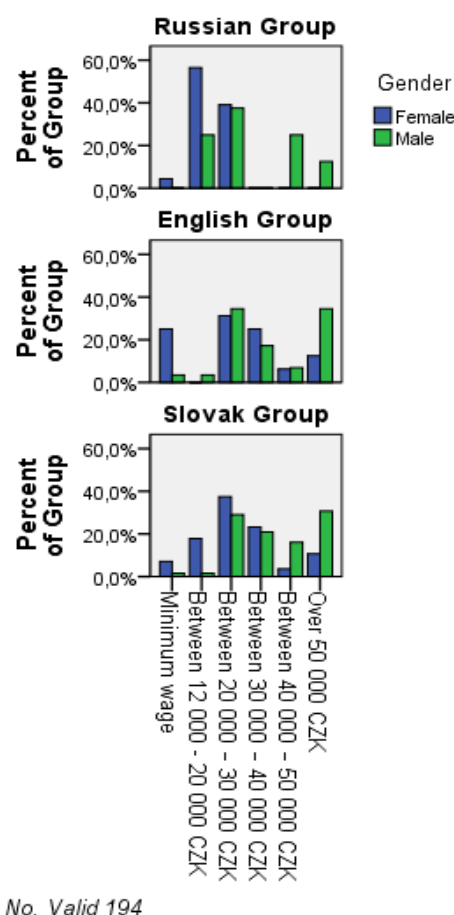
4.2 Wage, Length of Residence and Perceptions

Figure 1 shows the gap in salary levels by gender across various linguistic lines. In order to determine if settled migrants have greater earning potential than recent arrivals we used the Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS) to confirm the correlation coefficient between length of residence and salary and found no clear evidence of a link between the two factors. Our assumption had been that long term migrants would earn higher salaries than younger participants as a reflection of their experience. The lack of a clear correlation is perhaps a result of the small sample size and dearth of respondents who have been in the country more than ten years. It is also conceivable that there are fewer 'unsuccessful' migrants as they would be more likely to re-migrate; perhaps opting to return home or seek out employment elsewhere. (Horáková 2000)

The limited impact of length of residence may additionally have something to do with deskilling or stability of income once established. It is possible that individuals are likely to 'fall into' a job and then become dependent on it once employed. (i.e. they are

unlikely to seek out other employment even if there is potential for greater earnings elsewhere given the risk involved) Additionally, it may be related to individual perception. Individuals from 'eastern' countries are able to enter the Czech labour market with limited difficulty and their salary expectations are moderated by the fact that they seek only to improve their standards in comparison to their (relatively poor) country of origin market. In contrast those coming from the West have a different benchmark from which to compare. (i.e. the market in the country of origin is 'stronger' with higher wage standards).

Irrespective of below average wages female respondents tend to be more satisfied with their decision to move to the Czech Republic than males. (see Figure 2) That is to say that the large number of female respondents with lower expectations thus earn lower than average salaries, yet are paradoxically more satisfied with their decision to live in the Czech Republic than the higher paid males coming from the west who are less satisfied on the whole. (due to the differing frames of reference)

Perceptions of salary in relation to colleagues shows great disparity between groups and genders with 61% of English females indicating that their salary level is roughly equal to their colleagues whereas a similar number of Russian speaking females (65.4%) indicated that their salary was lower than the income of their colleagues. 16% of female English speakers indicated that their salary was above average in contrast no Russian females indicated the same. One third of male English speakers (38.7%) indicated that their salary was higher than their colleagues and more than half (54.8%) indicated that their salary was roughly equal to their colleagues. Russian speaking males show a more average distribution with 25% indicating a lower salary than their colleagues, 37% indicating above average and 37% indicating that their earnings are average. Nonetheless those who are underpaid or perceive themselves to be underpaid remain satisfied with their earnings and the decision to move to the Czech Republic and as indicated below are likely to remain in the Czech Republic.

4.3 Satisfaction

A large number of respondents (35%) are unsatisfied with the stability of their income, only 7% are very satisfied. Russians are generally more dissatisfied with the stability of their household income (48.6%) which may be connected to the significant number earning below the Czech average wage or the fact that they are fifty per cent more likely to have jobs with limited terms of employment. While it would be expected that the higher average wage for English speakers would lead to higher satisfaction levels the truth is mixed with a quarter of English respondents being unsatisfied. It is clear that Russian speaking men are the least satisfied and exhibit less variation in opinion than other groups. In clear contrast, female English speakers are the most positive group yet with the greatest degree of variation in responses. It appears that stability of income is of concern for many respondents, even for those earning above average salaries. This insecurity may stem in part from perceived instability in the market, due to the recent financial crisis or, for some, instability in their income if they are self-employed (~22% of total respondents) or for other reasons we are unaware of.

While it is expected that individuals who earn less than average would be less satisfied with the stability of income, there appears to be significant variation between and within groups also when asking about their satisfaction with their original migration related decision. As an example, we find that the most satisfied group are those female Russian speakers in the mid to low income category. (Figure 2) We understand this to be linked to the fact that they are able to,

and indeed do, compare their income and quality of life with relatively low levels at 'home'.

What is noteworthy is the fact that a large portion of wealthy English speakers are often dissatisfied with their decision to move. Indeed there are a number of outliers within the English language group who are extremely dissatisfied with their decision to move to the Czech Republic. (see Figure 2) We note that there is some disjuncture between satisfaction with decision and satisfaction overall (with salary and employment) it appears that some individuals claim to be very unsatisfied with their decision but then claim to be satisfied in terms of their salary level, work environment and the like which leads us to believe that further study of 'relative' satisfaction is necessary.

Figure 2 Satisfaction Level Based on Decision to Move
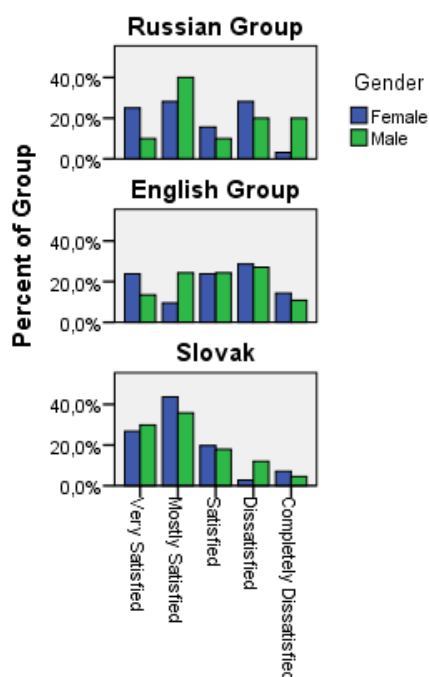
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### 4.4 Return Home if Unemployed

The majority of respondents intend to remain in the Czech Republic for the foreseeable future. The vast majority of respondents would not return to their country of origin even if they were unemployed for more than six months. (Figure 3) Approximately 30% of respondents would return home in the case that they were to be unemployed for more than 6 months. By far the majority would not return home even if threatened with long term unemployment. There is variation between groups though, with English and Slovak speakers indicating a willingness to return home in the face of unemployment. [1]

Female English speakers are the most likely to return in the face of unemployment with 60% indicating willingness to return, roughly half of Slovak females also indicate a willingness to return. Russian speakers are universally against return, a reflection of cultural, economic or political realities in their home countries. The

willingness or lack thereof may reflect the availability of unemployment benefits for those with full time contracts in the Czech Republic, indeed there may also be a psychological limitation imposed on mobility for those who are 'settled' in the Czech Republic or the simple fact that 'things are worse at home'. Males may be less likely or less willing to 'give up' in the face of unemployment or may be unwilling to risk unemployment at home. Anecdotal evidence suggests that high unemployment in an individual's region of origin is considered a significant problem facing return migrants.

Statistically there is no correlation between the number of years an individual has been in the Czech Republic and their willingness to return if unemployed. There is, however, a correlation between language group and willingness to return home which supports our understanding that English language speakers are far more likely to return than others. (Pearson Chi-Square is 6.446 at the 0.01 level (two-tailed)

Figure 3 If Unemployed More Than 6 Months Return Home
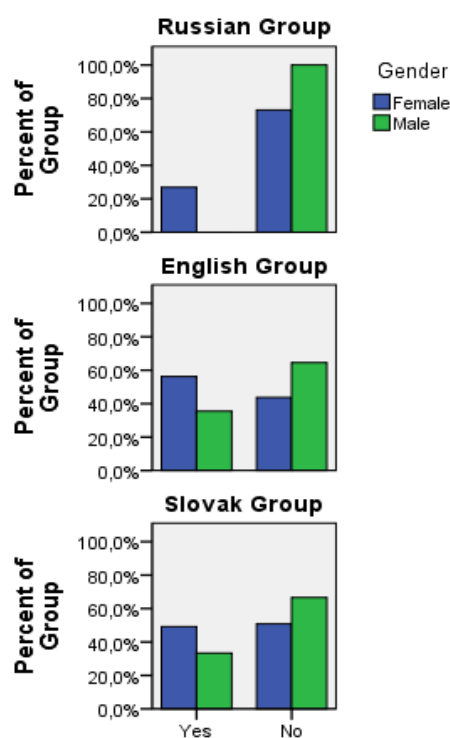
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4.5 Reason for Leaving One's Home Country

While recognizing the difficulty of gathering accurate responses ex post facto given the multifocal character of much migratory decision making and the often changing rationalizations provided by respondents we see that common explanations for leaving one's home country relate primarily to employment or the desire for change. The more traditional 'push factors' generally utilized in migration research such as economic factors or imbalances in living conditions are apparently of little significance to individuals. While 'work' is a significant factor from a personal perspective we find that common explanations for leaving one's home country are as often related to family reunification or a need for change as they are related to work. There are, however, significant differences within sub-groups. Variation in the relative importance of each factor is highlighted in Figure 4. Family reunification was nearly as important as 'need for change' or 'employment' for Russian females

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1 Unemployed more than 6 months return home. (Per cent Valid)
Russian: Yes 17.5 % No 82.5 % Female yes 25.9% No 74.1% Male Yes 10% No 90%
English Yes 42.3% No 57.7% Female yes 60 % No 40% Male Yes 34.6% No 65.4%
Slovak Yes 30.3.% No 42.6% Female yes-50.6% No 49.4% Male Yes 39.7% No 60.3%

while interpersonal reasons were given more often by English females. Study was an important factor for between 12% and 26% of all respondents while a need for change was expressed across all groups. Slovak men more often claimed to have come due to work while Slovak females were more likely to indicate that they moved due to a need for change or study. Variation may also be due to the fact that a number of English respondents are essentially lifestyle migrants, who have moved for reasons of quality of life, in search of experience or for other non-economic reasons. Slovak nationals, on the other hand, do not differentiate between their home market and the Czech market and move fluidly between the two.

Figure 4 Reason for Leaving Home Country
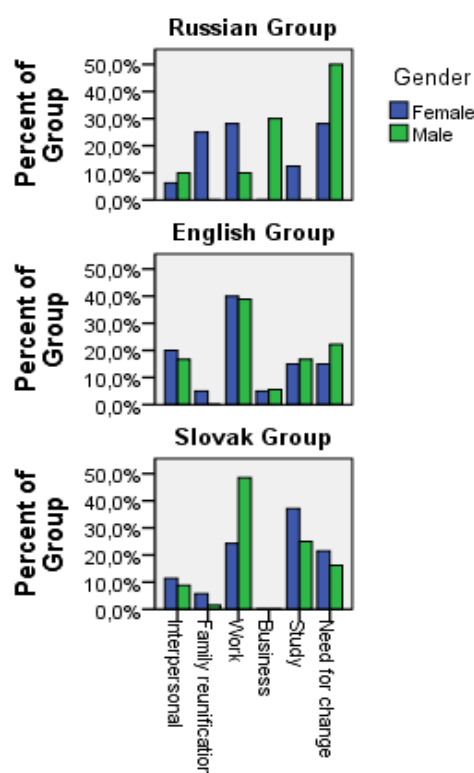
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5. CONCLUSION

We find that gender differentiated data provides a unique contrast to simple response analysis. Not taking into account variation among respondents within groups has the potential to mislead researchers who seek to gain a better understanding of migration decision making processes. It is imperative that research include analysis of gender variation, as standard practices utilizing comparative approaches have the potential to gloss over pertinent divergence in responses. During the course of the preliminary research the authors sought only macro levels of variation and failed to take into account intra-group variation. This paper seeks to redress this oversight by providing an examination of the variation deemed to be of relevance for expanding our understanding of migrant decision making and the potential for remigration trends.

Failing to address gender differentiated responses would have blinded us to the variation which exists within groups. Aggregate responses obscure the fact that a substantial number of English speaking female respondents would be willing to return home if unemployed for a long period of time or that Russian speaking

females are far more satisfied with their decision to move, even taking into account their low income levels.

Such minute variations are difficult to analyse at the aggregate level, unless there is a concerted effort to seek out intra-group variation in responses. This paper has shown that there exists significant variation between genders and among groups with correlation coefficients indicating that gender has an immense role in salary potential for Russian speaking women, but is only weakly correlated in the case of other linguistic groups. Similarly, there is a strong correlation between an individual's alma mater and salary potential which is detrimental to non-EU degree holders. Further work is required to tease out the minute variations that exist between groups; future work should seek to clarify how severe the impact of having a non-EU degree is on third country nationals in terms of income potential or remigration.

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