**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND WORK SCIENCE**

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# Materiality, Mobility and Strategies of Nurturing Long-Distance Family Relationships: A Study of Migrant Women's Practices Around Sending Packages Home

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# Abstract

This thesis draws on migrants' practices around sending packages home to explore their practical experience with navigating distance and what it actually takes to maintain close familial relationships across space. The study employs a Grounded theory methodology to analyse ten semi-structured interviews with Ukrainian female migrants in Sweden. By using Grounded theory this thesis combines theoretical concepts of positionality and access to spatial mobility and intersectionality. The migrants' access to spatial mobility is discussed in relation to social divisions of gender and family role, the migrant and their families' economic situation, and the intersection of these categories under the conditions of migration. The findings demonstrate that nurturing long-distance relationships is, in fact, a strategic undertaking. The migrants employ the following five strategies: *balancing economic costs versus social benefits, managing time, securing delivery, navigating border control,* and *'conveniencing' delivery* – which stem from the variations in their access (economic, temporal, organisational and physical) to spatial mobility. The migrants sending experiences and how they deal with mobility barriers are seemingly informed by how close the migrant is with her kin and how she views her role in the family. We see how the participants' sending was largely motivated by a feeling of duty and consideration towards their aging parents. The migrants' sending was also framed by the financial means available to them and economic needs of their family. Those migrants whose packages were intended to provide daily essentials had to work harder to overcome mobility barriers in order to deliver their care in full scale and at the time it was needed.


Key words: migrants, strategies of nurturing, long-distance family relationships, packages, spatial mobility, Grounded theory.

# 1. Introduction

In times of increasing migration, more scholarly attention has been given to how migrants and their families can continue stay close despite being separated by distance. Various studies (Baldassar, 2008; Baldassar and Merla, 2014) have argued that distance and geography should not be viewed as a hindrance for migrants and their families to sustain meaningful relationships. Sending packages, in particular, has been found to be one of the effective strategies used by migrants to transmit their care and support to their kin (Burrell, 2008, 2011). The packages that migrants send to their families may include objects and foodstuffs for daily use as well as more special gifts and souvenirs from the new country. Sent items serve as a tangible demonstration of migrants' love and devotion to the family, while also can provide economic and practical support (Burrell, 2008). Existing qualitative research on material remittances and gifts has tended to focus on migrants' motives behind sending and the meaning it has for their familial relationships (Åkesson, 2011, Cliggett, 2005). Less attention has, however, been given to migrants' practical experience around navigating the distance and it's various aspects (infrastructure, logistics and borders) and what it *actually* takes to maintain close familial ties across vast space.

This thesis builds on the previous study '*Materialising Care Across Borders: Exploring Family Ties Between Sweden and Ukraine Through Sent Things*' (Khrenova and Burrell, 2021), conducted by the author together with Kathy Burrell from Liverpool University during 2018-2019. Within the framework of this study, I conducted interviews with Ukrainian female migrants living in Sweden. The mentioned study focused on *why* migrants send packages, whereas *how* they do this and the practical toll of sending remained unexplored. This thesis offers a closer look at migrants' practical engagement with sending in order to spotlight the nature of thought, effort, time and financial resources that migrants put in place to nurture long-distance family relationships.

Migrants' practices around sending packages are explored with reference to an individual's possibilities for spatial mobility. In the contemporary world, where families no longer share the same household throughout their life course, an individual's possibility for spatial movement determines his/her ability to arrange, schedule and perform social interactions at-a-distance (Urry, 2007). This thesis employs Urry's (2007) concept of *access*, which is a key notion in examining an individual's possibilities for spatial mobility. Although migrants are known as a group with restricted access to spatial movement, they might not have equal experiences with dealing with distance as individuals. Cresswell (2006) underscores that an individual's access to movement is informed by their specific social positionality. Migrants' experiences with moving packages may vary depending on, for example, gender and family role and how established they are in their new country. Migrants' practices of sending therefore tell us more about the hidden obstacles that migrants might face in their post-migration life, and the heterogeneity of their experiences.

This thesis aims to provide a more holistic understanding of migrants' experiences with nurturing long-distance familial relationships, by drawing on the contributions of several academic disciplines. Along with the sociological literature on mobility and long-distance family-making, I rely on anthropological research on material remittances and gifts, and geographical studies on moving packages across borders. The combination of these different studies helps to bring new insights in understanding migrants' lives in general and how they can stay in touch with their loved ones across distance.

This study examines the following research question and sub-question:

**Research Question:** *How do migrants nurture long-distance family relationships through practices around sending packages home?*

**Sub-question**: *In which ways do migrants' and their family's positionality and access to spatial mobility inform migrants' practices around nurturing long-distance relationships though sending packages home?*

By *nurturing long-distance family relationships*, I mean that migrants transmit their care and support to their families back home and show their continued presence and participation in family life. By using the word *home,* I do not intend to make any essentialist statements, but employ the participants' own conceptualisation of where they feel their home is.

The migrants' access to spatial mobility is discussed in relation to social divisions of gender and family role and their and their families' economic situation, and the intersection of these categories under conditions of migration. Other social categories, such as legal status, age, marital status and ethnicity are not irrelevant, but the analysis is reduced to the mentioned categories to make it manageable within the scope of this thesis.

## 1.2 Method and sample

This thesis employs a Grounded theory method described by Charmaz (2014), albeit with some adaptations. This method allows the combination of several concepts and theories, to produce an interpretative framework to explain more hidden processes related to human experiences (Saldana, 2009). Since my data has already been collected, I did not intentionally follow Charmaz's theoretical sampling. Nonetheless, my sampling approach that included a specific group of migrant women with different social positionalities resulted in variations in women's accounts about how their access to mobility informed their sending. So, the sampling carried out naturally fit within the methodological framework of Grounded Theory.

The research question is explored with reference to ten in-depth interviews with Ukrainian migrant women living in Sweden. When it comes to long-distance family-making, Ukrainian migrants are a valuable group to draw on because of their active engagement in transnational practices. In 2018 the World Bank documented that Ukrainian migrants sent a record amount

of more than 14 billion dollars' worth of financial remittances home, more than any other group of migrants in Europe. The focus on women was prompted by the fact that the literature on long-distance family-making (Baldassar, 2008; Åkesson, 2011) has noted that female migrants tend to be more engaged in the maintenance of family relationships. Ukrainian migration to Europe is characterised by a significant proportion of women (Marchetti and Venturini, 2013), which provides an empirical case to focus on female migrants' experiences. A sample of Ukrainian female migrants in Sweden serves as an illustration for this study, but this research can, in principle, be applied to any other group of migrants with similar socio-economic characteristics elsewhere.

## 1. Previous Research

The related research is presented in four parts. The first part describes Ukrainian migration in Europe in general and in Sweden in particular. The second part demonstrates how sending packages is linked to the process of long-distance family-making. The third part presents current discussions on mobility and maintenance of long-distance relationships. The final part shows migrants' practical engagement with sending, revealing this practice is more complicated than first assumed.

### 2.1 Ukrainian migrants in Europe

Recent migration of Ukrainians to Europe is primarily caused by the poor socio-economic situation in the country (Bylan, 2017). The war in Donbas and the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014 has aggravated the economic and political situation in the country. Even Ukrainians with higher education and qualified work often have low wages and insecure employment, prompting them to leave the country in search of better economic prospects (Bylan, 2017). Although Ukraine's nationalist ideology promotes women's primary role as a wife and a mother, low wages in the country make getting-by difficult for single-income families, urging women to look for ways to support their families financially (Solari, 2017). Due to limited career opportunities, especially in more rural parts of the country, many women decide to migrate to Europe to work, with the intention of remitting as much as possible back home (Marchetti, Venturini, 2013). In Europe, Ukrainian women usually take low-qualified employment in the domestic and care sector or in agricultural industry (Feduyk, 2013).

Ukrainian migration in Sweden reflects the general pattern of Ukrainian migration in Europe. In Sweden, Ukrainians are one of the larger migrant groups that move to the country for work reasons. The majority of Ukrainian women arriving in Sweden perform low-skilled work as care-workers, berry-collectors and cleaning personnel (The Swedish Migration Agency, 2015-2020). However, there has recently been an increase in the number of high-skilled migrants who arrive to Sweden to work as engineers or IT-experts (Swedish Migration Agency, 2020). Also, some of the migrant women arrive to Sweden for study reasons and continue their careers in the country (Delmi report, 2018). Additionally, some of the migrant women arrive to Sweden to seek asylum, trying to escape from the ongoing military conflict in Ukraine (Swedish Migration Agency, 2015-2020).

## 2.2 Sending packages and family-making across distance

Recent studies on gifts and material remittances (Cligget, 2005; Åkesson, 2011; Burrell, 2008) have found that the practice of sending packages bears a significant economic and social value. These studies have shown that the practice of sending packages is tightly linked to the system of duty, obligation, love and care that underpins familial relationships. Cliggett (2005), for example, presents how Zambian migrants in the UK send packages with foodstuffs, toiletries and clothes to cover the daily needs of those back home. Apart from the economic help, sending is intended to demonstrate that migrants have not forgotten their families and remain loyal even from afar. Mckenzie and Menjivar (2010) describe how migrants fathers send presents to their wife children back home as tangible reminders of their continuing sense of responsibility to the family. Singh et al. (2012) also presents how migrants' sending of material gifts in relation to life-stage events and religious serves as a solid proof of their continuing commitment to familial traditions and their participation in the course of family life.

Cliggett (2005) argues that it is not only the gift that is important but that act of sending is meaningful in itself. He claims that sending has a strong moral implication. Regular sending can cement relationships, whereas less regular or absent transfers can lead to clashes and even the denouncement of familial ties. Åkesson (2011) highlights that although (not) sending things can affect communication, most often this practice is secondary to the relationship. She claims that sending practices are usually shaped by the relationship history between individuals as well as by gender and familial structures of duty and obligation. In other words, how close migrants feel to their kin and how they view their role in the family will affect their practices around sending. Despite evidence that men also send gifts back home (McKenzie and Menjivar, 2010), Åkesson (2011) and Katigbak (2015) have found that female migrants tend to experience more pressure to 'remember' their family and to demonstrate their support through gifts and remittances. In the patriarchal societies, where caring arrangements rest primarily on female shoulders, women often continue feeling responsibility for organisation of the family life even after migration.

## 2.3 Migrants and spatial mobility

In the literature on long-distance family-making, spatial (im)mobility is often brought up in relation to two matters. The first matter relates to restrictive immigration regulations. Brandhorst et al. (2020) demonstrate how requirements of high and stable income often prevents migrants from reuniting with their children or older parents. Åkesson et al. (2012) presents how undocumented migrants especially face challenges in sustaining long-distance family relationships. She describes how difficult it is for undocumented migrant mothers to rearrange care for their children in case of illness or death of foster carers, as they are unable to travel home. The second matter refers to the insufficiency and inequalities of travelling systems across the globe. The recent boom and expansion of low-cost air travel options has seemingly

offered migrants and their families more possibilities to visit each other (Green, 2015). However, Burrell (2011) describes how low-cost travel often implies, inconvenient hours of travelling, airports located too remotely, as well as significant luggage restrictions – making the movement troublesome and exhausting . Even those migrants who can afford better travel options, may find it difficult to travel home if mobility systems in the country are not sufficient, if they are unable to devote more time to travelling (Ryan et al. (2013).

## 2.4 Migrants' sending and spatial mobility

Recent research on migrants' sending packages home reveals this practice is more complicated than first assumed. Despite the apparent hypermobility of today's society, the insufficiency of mobility systems between wealthy states and the rest of the world is still a problem. While exploring material exchange between Bissau and Portugal, Abranches (2013) presents how the irregularity and, sometimes, uncertainty of flights between the countries makes migrants' sending more time-consuming and troublesome. She presents how the senders have to come to the airport during inconvenient times and queue for hours, sometimes missing work or important appointments. Additionally, in less privileged countries, the national and local mobility networks might not be developed sufficiently to ensure speedy delivery to more geographically remote places. So, migrants might have to make additional transportations arrangement, making the sending more effortful and time-consuming (Burrell, 2017).

The regulated channels for shipping goods between privileged countries and the rest of the world tend to be expensive, creating an additional barrier for migrants to deliver their care through sent packages. Abranches (2013) documents that regulated postal services between developed and developing countries can require significant payment for inspection and customs fees, hindering migrants' ability to send packages regularly. Furthermore, regulated shipping channels often have significant limitations in the size and weight of packages (Burrell, 2017), preventing migrants from making more substantial material contributions to the family. To bypass these obstacles, migrants make arrangements with private travellers, who agree to take their package for a certain renumeration (Abranches, 2013). In other cases, migrants develop their own logistics, buying and driving vehicles exclusively for shipping purposes (Burrell, 2017). Additionally, migrants also use the services of undocumented couriers, from larger companies to smaller-scale individual operators who transport packages across borders for comparatively less money than regulated shipping services (Nyamunda, 2015).

Shipping packages comes with risks and insecurities, hindering migrants ability to nurture long-distance relationships through sending. Sent packages cross multiple terrains, pass many hands, transports and places, so the loss or damage of sent items is not uncommon. Burrell (2017) describes how migrants use more secure boxes and extra packaging material to secure the contents of the parcel. Abranches (2013) also presents how senders write prayers on the parcel in hope that this will prevent stealing. Sending with unregulated courier services bears even higher risks. Nyamunda (2015) describes how in order to transport more goods more frequently, and without paying customs fees, the couriers sometimes make private deals with the local

authorities or the border police. These illegal pay offs, if revealed, can generate risks not only for the delivery of the package but also for migrants' life in the new country. We see then that the practical toll of moving things around should not be underestimated. Logistical and infrastructural demands evidently magnify the geographical distance and so complicate migrants' ability to navigate it to sustain family ties.

# 3. Theoretical Framework

This chapter outlines the central theoretical concepts that guided the analysis and development of the interpretative framework. Mobility theory and Intersectionality theory have aided the examination of the practice of sending packages as a way to nurture transnational relationships.

## 3.1 Conceptualisation of spatial mobility: access and positionality

Contemporary research on spatial mobility (Urry, 2007; Sheller and Urry, 2006, Cresswell, 2006) argues that in our modern world, where social interactions happen more or less at-a-distance, a person's capacity for spatial movement is essential for their ability to maintain social relations. A person's high capacity for spatial mobility increases his/her opportunities for organising, timing and performing moments of interaction (whether physical, virtual or through objects), helping to maintain close relationships across space and over time (Sheller and Urry, 2006). On the contrary, restricted possibility for spatial movement hinders people from fulfilling their social obligations to meet, to converse and to be there for another person (Class, Shove and Urry, 2005).

Urry offers *access* as a key concept to examine people's capacity for mobility in an urban setting, and presents four elements that constitute this access: economic, physical, organizational and temporal. *Economic access* refers to availability of financial resources for a person to access different mobility services. This element predominantly affects consideration and the eventual choice of mobility services and systems. *Physical access* refers to how physically easy or difficult it is for individuals to enact movement. Physical access primarily relates to people's physical (dis)abilities, physical constraints to move themselves or to move large or weighty objects. This element can also depend on material barriers and practical hurdles in the surrounding that hinders people's spatial movement. *Organizational access* refers to the variability and organisation of mobility services available to a person - how secure mobility services are, their reliability and their extent. Lastly, *temporal access* depends upon the availability of time resources required for movement. Temporal access refers to an individuals' possibility to access mobility services at the moment convenient for them, and with the speed required. Temporal access is about a person's sense of control of the time resources needed to enact a movement, it is about timing and time-management. The presented types of access, although able to stand on their own, are not always inseparable in practice (Class, Shove and Urry, 2005). Economic access, for example, is often combined with the temporal or organisational access, which encourages a more holistic approach to understanding a person's capacity for mobility. To conclude, Urry's *access* is based on, on one hand, the availability of

mobility options, and on the other hand – the existing socio-economic conditions, which may (not) allow people to access these options.

Urry (2007) and Cresswell (2006) draw attention to variation in people's possibilities for mobility. The scholars challenge the liberal idea of movement as an unconditional right, a universal attribute of an autonomous body. Instead, they argue that peoples' capacity for spatial movement is not equal, but varies significantly depending on a person's position in the system of social hierarchies in a given society at a particular moment in history. A possibility to organise and enact movement, and how this movement is embedded  is produced with a system of power relations and further reproduces them (Hannam, Sheller and Urry, 2006). For instance, in an urban environment, people from the lowest social class tend to reside in areas further away from where mobility systems are concentrated, and have a lessened opportunity to move on their own or to move goods and information, which reinforces their immobility (Cresswell, 2006). Migrant groups face particular challenges when it comes to spatial movement. A person's possibilities for mobility can depend on whether he/she is identified as belonging to the privileged world or not. Those who are not considered members of richer societies are often approached as a subject of suspicion and a possible threat, so their possibilities for movement, both across and within borders, tend to be either blocked or constrained (Shamir, 2005). Gendered and family structures also play a role in shaping a person's possibility for spatial mobility (Cresswell and Uteng, 2008). The load of family maintenance places demands on women to maintain multiple social contacts and to arrange many interactions. Women tend to assume responsibility for getting children to and from school, organising medical check-ups, and paying visits to older relatives (Hjorthol, 2008).  At the same time, women tend to occupy lower socio-economic positions, and often have less freedom, fewer temporal and financial resources to enact movement (Cresswell and Uteng, 2008), making their travelling more demanding and constrained.

In their discussions the scholars (Cresswell, 2005, Sherell and Urry, 2006; Urry, 2007) point out the complexity of interrelationships between human agency and mobility structures. They claim that urban environment is not static, but can be affected by humans, configured and reconfigured by their actions and interactions. Although the ideology of social hierarchies is entangled in the way that spatial mobility is constructed, it is important to recognise an individual's capacity (even if limited for some) to navigate and challenge the existing mobility structures.

### 3.2 Conceptualisation of positionality – intersectional considerations

Building on the above, access to spatial mobility should be discussed in relation to social divisions of class, gender and family role, migration and their intersection.

Intersectionality builds on the idea that an individual's social positionality is never constructed along one axis of difference, be it gender, class or other, but along multiple axes of differences. Yuval-Davis (2006a) argues that separate social categories, such as womanhood or working

class although autonomous and grounded in different ontological basis, carry little meaning if used on their own. Instead, these categories gain meaning through an interplay with each other. That is to say, a woman's social positionality would be constituted through an interplay with other categories, such as social class, age, nationality, immigration status. These different social divisions cannot simply be summed up (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1983) specifically argue against such notions as double and triple oppression. Instead, it is important is to examine how these different divisions constitute one another and interrelate, creating various identities.

Despite the fact that a combination of different social categories can produce different positionalities, these intersections are not completely unique for every individual. Yuval-Davis (2006b) highlights that people are not placed randomly along different axes of power. She argues that people who have a specific position along one axis of power tend to occupy a particular place along the other. For example, women more often than men have worse financial and career opportunities. This, however, does not mean that the intermesh of specific social categories will always be similar. We need to remember there is a variety of social divisions that can affect a person's social positionality.

The meanings of social categories and their intersections need to be examined relative to the social context. Although social divisions are often presented as a universal result of a historical process and a biological destiny (Yuval-Davis, 2006b), the meanings that social divisions and their intersectionalities carry are dynamic and changing and should be viewed as relational to specific social conditions at a given historical moment (Acker, 2006). In other words, people's practices and experiences stemmed from their social positionality should be examined in relation to the existing social, political and economic structures, and the ideological visions that underpin them.

## 3.3 Combining theoretical tools

The theories of mobility and intersectionality can complement each other in ways useful for this study. Mobility theory on access helps to spotlight the more hidden obstacles that migrants face in their post-migration lives. This framework points to the barriers (economic, organizational, physical and temporal) that migrants have to deal with while maintaining relationships with their loved ones. While the intersectionality approach allows us to highlight the heterogeneity of the migrants' experiences and practices, and to make sense of their different nature. Social divisions that are relevant for this study are gender (and family role), financial situation of migrants and their families and their intersection under the conditions of migration.

# 3. Methods

## 4.1 Grounded theory method

In this study, I employ the Grounded theory method presented by Charmaz (2014). Charmaz outlines grounded theory as a theoretical and methodological package that covers all steps from data collection to theory construction. Charmaz explains Grounded theory (GT) as a method developed to interpret human's tacit experiences. GT views humans as active agents in their own lives, who, through their actions, create social structures. So, this method focuses primarily on actors and their engagement in different processes and actions. This method implies that researchers draw on collected data to create a theoretical framework. To construct a theoretical framework, Charmaz advises using an abductive approach, meaning the researcher continuously compares the data against all possible theoretical explanations, and then tests the formed hypothesis against the data.
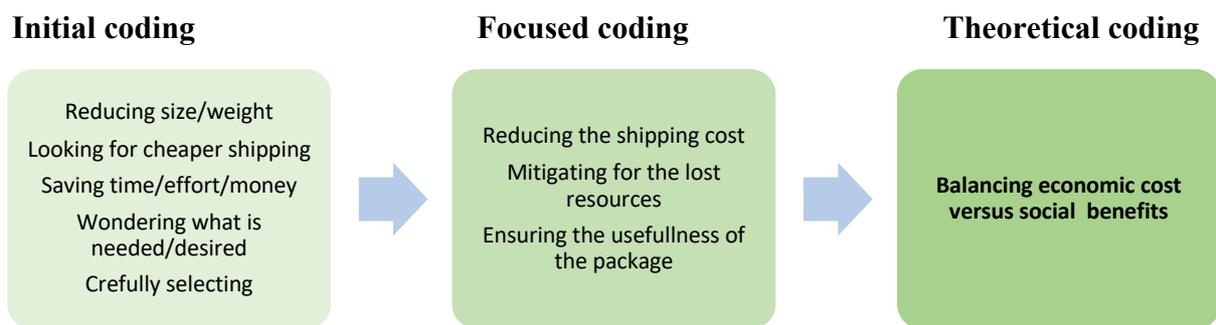
Grounded theory benefits this study in two ways. Firstly, GT's focus on actions helps to disclose the complexity of sending practices. GT advocates for coding in actions (in gerund form), as opposed to coding in themes, which allowed me to approach sending not as a singular act, but as a series of actions, which migrants undertake to stay in touch with their families. Secondly, GT's focus on actors and their perspective allowed me to concentrate on migrant's social positionality, and how it affects their experiences with family-making through sending. Charmaz has a more constructivist approach to GT recognizing researcher's role in construction of a theoretical framework. She argues that coding that reflects actions helps the researcher to acquire a more situated gaze and to stick to the participant's view. Being a Ukrainian migrant woman in Sweden, who is also engaged in sending, I want to reduce the effect of my personal experiences framing the interpretations of the participants' narratives.

## 4.2 Application of the Grounded theory method

Following Charmaz (2014), I employed two phases of coding – initial and focused coding. The initial coding involved doing line-by-line coding to dive into the data and to find out more about the world of the participant. The main question I asked at this stage was what was happening from the participant's perspective, while noting any underlying assumptions that formed her views. I analysed one interview at a time in order to focus on the perspective of this particular interviewee, while also bearing in mind her role in the family as well as her and her family's economic situation. I later applied the codes from each interview to all other interviews to investigate the ways in which these experiences are similar or different, and why this may be the case. I was attentive to the participants' exact words and formulations. If I felt their expression captured their view or if a particular word was mentioned repeatedly, I used it in the codes. Although I coded the translated interviews, I would continuously refer to the originals to make sure the translation was accurate enough to apply the wording in the codes.

During the focused coding I selected the codes that stood out and reflected the data the most, for example recurring or salient experiences. At this stage, I focused more on what these codes told me in general, concentrating especially on the participants' experiences of mobility barriers, how they understood and acted upon them. This stage in particular involved constant comparison between data and codes and the theoretical concepts. My working process from the initial coding to the focused coding and then to the theoretical coding is presented in *Figure 1.* The codes and categories that emerged will further be presented and explained in the analysis.

**Figure 1. An example of the Grounded theory-based coding of the interviews with Ukrainian migrant women in Sweden**

**Initial coding**  **Focused coding**  **Theoretical coding**

Reducing size/weight
Looking for cheaper shipping
Saving time/effort/money
Wondering what is needed/desired
Crefully selecting

Reducing the shipping cost
Mitigating for the lost resources
Ensuring the usefullness of the package

**Balancing economic cost versus social benefits**

Since my interviews were already conducted and transcribed, I employed a technique of memo-writing (Charmaz, 2014) during the analysis. For every interview I had a separate memo, where I wrote down my general impression from reading the interview and noted the emerging codes and categories (and the links between them), supporting them with the participants' accounts. These memos eventually served as a key record for comparison between codes and data and codes and theory across the interviews, and laid a foundation for my analysis and discussion.

## 4.3 Material and sampling

This study draws on ten in-depth, semi-structured interviews with Ukrainian migrant women living in Sweden. The interviews were structured around the respondents' experiences of communication with their families, with a focus on their sending practices. I used my contacts with local Ukrainians to orally spread the information about the study, relying on snowball referrals from there on. Some of the respondents were also recruited at the collection point in Gothenburg, where local Ukrainians come to send their packages to Ukraine via unregulated Ukrainian courier services. The respondents were selected on the condition of regular sending, within the age-range when participants tend to take more responsibility for sustaining family ties (over 25 years old). I aimed to include the respondents with different socio-economic background and situation in the country. The interviews were conducted in the language preferred by the participant, either in Ukrainian or Russian, transcribed and translated into English. Every interview took place in a café of the participant's choice, and on average lasted between one and a half and two hours. Most of the participants initially found it difficult to talk

about their sending because of how ordinary they thought this practice is, signalling how inherent sending has become to their communication with the family. However, they would soon reveal how important sending is to them and how much thought, effort and concern they actually put into this practice.

The sample includes women aged between 25 to 49, and the majority have been living in Sweden for between three and seven years. Most of the women are married or in a partnership, and two have a dependent child. Seven women arrived from bigger cities, while three came from smaller towns or more rural areas. Although all of the women, except one, have higher level of education, most of them had a precarious employment situation, either facing unemployment or performing work below their qualifications, such as care work or low-skilled work at a factory. Among these women, some were in a more comfortable financial situation due the earnings of their partner. Several women have managed to secure qualified and well-paid employment, working as a university scholar, an IT-expert and an HR consultant. The participants have been residing in Sweden legally, but most of them had short-term residence permit (either on the basis of their or their partner's work), and one of the women had an uncertain status of an asylum seeker, which limited their possibilities to travel home. The participants mainly sent packages to their parents, more often, mothers in Ukraine.

The participants used different shipping channels, both regulated and unregulated. Most of the women at least occasionally send their packages via unregulated Ukrainian courier services, as this option was considered one of the cheapest. These courier companies usually consist of two to four individuals based in Ukraine, operating between Sweden and Ukraine. At the time of the data collection in 2019, I found at least three companies which made their trips on a regular basis, every two or three weeks. However, the real number might be higher, as information about their services tend to spread informally, through Facebook and Viber groups as well as friendship networks. The couriers arrive to Sweden in a mini-van and cover more populated areas between Stockholm and Malmö. If the contents of the package was considered as more valuable or if the package needed to be delivered more quickly or more conveniently for the receiver, some of the participants used more expensive private shipping services, such as DHL. To send smaller packages, the migrants tended to use regular post or rely on the local Ukrainian communities, sending their gifts through friends and acquittances who travelled to Ukraine.

## 4.4 Ethical considerations and the researcher's role

The interviews were conducted in line with the Swedish research Council's Ethical principles of informed consent and guaranteed confidentiality (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017). Prior to this study, I contacted each participant and received their permission to re-analyse their interviews for this thesis on condition of anonymity. The participants were informed about their right to withdraw their participation from this study at any time, until the publication of this thesis. The participants interviews were stored under false names in a password-protected folder on my private computer. To preserve the participants' confidentiality, I use pseudonyms and give personal information in a generalised manner.
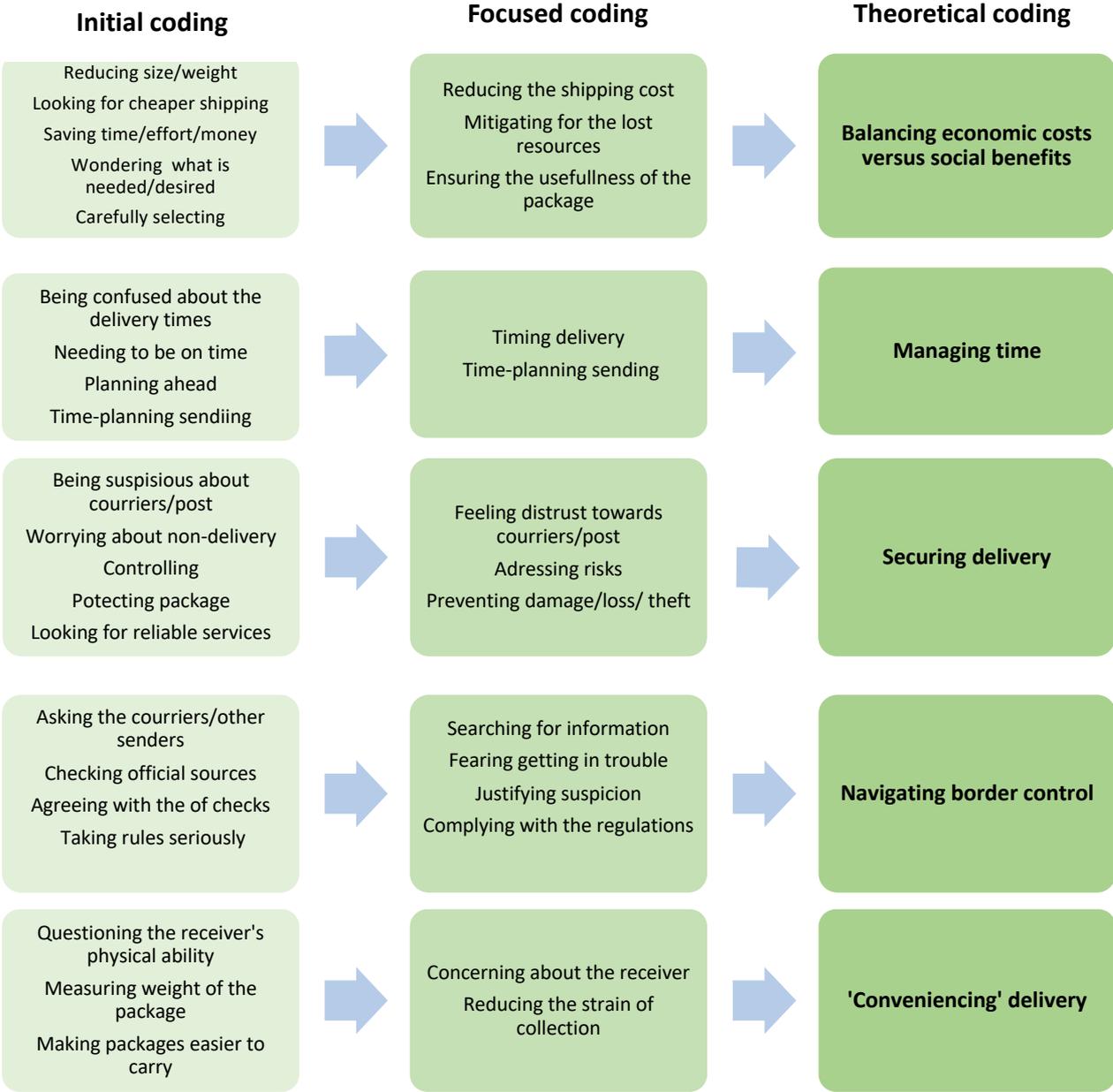
One of the particular challenges I faced during the interviews was to learn to encourage the participants to talk about the experiences they felt were trivial and not worthy of scrutiny. To trigger the participants reflections, I asked them to take pictures of some of the items they were planning to send and to explain them to me them during the meeting. To further encourage the participants to speak, I followed the advice of Torbenfeldt Bengtsson and Fynbo (2018) of using longer periods of silence. Also, I performed the additional emotional labour of displaying interest in the subject and showing my eagerness to hear more (Hoffmann, 2007). During the interviews I also continuously reflected on the power balance between myself as a researcher and the participants. Since I am also a Ukrainian migrant woman, I felt the participants viewed me as more relatable and I found it relatively easy to gain their trust. The nature of our conversations at times revealed intimate details of the informants' relationships with their families, putting them in a vulnerable position. This has put additional responsibility on me to be careful to not exploit the participants' sincerity. To balance the power dynamics, I felt it was important to share with them some of the personal details about my life as well the private experiences with maintaining connection with my family. After each interview, I had it as a rule to check with the participant whether any parts of the conversation should not be analysed or presented in the final work.

## 5. Analysis of Empirical Findings: towards a typology of strategizing nurturing

### 5.1 Towards a typology of strategizing and sending practices

The findings presented here are based on a Grounded theory analysis of the collected interviews with Ukrainian migrant women in Sweden. Theoretical concepts of positionality and access to spatial mobility and intersectionality have shaped my work surrounding the codes and categories, helping to inform the theoretical framework. *Figure 2* illustrates the process of coding and how some of the initial codes were developed into focused codes and thereafter into the following five theoretical codes: *balancing economic costs versus social benefits, managing time, securing delivery, navigating border control,* and *'conveniencing' delivery).*

**Figure 2. The Grounded theory-based coding of the interviews with Ukrainian female migrants in Sweden**

| Initial coding | Focused coding | Theoretical coding |
|---|---|---|
| Reducing size/weight<br>Looking for cheaper shipping<br>Saving time/effort/money<br>Wondering what is needed/desired<br>Carefully selecting | Reducing the shipping cost<br>Mitigating for the lost resources<br>Ensuring the usefullness of the package | **Balancing economic costs versus social benefits** |
| Being confused about the delivery times<br>Needing to be on time<br>Planning ahead<br>Time-planning sendiing | Timing delivery<br>Time-planning sending | **Managing time** |
| Being suspisious about courriers/post<br>Worrying about non-delivery<br>Controlling<br>Potecting package<br>Looking for reliable services | Feeling distrust towards courriers/post<br>Adressing risks<br>Preventing damage/loss/ theft | **Securing delivery** |
| Asking the courriers/other senders<br>Checking official sources<br>Agreeing with the of checks<br>Taking rules seriously | Searching for information<br>Fearing getting in trouble<br>Justifying suspicion<br>Complying with the regulations | **Navigating border control** |
| Questioning the receiver's physical ability<br>Measuring weight of the package<br>Making packages easier to carry | Concerning about the receiver<br>Reducing the strain of collection | **'Conveniencing' delivery** |

These five theoretical codes laid the basis for the core category *strategizing nurturing* of long-distance relationships with a typology of strategies that migrants undertake to deal with mobility barriers to sustain familial ties (***Figure 3***).

**Figure 3.  A Grounded theory-based coding model of migrants' strategies of nurturing long-distance family relationships through sending packages home**
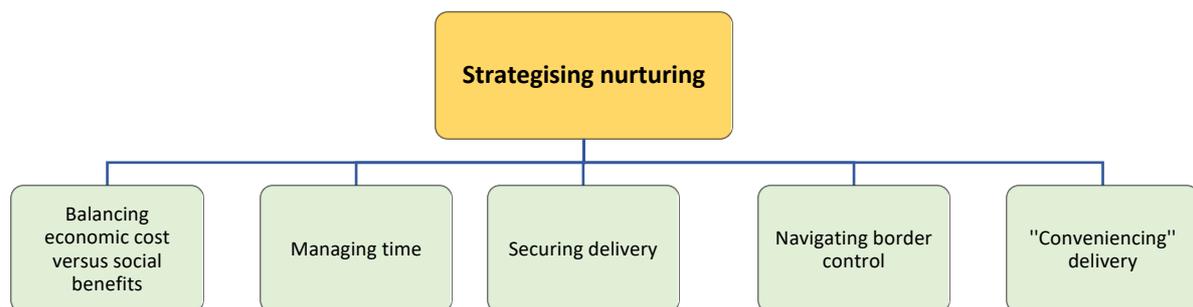


Although the presented strategies are a product of the analysis of all of the interviews, I support the findings by drawing on the accounts of five women whose narratives are the most telling and representative of the group. The focus on a smaller subset of the sample also allows me to present the participants in a greater detail and to demonstrate how their strategies are linked to the social positionality of themselves and their family.  The presented stories were told by participants with different family situations and socio-economic background, which allows me to highlight the variability of the migrants' experiences.

### 5.1.1 Balancing economic costs versus social benefits

One of the identified strategies that the migrants employ to nurture long-distance relationships is *balancing economic costs versus social benefits of sending*. This strategy refers to the participants' attempts to evaluate and equalize the economic cost of sending relative to it's social value. The focused codes that helped to pinpoint the strategy are *reducing shipping costs, mitigating for the lost resources,* and *ensuring the 'usefulness' of the package.* All of the participants, with no exceptions, found the regulated shipping services between Sweden and Ukraine to be very expensive, especially relative to the fairly low monetary value of the items they usually send. Because of the high shipping cost the participants struggled to send packages at the scale and with the frequency they would have wanted, revealing how the economic barrier to spatial movement can hinder migrants' capacity to transmit care to their family across space.

To maintain their sending with financial means available, the participants looked for ways *to reduce the shipping costs*. They learned to reduce the size and the weight of the sent items, by using lighter packaging, cutting out clothes' labels and arranging their gifts in a specific way. Additionally, some of the participants spent time networking to arrange sending via friends and acquaintances or unregulated couriers. This extra work of navigating the economic mobility barrier evidently required migrants to put additional time and effort into their sending. For example, Ruslana shares how troublesome it is to organise sending via friendship networks, the only shipping option she finds affordable:

''I have to call this person and arrange a meeting, and bring the package. You need to organise all this! […]We've arranged this meeting and I get a call from work: "Can you come and work now?" I always agree because I can get more work in the future. Sometimes I have to prioritise work, and next time it will be sending''

(Ruslana, 24 years old, zero-hours contract at a local hotel)

Ruslana's account demonstrates how her restricted economic access to more convenient shipping services forces her to continuously balance between her work aspirations in her new country and her family-doing through sending. We see how these less obvious mobility disruptions not only hinder migrants' communication with their families but also make it harder to succeed in their migration projects. Ruslana's account also reveals how migrants might not simply accept the sacrifices that the maintenance of long-distance relationships may require of them. The participants attempted *to mitigate for the lost resources* by calculating the appropriate amount of attention they can devote to this practice, relative to the resources and effort they have to spend. Ruslana later adds:

''If I feel I haven't sent something in a long time, then I will try to find a way, to send via post, or maybe order something online. […] But it has to be convenient, as I don't have that much time''

Ruslana's parents in Ukraine are still fairly young, employed and are not financially dependent on her packages, so she seemingly felt more freedom in her sending arrangements. Those participants who felt more responsibility for their parent(s) back home tried to compensate for their less frequent sending by *ensuring the 'usefulness' of the package*, that the package contained more valued items.

''Imagine, I have to travel a long way to send package, to pay for this trip then the shipping cost. It makes sense to form a decent package. I always ask myself whether it is worth to send this or that? or just this piece of clothing? So, you end up really thinking what is that they want or need.''

(Anna, 35, part-time employment at a beauty-salon)

In Anna's case, nurturing relationships through sending is especially troublesome as her insecure economic situation is complicated by her uncertain legal status in the country. Due to the uncertainty of her residence in Sweden, she only managed to find rental accommodation in a small village, with fewer shipping services. To send a package, Anna has to make an expensive and long train journey to the nearest major city, where she can hand the package to the couriers. Anna's story illustrates how an individual's social marginalisation can translate

into her spatial marginalisation and reinforce her immobility, making it more troublesome and costly for her to maintain connection at-a-distance.

Anna's account demonstrates how navigating mobility barriers goes hand-in-hand with navigating social obligations, and presents an example of how the participants looked for ways to reduce their sending without compromising the amount of care shown. Restricted economic access to mobility forces migrants to be more attuned to the needs of their families, and to perform the extra mental work of selecting the 'right' objects to send. In comparison to the single participants, who only send things to their families, Anna is also responsible for communication with her husband's family, arranging sending to multiple households. In Anna's family, caring arrangements lie almost exclusively on her shoulders, very much in line with gender and family structures in Ukrainian society (Tolstokorova, 2013). The load of family maintenance makes her sending not only practically trickier, but also mentally more demanding, as she has to be attentive to the needs of different family members.

The mentioned stories show us about the economic costs of nurturing the long-distance relationships, and how the migrants might be forced to balance between these costs and the value they provide to the relationships.

### 5.1.2 Managing time

The second nurturing strategy the participants employ is *managing time.* This strategy refers to various tactics that migrants develop to use time in a way to effectively deliver their care though sending. Some of the focused codes that allowed me to develop this strategy are *timing delivery* and *time-planning sending.* One of the most recurring concerns among the participants was the difficulty to arrange timely delivery of the package, as this could vary significantly depending on the postal services and the border control. The participants were worried that because of the delivery delays they might 'miss' important moments in family life, such as life-stage events or national celebrations. The participants' concerns spotlight the temporal mobility barriers that migrants face when trying to maintain long-distance relationships, and the extra strain it puts on them. Valentina shares her experiences with timing the delivery of the packages she sends to her parents in Ukraine:

''Especially when I send a gift, I really try to plan ahead. When you send a gift, you want it to arrive on time, not earlier, not later, but *on time*. Because *this* is how you demonstrate your family you have not forgotten them''

(Valentina, 31, full-time university researcher)

 Valentina's account presents how the lack of control over delivery times hinders migrants from scheduling interaction with their loved ones, making it harder to fulfil their familial obligations. There is evidence that the construction and maintenance of common temporalities is an important aspect of fostering a sense of closeness across physical distances (Acedera and Yeoh, 2019). Evidently is it not only *what* to send, but also *when* to send that families might perceive as important to sustain relationships. Valentina's story also highlights how migrants' reduced temporal access to mobility can prevent them from demonstrating their remaining devotion to familial rituals and traditions. The timely delivery of a package gives a hint to the receiver about

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the effort migrants put into the arrangement and emphasizes their eagerness to participate in family-making, even across distance.

In Valentina's case, timing delivery is primarily about showing attention as her parents are still fairly young, working and can take care of themselves. In other cases, however, temporal arrangements can be more critical, as the migrants try to meet the real and immediate needs of their families. For example, Maria is in her late forties and came to Sweden in search of better financial possibilities, subsequently finding work in the care industry. Maria routinely sends packages of foodstuffs to her elderly mother in Ukraine in an attempt to cover her daily needs. Maria's mother has a very small pension and is therefore particularly thrifty, often denying herself even basic food items. To prevent food from perishing in transit, Maria is *time-planning her sending*. During colder seasons, she sends perishable goods, such as butter and sausages, and during warmer seasons, she switches to canned food, pasta and grains. Although this additional planning seemingly makes the sending more complicated for Maria, she wants to make sure her mother eats well, something she cannot guarantee if she sends money. Maria's time-planning especially highlights her role as a dutiful and caring daughter and generally shows an example of migrant women's continuous sense of responsibility for the wellbeing of their families, especially their parent(s).

### 5.1.3 Securing delivery

The third nurturing strategy the participants use is *securing the delivery*, which refers to the participants attempts to make sure their package arrives safely. The focused codes that helped me to identify this strategy are *feeling distrust towards couriers/post*, *addressing risks,* and *preventing damage/lost/theft of the package*. The interviews revealed that the participants *feel distrust* towards available shipping channels (both official and unofficial) questioning the responsibility and motives of the couriers. All participants, without exception, *addressed the risks* of their packages arriving damaged or not at all due to the vast distance travelled and multiple handlers involved, and felt that there is no reliable system to turn to in the event of non-delivery.  This lack of secure and reliable shipping options reveals migrant's restricted organisational access to mobility, creating difficulties to maintain relationships at-a-distance. For example, Christina shares how the risk of her gifts being stolen or broken during the journey prevents her from arranging sending:

''There is this mixer I really want to buy and send to my mum, it will make cooking so much easier, I don't think they sell this type in Ukraine or maybe it's more expensive there. I think, I have to wait until I can come home, it's too risky to send it. With expensive stuff, you never know whether it is going to arrive.''

(Christina, 32, IT-expert)

Since Christina's mother refuses to accept money from her, Christina's packages with higher-end food items, clothes and kitchen equipment are the only way for her to financially support her mother from afar. As found in Cabraal and Singh (2012), sending packages as opposed to money might make it easier for younger migrants to take care of their older kin without causing embarrassment. The risk of non-delivery also prevents Christina from sending a more expensive items, hereby hindering her from making a more substantial contribution to the family.

Christina's story shows how important this less obvious, secure access to mobility options can be for the nurturing of long-distance relationships, how it can either broaden or hinder a migrant's capacity to take care of their loved ones across space.

Christina is one of the more affluent participants with the higher income and paid holidays to regularly travel home, safely bringing the gifts with her. Most of the participants, however, were not able to go home regularly and had little choice but to embrace the risks associated with sending. The most recurring themes in the migrant's narratives were attempts *to prevent the damage, loss or theft of the package.* The participants employed various controlling tactics, such as informing their families about the content of the package, attaching a list of the contents to the package, maintaining contact with the couriers during the journey, and checking with the family whether all the contents have arrived. Some of the participants were particularly inventive in securing the contents, developing a unique damage-proof packaging. For instance, Natalia describes her packaging when she sent a second-hand television to her mother in Ukraine:

''I've found a lifehack on the internet. I have been collecting egg cartons, for a month or two! The tv was wrapped into a soft fleece blanket.  It's the first layer. Then, carton packs from eggs, around the screen. Then, I put another layer of carton, which I've specifically cut out! And so, my mum has a fine tv!''

(Natalia, 32, part-time technical worker at a factory)

Natalia's account demonstrates how organisational mobility barriers can make migrant's caring through sending practically more effortful and time-consuming. Natalia's creative packaging, however, also show how persistent migrants can be in finding ways to overcome mobility barriers and to care for their loved ones from afar. Although the organisational barriers to mobility have clearly affected the migrants' ability to nurture their long-distance relationships, the negative effect is not clear-cut. For example, the additional packaging work, although clearly requiring more effort, was viewed by most of the participants as a labour of love. Several participants, including Natalia, shared that they enjoy the packing process, and were proud of how they have managed to successfully send their families more fragile or expensive objects.

### 5.1.4. Navigating border control and shipping regulations

Another nurturing strategy that migrants use is *navigating border control and shipping regulations*. The focused codes that helped me to identify this strategy were: *worrying about getting in trouble, averting problems*, *justifying suspicion.* Shipping goods outside of the EU is made more complicated by border control and customs regulations around what is (not) allowed to be sent, in what quantities and how the sent items need to be packaged.

The interviews revealed that it might not be the border control barrier in itself that makes it harder for the migrants to nurture the long-distance relationships, but the migrants' perception of this barrier. There was no evidence in the narratives that the border control and shipping regulations hindered migrants from shipping something they wanted or needed to send.  Instead, it was the participants *concerns about getting in trouble* that made the sending process more troublesome. The participants were worried about accidently breaking the shipping regulations,

thereby causing problems for the couriers and potentially having their packages confiscated. All of the participants were keen *to avert any potential problems*, most commonly by searching for information about the regulations from fellow-senders, the unregulated couriers and/or official sources. Some of the participants were especially eager to demonstrate their compliance with the rules and regulations. For example, Daria, who came to Sweden with her husband over a year ago, but still have not managed to find a job explains how she arranges her packages:

''You need to keep it [the package] keep it openable, they [border control] need to make sure…what if I hide something there? What if I smuggle something forbidden? Drugs, or guns, or God knows what! I attach all the receipts, with the packaging intact, so that they [know that the things I sent, it's not something unacceptable or prohibited, or stolen.''

(Daria, 35, unemployed)

At the Swedish Customs Agency guidelines (Tullverket, 2021), I have not found any confirmation of the rules mentioned by Daria, and most of the senders did not include receipts in their packages. The participants' account demonstrates how the migrants' fear of getting in trouble might lead them to be excessively cautious about their sending, going as far as inventing their own regulations, reinforcing their immobility.

Daria's approach is representative of the sample. The participants' experiences with border control appeared to be linked to their socio-economic status in their new country. The participants who, like Daria, had an uncertain employment situation appeared more cautious in and concerned about the practicalities of their package crossing the border. While all of the participants, except one, had an experience of their packages being robustly checked - where their gifts were unwrapped, the contents were opened and taken apart - only two of the participants (both have been living in Sweden longer with regular employment) voiced their discontent about the searches and how they were conducted. The rest of the participants, however, took these checks for granted, and even justified the suspicion of the border police by accusing fellow-Ukrainians of breaking the regulations. Coming back to Anna, who arrived in Sweden to seek asylum, and her experiences with sending:

''Swedes would have definitely asked: ''Where was it? Why was it opened? What was basis it was opened?'' We [Ukrainians]are searched and that's it, we are very calm about it. And you know how our people are! […] Someone probably sent something [forbidden], like alcohol or cigarettes, so the border police decided to check everything.''
(Anna, 35, part-time employment at a beauty-salon)

Anna's observation about the difference in reactions between Ukrainians and Swedes reveals the lack of power and status that Ukrainian migrants experience, and how this affects their attempts to enact movement. Both Daria's and Anna's account demonstrate how migrants (especially those in a more insecure situation) tend to take their restricted access to mobility for granted, while being more prepared to accept their position as a suspect. The participants' devotion to following the regulations, both real and perceived, can be interpreted as an attempt to gain a sense of acceptance and belonging in the new country.

### 5.1.5 'Conveniencing' delivery

The final identified nurturing strategy that participants employ is 'conveniencing' delivery. This is a strategy to ensure the process of receiving the package is as comfortable and effortless as possible for the family. The main focused codes that helped to identify this strategy are: *concerning about the receiver* and *reducing the strain of collection.* Most of the participants send packages to their elderly parent(s), and concerns about the receivers' physical ability to collect and carry the often-heavy packages were recurring in the interviews. The data showed how aware the participants are of the health issues their parent(s) have, how their bad backs, arthritis and high blood-pressure might make it harder for them to collect the packages. The participants' *concerning about the receiver* meant they carefully estimated the weight of the contents, planned how much they can send at once and considered the practical hurdles of the delivery. The receiver's bodily frailty reveals a physical barrier that migrants face (albeit indirectly) and navigate when nurturing the long-distance connection through sending. The interviews demonstrated how the participants attempted to overcome this mobility barrier, adopting various tactics to *reduce the strain of the collection.* Those participants who could afford to pay extra for shipping were eager to arrange a to-door delivery as long as it meant the receiving would be smooth, easy and bring no inconvenience to the receiver. Other participants, who could not afford this, were more inventive in their sending. The earlier mentioned participant, Natalia, came up with creative packaging solutions, which could ease the process of receiving:

''I am sending about 20 kg, how will my mother carry it?! I bought this little trolley, the one elderly women in Sweden use, it goes with a bag and wheels. I put the package in it, and send it with the couriers. So, my mum has a transport now!''

(Natalia, 32, part-time technical worker at a factory)

Natalia's accounts illuminate how mindful migrant daughters can be about their parent's physical frailty, and how they try to physically take care of them, even across distance. Although this physical barrier does not target the senders personally, it was them who took steps to navigate it. It is common for migrant children to experience a sense of guilt for not being able to provide physical, hands-on care to their parents (Baldassar, 2007). In Ukrainian families, where care arrangements rely heavily on women's reproductive labour (Tolstokorova, 2013) female migration is stigmatised within public discourse (Solari, 2014). Ukrainian female migrants may therefore especially suffer from a feeling of guilt for not being physically present for their parents. This 'conveniencing' strategy can be interpreted as the migrant's manifestation of her practical and physical support. Natalia's strategy is also informed by her mother's financial constraints. This strategy was more apparent among the participants who also felt financial responsibility for their parents, since their packages tended to contain a larger number of goods, including heavier items, such as foodstuffs, shoes and clothing.

Although navigating this physical mobility barrier might have put a strain on the migrants, it is also this additional thought and effort that seemingly makes the act of sending more meaningful, and helps migrants to accentuate their love and attention.

Natalia evidently enjoys the packing process and takes pride in her packaging strategy:

''I've learned to make handles with the tape, like regular bags have, for a carton box. So, it's easier to hold the box. this process has become special for us. I now have a special box, with paper, knife, scissors, two different types of tapes.  Every package is like a piece of art!''

We see then how these consideration strategies, although requiring more time, effort and finances, can be viewed by the migrants as a part of caring for and about their loved ones. Natalia's reaction once again spotlights how overcoming mobility barriers can give migrants' an opportunity to demonstrate just how much they value these relationships.


## 6. Discussion and Conclusive Remarks

This thesis adds to existing studies on mobility in post-migration life by revealing how physical distance and the barriers related to it affect migrants' ability to nurture long-distance familial relationships. The findings show that the types of strategies that migrants undertake to maintain familial ties across space through sending stem from variations in their access (economic, temporal, organisational and physical) to spatial mobility. The migrants' strategy of navigating the border control and shipping regulations reveals an additional mobility barrier to migrant's ability to nurture long-distance relationships, which does not accurately fit within Urry's (2007) typology. The migrants' worries around accidently breaking the shipping regulations and resulting trouble highlight how borders remain an obstacle (whether real or perceived) for migrants in their post-migration lives – even in less obvious ways.  More research would be beneficial to explore to what extent the developed typology of strategies can be applied to other migrant groups in other countries.

All the participants, including the more affluent migrants, had limited opportunities to move packages, which made it practically more difficult to arrange, schedule and perform moments of interactions with the family. The analysis reveals there is a low availability of mobility options between Sweden and Ukraine. Even the expensive private shipping services were not viewed by the participants as reliable, quick and convenient enough to maintain smooth and easy communication with their families, revealing a general insufficiency of mobility options, regardless of the migrant's social positionality. Few transport connections between the countries, queues at the border control and poor roads and infrastructure in Ukraine have magnified the distance and complicated the senders' ability to maintain the connection with their loved ones.  At the same time, the migrants' evidently lacked resources, more often financial and temporal, to access the available services, and had to maintain their sending at cost of their work opportunities or private time and leisure.

We see, however, how inventive and persistent migrants can be in finding ways to overcome mobility barriers and maintain contact with their families. The strategies of *balancing, time-planning, securing, navigating and considering* reveal that the nurturing of long-distance relationships is in fact a strategic undertaking. Each of these strategies involves some level of evaluating, calculating, and contemplating on the part of the migrant in order to bypass these mobility barriers with minimal personal cost and without compromising their familial relationships.

The participants sending strategies and how they deal with mobility barriers are seemingly informed by gender and familial structures, by the participant's and their families' financial possibilities, and by the intersection of the two under the conditions of migration. An illustration of migrants' nurturing strategies set in the context of migration could be depicted as follows *(Figure 4)*.

**Figure 4. A Grounded theory-based coding model of migrants' strategies of nurturing long-distance family relationships through sending packages home set in the context of migration.**
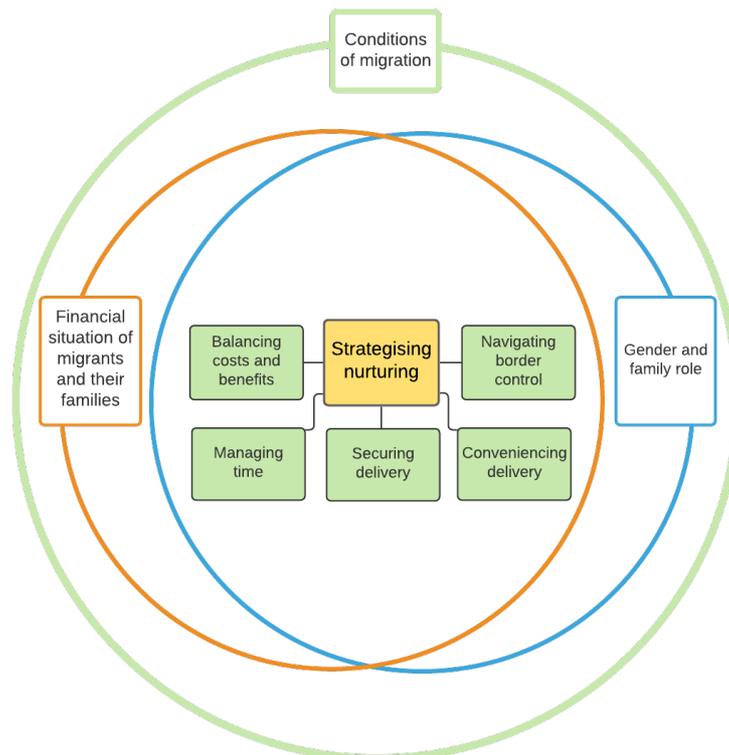


To some extent, the strategies are informed by how close the participant is with her kin and how she views her role in the family. The participants' stories illuminate the level of duty that migrant women might feel towards their families in general, but more specifically towards their aging parent(s). It was the participants' consideration of their parents' health issues, physical abilities and wellbeing that seemingly fuelled their sending and to a different extent framed

their nurturing strategies. Despite the high economic costs, time and effort that sending requires, none of the participants have ended the practice. Even among the participants who have been living in Sweden for more than three years, only one woman, whose parents were relatively young and healthy, has reduced her sending over time. Despite what other findings suggest (Baldassar, 2007), the rest of the migrants have remained active senders as they perceived their parent(s) as increasingly frail and, therefore, increasingly dependent on their care and support. The participants were seemingly keener to overcome the mobility barriers and arrange sending to their mothers than fathers, which partly results from having a closer relationship, but also that their mothers were perceived as more vulnerable and in need of attention and support. At the same time, the migrants' sending experiences are informed by the participant's but also by her families' financial situation. Most women in the study have unstable and low-paid employment, reflecting a larger pattern of female migrant socio-economic position in Europe (European Commission, 2008). Those women who struggled to afford more convenient shipping services had to put more thought, time and effort into finding ways to send packages with the financial means available to them. A reduced access to cheaper, quicker, more secure and convenient mobility options especially affected those women whose packages were intended to provide their families with daily essentials. These participants viewed their sending as critical, and had to work harder to overcome mobility barriers in order to transmit their care in full scale and at the time it was needed.

Despite several participants (and their families) being more financially successful and established in Sweden, they still faced mobility barriers, just in different ways. As with the other participants, they also found shipping services too expensive and were forced to reduce the regularity of sending. However, unlike the participants in a more precarious economic situation, they could compensate for their less frequent sending by including more valuable items or making additional money transfers to the family, thus meeting their family's expectations. It appears that an especially significant mobility barrier for the more affluent migrants is the lack of secure shipping channels between Sweden and Ukraine. Despite having a financial possibility to send higher quality gifts and expensive electronics, the participants did not trust the shipping services enough to send these items, which limited their ability to significantly improve their family's life. As the findings show, for those migrants whose parents refuse to accept financial help, this organisational mobility barrier might become a real challenge for their caring at-a-distance.

Apart from gender and family role and economic situation there were other social divisions that seemingly had an impact on the migrants sending and their experience with mobility barriers that might deserve further exploration. For example, the analysis shows how an uncertain legal status in the receiving country can reinforce migrant's immobility not only between but also within the borders, making it more difficult to reach out to their family across space. Also, the family situation played a role in migrants' sending. The participants in a partnership with a Ukrainian man seemingly experienced more pressure to navigate the distance and maintain regular sending due to their key role in communication with both families. The load of responsibility for not just her own but also for her husband's family gave these women less freedom to adjust the sending to her personal schedule or to altogether call it off. Some of these

participants had a dependable child, which meant their days were also filled with child-caring responsibilities, leaving less time and fewer possibilities to overcome the mobility barriers and arrange sending. The social divisions of age and nationality, although not touched upon in this thesis, could also have impacted the migrants' experiences with sending. The findings signal that a more extended intersectional analysis would be beneficial to explore how all these mentioned social categories intermesh, influencing migrant's ability to nurture long-distance relationships though sending.

In conclusion, this study of migrants sending practises underscores the importance of mobility discussions in post-migration life. It is not only migrant's (and their families) own possibilities for movement but also hidden mobility opportunities, such as migrant's capacity to move packages to their family, that can affect their ability to sustain the family connection. Despite mobility barriers evidently making it harder for migrants to sustain long-distance connections through sending, the findings reveal that we cannot only think of mobility barriers as disruptive. The extra thought, labour, time and financial resources the participants put in place to navigate mobility barriers helped them to highlight their love and care to their families.

This thesis was written during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, one of the most impactful events on spatial mobility in recent memory. For future research, It would also be worth exploring how the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent restricted movement might have affected migrants' practices around sustaining long-distance relationships through sending packages home.

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# Appendix

## Attachment 1. Information letter and consent form

**Information to participants about the student Master project, with a preliminary title ''Materializing distance in transnational relationships: a study of (im)mobility of sent and received things across borders''**

You kindly agreed to an interview in the project ''Sending and Receiving Things: From Sweden to Ukraine'' that I conducted with Dr. Kathy Burrell, where we explored how migrants sustain relationships with friends and families 'back home' through the process of sending and receiving packages to and from Sweden. In this study we mostly looked at *why* Ukrainians send and receive things, and the emotional aspects of this practice.

I am contacting you again to ask your permission to re-analyse this interview material with a new focus on your experiences of *how* you send and receive packages, and I will explore the practical side of this practice. Little research has been done to understand various aspects of geographical distance (such as borders, legal regulations, logistics etc.) can enable or constrain families' ability to keep in touch after migration.

My current project will be done as a Master Thesis, with a preliminary titel ''Materializing distance in transnational relationships: a study of (im)mobility of sent and received things across borders''. This study is a student project that will result in a Master thesis within the Master Program in Sociology at the University of Gothenburg. The thesis is later planned to be published as an article in an academic journal.

The study is conducted independently by the student Lyudmyla Khrenova, and the responsible supervisor is Associate Professor Gabriella Elgenius at the Department of Sociology and Work Science (see further contact info below). The project adheres to the ethical principles of the Swedish Research Council for research in the humanities and social science research. Information about research ethical information for participants see below.

**Voluntary participation and non-disclosure**

All participants involved in the project are covered by professional secrecy. Personal names are not registered and the interviews are stored under 'fake names' on my password-protected computer. The thesis might include the extracts from the interviews, which will be presented under pseudonyms, and the participants' personal information will be generalized. Participation takes place on the research participants' terms and with their safety in mind. The participant can choose to withdraw their participation at any time until the thesis is published. I would be grateful if you would allow me to reuse the interview material, but it is your right to refuse the material to be used as a part of this MA project. I would also like to ask your permission to reuse the material for future publications on similar topics.

**Handling of collected material**

Material such as researcher's notes and recordings of the interviews are stored on my password-protected computer under fake-names, and are only available to authorized researchers. The

recorded interviews have been deleted. The collected material and interview transcriptions will not be used for any purpose other than scientific research and for teaching purposes under the conditions described herein. The results may be presented in scientific article or report.

**Results and publication**

The results of the study will be published in the form of a Master thesis that is to be completed on 4th of June 2021 (alternatively on the 17th of September 2021). Participants will then be able to download the essay from GUPEA https://gupea.ub.gu.se. Participants are also welcome to attend the presentation of the project 7th of June 2021. If you are interested please let me know and I will send you a zoom link.

**For questions and further information, please contact:**
Lyudmyla Khrenova
Phone 0722713204
E-mail: L.Khrenova93@gmail.com

Responsible Supervisor
Associate Professor Dr. Gabriella Elgenius
E-mail: gabriella.elgenius@gu.se

**Consent to participate**

I have read and fully understood the scope and implications of participating in this student MA project. Any questions I had were answered satisfactorily.
I hereby agree :

☐ to participate in the mentioned MA project

☐ to my interview being used for future publications on similar topics

☐ to my personal details being handled as described above

| Date and place | Name and Signature (participant) |
|---|---|
| Date and place | Name and Signature (student) |

1. **Background and Migration**
   - Please tell me a bit about yourself? Where did you grow up? What has your life been like prior to your migration?
   - How did you end up living in Sweden?
   - Do you have family members who are still living in Ukraine?
   - How old are they? What do they do for a living?
   - How did your family/friends feel about you migrating?
   - Did you have an image of what Sweden would be like? Have you found this to be a realistic image? (what corresponded/didn't correspond to the reality)

2. **Life in Sweden**
   - Can you tell me about your life in Sweden ?
   - What work have you found?
   - What have your experiences of accommodation been?
   - Have you been able to make a home here?
   - Have you ever faced prejudice?
   - Do you have any social ties here?
   - Are you part of a Ukrainian community? How do you feel it?

3. **Journeys**
   - Can you remember your first journey to Sweden? Can you describe it?
   - How did you find the airport or border when you arrived? Did you have any problems at the border?
   - How often do you travel home?
   - How do you travel? Can you describe the experience?
   - Can you describe the last time you travelled there and back? Why did you go?

4. **Transnational contact**
   - How much contact do you keep up with your family?
   - What ways do you use to keep in contact?
   - How do you stay close to family there?

5. **Sending packages/remittances**
   - Do you send packages to family in Ukraine?
   - What sorts of things do you send?
   - Why do you send these things particularly? Who are they for, how do you choose them etc.?
   - Do you know how these things are received back home?
   - Do people ask for particular things? Or things of particular brands? How do they explain their wishes?
   - How often do you send packages?
   - What sending options do you use? Can you describe them? Why do you use these particular services?
   - How has this sending changed over time – have your patterns of sending changed since you migrated?

- How do you plan your sending? What do you think about?
- Do you send money back?

  If yes:
- Who do you send money to?
- how much do you send?
- How often do you send this money?
- Why do you send money back?
- Do you know what is the money used for?
- How do you do this – is there a specific service you use?

- Has anything you send ever arrived opened? Why? How did you feel about it?
- Has anything you send ever got broken, or stolen, or got bad? How did you feel about it?
- Has anything you send ever arrived later than you expected? How did you feel about it?
- How long does it take for the package to arrive?
- Do you feel you have to plan the sending?
- Is your partner involved in sending things? how do you share responsibilities (who buys, who sends, who packages)
- How do you package the items you want to send?

**Carrying things (gifts, food, money) when travelling to Ukraine**

- What do you carry back when you travel to Ukraine?
- Do you take gifts for your family when you travel to Ukraine?
- If yes, what do you take, who for, how do you choose what to take?
- Is there anything you would have never sent but prefer to carry with you? Why?
- How are these gifts received when you go back?
- Do you give money when you go back?
- Have your patterns of bringing gifts or things changed since you migrated? If so, how?

**6. Anything else?**

- Is there anything else about your experience of being Ukrainian in Sweden which I have missed which is important?