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Some immigrants are more transnational than others: transnationalism as differential factor of integration.

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Abstract

Transnational migration has been a popular academic topic since the 80's, but is still an ambiguous concept, specially from a macro-historical point of view. Basically, it seems evident that time must pass before we can decide whether the so-called phenomenon is qualitatively or quantitatively different from past experiences. However, if we limit our analysis to the present time, transnational migration seems a useful concept to describe different patterns of migration. It is reasonable to argue that some immigrants are more transnational than others. Of course, the degree of "transnationalism" depends on the amount of the stock and on the intensity and history of the flow in a given host country; but not strictly so. Some nationalities are more transnational than others from the very beginning of the settlement process. The demographic signs of this transnational character are found within the history of each migratory movement across the world.

This perspective suggests interesting hypothesis on causes as well as effects of migration. Within the field of demography and population studies, more has being written about transnationalism as a causal factor for observed migration patterns. So, for example, from this perspective we can venture that receiving nations with a weak labor market are less attractive for traditional economic migrants, and more affordable for transnational migration movements. But the sociodemographic analysis of the consequences of transnational migration is equally promising. Transnational migrants bring with them a "migration culture" and an institutionalized network that have their own effects on the process of integration into the host society. In nations that are just beginning to host immigration, the transnational character or long migration history of the newcomers may have more impact on society than the inflow amount.

The purpose of this paper is to explore this perspective and hypothesis with recent data on international migration in Spain. First, a clasification of migration movements in relation to its transnational character will be proposed, based on international data about the weight of emigration for each national origin. Secondly, differences in demographic behavior (nuptiality, fertility, internal migration) between spanish and foreign populations will be analyzed as measures of integration. Finally, we will test whether the differences, or degree of integration, respond to differences in the transnational character of the migrant populations.