"Necessity is the Mother of Invention": Romanian Children's Perspectives in Transnational Mother-Child Relationships

M. A. Thesis

Author: Isabela Veronica Dămoc

Main supervisor:
    MENÉNDEZ TARRAZO, Alicia, Universidad de Oviedo
Support supervisor:
    WAALDIJK, Berteke, Utrecht University

Approval signature:

MENÉNDEZ TARRAZO, Alicia

Oviedo, June 2nd 2014

AUTORIZACIÓN PARA CONSULTA DE TESIS DE MÁSTER CON FINES DE INVESTIGACIÓN
PERMISSION FOR ACCESS TO MA THESIS FOR RESEARCH PURPOSES

Dña./D. / Ms. / Mr. **Isabela Veronica Dămoc**,

con D.N.I. /pasaporte / passport no.   , como autora/autor de la Tesis de máster

titulada / as author of the MA thesis entitled: **"Necessity is the Mother of Invention": Romanian Children's Perspectives in Transnational Mother-Child Relationships**

por medio de este documento expresa su autorización para que dicha obra sea utilizada con carácter no lucrativo y con fines exclusivos de investigación. Deberán respetarse, en todo caso, los derechos que le asisten, establecidos en el Real Decreto Legislativo 1/1996 de 12 abril, por el que se aprueba el Texto Refundido de la Ley de Propiedad Intelectual y en particular, conforme a su artículo 14.3º, el de que sea siempre reconocida su condición de autora/autor del trabajo, con inclusión del nombre y la referencia completa de la fuente, cuando se proceda a la reproducción directa o indirecta del contenido o de las ideas que aparecen en él.
Lo que declara a los efectos oportunos.

hereby authorises the above work to be accessed for research purposes only and with no commercial gain. Her/his rights as author, established in the Spanish laws quoted above, and in international laws and codes of ethics of academic research, must be respected and recognised, with full inclusion of name and complete reference of source, in any direct or indirect reproduction of content or ideas in whatever form.

Oviedo, a 2 de Junio de 2014 / June 2nd 2014

Fdo./ Signed:

M. A. Thesis

MS/MR. Isabela Veronica Dămoc

TITLE: "Necessity is the Mother of Invention": Romanian Children's Perspectives in Transnational Mother-Child Relationships

KEY WORDS: transnational motherhood, children's experiences, interviews, life narratives, researcher's contribution

MAIN SUPERVISOR: MENÉNDEZ TARRAZO, Alicia

1. Spanish summary

La migración de las mujeres por motivos laborales hacia los países desarrollados desafía las relaciones tradicionales entre madres e hijos e hijas. Debido a que sus hijos permanecen en el país de origen ellas se convierten en 'madres transnacionales'. Este fenómeno genera una nueva relación materno-filial transnacional en la que ambas partes tienen que adaptarse. Este tema ha sido ampliamente discutido en el mundo académico, pero prestando atención principalmente en las declaraciones de las madres, lo que lleva a discursos esencialistas acerca de las experiencias de las niñas y de los niños. El proyecto explora las disparidades entre las representaciones de los niños y de las niñas en la literatura académica existente. Así, se revelan sus perspectivas sobre el tema. Con los relatos de vida se implementa un método de investigación cualitativo: Nueve jóvenes adultos rumanos fueron entrevistados y guiados para que interactuaran con sus experiencias del pasado con el proposito de que reflexionaran sobre sus identidades en el presente. Las entrevistas revelan diversas internalizaciones del pasado en el presente de estas personas y los efectos del fenómeno estudiado, lo que facilita la comprensión de la relación transnacional entre madres e hijos. La posición de la investigadora, como objeto de investigación, se incluyó también en el debate, lo que permite la interacción del relato autobiográfico con el academico.

2. English summary

Women's labor migration to developed nations challenges traditional mother–child relationships. Because their children remain in the home country, they become 'transnational mothers'. This phenomenon generates a new transnational maternal-filial relationship to which both parts need to adjust. This subject has been vastly discussed in

the academia, but focused mainly on mothers' declarations, leading to essentialist discourses around children's experiences. The project explores the disparities between children's representations and their actual experiences, by advocating for the need to reveal the children's perspectives on the matter. Focusing on the life narratives of children with transnational mothers, a qualitative research method is implemented: nine Romanian young adults have been interviewed and guided to engage with past experiences in order to reflect on their identity of the present. The interviews unearth children's diversified internalizations and overall effects, facilitating the understanding of the mother-child transnational relationship. The researcher's position, as object of research, is also included to the debate, linking the autobiographical with the academic.

Approval signature

 MAIN SUPERVISOR   AUTHOR

MENÉNDEZ TARRAZO, Alicia   DĂMOC, Isabela Veronica

        Signed: Signed:

I dedicate this disseration to the nine interviewees who participated in this study.

For who we are and will be. Not for who we had been!

Dedic această dizertaţie celor nouă persoane intervievate care au luat parte la acest studiu.

Pentru cine suntem şi vom fi. Nu pentru cine am fost!

Acknowledgements

It is with immense gratitude that I acknowledge the help of all those who directly or indirectly have made the realization of this project possible.

First I wish to thank my mother, Maria Mateeş, without whom I would have never been able to experience a transnational relationship and thus engage in this research. Her constant moral and financial support enabled me to project the personal into the academic sphere.

I would like to express my very great appreciation to the nine interviewees who have agreed to take part in this study: Claudiu, Otilia, Sonia, Andi, Paul, Maia, Doroteea, Elena and Rita Seghet. Their enthusiastic engagement with the topic, vivid illustrations of their transnational experiences and openness in private matters, provided the core material for this thesis and led to a new type of relationship between the researcher and the object of study.

I am particularly grateful for the assistance given by my two supervisors, Dr. Alicia Menéndez Tarrazo and Prof. Dr. Berteke Waaldijk, without whom I could not have completed this thesis. They provided me with very valuable information, resources and guidance in the writing process. Moreover, their encouragement offered me an incomparable sense that my work contributes to the field of feminist studies of migration.

My special thanks are extended to my peers from both Utrecht University and University of Oviedo: Laura Candidatu, Stella Faustino, Eliza Fiore, Lan Kieu. They have reinforced my involvement with the research through their friendship and connection on a personal and emotional level.

Last but not least, I wish to thank my fiancé, Florin, for the love and appreciation during the two years of the Erasmus Mundus GEMMA programme, and for the technical support provided, which facilitated the data gathering for this research project.

Table of Contents

Introduction

In the context of labor migration, the number of women deciding to work in other countries and thus taking up the role of breadwinners is rapidly increasing. The great majority migrate from poor or developing countries to developed nations and find work in the domestic, care or other sectors. But one of the consequences of women's migration is the constant challenge of the traditional maternal-filial relationships. These particular migrant mothers, who experience the hardships of the separations from their families in order to provide for them, inevitably become 'transnational mothers'. As indicated in the title of this Thesis, 'Necessity is the mother of invention': when urgent problems threaten a family's well-being, a solution will eventually be found. This solution often comes in the form of mothers' leaving the household and working abroad. Regardless of the reasons, their migration triggers the internalization of the variations in organizational arrangements, meanings and priorities, negotiated across time and space between the two parts, mothers and children. Mothers and children across the globe, separated by both spatial and temporal borders, need to find new ways of maintaining their relationships and to adjust to new resulting conditions.

Vastly discussed in the academia, the debate on 'transnational motherhood' and its consequences has focused mainly on the mothers' experiences as valid for theory formation. Though the recipients of transnational motherhood or other involved parts are being taken into consideration more and more in feminist studies of migration, extensive work still needs to be done on the children left behind in the home countries. Because of the mothers' hegemonic positions in the discussion, essentializing discourses around the children left behind might appear. These discourses may confirm, but at the same time contradict, the complex experiences of the children. The motivation for engaging with this particular aspect has been my personal experience in the context of transnational motherhood, which did not match the generalizations described in the available literature. The disparities between the discourses encountered and my actual experience led to the reorientation of this project, from the transnational mothers' perspectives to the perspectives of the children. It is necessary to study both migrant families and children, taking into account the children's experiences and their perspectives on the matter, in order to evaluate the generalizing findings derived from the research done so far. Besides, in spite of abundant research on immigrant Asian and Latin American transnational families, little is known about the Eastern European

context. Much quantitative work has been done on women's labor migration, but not many qualitative accounts of the consequences of their absence on their families exist.

The purpose of my research is to shift the focus from transnational mothers to transnational children, as an integral part in the process of knowledge production of theories on transnational families. I intend to bring forward children's experiences, perspectives and interpretations of the transnational phenomena, in the form of life narratives. The inclusion of children's declarations can no longer be ignored if theory in the field of feminist studies of migration is to escape uni-dimensionality. The goal is to clarify, confirm or contradict existent discourses on the children's feelings towards the separation from the mother, discourses which often victimized them. Through Romanian children's life narratives I wish to draw attention to the Eastern European context, in which the literature on the subject is limited. This will re-instate their agency in the process of knowledge production. Also, the aim of my thesis is to approach differently the subjects of research; therefore, a non-traditional type of interview will be adopted, in order to establish a personal connection with the interviewees. This will place the researcher at the same level with her 'objects' of research. Moreover, another objective of this Thesis is the use of the autobiographical as valid for theory formation, by including the researcher's own experience and perspective to the debate.

The project sets its focus in exploring real-life narratives of children with transnational mothers and to compare them with available theory on the subject. Nine Romanian young adults whose mothers have worked in Italy in the care or domestic sector have been interviewed and invited to interpret their past experiences and deduce their meanings for their current circumstances. By mobilizing the autobiographical and by guiding interviewees to reflect on their identity, as influenced by their mothers' migration, the analysis of the interviews unearths the children's diversified internalizations of their transnational relationships with their mothers, and the overall effects. The project also includes the researcher's position, as both subject and object of research, vis-à-vis the discussion, through interventions and examples from my own experience.

I have organized my Thesis in three chapters. The first one tackles several theoretical stances on the concept of motherhood and transnational motherhood and argues for the interdependency of the transnational mothers and children. Mothering, under essentialist interpretation, is portrayed as responsible for the nurturance of children. Also, the sexual division of labor has attributed to women the role of carers for

those unable to care for themselves, ultimately reinforcing the idea of women's belonging to the private sphere, the domestic space. In spite of this ideological delimitation, women continue to work outside the households and increasingly become breadwinners in their families. Though this phenomenon is not out of the ordinary, it has been said to become problematic when mothers decide to migrate to other countries in order to work. In this context, mothers become 'transnational mothers', finding themselves in an ambivalent position. In order to offer their children a better life, they are forced to leave them behind in the home country. While generally drawing on the struggles transnational mothers face in their separation, the chapter also emphasizes the alternative ways of doing motherhood and of maintaining intimacy across the distance. Specifically turning to the Italian context in which transnational mothers find a favorable destination, the chapter also discusses the Romanian situation that became an impetus for many women's migration. Then, more concretely, this section directs readers' attention towards the Romanian children who experience this type of relationship and argues for the necessity of shifting the focus to their perspectives.

The second chapter focuses on the methodological processes of approaching the recipients of transnational motherhood and of validating their declarations as life narratives, understood as key resources in the production of knowledge in the field of transnational motherhood. The interviews, as the method of gathering the material for the project, were conducted in a manner meant as a detachment from the traditional style of data gathering and celebrating an open relationship with the interviewees. This has enabled the respondents' active involvement with the topic, leading to the reinterpretation of the past for the present meanings through storytelling. In developing on the concept of life narrative, it has been argued that interviewees themselves become knowledge producers. Along with the steps taken in conducting the nine interviews, such as sampling, channels of communication or coding, the chapter also brings into discussion the possibility of the researcher as subject of study. A new style of creative writing can be enabled, with the researcher situating herself at the same level with the other respondents, but fully aware of the power differentials involved.

Finally, the third chapter is dedicated to the analysis of the interviews and of the researcher's contribution, in relation to the existent theory in the field of migration and transnational motherhood. After briefly referring to the subjects' background, the chapter discusses various themes emerging from the life narratives. One important element is the selection of memories representative of the interviewees' current

dispositions. Upon those memories they were able to reconstruct episodes in their transnational experience, interpret events and draw conclusions. The chapter specifically explores the care arrangements mothers took before leaving the country and the immediate or long-term emotional outcomes of their absence affecting the children. The maternal-filial relationships before and after the departure have also been analyzed, providing examples that confirm or contradict several myths encountered in the literature on children with transnational mothers. The ways interviewees actively observed and interpreted their experiences have been made visible though their stories, paving the way for the acknowledgement of life narratives as vital resources for the research. The chapter ends with the researcher's contribution, which celebrates the subjective and the autobiographical as an academic style of writing.

Chapter 1

'You can't have one without the other':
The Interdependency of Transnational Mothers and Children

1.1.   Women's Labor Migration in the Domestic or Care Sector

The image of the woman has been associated with the role of the mother, both in the past and in the present still. This image has been constructed to refer to someone highly protective and highly present in the family, acting as carer and guide into cultural, educational, social, moral and even religious adequacy. Her ubiquitous presence in the family, both nuclear and extended, has been fixed through discourses around the rearing of children, and around her belonging to the domestic or private sphere—the household. Nakano Glenn has stated that "Mothering—more than any aspect of gender—has been subject to essentialist interpretation: seen as natural, universal, and unchanging" (1994, 3, in Raijman et al. 2003, 731). What is more, because of their roles in the family, women often become responsible for "the production and circulation of symbolic capital as a form of status display" (Erel 2012, 465). This process is enacted through women's reproductive work in the household; women are thus defined as the crucial link "for maintaining, enhancing or destabilizing the intergenerational reproduction, accumulation and transmission of cultural capital" (Erel 2012, 465). It could be argued that by keeping women to the domestic and private arena only, the intergenerational reproduction of social dogma is assured.

However, as Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo and Ernestine Avila have explained, the idea that motherhood is "biologically predetermined in any fixed way" is not valid, but it is indeed historically and socially constructed (1997, 549). They further add that motherhood or the act of mothering has been generally sensed as a practice involving "the preservation, nurturance, and training of children for adult life" but that there exist numerous "contemporary variants distinguished by race, class and culture" of what the idea of motherhood might be (1997: 548). Hence, they confirm the thought that pre-determined functions of women can and should be debunked. Along these lines, Nancy Fraser, in her article "Women, Welfare, and the Politics of Need Interpretation", claims that "the sexual division of labor assigns women primary responsibility for the care of those who cannot care for themselves", such as children, the sick, the disabled, the

elderly etc, and that this way they become unpaid caregivers (1989, 148). Therefore, it is clear that women and mothers do work, but because of the rejection of their domestic work from the labor market, their work remains unremunerated.

Women's correlation to the domestic or private space has been highlighted in parallel with the man's/husband's admittance to the public or labor domain. Gro Hagemann has written that not many decades ago the terms 'work' and 'family' were placed into "separate fields of activity and understanding" (2010, 20) and that each field immediately received gendered connotations and a central function in denoting femininity as well as masculinity (2010, 20). In this sense, femininity and motherhood respectively, by definition and general understanding, were to be kept separate from the public sphere. But this delimitation did not limit women's presence and participation in public spaces. Liz Bondi explains that the association of the feminine with the private realm and of the masculine with the public realm, respectively, is not so much the result of their involvement strictly in the designated spaces, but an effect of the ideologies connected to a new middle-class emerging in the nineteenth century. In capitalist urban societies, men and women have both participated in productive activity (as paid workers) and in daily generational and social reproduction (Bondi 2005, 7). In the twentieth century more and more women entered the waged workforce, so a total separation of the two spheres was hardly a reality (Bondi 2005, 8). But Hagemann also describes how the supposed rule made it clear that "a married woman in gainful employment was somehow an anomaly, a deviation from the rule" (2010, 27). In other words, a wife's or a mother's aspiration to the role of a normal worker was simply perceived as a violation of social rules. Conversely, a married man who failed to support his family also violated the rules (Hagemann 2011, 27). What is more, according to Longman et al. "unpaid domestic labour, care giving and childrearing (or carework) by women function as the necessary condition for male citizens to be self-sufficient and autonomous, and freely participate in the public sphere" (2013, 386). Therefore, as long as women and their domestic work were kept together, in harmony and in private, men could indulge in the privileges granted by the public sphere.

Nancy Fraser, already in 1989, in a U.S. context, mentioned that the assumption that women and men belonged solely to the designated social divisions is no longer the rule. Neither was the belief that families should contain one primary breadwinner who necessarily has to be male, and an unpaid domestic worker who automatically becomes the woman or the mother. And the idea that women's paid work outside the private

sphere was only meant to supplement the male's wage was no longer accepted (Fraser 1989, 149). Longman et al. argue that "mothering cannot be restricted to the private domain of the family, nor to the 'ethnocultural community', but is intensely intertwined with the public domain (2013, 391). Motherhood has become empowering and is no longer seen "as a condition of dependence and weakness" (Koven and Michel 1990, 1091). However, the domestic sector, having been "characterized by its feminization" (Gorfinkiel Diaz 2011, 741), provided women with the assets in joining the work force. Their experience in managing the households enabled women to find jobs such as carers, cleaners, seamstresses, cookers, etc. This way mothers have become breadwinners, associating the role of economic providers to their emotional and moral responsibility for their children. The gradual disappearance of the domestic service in its traditional form resulted in women across social classes combining household responsibilities with employment (Bondi 2005, 8). Because "fewer and fewer families conform to the normative ideal of a domicile", women started acting against a "feminization of poverty" (Fraser 1989, 144-148). This has happened as a response to the growing number of women in the adult poverty population, growth connected to, among other things, the rise in "female-headed households" (Pearce 1979, in Fraser 1989, 144).

As a consequence of women's increased participation in the labor market, the traditional regulations of the family were strongly influenced. With the reorganization of the sexual divisions of labor new structures and new social priorities emerged, with necessary positions to be filled. And because women stayed in the labor domain after having children, a supplementation for taking up domestic tasks was necessary, even though women/ mothers still continued to take responsibility. Another change in the family structure was the consolidation of the nuclear family model, with less predominance of the extended family, which multiplied the difficulties in the system for helping other members of the family. If women managed to 'escape' the domestic sphere by working outside of it in order to supplement the family income or become financially independent, this led to a lack of women caring for the older members of the family. Due to the lack of public solutions to enable the compatibility of family and working life, women face the difficulty of finding care work to supplement their absence. This problem has derived from society's expectations that women are responsible for the well-being of the family members, not their male counterparts. So a female figure is necessary to substitute that position. Interestingly enough, this

supplementation often comes with the help of migrant women, because in spite of all transformations in gender relations, there is still "a deep symbolic association between feminine characteristics and the idea of care giving, as well as a construction of women as innately dedicated to the domestic realm" (Gorfinkiel Diaz 2011, 470).

1.2. Alternative Constructions of Motherhood: Transnational Motherhood

The trend in Western or First World countries, in recent decades, has been to employ migrant women either from Asia or Latin America, or more recently from Eastern Europe, in the domestic sector. Ehrenreich and Hochschild write that the "care deficit" that has emerged in the wealthier countries, be them Central, North or Western European or North American, due to the fact that women have entered the workforce, "*pulls* migrants from Third World and postcommunist nations" (2004, 28, emphasis in the original), while poverty "*pushes*" them towards migration. In other words, a lot of women have migrated to "make up the difference" (2004, 23, emphasis in the original). This difference on one hand refers to the women and mothers who after entering the labor market no longer have the time to properly care for their children or elderly relatives; and on the other hand, it refers to the migrants' opportunity to improve their financial situations, by supplementing the care or domestic work for their employers. Gorfinkiel Diaz explains that migrant women find in the domestic or care sector a chance to migrate to other countries and to legitimately enter the labor market (2011, 741). However, a certain 'ethnification' of paid reproductive activities becomes a feature of this sector, which is "changing the hierarchical structure of nationalities, depending on the country of destination and its migratory history" (Gorfinkiel Diaz 2011, 741). Gorfinkiel Diaz further adds that in this way the domestic sector becomes the space where two groups of women and their everyday experiences are brought together: "the native working mothers and the migrant domestic workers" (2011, 741-742). Their participation in the labor market comes as a "parallel phenomenon" (2011, 742), in which a mutual need for each other is produced, as employers are not always able to combine their workplace and family tasks without the existence of the domestic workers (2011, 742). So far, the employment of migrant female domestic workers seems to be the best solution for both parts. But what are the consequences for the migrant women employed?

Rebeca Raijman et al., write that in the current flow of international migration there is an increasingly visible presence of immigrant women, which weakens the idea that men are the central protagonists in migrant flows, and that women only follow the men's initiative. A feminization of transnational migration can be observed, indicating that women become "independent social actors making decisions, taking actions, and redefining family and labor roles as they cross international borders in search of a better life in a new globalized world" (Raijman et al. 2003, 728). Though these migrants are part of a larger flow of "global reproductive workers", believed to be imported as cheap labor force to occupy gender-specific jobs in Western countries, a scholarly detachment from the "mobility of the capital and labor approach" has taken place (Raijman et al. 2003, 728). New insights into the implications of gender in globalization have been provided, especially the dilemmas resulting from the "globalization of domestic work" and the "globalization of child-care" (Raijman et al. 2003, 728), for example in the works of Hochschild (2000a), Hondagneu-Sotelo (2001) or Salazar Parreñas (2000). Raijman et al. refer to the dilemmas of female migrations, more specifically "the prices that migrant women have to pay in terms of occupational downward mobility, the 'cost' of being illegal in the host society, the disruption of family life, and the contradictory expectations stemming from the need to redefine their role as mothers and as breadwinners" (2003, 728). On the one hand it can be said that First World countries benefit from "importing domestic and care work as they once imported raw material from the Third World" (Raijman et al. 2003, 729). But on the other hand, incorporating migrant women into the domestic service and care work also sustains the idea that "domesticity is one of the few occupations open to migrant women due to gender segregation in the labor market of developed countries" (Raijman et al. 2003, 730).

Ostensibly, these migrant female workers employed in richer countries are often mothers themselves. In parallel with the increase of women's participation in the labor market and the increase in the paid domestic work, several changes in the perception of mothering as well as in the construction of an ideal way of caring have taken place. As Gorfinkiel Diaz explains, the methods of "doing motherhood" are constantly amplifying and "the values of the mother-child relations" are therefore automatically adjusted to the new realities (2011, 739). That is why, as a consequence of the increase in migrant domestic workers, new and diverse family (trans)formations arise. And as motherhood is no longer considered as the fundamental identity of women, new forms of doing motherhood characterize female migrant workers, who necessarily have to adapt to the

"demands and restrictions established by the internationally commodified dynamics of care" (Gorfinkiel Diaz 2011, 748). The emergent idea is that, inevitably, these migrant mothers become 'transnational mothers' by leaving their children in their countries of origin while they migrate to more developed countries in order to find work.

Transnational motherhood has been defined as the situation in which immigrant women work and reside in another country, while their children remain in their countries of origin. These situations produce a "variation in the organizational arrangements, meaning, and priorities of motherhood" (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997, 548). The concept of transnational motherhood consists in "new ways by which migrant mothers redefine their identities as a result of their simultaneous roles in the host and the sending societies" (Raijman et al. 2003, 731). Also, transnational mothers have been described as those women who migrate from poor to developed nations "to escape extreme poverty, political persecution, or other oppressive sociopolitical constructs" and who, in doing so, consciously leave their country, family and children behind (Sternberg and Barry 2011, 65). The migrant women who leave their children back home are actively or even voluntarily engaging in a mechanism of constructing alternative concepts of motherhood, so the meanings of motherhood are reorganized and re-accommodated to the new spatial and temporal separations (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997, 548).

For the migrant mothers there occurs a shift from an ideology of "family in one place" (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997, 548, in Raijman et al. 2003, 731), entailing the glorification of a form of privatized mothering (Raijman et al. 2003, 731), to a new rhetoric of transnational motherhood, with an emphasis on the role of breadwinner. In many cases the mother becomes the main breadwinner and her work abroad assures the family's well being. This way transnational motherhood challenges traditional conceptualizations of mother-child relationships, no longer being "nurtured daily within the home" (Raijman et al. 2003, 731). Of course, the relationship involves both financial backing and intimacy negotiation from afar. But the concept of transnational motherhood is not necessarily defined in terms of "physical circuits of migration but as the circuits of affection, caring and financial support" (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997, 550), which transcend national borders. Mothers are able to adjust to their new roles as "overseas mothers" and are capable of caring for their children by "remote control" (Raijman et al. 2003, 731). They try to nurture the relationship with their children through remittances, packages, phone calls, letters, sending photos or frequent

visits. As much as it might improve the family's financial situation, women's migration does not always consolidate the mother-filial relationship. This process often compels migrant women to face "the paradox that to provide their children with a better future, they are forced to leave home" (Raijman et al. 2003, 731). The third chapter will be dedicated to the analysis of the consequences transnational motherhood has on both mothers and children by offering real life examples of the struggles and complexities involved.

Once a mother decides to leave her country to relocate to another one for work, changes occur on both parts, for the mother as well for the family left behind. First, the two major characteristics of traditional motherhood, intensity and time spent with the children, no longer function as fundamental concepts of maternal-filial bonds (Gorfinkiel Diaz 2011, 742). Migrant mothers have extended the delimitations of the reproductive sphere of their own households, reducing the physical presence in the relations with their children. Therefore the concept of "motherhood from a distance" (Gorfinkiel Diaz 2011, 743) emerges, with the inevitable lack of a constant physical presence in the mother-child relation. This new relation may vary according to the geographical proximity or economic needs of each case. The idea of doing motherhood from a distance is highlighted through the mothers' impossibility of "negotiating their physical presence on a daily basis" (Gorfinkiel Diaz 2011, 743). The distance between the two parts can only be reduced during concrete and pre-arranged periods of the year, such as vacations—distance being an unavoidable consequence of entering the labor market in a different country than one's own (Gorfinkiel Diaz 2011, 743).

The migrant mothers do not leave without thinking of their children. Rhacel Salazar Parreñas claims that the mothers do not abandon their children; instead they "reconstitute mothering by providing acts of care from afar" (2005, 323), as well as by overcompensating for their physical absence. They perform a transnational version identified as "intensive mothering" (Salazar Parreñas 2005, 323). They either leave their children in the hands of "surrogate mothers" (Gorfinkiel Diaz 2011, 743), or find other alternatives for their absence. The surrogate mothers with whom they share mothering responsibilities are female kin members and friends or hired child carers (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997, 551). This practice has been termed as "global care chains" which represent "a series of personal links between people across the globe based on the paid or unpaid work of caring", producing an "ecology of care" (Hochschild 2000b, 131, in Dawn 2006, 208), in which one type of care is dependent of another. The new

maternal-filial relationship created is fuelled by a constant material and emotional exchange, which crosses the borders of nation-states. This often leads to the development of cyclical motherhood from a distance, with mothers experiencing periods of "complete physical absence", combined with an "intense maternal role" (Gorfinkiel Diaz 2011, 743-744) during specific phases, for example visits to the home country. This intensive maternal role has been defined as transnational 'hyper-maternalism', characterized, among other features, by thorough surveillance of the children (Tungohan 2012, 41).

As much as transnational mothers differentiate their version of motherhood from "estrangement, child abandonment, or disowning" (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997, 557) the general opinion constructs these situations as problematic for the families. Much effort is made to maintain relations with the community in their home countries (Raijman et al. 2003, 730). Bonds are nurtured with greater effort in the cases of migrant mothers, thus contributing to the view of transnational experiences as "simultaneity of connection" to the new land and the homeland (Levitt and Schiller 2004, 1011, in Erel 2012, 471). But migrant mothers are "caught in an ideological impasse" (Tungohan 2012, 40). On the one hand the sending countries venerate female migrants as 'martyrs', their labor representing a trusting source of revenue for their families. On the other hand the dominant expectations of what constitutes maternal behavior have women's physical presence in the household as an essential feature (Tungohan 2012, 40-41). So the supposed incapacity of migrant mothers to actively care for their families has caused much consternation within their home communities. Women's migration is sometimes perceived as "the demise of nuclear family structures" (Tungohan 2012, 41). In an Asian context, for example, migrating mothers have often been portrayed in a contradictory way: as economic heroines and, simultaneously, as bad mothers (Bastia 2013, 164). In the Philippines specifically, national discourse characterizes migration as a viable option for single, childless women but not for mothers, who are expected to be close to their families (Bastia 2013, 164).

Despite negative characterization of the migrant women's absence, it has been observed that mothers still continue to emigrate, leading to a "rapid feminisation of cross-border migrations" (Bastia 2013, 160). Even though there are cases where women have been defined as passive, having "little choice in determining decisions over their own or others' migration" (Chant 1992, 197-198, in Bastia 2013, 164), women are still adamant to emigrate. Their household responsibilities might "act as deterrent" (Bastia

2013, 164), but women still "exercise a high degree of agency" (Bastia 2013, 161) in their decisions to work abroad, especially towards their male partners, defying their husbands' impositions on their stay in the home country (Bastia 2013, 164). Regardless of the mothers' determination, family relations are not to be disregarded, for it is mainly for the families' benefit that mothers emigrate in the first place. The family is the site of conflicting interests" (Salazar Parreñas 2001a, 83, in Fedyuk 2012, 279), hence it is mandatory that commitment and opportunities (time, money) be present on both sides of the (transnational) family (Fedyuk 2012, 280). Since the exchange of care relies on "a dialectic of capacity (ability), obligations (cultural expectation), and negotiated commitment (family relations and migrations histories), which change over the family and individual life course" (Baldassar 2007, 392-393, in Fedyuk 2012, 280), studies on transnational families have to consider the complexities of care arrangements. So, even though migration is often depicted as pertaining to the individual alone, it is strongly linked to social processes that occur at the 'meso' level (Bonizzoni 2009, 83). In other words, the choice of the individual is profoundly impregnated in "local and transnational networks", mostly comprised of family ties, set in motion by both economic and emotional impetuses (Bonizzoni 2009, 83).

The mothers' decision to migrate for work is thus fueled by economic factors, and sensed as the only available solution for financial difficulties. In addition, migration has been further defined as "a practical response to a failed marriage and the need to provide for children without male help" (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2004, 31). Likewise, there are two conditions for migrant mothers' leave to be "legitimate and viable": economic need and suitable family arrangements for the children (Raijman et al. 2003, 743). For that reason, transnational mothers send most of their remittances home and search for available ways of keeping in touch with the family. They are even said to contribute more than their male counterparts in the rearing of the children and becoming a "crucial source of revenue for economically beleaguered countries" (Tungohan 2013, 40). Mothers constantly strive to make up for their physical absence, for the absence does not necessarily denote a lack of emotional support, especially when they migrate with the intention of staying for a determined period of time (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997, 558). However, when all the arrangements fall short and the children are not taken care of properly, migrant mothers are confronted with a new dilemma; and because of this, Raijman et al. ask whether mothers should return home

13

"to take charge" of their own children and thus give up their economic aims (2003, 743).

1.3.   Italy as a Territory of New Possibilities for Romanian Transnational Mothers

Turning to the domestic or care labor migration in the Romanian–Italian context, Romania functions as the sending country and Italy as the receiving one. Italy has been described as a country in need of care. For instance, already in 2002, 25% of the population was over sixty, and the number of elderly people with significant care needs was expected to grow in the next decades (Lyon 2006, 212). 3.9% of the population was over eighty, a proportion that was expected to double by 2010 (Lyon 2006, 212). So in the context of a constantly aging European population and a changing equilibrium between the young and old, "the need for elder care is stretched and likely to grow as the population ages" (Lyon 2006, 212). The care for these elderly Italian persons has been provided mainly in two ways: by women in the households or through the employment of migrant men and women, "arising from their location in the global economy" (Lyon 2006, 212). It is to be mentioned that only a small percentage of elderly people live in residential homes (It: *casa di riposo*), due to high prices (1000-2000 euros per month). Also, the Italian social services lack the resources to satisfy a large number of care needs and home-based services are very limited. Therefore family care predominates (Lyon 2006, 216).

Lyon has noted that in recent years, a very significant trend is that of employing migrant labor for home-based care, both as resident and non-resident care workers. In Italy specifically, most migrant women have been employed without a regular contract and, with the help of the regularization scheme, workers initially without a legal status have been made visible (2006, 217). These carers are referred to as 'badante'. Though this phenomenon has become visible in the past decades it has a longer history (Lyon 2006, 213-217). For example, in the 1970s the migrant women employed came from the former Italian colonies. In the 1980s women from Latin America were employed. Through the 1990s single migrant women from central and Eastern Europe (Romania, Hungary, Albania, etc) were occupying these positions, as stated in a 2004 report by Caritas Romana (Lyon 2006, 218). As far as women from Eastern Europe are concerned, they often worked on a temporary basis, for two or three months at a time,

sharing jobs with female family members or friends (Lyon 2006, 218). This practice, widely referred to as 'pendulum migration', means that migrants rotate work in Italy, and other EU countries, with periods back in the home countries, repeatedly returning on tourist visas (Lyon 2006, 218). Because Italy is perceived as a rather weak welfare state and because of the relatively low cost of employing a migrant worker (between 800 and 1000 euros per month if social security payments are made and the worker's situation is fully regularized), at the end of 2004 Caritas Romana stated that from 496,000 domestic workers who worked in Italy, 16.4 % came from Romania (Lyon 2006, 218-219).

Migrant labor fills a supply gap at a low cost and sustains an ideal. On the one hand the care for the elderly is done inside the family, inside the domestic space, and on the other hand women still remain veiled by the traditional aura of the natural caring feature (Lyon 2006, 220-222). By alluding to attributes such as 'docility' or 'compliance', sending countries benefit financially from the "perpetuation of gender stereotypes" (Tungohan 2013, 40). At the same time it has been noted that some employers in receiving states perceive female migrants as ideal workers because they are more reserved and thus more productive (Tungohan 2013, 40). In this sense, employers help in constructing migrant women's 'otherness' by accentuating their supposedly 'inferior' race, nationality, class and even femininity. Therefore 'poor' and 'working-class' 'Third World' women are constructed as "better workers driven by economic desperation" (Tungohan 2013, 40).

Despite this rather victimizing discourse, Romania continues to be a major sending country of domestic workers. Romania has experienced a massive migration phenomenon, with an estimated 10-15% of people leaving the country in search of better opportunities, placing it among the top migrant-sending countries since the 1990s, due to the fall of communism (Moscardino et al. 2011, 11). Owing to its cultural and geographical proximity, Italy has been a top receiving country for Romanian immigrants, these representing the largest minority (935.000) and 60% of all labor migrants (Moscardino et al. 2011, 14). The largest Romanian settlement appears to be located in northeastern Italy, where Romanians have an employment rate of 73% (Moscardino et al. 2011, 14). However, Mihaela Robila observes that, despite its recent economic progress and admission to the European Union in 2007, Romania still faces concerning economic difficulties. She points out that Romania has a Gross Domestic

Product (GDP) per capita of $11,500, lower than that of Hungary, Poland or Bulgaria (2010, 326). She further adds that:

> With the lifting of the Schengen visa restrictions since 2002, the number of immigrants increased even further, Romanian representing 40% of all labor migrants in Italy, 18% in Spain, 5% in Germany, 5% in Hungary and 6% in Israel (Sandu 2006). Although the data on the types of jobs performed in the destination countries is limited, an estimated 36% of Romanian immigrants work in construction, 28% in agriculture, 15% in private households (housekeeping), 12% in hotels/restaurants, and the rest in other areas (Siar 2008). Women represent 51,3% of immigrants (IOM 2010) (Robila 2010, 326).

In parallel with Romania's economic struggles, it has been observed that more and more educated and/or middle-class individuals migrate to richer countries, "leaving qualified but poorly paid jobs in their countries to work as domestics abroad, earning (comparatively) better salaries" (Sarti 2004, 89). Additionally, due to the incorporation of cheap domestic labor, lower-class employers emerge as well. Consequently, there exist domestic workers who have a better education than their employers, and have had a job with more responsibilities in the home country (Sarti 2004, 89).

One of the greatest achievements perhaps, has been the reorientation of feminist researchers towards the symbolic and emotional value that the concept of caring entails, especially in a context where carework is constantly devalued, not to mention female work. Ehrenreich and Hochschild write that wealthy countries sought to hire carers that could show affection towards the ones they cared for; carers, besides their "muscle power and attentiveness to detail", often bring the families that employ them real maternal affection, that might otherwise have been invested in their own families (2004, 24-25). The migrant women often show concern for the persons they care for, often translated as 'emotional labour'. This term characterizes the carers' "ability to sell love" (Marchetti 2010, 141). Because it has been said that elderly people in Europe tend to suffer from the lack of care or affection that was previously available inside the extended family, migrant women then somehow fill a gap left by the new transformation of family networks (Marchetti 2010, 141). By becoming an important part in the organization of the household, migrant women sometimes also become a type of substitute for the traditional (maternal) figures that might be absent (Marchetti 2010, 141-142). In the case of children, things may be different. Gorfinkiel Diaz explains that some degree of attachment also forms between the carer and the cared for (2011, 746), but this might sometimes lead to a competition between the domestic

worker and the female employer. When this is not the case, employees are expected to engage fully in the relationship with the children they care for (Gorfinkiel Diaz 2011, 745). Yet, as Escriva and Skinner claim, most often transnational mothers who care for other individuals in other countries are penalized for not "looking after their own dependants" (2008, 113). It is then important to know whether the children left behind have the same feelings towards their mothers' leaving and the new mother-child relationship emerging from the separation.

1.4.   The Necessity of Turning to Children's Experiences

Ehrenreich and Hochschild write that women from poor and developing countries have a disheartening choice to make when it comes to offering their children with a better future. They migrate to developed nations to work in the domestic or care sector, but are forced to leave their families behind. They can either raise their children in difficult conditions in the country of origin, or choose to migrate, but not be physically present for their children (2004, 21). Not surprisingly, this type of discourse triggers the impression that children remaining in the home country might suffer as well due to the mother's absence. In migration literature the children left behind are often portrayed as "passive recipients of care and lacking agency in migration processes" (Hoang et al. 2012, 738). Also, children's agency might take "particular twists" when the relationships with their parents are placed in a transnational context (Hoang et al. 2012, 738). This might be true, mainly because one of the major challenges of migration is the impact of the parents' absence on the children's "functioning and family relations" (Robila 2010, 326). These phenomena are not yet fully understood, especially in Eastern Europe. Even so, the affected population continues to increase. Due to the flux of economic migration, approximately one out of five Romanian children between the ages of ten and fifteen (approximately 170,000) have one or both parents working in another country (35,000 have both parents, 55,000 have only the mother and 80,000 have the father working abroad) (Robila 2010, 327). Still, under the scope of these concerning numbers, it has been observed that the literature on migration has tended, at least in the past, to focus on the migrants' experiences or on transnational mothers' confessions. Olena Fedyuk reinforces this argument when she says that "most research is done on the care provided for the children and families left behind" (2012, 280), basing her findings

on scholars such as Andall (2000), Gamburd (2000), Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila (1997) or Margold (2004).

Due to the 'transnational turn' in the field of migration studies, a lot of research has started to be done around the lived experiences of those families forced to "live together apart" during the stage of migration (Bonizzoni 2009, 85). Much research has flourished because of the attention given to the growing number of immigrant female workers, mainly working as domestics or care workers in countries such as Italy or Spain. Therefore many researchers have focused on the often contradictory experiences of transnational mothers, forced to be separated from their children for the sake of their families (Bonizzoni 2009, 85). Other researchers have broadened the discussion by analyzing transnational fathers' experiences. Others have started to analyze the ways in which children understand and interpret the separation, and try to influence the arrangements adults have made for them (Bonizzoni 2009, 85). Interestingly, previous studies have shown that relatives, meaning parents, children, siblings, aunts, uncles, etc., do not stop considering themselves a part of the same family even if the distance between them becomes greater as a consequence of migration. They were believed to establish "forms of solidarity and support" locally and transnationally (Bonizzoni 2009, 85), both emotional and economic, through remittances and rituals of intimacy at a distance, such as visits, phone calls or sending gifts. These acts have been proved to keep the members of a family together, despite the long distance and temporality that intervenes (Bonizzoni 2009, 85).

Also, in the cases of transnational mothers, there usually exists a type of care arrangement for the left-behind children. Mothers are usually the ones more frequently connected to care and household tasks and their departure implies "a much more radical reorganization, compared to that of fathers" (Bonizzoni 2009, 86). The remaining fathers are mostly devoted to their work, so in this case other female relatives or non-relatives are called to 'fill the gap' in the household. The delegation of care can be a delicate process, since in order to prove successful, "a good degree of coordination between the distant mother and the substitute caretaker is needed, and also a good relationship" (Bonizzoni 2009, 86). This should include features such as reciprocal knowledge, love or trust. Also, the relationship should function well between the caretaker and the fostered children. Nevertheless, in the case of long separations, the balance of the family might be put at risk, sometimes with dangerous consequences for the well-being of children (Bonizzoni 2009, 86). However, in a transnational

motherhood context, "mothers do not constitute the only maternal reference for children as they grow up" (Gorfinkiel Diaz 2011, 744). As the substitution dynamics of maternity care occurs, maternity can be assumed by more than one player, be it a female member of the family group or from a group outside the family (Gorfinkiel Diaz 2011, 744).

What comes to define the lives of transnational families is intimacy (Salazar Parreñas 2005, 319). This is to say that in a way, migrant mothers are "here and there", yet, one should keep in mind that the aspect of transnational motherhood should be treated as a two-way process. Therefore the perspectives of children as well as the feelings of the extended kin are to be included more in the picture (Salazar Parreñas 2005, 319). Future research should focus on the other sides of the transnational motherhood processes, in order to better understand the diversity of the implications deriving from those very processes. Salazar Parreñas considers the children's interpretations of their parents' acts of care to be "a visible glimpse into their understanding of transnational life and intimacy" (2005, 321). Therefore the next chapters engage with some of those very 'glimpses' into transnational lives, through Romanian children's real life stories.

2. Methodology

'Children should be Seen and not Heard':

Approaching the Recipients of Transnational Motherhood

2.1. Interviews as Method of Inquiry

In order to base and develop the arguments of this project, it was imperative to work with a great deal of material that would provide enough evidence to support those particular arguments. In this sense, real life stories proved to be an inspiring source of theorization. For this project, a total of nine qualitative interviews have been conducted, and a tenth intervention from the part of the researcher herself has been included. The research interviews targeted Romanian young adults, both male and female, who at a particular time in their lives (childhood, adolescence and young adulthood) experienced the phenomenon called 'transnational motherhood'. In other words, the research interviews focused on the life narratives of Romanian children and the relationship with their transnational mothers, who had migrated to Italy and worked in the domestic or care sectors. They were invited to think back about their experiences and to analyze and interpret events from the point of view of their present identity.

In conducting the interviews a non-traditional position was adopted, as described in detail by Ruth Frankenberg in *White Women, Race Matters. The Social Construction of Whiteness* (1993). A "dialogical" approach to the interviews was developed, instead of simply "maintaining the traditional, distant, apparently objective, and so-called blank-faced persona" type of interviewer (Frankenberg 1993, 29). The researcher positioned herself explicitly as part of the discussion, and even shared personal information with the respondents. This was done to facilitate the conversation in the context of transnational motherhood, as well as to "democratize the research process", reducing the extent to which the researcher was positioned as an "invisible presence" (Frankenberg 1993, 29). Frankenberg reminds us that usually, the 'blank-faced or neutral interviewer' was not to get involved in the debate, because results might appear more 'scientific', without running the risk of the subjects answering what the researcher wants to hear (Frankenberg 1993, 29). However, feminists have criticized this kind of approach, believing that the style can be unfair to those persons who actually need information or advice from the interpreter. The blank-faced persona perceives interviewees simply as 'data', and thus an utmost power differential between the two

parts is maintained (Frankenberg 1993, 29). What is more, stepping outside the neutral persona and explaining to interviewees the idea behind the project might be necessary to obtain their interest and suppor and for a good development of the research (Gluck 1977, in Frankenberg 1993, 29).

That is why the present project aims at a detachment from that traditional style of data gathering, and to celebrate a more open relationship between the interviewer and the interviewees. Because "no presentation of self is really neutral" (Frankenberg 1993, 30), certain readjustments in the way the researcher presented herself had to be considered. No academic or professional status has been alluded to, but rather the same type of shared experience has been mentioned. The researcher, in order to avoid any negative characterizations from the part of the interviewees, described herself as belonging to the same targeted group of subjects, thus eliminating possible power imbalances. This kind of dialogical method breaks the silence and can facilitate the interviewees' analytical engagement with certain issues; this is crucial, especially since "any research project involves raising an overarching question or opening up an area of discussion and receiving a range of responses to it" (Frankenberg 1993, 30-33).

2.1.1. Researching Qualitatively: towards the Narrativization of Life Events

What exactly does the study of individual accounts have to offer? In answering this question, one can relate to the privileging position the singular and the particular has over the large samples of statistical generalizations. When referring to one's past events, meaning narrating them, it can be understood that "good narratives typically approach the complexities and contradictions of real life" (Flyvbjerg 2006, 237, in Bathmaker 2010, 2), not to mention that this is an indicator of a better understanding of complex interrelationships because of the "noise" retained by individual real life cases (Hodkinson and Hodkinson 2001, 4, in Bathmaker 2010, 2). Therefore this project intends to approach exactly these kinds of complexities, by exploring the contradictory space of life narratives. Allowing people to come forward with their stories or narratives motivates them to "negotiate their identities and to make meaning of their experience" (Bathmaker 2010, 3).

Similarly, it has been argued that "we know and discover ourselves, and reveal ourselves to others, by the stories we tell" (Lieblich et al. 1998, 7, in Bathmaker 2010,

3). Doubtlessly this triggers the thought that narrative research is associated with restoring individual agency, by focusing on the ways in which people "may choose to shape their own lives" (Bathmaker 2010, 3). However, it is to be emphasized that identities have to be contextualized in particular social structures, which fix individuals into various forms of subjectivity (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2000, in Bathmaker 2010, 4). In this manner, the investigation of the narratives and of the people's diverse behavior will lead to a certain implementation of narrative reasoning (Polkinghorne 1995, 11). This narrative reasoning captures the abundance and the graduations of meanings of inter-human activities, graduations that cannot be fixed in definitions or facts. Therefore the narratives of the subjects inevitably become the major (re)sources on which to build solid arguments. Understandably, the stories, or "storied memories", capture the complexity of situations as well as the "emotional and motivational meaning" attached to them (Polkinghorne 1995, 11). Hence, the respondents interviewed for this project have been continuously encouraged to capture the complexity of their experiences in the narratives they provided.

The term 'narrative' becomes synonymous with the primary linguistic expressions that make up qualitative research projects. The term refers to the data form or field notes, or original interview data and their written (and translated, one could add) transcriptions, which researchers use in their analysis (Polkinghorne 1995, 4). Interviewees often offer their responses in the form of stories, because most people usually understand and revise their experiences in a storied manner. However, in order for these data-stories to be a good source of analysis, they have to be textualized (Polkinghorne 1995, 12-13). Therefore transcribing the interviews is a necessary step in working with the available data. Once the stories have been textualized, researchers analyze the data from the interviews by organizing different topics and themes that arise in the discussions. They later interpret the deducted meanings in a conceptual rather than statistical manner. Because of the large amount of data, a method of analysis based on cognitive or conceptual judgments, rather than one done by a computer, is preferred. Understandably, the purpose of qualitative interviewing consists in the description and interpretation of experiences, but not in the testing of possible hypotheses, finding statistical differences between groups, etc.; the goal is rather to generate hypotheses, to make implicit aspects of real life situations explicit, or to penetrate into the experiences of individuals from within. Consequently, the respondent is no longer a mere object of

study, but a participant who explores the research questions (Mertens Oishi 2002, 172-174).

In the present case, the project on children's life narratives around their transnational relationships with their mothers purposively invited the respondents to explore and constantly interpret the data they provided. However, it is equally important for the researcher to have some preliminary ideas of the totality of the project, before and while engaging with the collected data (Polkinghorne 1995, 15). That is why this project will set the stories collected against the framework of the transnational relationships between mothers working in Italy and their children left behind in Romania. Consequently, a paradigmatic analysis will be undertaken, examining the data collected in order to "identify particulars as instances of general notions or concepts", common themes or conceptual manifestations among the narratives (Polkinghorne 1995, 13).

2.1.2. From Stories to Life Narratives

It is said that 'listening is an act of love'. By listening to people's stories about themselves, words reverberate into memory bringing the past, the present and the future together. I have specifically chosen to listen to what Romanian children have to say in connection with the transnational relationships they had or have with their mothers, because I believe that one spoken word expresses a thousand more. The project illustrates my interest in their stories, both as a 'child left behind' myself and as a qualitative researcher in the field of migration and gender studies. By capturing their stories, the project could benefit academic and non-academic audiences by making them understand the complex consequences of this phenomenon. To be more specific, I am interested in other stories and the meanings storytellers deduce from them or the "various kinds of responses, actions and understandings that appear across the storied data" (Polkinghorne 1995, 14) and how they could be brought to the academic space. What the project attempts then is to find out the children's understandings and meanings of their experiences in a transnational context in order to contribute to the existing theory on transnationalism.

The reason why interviewees were asked to talk about their experiences, instead of filling out questionnaires or writing answers to certain questions, is that people take cognizance of their experiences, assume individuality, build relationships and

participate in cultural discussion through the act of storytelling. The telling of a story therefore almost becomes a *"performance"* (Langellier and Peterson 2004, 1-2, emphasis in the orginal), leading the persons narrating the events with all their memories, emotions, meanings, interpretations and understandings to a new form of knowledge production. Smith and Watson believe that this kind of self-referential mode, which they call 'life narrative', clearly distinguished from 'life writing' or 'autobiography', takes life as its subject, and is best approached as a "moving target, as a set of ever shifting self-referential practices that engage the past in order to reflect our identity in the present" (2001, 3). To sustain this, Elisabeth Grosz speaks of the 'untimeliness' of theories produced, explaining that "something is untimely" because "it is not yet used up in its pastness, it still has something to offer that remains untapped, its virtuality remains alluring and filled with potential for the present and future" (2010, 48). And this is exactly what feminist theory has directed itself to: "re-reading the past for what is elided, repressed, unutilized, or unconscious in it" (Grosz 2010, 48). Through the invitation to participate in the interviews, or rather in the conversation or storytelling of their experiences, the respondents were motivated to engage with the past and interpret its effects.

Regarding the subject matter of the stories, it can best be described as people's act of illustrating attempts to find solutions, clarifications or explanations to incomplete situations (Polkinghorne 1995, 7). In this sense the connectedness of life is perceived by those experiencing it, and the ability to make it coherent resides solely in those who have experienced it. So stories become linguistic expressions of people connecting to their life experiences (Polkinghorne 1995, 7). It is then understandable that through life narratives, interviewees are capable of connecting to past events and searching for their meanings. Still, one has to be aware of the fact that the interviews registered here do not represent complete life narrative accounts, in the proper sense of the term, because they do not report descriptions of the interviewees' entire life span. Rather, they are representative of a series of past experiences, tied together by the context of transnational motherhood, crucial for their present identity.

The stories of the nine interviewees have been included the category of life narratives, because these help in "linking 'personal troubles' to 'public issues'" (Wright Mills 1959, 248, in Bathmaker 2010, 1). In the research of narratives, the connections between personal and public concerns and how they can be understood and interpreted are constantly explored, especially since such research is influenced by the "ubiquity of

personal narratives in contemporary Western culture and politics" (Chase 2005, 669, in Bathmaker 2010, 1). Yet it is important to acknowledge that narratives are constructed through the collaboration between different participants. Respectively, these imply "the subjects of the inquiry" ('respondents'), "the researchers (who might also be the 'subject' of the research), others who become involved in the inquiry . . . as well as the readers, who will form their own construction of the text as it is presented" (Bathmaker 2010, 1-2). This is true about my own research, for I have guided the respondents in staying on track with their stories, in focusing on their transnational relationship with their mother, and in interpreting its consequences.

But what is truly important to remember is that narratives might "speak truth to power" (Bathmaker 2010, 3). Significantly, narrative and life history research provides "a means of getting closer to the experience of those whose lives and histories go unheard, unseen, undocumented—ordinary, marginalized and silenced lives" (Riessman 2008, 9, in Bathmaker 2010, 3). Therefore narratives, or narrators, invite listeners, readers or spectators to share the narrator's point of view. Furthermore, it has to be mentioned that, even though the collection of such stories represents the first step in life-history research, directly linked to the ways in which people narrate their own lives, this kind of research targets the understanding of those particular stories "against the background of wider socio-political and historical context and processes" (Biesta et al. 2005, 4, in Bathmaker 2010, 4). Consequently this project will not only capture some of Romanian children's stories, but it will include a (re)interpretation of their experiences in a highly complex context. On the one hand the interviewees will be motivated to "make sense of life as lived" (Bathmaker 2010, 4), and on the other hand, the often ignored structural and cultural characteristics of daily social spheres will be made visible particularly through the respondents' stories. What counted as strictly personal is brought to the public's attention because "many personal troubles cannot be solved merely as troubles, but must be understood in terms of public issues—and in terms of the problems of history-making" (Wright Mills 1959, 248, in Bathmaker 2010, 4).

2.2.   Steps and Measures in Conducting the Interviews

2.2.1. Targeting Respondents: Snowball Sampling, Purposive Sampling, Contact, Acceptance/ Refusal

Because of the space limitations imposed by the dissertation, I decided not to focus on more than ten interviews for the project. For this reason, from the very beginning, a 'purposive' sampling was used in choosing the interviewees, as well as the 'snowball' sampling, for one interviewee more. The purposive or judgmental sampling is that in which the researcher uses his or her judgment, research skills or prior knowledge in order to decide which respondents to choose. In the snowball sampling the researcher uses informants to identify further respondents who would qualify for the interviews; these interviewees might, in turn, suggest other possible respondents, and so on (Bailey 1994, 96). In total, I reached out to fifteen possible subjects using purposive sampling, and to one informant who, through the snowball sampling, lead me to the inclusion of one more subject.

The subjects I deliberately chose came from my immediate social circles—friends and family members. The purpose in doing so was, on the one hand, to ensure and to facilitate the exchange of information, and on the other hand to give them the possibility to come forward with their stories and thus considering them as subjects with full agency. A privileging of those particular subjects was not necessarily intended, but neither did I want to take their importance and possible contribution for granted. The subjects were contacted privately, either face-to-face or via Facebook. Interviewees were provided with information on the topic of the thesis and the purpose of the interview, and extended an invitation to participate in an interview/ discussion. Out of the sixteen subjects contacted, nine responded positively, two refused, one hesitated at first and then refused, and four did not respond to the invitation in any form.

2.2.2. Channels of Communication: 'Face-to-face', Skype

The initial goal in conducting the interviews was that of meeting face-to-face with the possible interviewees, in order to facilitate the communication process and to enable a scenario of trust. However, this has not been entirely possible. This process has been conditioned by the long territorial distance separating the interviewer from the

interviewees. The researcher's position was fixed mainly to Spain, while the respondents' was either in Romania or in Italy. The first and the second interviews (September 6th 2013 and January 19th 2014) were conducted face-to-face with the occasion of the researcher's visiting Romania; the rest of the face-to-face interviews were not possible because of lack of funds allocated for travels within the researcher's study programme. Therefore the other seven interviews (between January 27th 2014 and February 24th 2014) were conducted online, with the help of Skype, a freemium voice-over-IP service, to which all interviewees had access. They either had the programme installed on their computers, laptops or on their mobile phones. They also disposed of a web camera, so the interviewees as well as the researcher were able to transmit live images to each other. The attitude of the respondents towards the interview in both cases was similar, therefore the fact that the conversations were carried out online did not affect the flow of discussion in any way. Moreover, respondents via Skype were able to set the date and time of the interview according to their own schedules, whereas the 'face-to-face' respondents had to adjust their schedule according to the researcher's availability.

2.2.3. Terms and Conditions: Agreement, Confidentiality

Before starting the interviews, all interviewees were handed an 'Interviewee Data Form', designed by the researcher, in order to provide information about the researcher, contact details, the purpose of the project, the title of the dissertation, the method of registering the data provided, the method of using the data provided, their rights as interviewees and the date-limit for exercising those rights.[1] Also, the form served as a way of keeping track of the interviews, by numbering them, and entering general data about the respondents, such as age, sex or location or email addresses. Particular stress was laid on the rights of the interviewees, such as agreeing or disagreeing to the use of the data provided for academic purposes only, to the recording of the data with the help of a voice recorder, to the translation of the data from Romanian into English, and to provide answers to all, part of, or none of the questions asked by the researcher—standard practices in research projects.

---

[1] See Appendix 1 for the Interviewee Data Form in English and Romanian.

All the interviewees were assigned pseudonyms in order to protect their anonymity and to ensure the confidentiality and integrity of the personal data provided. Two of the respondents specifically asked to be assigned a pseudonym, and chose it themselves. Other two interviewees insisted that their real names be used for the research project, while the other five respondents showed a neutral attitude regarding their real name or a substitute for it. However, except for the first two pseudonyms already chosen by the subjects, all remaining seven interviewees were given a pseudonym.

2.2.4. Coding: Recording, Transcribing, Translating

After informing the interviewees about the terms and conditions of the interview, and upon their agreement to be assisted by a voice recorder, their data has been registered with the help of the device SONY IC Recorder ICD-PX333.[2] The respondents were shown the device, and this was set to record only after the review of the Interviewee Data Form and after the respondents' signal that they were prepared to start the conversation. The device was stopped when the discussion had covered the points of interest, and the respondents were informed about the closing of the interview. All other verbal communication outside the delimitations of the interview was neither recorded nor used in this dissertation, whether it was related to the topic of the discussion or not. Also, while the respondents spoke, the researcher noted down on a separate piece of paper any other non-verbal communication details, such as tone of voice, pausing, body posture, gesticulation, etc., as well as details that might turn out to be relevant in the analysis of the interviews. This was possible in seven out of the nine interviews, but not entirely possible in the case of two interviews, because they used Skype on their mobile phones and did not manage to send a live image of themselves.

After all nine interviews were recorded, they were fully transcribed in a Microsoft Office Word document, registering the ways in which respondents spoke verbally and communicated non-verbally. The conversations took place in Romanian, and at times included specific words and accents typical of the Western or Eastern parts of Romania, called 'Ardeal' and 'Moldavia' respectively, as well as the occasional use of Italian words. The transcriptions render regional language, indications of pauses,

---

[2] See Appendix 2

laughter and incomprehensible instances. Also, all other names of persons mentioned by the interviewees were marked with an 'X'. Then the interviews were translated into English.

2.2.5. Interventions and Guiding: Set of Questions

Though the initial goal of the project was to encourage respondents to tell their stories freely, this has not been achieved, because they lacked confidence in selecting specific episodes from their experiences. All interviewees showed interest in the discussion, but only if guided by specific questions, meant to help them in rendering past events. Not necessarily aiming at conducting a 'Question-Answer' interview, a set of twenty-three questions were prepared, but only with the function of guiding the respondents.[3] Many questions were omitted because previous answers by the respondents had already revealed information on specific points. At the end, the respondents were invited to add comments or ask other questions.

2.2.6. Setting and General Atmosphere

Except from one 'face-to-face' interview which had been conducted at the researcher's home and one Skype interview which took place at one of the interviewee's friend's home, due to lack of internet connectivity, all other seven interviewees were located in their personal homes, either in a living room or bedroom, sitting close to their computers, laptops, or mobile phones, on a chair, on the sofa, or in bed. The interviews were all conducted in the evening, after 7 p.m., and the interviewees appeared to feel comfortable in those specific locations. The duration of the interviews varied between twenty-three minutes and fifty-five minutes, sometimes with temporary interruptions, due to internet connection problems. Also, five interviewees were interrupted temporarily by other persons, but the quality of the interviews was not affected. Though the questions asked made reference to past events, sometimes with heavy emotional charges, all the respondents were able to answer elaborately. However, two of the respondents showed signs of emotional distress at a lower level, when confronted with painful past experiences or present complex implications due to past experiences.

---

[3] See Appendix 3 for the Set of Questions in English and Romanian.

2.2.7. The Researcher's Disposition

In this section, I use the personal pronoun 'I' as substitute for 'researcher', since it is obvious that the researcher cannot escape subjectivity. I can say that, at first, I hesitated to ask people to take part in the interviews, not because of my position, but because I was not sure whether a remembering of the past would trigger any painful memories. But once I got the confirmation of their approval, I felt confident in approaching the respondents. Second, as much as I wanted to start free discussions with the interviewees or let them tell me the stories, the context in which we met did not leave a proper space for that to happen. So, constrained by the parameters of an academic piece of work and by the respondents' reluctance to start the conversation, I went along by keeping the somewhat 'detached' position of the interviewer, but not entirely, for I was summoned to answer questions as well. And third, I must admit that it has been a unique experience conducting the nine interviews. On the one hand I got to know the people 'in front of me', and that gave me a sense of belonging to a group of people shaped by the outcomes of transnational motherhood. On the other hand, I was faced with accepting and empathizing with the burden and even suffering some interviewees kept inside. Tears of sadness and joy were shed, but only to reinforce an idea of empowerment that resides in 'us', the subjects of the research, children united by the same, yet different, experiences.

2.3. The Researcher as Subject of Study

As stated in the Introduction, the reason behind the development of this particular research question on the relationship between transnational mothers and the children they left behind has been triggered by the researcher's personal experiences and attitude towards the subject. So is it then understandable if, in this subchapter particularly, the researcher becomes a case study as well. Therefore, the obvious effect is that of substituting the defining term of 'interviewee' or 'respondent' with that of the personal pronoun 'I'. This is because, on one hand, as Cherríe Moraga wrote, I too feel that there are "two inseparable facts of my life. I can't talk or write about one without the other" and that my mouth, respectively, "cannot be controlled . . . It's as if la boca were centered on el centro del corazón, not in the head at all . . ." (1983, 142). On the other hand, according to Ruth Frankenberg's thinking, I too see and "used myself as a source

of validation" (1993, 34) for different recurrent themes necessary in the analysis of the relationship between mothers and children in transnational contexts. Unable to detach the topic of the project from my own persona, I admit that the enthusiasm of coming forward with my own story grew with every interview I conducted, and a way to put down my own experiences soon proved mandatory. Moreover, during the conversations with other children of transnational mothers, I have experienced the so-called "tip-of-the-iceberg moments" every time someone "would remind me of the enormous amount that was not being expressed . . . forgotten . . ." (Frankenberg 1993, 40). But of course, conscious of the fact that my story alone would be insufficient for sustaining a solid argument in an academic instance, the interviews had to remain the focal point of the project.

I decided to include my testimony as an adjacent part to the analysis of the interviews, separately, as a final comparison, or maybe as a passage towards a new style of academic writing, to the nine interviews conducted. But because my part of the story does not come as a recorded interview, transcribed and translated, a different method will have to be adopted. Thus, I decided to give 'free writing' a try, producing a piece of written text to be read out simply as a 'story' or 'life narrative'. While the interviews will be transcribed and translated, presented under the form of a dialogue with questions and answers, my story will present itself as a written (auto/-) life narrative, focusing on my experiences in the context of my transnational relationship with my mother. And in doing so, I agree with Richardson (2000) who understands "writing as a method of inquiry" (in Lykke 2010, 163), and with Nina Lykke who, in line with Richardson, sees "language as active in the production of research results" (2010, 163). My language will not be spoken, but written, functioning as a method of supplementing the theoretical knowledge on the chosen topic.

Bringing the personal sphere alongside the theoretical knowledge production in transnational maternal-filial relationships through storytelling was based on the idea that "within the human sciences, foremost the humanities, originality of thought and expression have traditionally been highly esteemed qualities in the writing as well as in the evaluation of academic texts" (Bränström Öhman 2012, 30). Still, as far as genre and style are concerned, different disciplines revolve around different requirements and traditions so this means "differing standards, norms and criteria for what a 'good' article, monograph, report, thesis, and so on should look like" (Lykke 2010, 182). And perhaps, to the new generations of scholars and students' disappointment, these

standards, norms and criteria become "fixed rules about genre and style" (Lykke 2010, 182). Notwithstanding, as in the case of Feminist Studies, when the boundaries between various disciplines are being "transgressed", as Lykke adds, the criteria for what a 'good' academic text should sound like can be challenged. So, my attempt, through the use of my personal life narrative in writing, is that of 'experimenting' perhaps with a style that becomes understandable for audiences outside the academic environment as well. To continue along these lines, Lykke states that "feminist scholars have been inspired to experiment with the disrupting of boundaries between academic and more creative—that is, 'literary'—ways of writing" (2010, 174). She refers to Richardson (2000, 929-930) who developed more on the idea of writing as a "method of inquiry", naming this kind of writing as CAP ethnography (Creative Analytic Practices), meaning working both creatively and analytically, by advocating for other writing styles and genres than the traditional ones. The claim that science-writing prose is not maintained as inviolable leads to the blurring of the ethnographic genre so that it can include conversations, poetry or drama (in Lykke 2010, 174-175).

One major contribution that the present project attempts is the shift from the position of a traditional, neutral, 'objective' researcher to that of an explicit first person narrator-researcher. Lykke develops this aspect in relation to postconstructionist feminist epistemologies, where the researcher subject appears in person in the text, as an individualized, 'I', rather than a 'we', like in the case of classic standpoint feminism. I will not theorize more on these two positions here, but the thought of a more mobile 'I', one more prepared to acknowledge differences without making claims to speak for others, seemed suitable for the kind of writing the present project tries to get at (Lykke 2010, 165). I wholeheartedly believe that a scholarly text should reflect "social, cultural, historical, natural, medical and technical realities" in one way or another, and so the best method to do it would have to be that of situating myself at the same level as my "informants or research participants", and to "locate myself as part of the same messy and confused reality" (Lykke 2010, 166-167).

I am fully aware of the power relations still involved in the relationship with the interviewees, and how this has shaped the dissertation. But acknowledging the imbalance created between the subjects of research and the researcher who sets the agenda, edits and analyzes the material, is reassuring in the way the researcher can take "both credit and blame for the overall result" (Frankenberg 1993, 28). However, I do not desire to be the traditional detached observer that guides the analysis towards the

final written text only, mainly because "there is no disinterested position to be adopted in scholarship" (Frankenberg 1993, 28). Therefore I "view myself as situated within the relations" (Frankenberg 1993, 28) of transnational motherhood and its implications. So then, why not fully acknowledge my 'privileged' position of a direct 'experiencer' of the phenomenon, and analyze the recorded facts through a new prism? The advantage qualitative research has in this kind of situations is that of presenting multiple possibilities for various interpretations. As Frankenberg emphasizes, "it should be clear that the editorial choices were mine—while readers can interpret the material I have included" (2010, 28). The next chapter will deal more with this aspect.

3. Analysis of Interviews
'Best of Both Worlds': Confirming or Contradicting Discourses on
Transnational Children

3.1. Introducing the Subjects

Initially this project aimed at reaching an equal number of male and female respondents so as to avoid biases and discrepancies between subjects. However, more female respondents showed interest in joining the discussion. In these circumstances, I decided to interview all female respondents, so as not to refuse them the possibility to come forward with their stories. I did not intend to privilege female respondents over male respondents, or to impose a limit on the number of interviewees according to their gender. Nor did I have as primary goal that of comparing female experiences with male experiences of transnational relationships with their mothers, but simply listening to the stories of those persons who have experienced the phenomenon. So out of the nine interviewees, three declared themselves as being 'male' and six declared themselves as being 'female'.[4]

The respondents belong to the group of young adult population, ranging from adolescence—age fifteen—to young adulthood—age twenty-six. In the case of the minor respondent, his mother had been previously contacted and given explanations about the method of the interview and the purpose of the project. All interviewees declared having been born in Romania.[5] At present five respondents live in Romania and four live in Italy.[6] The respondents' education varies from high school level to M.A. and most of them have been employed at least once.In terms of familial status, the interviewed persons are either only children, or have one or two siblings. Also, according to their confessions, two of the respondents have divorced parents (from which one re-married), and seven declared their parents to be together still. The aspect of religion has been intentionally omitted from the interviews, because religious characteristics as defining features for the interviewees' experiences proved irrelevant for the project's goal.

---

[4] See Appendix 4 for more information on the interviewees.

[5] See Appendix 5 for the map of interviewees' places of origin.

[6] See Appendix 6 for the map of interviewees' current location.

3.2. Memory at Use

In the process of analyzing the nine interviews, memory played a major role, helping respondents to recount past events and allowing for present interpretation. Since a relation of interdependency exists between experience and memory, an interview can no longer be understood as a mere "telling of a Life" (Frankenberg 1993, 39). Passerini has argued that the unprocessed material of oral history entails more than just factual statements. It comprises dimensions of memory, ideology and subconscious desires and literal narratives, becoming a cultural manifestation. Memory, which works in a complex, political and idiosyncratic manner, comprises various levels that are at stake during oral-history interview. One is the stereotyped "all-ready" memory, which reveals general aspects of the world; the other is "more directly connected with real life experiences" (Passerini 1979, in Frankenberg 1993, 39-40). In this sense, the interviewees—or life narrators—found their personal memories to be the "primary archival source" in their interpretations of personal experiences (Smith 2001, 6).

The difficulty of the interviewees to fully acknowledge personal experiences as valid for the project's objectives was due to the belief that old memories could no longer be relied upon or that they become ephemeral. Contrary to their indecision and incertitude, old memories are as revealing as recent memories. But, as a general rule, the idea that younger children have less knowledge and routine information, with a less detailed recollection of their accounts, stands solid (Nelson and Gruendel 1986, in Wilson and Powell 2001, 4). However, the complexity of memory is constantly acted upon through a series of factors operating at the time of the event, such as the "time of day, level of stress experienced by the child, where child's attention was focused" or even the time lapse between the event and the interview (Wilson and Powell 2001, 5). Nevertheless, the child is able to provide detailed and precise information, although his/her capacity to remember and convey information increases with age. What is more, the information that is significantly personal proves to be remembered better than other types of information (Goodman et al. 1990, in Wilson and Powell 2001, 5).

One interviewee, Elena, tried to remember exactly what happened in the past, but thought her answers lacked essence: "No, all the questions were just right. Just that I don't know if I answered the right way" (1).[7] This indicates that she had pre-established

---

[7] See Appendix 7 for the original Romanian quotes used in Chapter 3, ordered consecutively from (1) to (88).

expectations of what her answers should be. Paul, another respondent, could remember the essential events, which was what mattered actually, but he could not be specific about the temporality of certain details: "The exact day, I can't remember it... I remember... I know it was a summer day, but I don't remember the exact day or month . . . I think it was June or May, or before... no, I can't remember" (2). However, this apparent vagueness did not impede the exposition of significant events in the respondents' lives. Another indicator that respondents felt insecure about the validity of their childhood memories was the invitation to conduct interviews with children who are currently experiencing the transnational relation. Doroteea, for example, repeatedly indicated that a child's confession would carry more weight than those of a now adult experiencer:

> Because he/she is going through something like that, at that moment, you know? And me, well, thinking about everything that happened in the past, it doesn't seem... well... I can't tell you what I felt, right? Because it's over. So many years have passed. But if you were to... well, to find a person who's going through it at the moment of speaking, I think it would be more... I don't know. They would say what they felt as you spoke. It would be something else, you know? (3)

Some respondents seemed to believe that their experiences could only be accurate if registered immediately after their occurrence. Apparently, over time, the emotional impact of the experience upon the respondents has been diminished, due to a new mindset. And it is through the redefinitions of recalled events that respondents can interpret past actions and deduce the meanings they have for them in the present. Other respondents believed their declarations to be insufficient. For example Claudiu, who was twenty-two years old at the time his mother worked in Italy, perceived his story as follows: "I don't know, mine... I don't see it as highly important or highly relevant. I don't know. The more information you get, the clearer it becomes for you to have an opinion and so you can start drawing some conclusions. Mine is, well..." (4). Regardless of supposed inconsistencies, or the ways in which respondents re-filtered and re-conceptualized their experiences, their memories were useful for the analysis. As a result, the diversity of the targeted group, whose ages at the time of their mothers' leaving ranged from seven to early twenties, serves to better understand how the age factor influences their internalization of experiences and memories. That is why, among the most important individual differences between the respondents, is that related to the structure and content of their narrative identities (McAdams 2008, 243). Therefore what

mattered was not the quantity of the memories, but the quality, building up a realization of their feelings towards the transnational experiences.

3.3.   Acknowledging Life Narratives

The previous subchapter on the uses of memory in recounting past events has showed that children tend to store less information than adults. However, events with significant importance remain vivid in subjects' minds. But there is more to memories than just remembering facts. One essential part of remembering is knowledge. And the more one knows about something, the easier it is to remember information about it (Wilson and Powell 2001, 2). When interviewees described their experiences, they were actually emphasizing three aspects: knowledge, sequencing and prioritizing (Wilson and Powell 2001, 2). First, the information that was considered important for the discussion was immediately revealed by the respondents. Second, they were able to automatically order the information into a meaningful sequence, following a sort of memory 'script'. And third, they gave priority to what they considered central for the discussion (Wilson 2001, 3-4). But interviewees also described accurate and specific details from both their childhood and adolescence.

The information respondents presented gradually acquired the quality of life narrative. At the beginning, interviewees were asked to say some general things about themselves, such as age, location or education. Interestingly, they began to speak in the same manner a narrator would begin telling a story, by introducing themselves or another character to the readers. The tone of voice, the dynamics and the structuring of their discourse, to a certain extent, revealed the narrators' backgrounds and lifestyles. Andi for example, who was fifteen years old at the time the interview was conducted, described himself in the following manner:

> Okay. Well, what can I possibly do? I'm fifteen years old, I'm from Bucharest, I'm in high school, I just got in, I'm a freshman, ninth grader. What do I do? Well, occupation, so to speak, I don't have one. Hobbies, neither. As sports, I practice, like, basketball; a job, honestly, no, I don't have one. That's it. (5)

Other respondents included information that might show their relationship status. Sonia briefly says: "I'm twenty three years old, I'm from Bacău, Romania, but I now live in Turin, Italy. My work, I do... wait tables, so to speak. I am married" (6). This shows how respondents choose to prioritize certain pieces of information, in order

to make themselves visible. Conversely, Maia, who was twenty-four at the time the interview was recorded, spoke about herself in terms of education:

> My name is [Maia], I'm twenty four years old, I was born in Sălaj, in Şimleul Silvaniei, and about, um, fifteen years, maybe even sixteen years ago, I moved to Timişoara with my parents. Concerning my studies... I graduated from two universities and a master's. Um, the undergraduate studies were in Marketing and Journalism and the master's in Advertising. Um, I love everything connected to advertising, film... Um, I'm a trainer in my spare time, when I'm not working—I'm working in a very large corporation and very time consuming. (7)

Though maybe unaware, the respondents were actually involved in a process of storytelling. "Subjects do not have to be taught how to tell stories", simply because "it is part of their cognitive repertoire" (Polkinghorne 1995, 13). This is a common method of making sense of and sharing life episodes. In feminist research, language becomes an active reality-producing medium, and is no longer defined as a solely "transparent and mimetic representation of the world 'out there'" (Lykke 2000, 173). Therefore, the interviewees themselves can now be read as textually personified versions of their names, fully acknowledging the forbidden 'I' of traditional academic genre rules (Lykke 2000, 164-165). What is favored then through this storytelling technique is the ability of the 'objects' to "spring to life as subjects with agency" (Lykke 2000, 168). Respondents have revealed themselves, to the researcher through the interviews, and to their friends and family, in informal conversations, by constantly making reference to theirpasts. This reference unearths different sides of their characters, their evolution or expressions of streams of consciousness.

The relation of the interviewees to their spoken words is a complex one, but for one thing, they acquire a type of narrative identity, which refers to their "internalized, evolving and integrative story of the self" (McAdams 2008, 262). Along with the contextualized stories in the framework of transnationalism, the respondents help to build up identities, constituting them as new kinds of subjects, enabled to "discover places from which to speak". In other words, the politics of self-(re)presentation, as Hall perceives it, consists not in the identity itself, but in using it as a strategy to "open up avenues for new speaking trajectories, the articulation of new lines of theorizing" (1990, 236-237, in Ang 2001, 24). That is why the interviewees have engaged in a process of "autobiographical reasoning, wherein they seek to derive general/semantic meanings from particular/episodic experiences in life" (McAdams 2008, 244). In shaping their

current identities, they have alluded to the six principles McAdams talked about: 1) the self is storied; 2) stories integrate lives; 3) stories are told in social relationships; 4) stories change over time; 5) stories are cultural texts; 6) some stories are better than others (2008, 244-248). I personally disagree with the last principle because the 'good' versus 'bad' are features too simplistic that cannot be attributed to stories evaluated in such a complex environment. Respondents often expressed that one effect of their transnational experience had been that of building up the person who they are today. The narrators evaluated past events and admitted theimportance they had had in forming their personalities. Maia, for instance, says: "Definitely. Everything that has happened so far has influenced the person I have become today" (8). Doroteea emphasizes the impact events had on her thinking: "But... when you're little, no. I say no... you don't think... Um, now... I want to say this about me, that now I don't think like I used to think back then when I was fifteen years old when my mother left. I mean I have a... I think differently" (9). Rita too expresses a mature cognitive ability as following the transnational experience:

> Um, with my mindset today, I think it does help, because, on one hand you express the emotions you live and they don't remain like some wounds inside you. Um, on the other hand you manage to give a name to the things you experience. And when you name them, it's like you're dominating them in some way. And you managed to detach yourself from them so that not one significant mark remains. (10)

Another indicative of the interviewees engaging in life narratives is the coherence and fluidity of their spoken texts, also understood as prosaic discourse, formed out of complete sentences integrated into a statement (Polkinghorne 1995, 6). But "people do not deal with the world event by event or with text sentence by sentence. They frame events and sentences in larger structures", Bruner notes (1990, 64, in Polkinghorne 1995, 7). Therefore the structures that the interviewees set into motion hint at plotting. Plots function as tools for selecting from the multitude of occurrences those which are primary contributors to the finality of the story (Polkinghorne 1995, 8). They entail the following configurations: "(a) delimiting a temporal range which marks the beginning and end of the story, (b) providing criteria for the selection of events to be included in the story, (c) temporally ordering events into an unfolding movement culminating in a conclusion, and (d) clarifying or making explicit the meaning events have as contributors to the story as a unified whole" (Polkinghorne 1995, 7). Guided by the researcher in delimiting the temporal boundaries of the narratives, the respondents

have performed their roles as narrators. For example, Andi described one of his good days from the time his mother was away minutely, almost giving the impression that it was a page written in a book, full of details, yet coherent:

> Okay. Let's start with the happy day. Um, a happy day meant a day without school. That was during the weekend. During the weekend, um, I would wake—I would wake up whenever I wanted, I had nothing to do, it was OK—and, as I said, I slept over at that neighbor's. Um, sometimes she would wake me up, or she'd let me sleep, but more often she would, because she had to leave, and she couldn't leave me alone in there, because, well, I didn't have the keys, maybe I wouldn't have handled locking the door, and so on. I liked it. Um, first she would give me breakfast, then she would leave me for an hour or two. Having two cats and a puppy, she would let me play, this and that, I was happy. Then she would say... would tell me... she would bring me home, that's sort of down the hallway. She would bring me home. She would let me watch TV [Laughs]. (11)

The interviews conducted did not intend to follow a question-answer trajectory, but rather to act as stimulants for the narrators' passage towards life narratives. Though guided, the answers were indeed provided in the form of life narratives. Put together, they formed stories which can stand on their own. Nine distinct voices and internalizations stemmed from the nine interviews, each contextualizing the concept of transnational maternal-filial relationships in unique ways. The narrative voices used different tones, ranging from irony to defensive, from nostalgic to critical, all alluding to the individual self-examination and self-making. Though the texts were scattered with "digressions, omissions, contradictions, gaps, and silences" (Smith and Watson 2001, 171), this did not interrupt the general coherence of the stories. At times negotiating cultural strictures about self-representation or the representation of their mothers, the narrators actively engaged in self-critical analysis and the critique of their ability to understand the past, and this only to reinforce the validity of the evidence unearthed (Smith and Watson 2001, 173-6).

3.4. Care Arrangements and Substitute Carers

The interviewees were invited to remember the care arrangements their mothers had done for them before leaving to Italy. The mothers' preference for who would look after their children grows "out of strategic availability" (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997, 559). They rely on different people to care for their children, which implies almost full-

time supervision. The substitute can be the father, an aunt, the grandmother or grandparents—which would mean "a more collectivist, shared approach to mothering" (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997, 559). However, the choice extends to paid caregivers, usually trusting female neighbors. If they remunerate the caregivers, mothers feel reassured that their children receive proper care (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997, 561). Also, the children might remain more or less alone, if their age is considered appropriate. They might reside in students' residences or simply in rented out flats. For example, Andi, who was left with a female neighbor, enjoyed this decision. The neighbor turned out to be an excellent educator and the respondentshowed immense gratitude towards her:

> When I found out, I agreed to staying with that person; meaning I liked to spend time with her very much. She was sweet and kind at first... not at first... um... in her way. But when it came to taking care of me, to teaching me, and knowing that it's for my own education and my own benefit, of course, she would become more severe. (12)

Rita, on the other hand, was put in a girls-only students' dorm, run by Catholic nuns. She recalls living in a supportive environment: "It was different because there were persons taking good care of... of us. Of course they only accommodated girls and I even met nuns who... Um, had better... who were closer to us, let's say... I felt supported" (13). Another respondent, Sonia, remained with her father, and their relationship developed positively. Though the father was not always in the house, Sonia said: "Yes, if my father was at the countryside... he came home during the weekends; we could handle it" (14).

In some cases it has been argued that men appear to be the ones who need care when women migrate (Kofman and Raghuram 2009, 12, in Hoang et al. 2012, 737). Sonia, for instance, mentions how her father missed the mother constantly:

> I know... anyhow, I remember my dad suffered a lot anyway. I remember the time when... even if it... if you are to put it that way, two years isn't that much. Let's say one... it wasn't... it was one year and then another year, you know? But, for someone who's used to spending all day long, it's hard, obviously... And I know he was often upset. He was writing poems [Laughs]. Oh well. (15)

The fathers left behind are said to comprise the largest group of principal carers for the children (Hoang et al. 2012, 737). In some cases, women's migration forces men to do housework, and in other cases men take up the role of 'househusbands' freely (Salazar Pareñas 2005, 327-332). For instance Claudiu describes how his father had no

objection in taking up household tasks: "My dad; my dad mostly. He became the woman in the house . . . Yes, he did the chores. I didn't really ever clean; or only did it when it was really necessary" (16). However, reconfigurations of the family's gender division of labor rarely take place in the proper sense of the term. Despite contestations of "normative gender behavior" (Fenstermaker and West 2002, in Salazar Parreñas 2005, 331), women's migration indeed facilitates men's proclivity towards 'reproductive work', but they do not engage properly as full-time caregivers of children (Asis et al. 2004, in Salazar Parreñas 2005, 327). In the Philipines and Sri Lanka, for example, some research shows that "men tend to reject care duties vacated by the migrant mother because the reversal of gender roles is seen as a threat to their masculinity" (Hoang et al. 2012, 737). The idea that men seem to be demasculinized by doing reproductive work can be confirmed by Claudiu's example above, in which he says that his father became the 'woman' in the household. This could lead to men being portrayed in a negative light.

Men's housework does not free women of their nurturing responsibilities. And it comes as no surprise that most often children rely on mothers first for support (Salazar Parreñas 2005, 327-332). Paul explains how his father's disinterested behavior turned his children away: "Because having a father... a bit . . . absent in our lives. He was a bit... he was young too . . . he wasn't very present in our lives. He minded his own business [Laughs]" (17). That is why the mother remained the referent in his life: "We were on her side... what? We were more attached... we spent more time with mom, right? And we could feel a huge difference" (18). Moreover, a concerning situation arises when the placement of children within other people's care, pejoratively called 'child shifting' (Phoenix and Seu 2013, 300), objectifies those children. Otilia remembers her father's attitude towards the idea of taking care of her:

> He reproached us the fact that mom was away, even though we, as children, never told
> mom: "Leave the house and go to work for our sake!" They came up with this idea. Yet
> he was reproaching us to that . . . But soon he realized that he cannot cope with two
> children, to cook for them, to... I don't know, maybe he cannot deal with the fact of
> being a single parent, to get involved more. (19)

Paul, for instance, describes how, after being left in the care of his father, the situation became problematic:

> Only three boys and my father, it was... I can't say things went pretty well . . . We
> couldn't trust him with too much . . . Um, we were three brothers, right? The youngest

was two years old and I had to bottle-feed him, right? [Laughs] I had to look after him, care for him, because, given the situation... Dad didn't bother to take care of him that much. He would let me take care of him. (20)

So inevitably, if the father rejects the care responsibilities in the family, mothers are left with the solution of reinforcing the traditional gender rules by maintaining the job of nurturing the family, finding themselves in a "no-win situation" (Salazar Parreñas 2005, 333). Regardless of mothers' care arrangements and improvisations, transnationalism is a contradictory process of the twenty-first century. Not only does transnational mothering disrupt "the notion of family in one place" (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997, 567), but this happens for the better of the same disrupted families. Transnational mothers worry constantly about their children getting into trouble during the separation and try to protect them from the discrimination they might receive (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997, 561-563). These constant precautions sustain what Raijman et al. argued: that the migrating women face daily dilemmas concerning their roles as mothers, dilemmas that "defy instrumental rationales and assumptions" (2003: 731). At the same time they have concerns over their children's sustenance, protection, and preparation for the future, and strongly hope that the caregivers replacing them will discipline and help the children. Some respondents talked about this concern regarding the substitute care. Sonia for example refers to her adolescent sister, who was supposed to care for her, saying that her sister's behavior at that time influenced her own well-being:

> Well [Laughs] we keep getting to my sister [Laughs]. Willy-nilly we still end up talking about my sister. Because it was that period for her, it also affected me somehow, you know? . . . It also affected me a little bit because, well . . . I felt unprotected, you know? Somehow. (21)

But she ends the description in a funny manner, remembering the usual fights between siblings: "Well, aside [incomprehensible] all the beating I got from my sister [Laughs] . . . Ok, but this has nothing to do with that. She beat me anyways, even if my parents were around" (22). This kind of occurrence only alludes to the normality of the relations between members of the family. Doroteea, in this respect, explains how her parents advised her to steer clear of trouble:

> I tried to stay strong and move on. And to… to steer a steady course as… as they would have wanted. Not to start doing all sorts of stupid things, like drinking alcohol and that sort of stuff. No, I tried to advance as they would have wanted me to, as they would had been in the country and... They used to say: "You gotta go to school, gotta study, gotta

come back"... Well, "gotta be careful who you talk to" or well... "Be careful about the friends you chose", so to speak. (23)

Whilst migrant mothers are sometimes proclaimed as "modern-day heroines" (Salazar Parreñas 2001c, 1136, in Hoang et al. 2012, 737), new definitions of doing motherhood have emerged, mothers even becoming sole breadwinner models. Apart from delegating both "the logistics and practice of the reproductive sphere" (Gorfinkiel Diaz 2011, 747), mothers from a distance consider the act of doing motherhood not only as the emotional and moral interaction, but also the material and economic responsibility. They participate from a distance in the general organization of activities but they have added the money issue to their maternal obligations. In this sense, women's positions adapt themselves to the new situations generated by transnationalism and new ideas of doing motherhood appear (Gorfinkiel Diaz 2011, 747). Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila observe that "transnational mothers seek to mesh caregiving and guidance with breadwinning" (1997, 564). Yet, the new "elastic definition of motherhood" (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997, 563) in most cases prohibits migrant mothers from mixing both financial obligations and spending time with the children. Most respondents declared that their mothers sent regular remittances and goods, in order to create the impression of being present in the household. Maia, for instance, describes how her parents tried to compensate for their absence by providing material goods to her:

> I definitely had... more clothes, more... pretty... pretty much everything I needed they tried to buy it for me, perhaps to compensate for their absence. And I can't say I was a spoiled child—if I want it then I get it! Usually I had to prove that I deserved something, but basically, our financial situation improved owing to their departure, rather than it would have been, had they stayed here. (24)

Unfortunately, this expanded definition of motherhood has been perceived rather negatively by the children left behind. The expectation of mothers fulfilling their roles as caregivers by combining income earning with physical separation from the family (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997, 562) has been condemned by the respondents. Interviewees understood the mothers' departure as a sacrifice for the benefit of the family, indeed contributing financially, but they could not internalize their mothers' sacrifice as beneficial for their emotional development. Otilia exemplifies her mother's discursive manner of drawing attention to the material advantages stemming from the migration, though she makes clear the importance of her mother's physical presence:

And when I told her, trying to talk to her, to explain the need to have her, to be by my side, she always had the tendency to defend herself and would say: "But am I not sending you so many things? Look at how much money I'm sending you!" and I would say that: "But it's not about money, mom, it's about me being alone"; but, "Yes, but look at how much I'm sending you!" and all the time she would mess with my words and say: "But I'm sending you a lot! Look at how much money I'm sending you!" and the every time I was left with this... That's what I remember; that she sent me so many things in order to make up for her leave. Probably then for her it was more important for us to have material things and money, than to be next to us. (25)

Therefore mothers do not progress from a type of motherhood that entails daily, face-to-face caregiving to one defined only through breadwinning (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997, 562). As such, women are still attributed the same traditional roles, and the breaking away from the "cult of domesticity" (Raijman et al. 2003, 741-742) cannot be achieved. From the existing literature and subjective collected data, no certain description of what constitutes "good mothering" can emerge, regardless of the migrant mothers' efforts to defend their choices (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997, 566). That is why it is crucial to leave space for an "articulation of a new rhetoric of transnational motherhood" (Raijman et al. 2003, 743).

The interviews reveal the mothers' constant involvement with the children from afar. They maintain affective ties with the family back home through repeated contact, keeping up to date with their children's lives (Paragas 2008, in Tungohan 2013, 46). The ways of keeping in contact have flourished alongside technological advancements, including phone calls, text messages, emails, freemium voice-over-IP services such as Skype, or social networking such as Facebook. To a certain extent, the physical absence of the mother does not necessarily result in the emotional absence in the relation with the family. In this way, mothers try to construct "psychological bonds" with the children, emphasizing the emotional relation instead of "giving importance to the amount of time spent together" (Gorfinkiel Diaz 2011, 744). One of the fundamental changes in the transnational care process resides in the impossibility of domestic employees to provide "quality time" for their children on a regular basis (Gorfinkiel Diaz 2011, 744). This can only be implemented at a given time in the future, during visits or holidays. Therefore they "sell their time" to "purchase tangible assets—such as health or education—for their families" (Gorfinkiel Diaz 2011, 744). All the persons interviewed declared keeping in contact with their mothers over the telephone, or via

Internet. Sonia recalls how her mother tried to maintain the same communication level from afar:

> But, well, I remember that, while she was away and gave us a phone call, um, always… I was older then, twelve years old, I was… I don't know if I still played with dolls, but I remember that when she called, and I was given on the phone to talk, she always sang to me, um, the lullaby, so to speak, which she used to sing to me when I was a little girl, when she cuddled me [Laughs]. (26)

Moreover, the mother invited her to sing along, as a way to maintain the ritual: "That's why it... and she made me sing it to her as well! Like: 'Come on, sing to mommy, sing to mommy!'. . . [Laughs] I'm making fun of her!" (27)

On another level, the communication between the two parts presented ambivalent positions. On one hand it "has ironically become a mechanism for the retention of gender norms and a force that impedes the reconstitution of gender practices engendered by transnational mothering" (Salazar Parreñas 2005, 333). Mothers believe that caregiving remains a solid characteristic of the mothering experience, constantly dreading the negative effects on their children (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997, 562). But on the other hand, they accentuate the importance of their economic role and use the term "sacrifice" in diminishing fears and anxieties or even negative criticism caused by the transnational process (Raijman et al. 2003, 743). Respondents, after analyzing the situation, also understood the mothers' departure as a 'sacrifice'. Doroteea, who also migrated to Italy, exemplifies this by saying that: "For quite some time now, I realized what it truly means to work among strangers and also the sacrifices they have made, at the same time" (28).

3.5.   Emotional Outcomes of Mothers' Absence

The concept of motherhood is not a one-way process. It goes hand in hand with that of 'childhood', or the interconnectedness and interdependency between mothers and children, regardless of their age. Therefore the contribution of children to the discourse on the transnational process can no longer be ignored. It is crucial to understand why and how transnational families arise and to place them in relation to the "structural conditions (such as political regulation or economic integration)" that configure them (Bonizzoni 2009, 84). Many studies on transnational families have looked into the migrants' abilities to surpass and even challenge the sense of separation that distance

imposes, but little attention has been given to the factors that can "stratify or complicate this process", such as spatial constraints, temporality, relationship failures, parental conflicts, etc. (Bonizzoni 2009, 86). In order to avoid possible distorted generalizations, whether good or bad, special attention should be given to the interaction between the two parts, and to their subjective interpretations. In emphasizing the quick generalizations that are usually made, interviewed children sustained the idea that each and every case of transnationalism is unique. Claudiu, for example, says the following:

> Well now, I told you: I can't say that, look, this is the recipe for everything and it will happen this way. It depends on the child I think. And on the age, and on the maturity, on the way of thinking; there are cases in which the children have a lot to lose when the parents or one of them leaves . . . It depends a lot on how much they invested during childhood. So there are things which pertain to the individual, so not... But I say that generally, it affects everybody. (29)

Sonia too believes that people should not generalize on transnational families, because each case is different:

> But, firstly, I'd say that there's nothing to be judged, because... well, like I said, there are scenarios and scenarios. There are persons who leave their families, perhaps for good, meaning to… go to somewhere better, you know? But it wasn't like that for us. It was just because we needed money and well . . . Of course, somebody leaves with the intention to give the family, the children, right? Something better, right? . . . But how to put it? Those people probably haven't gone through something like this and that's why they talk. But I can't say… there are all kinds of situations. (30)

Elena dislikes the quick judgments made by others, especially without having experienced the phenomenon: "Well, on these cases opinions are divided of course, just that, frankly each and every one knows best what's going on with their families, how they manage, what they provide their children with. And people really don't know anything about it" (31). Even Paul, who has felt victimized due to his difficult familial context, insisted that generalizations cannot be made:

> Considering our situation, yes, you could say that. But when a family is doing very well, the parents get along fine, and even if one leaves and lets children with the other one, right? And if the family is doing well, you can't say that. You can't victimize: "Poor kids, they were left alone!" Because the parents are still together, they didn't... Only one of them left, for their future, for their well-being, right? (32)

The first ones to debunk certain myth are the children of these transnational mothers themselves. Children explain how migrant mothers, placed in between, face

competing expectations. On the one hand they are expected to 'save' their families by becoming economic superwomen, but on the other hand, they are highly criticized for being absent. They are both elevated and admired for their maternal sacrifices, but at the same time condemned or denigrated for working abroad (Tungohan 2013, 41). It has been noted that "because lives and relations are linked across borders, transnationalism offers an attractive, and at times deceiving, imagined possibility of living with two hearts rather than with one divided heart" (Falicov 2005, 339, in Schapiro et al. 2013, 49). However, when it comes to the well-being of their children, these mothers display strong ideas of what education for their children might mean, including values such as "stability, strict authority, quality time and diligent study" (Longman 2013, 392). In this sense, mothers tackle restrictions imposed by distance by practicing what Tungohan calls 'transnational hypermaternalism' (2013, 41).

Maternal care is usually exhibited through financial support, remittances, strict surveillance or constant communication across borders, and the use of technological breakthroughs, which enable mothers to get involved in the households from afar (Tungohan 2013, 41). Various studies have shown that transnational family life is defined by intimacy across borders, and that regular communication is part of the everyday process of maintaining family ties (Salazar Parreñas 2005, 319). Interviewees did confirm the idea that their mothers had been overprotective, constantly keeping in contact with them, but the exaggerated care had been perceived rather as a lack, due to the mothers' physical absence. Maia for example, insists in her story on the limitations her mother imposed on her through constant overprotection:

> They tried a lot to protect me while they were away, lest I should suffer or be hurt, and so on, and they… were trying too hard to take care of me, but they were shortening my arms instead of... allowing me to make my own decisions. And somehow that made me be dependent on them. At least emotionally. (33)

Although mobile phones or the internet empower migrant women and offer them numerous possibilities to express intimacy and care across borders, there is evidence that these communication channels are by no means a solution to overcome problems caused by separation. Sometimes it is just the act of communication and not the content that attests the relationship (Licoppe and Smoreda 2005, in Madianou and Miller 2011, 462). So the mobile phone does not improve the relationship of those "who experienced a gap in communication at a formative age" (Madianou and Miller 2011, 467). Some respondents agreed that communicating across distance was a sign of disintegration of

the relationship. Elena, when asked to describe a sad day from the time her mother was away, made reference to her birthdays:

> Honestly, I get nostalgic when I think I would have liked her to be present next to me. And we were talking on the phone, she always called me, congratulating me. And I told her: "Yes, yes, but, you know it's not the same thing, as if you were here with me!" [Laughs] But I understood that that's the situation and she can't be with me [Laughs] . . . Or when I wanted to share any joy with her. I would call her because she was not here. And she would share my joy from a distance. (34)

Mothers are aware of the inability to provide 'proper' love from a distance. That is why they overcompensate for their physical absence, indulging in a kind of "intensive mothering" (Hays 1996, in Salazar Parreñas 2005, 323). They are simultaneously 'here and there', so by reconstituting the idea of mothering as a combination of nurturing from afar and breadwinning features, they try to transmit intimacy (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila, 1997, in Salazar Parreñas 2005, 319). By demonstrating their care through financial contributions, mothers go beyond gender expectations and this accentuates their feelings of independence and self-worth. But this can lead to mother–child ties being "reduced to commodity-based relations with love shown through material goods" (Tungohan 2013, 44). These efforts are deemed as "insufficient evidence of maternal love" (Tugohan 2013, 45), perhaps because of the ideological belief that mothers should be nurturing children from "up close", not from outside of the household (Salazar Parreñas 2005, 333). This can be exemplified by Doroteea, who would have renounced all material goods just to have her parents by her side. She would tell them: "I don't need the money, I don't need the clothes, I don't need anything, only for you to come home" (35). Most interviewees accused the separation of causing them distress, partially ignoring the received remittances. Though their financial situation improved, they did not experience richness. Rita explains that the remittances her parents sent from Italy were no indicator of wealth, but still, outsiders had a false impression regarding this aspect:

> In high school I had the impression that everybody considered me, let's say, wealthy, rich, just because my parents were in Italy. But... which was not true, as I told you. And I couldn't care less about explaining it to them that it wasn't true, because... I didn't find it appropriate. But there was... there was a distance growing between me and the others. Even some teachers have said something of that sort and I didn't like it at all. They were deceived by the appearances, right? Like... if you have parents in Italy then you have everything [Laughs]. And it's not like that. (36)

Despite the visibility and materialization of migrant mothers' affection and care through financial or material goods, it has not been sufficient in guaranteeing the quality of care children would have desired (Bonizzoni and Leonini 2013, 467). Although these mothers do not abandon their children (Salazar Parreñas 2005, 323), their offspring may still develop a sense of loss (Pottinger 2005, in Bonizzoni and Leonini 2013, 468). Various research studies carried out in Romania illustrate that, after parents migrate, children feel nostalgic, sad, alone or unprotected. If for younger children these feelings fade away rapidly, it does not happen in the case of older children; they show signs of "fear, anger, indignation and the feeling of rejection" which cannot be ameliorated by remittances or presents (Luca and Gulei 2007, in Adumitroaie and Dafinoiu 2013, 192). In some cases these feelings may invade the rest of their lives (Irimescu et al. 2008, in Adumitroaie and Dafinoiu 2013, 192). Respondents declared that during childhood and adolescence, they often experienced these kinds of feelings. However, after reaching adulthood, they did not feel the same, having eliminated negative feelings and no longer showing signs of distress. Doroteea makes a comparison between hers and her sister's attachment to the mother, and how the separation affected the younger sister more:

> Well I had to be like . . . a mother to my sister because she was younger. She's two years younger than me. She felt much more my mother's absence, because she was much closer to her—more of a mama's girl, so to speak. For me it wasn't that... it didn't affect me as much as it affected her. (37)

To return to the feelings of loneliness or abandonment that many interviewees alluded to, it has been claimed to affect children more when the mother migrates, than when the father does. Even children receiving care from somebody else still have the same feelings (Adumitroaie and Dafinoiu 2013, 199-201). Interestingly, the interviewees talked about a contradictory attitude towards their transnational experience. On one hand they were aware that their mothers did not abandon them when leaving to Italy. This was visible through remittances, regular contact, visits, care arrangements, and a form of motherhood at a distance. But on the other hand they inevitably interiorized their mothers' absence as a form of emotional abandonment. The feelings of solitude due to long separation from the mother translated into a general state of affective abandonment. This feeling was temporarily suspended during occasional reunions, but was reinstated with the mother's next departure. The feelings of abandonment were more intense during the earlier stages of the child's life, but faded away as the child transitioned from adolescence to adulthood. Doroteea confessed that

she had the same feelings at an earlier stage in her life, but those feelings changed once she grew older:

> When you're little you don't understand certain things. Um, only after you grow up you get to realize certain things and the sacrifices they've done and all that. When you're at that point you... Um, you just feel like they abandoned you and that's it! That they just care more about the money and not about you. Those times, when you are at that age, that's what you feel. You feel that they don't care about you and they left and they just want to make money. But once you grow up... (38)

Because children have high care expectations which cannot be met in transnational contexts, the "rhetoric of blame" envelops their mothers, especially if "media reports circulate anecdotal account of children of absent parents engaging in high-risk activities" (Cinco 2009, in Tungohan 2013, 45). As a result, state officials warn mothers against migrating because it affects "family solidarity" (Salazar Parreñas 2006, in Tungohan 2013, 45). Caplan relates this kind of ideology to the 'Good Mother Myths' and the 'Bad Mother Myths' and describes them as follows:

> The Good Mother Myths set standards that no human being could ever match, such as that mothers are always, naturally, 100 percent nurturant. We have a double standard. We don't have that kind of expectations of fathers. So when, 1 percent of the time, mothers don't do what we wish they could do, we feel betrayed, because the myth is that they naturally are able to and in fact are desperate to be nurturant all the time. But when our fathers do anything nurturant, we feel that it is wonderful that Daddy did something like that. (Naturally, the answer is not to stop appreciating what fathers do but rather to be ready to give mothers equal credit when they are nurturant).
>
> The Bad Mother Myths allow us to take mothers' neutral or bad behavior— because mothers are human, so we do some bad things—or even mothers' good behavior, and transform it into further proof that mothers are bad (Caplan 2000, 239).

Always assumed to be responsible for any type of problems associated with children, migrant mothers and their actions almost become devalued and pathologized, turning them into the scapegoats that every society so much needs (Caplan 2000, 237-240). Alarmingly, Doroteea remembers how, while still in school, the school's psychologist tried to detect certain interiorized resentments by talking to children, after the following incident occurred:

> There was this one time. I remember that... I think it was... discussed... I remember that then... Yes! A child hanged himself because his parents were away in... I don't remember what country! And he, of too much yearning, hanged himself! And then they initiated this program: for psychologists to talk to the children who have migrating

parents, if I remember exactly... correctly. It was something like that. . . Because that particular child left a letter in which he said that because of that, blah, blah, blah... he can't take it anymore [incomprehensible] and ends it all. (39)

However, the children interviewed for this research project strongly resented these generalizations, offering examples that put mothers in a good light. Claudiu, for example, enjoyed all aspects of his mother's departure:

But I found no problems in that, nothing. It was OK. I mean I'm not the case where something bad, difficult or dramatic happened. And here, while I stayed with my dad, we didn't argue, there were no problems, everything was OK . . . I am one good case scenario! (40)

Most respondents, although they had high expectations from their mothers in terms of affection, did not fully reject material advantages as a form of care. They did not concentrate on financial improvements during the interviews, because they these were overshadowed by the emotional lack of the mother. But they did valorize the mothers' economic contribution. The mothers' salaries reaching even the point of 1200 euros per month enabled them to respond to their children's needs. Maia, as the other respondents, shows her appreciation of the financial investment her mother provided: "I probably wouldn't have graduated twice, or I wouldn't have gone to singing school or played the organ or taken dancing classes for twelve years or…" (41). Claudiu, on the other hand, even wanted his mother to stay longer in Italy, to become financially independent:

Frankly, it would have been good if she stayed longer. At least two years. It would have been super useful . . . From a financial point of view, in terms of them securing more or less their living for several years, you know? And they would have a backup fund, from where, in case of trouble, they could… (42)

Another outcome from their transnational experiences was the better understanding of their mothers' struggles in the process of migration. As children interiorized the separation from the family as a "deeply personal loss" (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997, 562) so did the mothers, who sacrificed daily contact with the family in order to provide financial support. Elena recounts how she felt reassured at the thought of her mother being treated nicely in Italy, but could still feel her sadness at being away from the host country:

Yes, I was, I was there… I was at the place where she worked; I met the family, a very nice family. I knew she was in good hands, that they didn't exploit her, that she felt

good in their company. She felt good in their company, but at the same time she would tell me "[Elena], you know, what's yours is yours, no matter what. You live amid strangers, you work for strangers; there's no place like home" [Laughs]. (43)

The biggest positive aspect recognized in the mother's departure has been the personal growth of the interviewees. For a determinate period of time a sense of "mutual estrangement" developed between the children and the mothers (Bonizzoni and Leonini 2013, 468). But this did not confirm the general opinion of children's delinquent behavior or educational unproductiveness (Tungohan 2013, 45). On the contrary, the interruption of the children's "going on being" (Winnicott 1965, in Phoenix and Seu 2013, 301), and their state of mind, was temporary and blamed on the stressful changes transnationalism triggered. Interviewees did not engage in any negative behavior during the separation, and even declared having striven and thriven more in their activities. Paul said that the experience will help him in the future, because he now understands certain things, and that he has learned from other people's mistakes. Andi confessed that his mother's absence turned him from a lazy boy into a diligent one, contributing to the tasks of the household. Maia felt motivated to study so as to avoid becoming a transnational mother herself:

Um, I remember that every time they left and every time I cried that I was alone and so on, I went to school and was very proud of studying and getting good grades, because I said to myself that I would do my best to stay in school, to study hard, to have a very well paid job, so as not to . . . end up in their situation; so as not to be forced to leave my children home alone, to grow up without me. And I think that this departure made me realize what I don't want to happen to my children. (44)

And Rita embraces the courage that her experience has taught her:

Very much. Um, like I said, firstly, I grew up quite fast. Um, it... it made me much more sympathetic towards others... Um, it opened my eyes, as they say, much earlier. And... and maybe because of this, afterwards, I faced things... more boldly. And change didn't scare me afterwards. I have undergone some changes lately, in recent years, and I see that I've confronted them… serenely. (45)

Evaluating the outcomes of the process of transnational motherhood, most interviewees expressed the desire not to follow the same course of action their mothers or parents did. They acknowledged the fact that they themselves have deemed the nurturing provided by their transnational mothers as "not enough" (Salazar Parreñas 2005, 333). So they envision their future next to their possible children, thus escaping

the exacerbated victimization of transnational mothers, blamed for familial problems, and of the children themselves.

3.6.   Maternal-Filial Relationships: Then and Now

Interviewees talked about the relationships with their mothers before, during and after the transnational experience. It has been interesting to note how respondents actively engaged in describing the occurring changes and how these were internalized, building up their current relationship with their mothers. All interviewees declared having been in good relations with their mothers before their migration, but once these relations became transnational, they began to suffer changes. The term 'family' implies "cross-generational bonding" and irrefutably, "deep emotional ties between opposite sexes" (Moraga 1983, 111). However, it is almost a fixed tradition to imagine the relation between mother and child as "paramount and essential" in our lives (Moraga 1983, 139). Not surprisingly, the majority of interviewees expressed their attachment to the mother. For example some of the respondents' relationship with their mothers transcended the mother-child boundaries, becoming one between two friends. Doroteea recalls the sense of comfort this gave her:

> The relationship between us and our mother was always one based on friendship, not necessarily a mother-daughter one, so to speak. I mean... I could see her as a friend, not a mother. I could talk openly to her. Um... it was... it was nice... especially since we would spend the holidays together... all the time. We were a family. (46)

The attachment to the caring figure in children's lives can be explained through John Bowlby's 'attachment theory', developed after studying the behaviors of children who had been separated from and then reunited with their parents. Bowlby characterizes 'attachment' as the system of maintaining a psychological balance between the child and the attachment figure. He further explains how the child, after a certain period of separation, fails to engage in attachment behaviors with the attachment figure—usually, the mother—after reunification, engaging in a process of defensive detachment. This could also derive in the child's inability to reenact attachment behaviors or in compulsive self-reliance (1973, 1977, 1980, 1988, in Schapiro et al. 2013, 51). Mary Ainsworth adds that the attachment behaviors tend to persist over time, even into adulthood. She also notes that, while in the presence of the mother, the children feel more secure (1970, 1978, in Schapiro et al. 2013, 51). However, Bowlby and

Ainsworth's theories were not reflected in the interviewees' behaviors towards their mothers. Although during the separation the children's affectionate behavior towards the mother was influenced, the children did not show any signs of difficulties in attachment behaviors upon reuniting with their mothers. Nor did it impede the children's level of engagement in affective behaviors later on. On the contrary, interviewees showed their enthusiasm and ease in relating to their mothers during reunification. Maia, for instance, hints at the positive feelings reinstated when reunited with her mother: "Well, it was the same, that joy of finally having someone to have dinner with, to someone to talk to. And I had that feeling of relief, of retrieval, of happiness" (47).

Mothers try to maintain the same kind of relation they had with their children before departing, making use of the "bridges of constant communication" that Salazar Parreñas has described at length (2001a, 142, in Fedyuk 2012, 284). Whether referring to phone calls, letter exchange or on-line video calls, these bridges have the function of facilitating and maintaining connections, making separation bearable, "making up for the lack of intimacy, proving love, and re-enacting a family at a distance" (Fedyuk 2012, 284). Another method of comforting the ones back home consists in mothers sending photographs from their work place, which demonstrates not only financial success but also "a way of representing and performing migration" (Andall 2000, in Fedyuk 2012, 284). Interviewees used such means of communication, which helped them to connect emotionally to their mothers. Andi confesses how in times of missing his mother, he would talk to her via Skype:

> Sometimes I went to my cousin's and talked to her on Skype. Once in a while, because she couldn't talk since she was at work. I would say... I would ask what Italy was like, what she did, what the weather was like, how things were; and she would ask me the same; I sometimes talked with dad—himself being away in Italy—and, well, what can I say? It was hard, but I talked with my mom, and it would get better! (48)

Sometimes photographs functioned as comforting instruments during the separation:

> There were times when I'd think of her, I'd lay in bed, I'd cry, I'd say, I'd say to myself: "I'd rather she stayed home and I left!" And stuff like that. Because it affected me in a way. Because I missed her. I'd look at a picture of her. I'd look and say: "Wow, there's mom!" and this and that. Because I would not see her at all in those three years, three-four years, perhaps only during summer holiday, and only then, something like

that and... It wasn't long enough to... I would look at pictures... I would think of her and start sobbing. (49)

Another factor playing a major role in the development of transnational mother-child relations is education. Though parents' strategies in childcare and childrearing vary considerably, a universal goal is that of promoting "children's successful development in a specific eco-cultural context according to their values, norms and expectations" (Moscardino et al. 2011, 12). Parents regard children as the core value of the family and in the Romanian context specifically, it has been observed that parents put great efforts in transmitting values, roles and attitudes towards the taking part in family and economic actions, meant to foster the individuals' sense of responsibility. Mihaela Robila has argued that childrearing in Romania is prone to valuing respect, modesty, obedience and control of negative emotions. Along with these, stress is laid on education, as asset in achieving social and financial security (2009, in Moscardino et al. 2011, 13). This might be a consequence of the considerable socioeconomic changes that Romania has undergonesince the fall of communism in 1989. Family functioning and childrearing had to adjust to the market economy (Robila 2010, in Moscardino et al. 2011, 13), forcing Eastern European parents to adopt an 'instrumental' approach towards the education of children, as an effect of the uncertainty of current or future economic needs (Robila and Krishnakumar 2004, in Moscardino et al. 2011, 13). This approach has been observed in some of the interviewees, confirming that their parents insisted on their education oriented towards economic stability.

For example, Doroteea admitted to resenting the economic situation in Romania, eventually deciding to migrate herself:

I just felt a bit frustrated, well, because nothing could be done in our country and she had to leave. Because of that... I don't know... I was... I can say I was a bit frustrated because... I could see that one couldn't do anything in the country, it wasn't... I couldn't see... there wasn't... any change. I heard that... more and more peers were saying that their parents went abroad for money. (50)

Interviewees also declared that their parents constantly insisted through verbal guidance, material goods and remittances that they should continue their curricular and extracurricular education. Rita, for example, describes how she continued to dedicate herself to studying, and that brought her a sense of self-empowerment and self-appreciation: "I continued to devote myself to studying because it was something that

interested me . . . Um, at the end of the ninth grade, I was awarded a prize for the best student of the high school and I got a trip to France during the summer" (51).

The values inscribed in Romanian children's behavior appear to have influenced the way the transnational maternal-filial relationships developed. During, and even before, the mother's absence, children reported having ambivalent thoughts and feelings about the relationship. Elena recalls the strange feeling she had as her mother prepared to leave:

> And, I don't know, it was so weird, because we used to be at home, all of us [Laughs]. And then, like, I don't know; although, yes, I'm old enough and was old enough when she left—at nineteen you're not a child anymore—and it was a bit strange, a bit different [Laughs]; somehow, a bit strange; to leave, to not... to... lest it should fall apart; because it didn't fall apart; just that we knew she had to leave; that was her decision; and if that was her decision, well, we had to respect that. (52)

During childhood, respondents' feelings about their transnational mothers varied from joy to hope of financial improvement, from nostalgia to intense sadness. However, the negative feelings disappeared when the two parts reunited. Generally, all respondents, after becoming adults and analyzing the whole process, favored the mothers' decision to migrate. They also declared that the mothers' absence had contributed a great deal to their development. Andi recalls how his feelings towards the situation changed with time:

> But, well, at first I didn't really miss her. Well, I didn't know what to say, because, I mean... I was fine. I felt OK at first. But, in time, I began to miss her, to call her, to think about her, and well... I tried to talk to her as much as possible. Whenever she came back during the holidays I was very happy. Every time I saw her… I was like any other child. (53)

At the opposite end, some respondents declared that the relationship with their mothers suffered important changes, with negative consequences on their well-being. Doroteea sadly recalls that what used to be a really close relationship, as between two best friends, turned into estrangement: "It wasn't like it used to be. We grew apart. Because um, I've turned in upon myself, I wouldn't talk that much, meaning I wouldn't tell her everything; I preferred keeping it all inside me" (54). Another respondent, Maia, felt that her parents still considered her a child and limited her decisions:

> As I grew older and started seeing boys or socializing more, um, somehow she felt pushed aside . . . And I thought about it and told her that all the affection that I wanted to get from them, or I felt like I needed to receive ever since they left, I tried to get it

from someone else. And I could only get it from a person of the opposite sex. And I feel that, they, I don't know... are somewhat selfish. Or they still haven't realized that I grew up. And that's pretty hard, because now our relationship is always based on: they tell me how they would want things to happen, while I make my own decisions. And I no longer agree to that. And I think all this distance and the period in which they were away, um, made us grew apart; regarding both my mom and my dad. And that's not very pleasing. (55)

Still, some respondents declared that their mothers' departure did not have a tremendous impact on their evolution. Claudiu, who was twenty-two years old, had a neutral attitude towards the transnational relationship:

No, I told you that it isn't a shock for me. And if she were to leave now, it wouldn't be something that would mark me. I am, I think, at the age when I understand that things happen and that's it. No, if I had been younger maybe it would have been a shock, maybe I would have felt the absence, maybe... But it was never really... (56)

Even Sonia, who was ten or twelve years old at that time, admitted that her mother's migration did not make a real difference on whoshe is today:

Oh, no, not necessarily. In the sense that, as long... how to say it? I could have been who I am today, somehow, even without her leaving, in the sense that... Yes, maybe a bit for my personality, yes. Because maybe it taught us to be a bit stronger, a bit more... you know? (57)

After considering their mothers' actions, the interviewees developed a new sense of themselves, their mothers and the relation between them. Their current opinions on the relationship have been shaped by the outcomes of both the mothers' and the fathers' behavior during the separation. For example, the degree of the fathers' aggressiveness and the mother's indifference and aggressiveness constitute two of the most important "predictors of psychological adjustment" to the relation (Adumitroaie and Dafinoiu 2013, 200). Thus, the more relaxed and optimistic the parents, the more bearable the separation and the more solid the relationship remained. But, apparently, the more aggressive the parents, the more hostile, low self-esteemed and emotionally unstable the children become (Adumitroaie and Dafinoiu 2013, 200). Respondents agreed with the correlation between parents' and children's behaviors, confirming even the notion that their psychological adjustment to the transnational experience developed according to the parents' dispositions. But if this had happened at one point in the past, it did not necessarily define the interviewees' present attitude. Maia explains that, although she

respected her mother, she would turn to her dad for comfort, because of her mother's severity:

> Um, I was always afraid of my mom because she was the boss around the house, and whenever I did something bad, I had to give evidence to her, and I always saw her as the authoritarian one. My father was the jester with whom I used to joke and I... I... I respect them and well, I always respected my parents, I listened to them, and tried all the time to be that good-as-gold child who always pleased her parents, so that they'd be happy and content. Usually when something bothered me, or when my mom tried to be more severe, I'd whine to my dad and then somehow the problem would be sorted out. (58)

The fathers' neglect or indifference also had a significant influence on the development of the children. Particularly, the fathers' aggressiveness and hostility marked the children's decision and definite opinion about the relationship between the two. For example Paul, though not specifying the exact manner in which his father has treated him and his brothers, admitted to detaching himself completely from his paternal figure:

> For me, my dad no longer exists! I respect him, with all due respect, but I got used to it. I have the idea that mom and dad together no longer exists. Now my father is dead to me! . . . You know, on one hand... I respect him, I never want to speak bad of him, or say something bad to him. Because, well, he gave me live, you can't blackguard your parents! But I made it a habit that dad... is dead to me! So I, for me, it's just my mom! (59)

Otilia too remembers how her father's violent behavior towards the mother influenced her own behavior in middle school:

> Perhaps at some point, but I know this, after mom came back and the scandals began and so, I was very tense. I know I once talked with X, and he told me, when we met in college, he said that: "Well, there was a time when you were very, well, angry, if someone... took your notebook off your desk, and you would say: 'No, leave it, it's mine, don't touch it!'" You know? I was very possessive. Probably, I don't know, I was so possessive because of... um, I don't know, of what was happening at home. And probably being used to the stressful environment where people were screaming all the time, I too had the tendency to scream, to protect what's mine, like that... (60)

The majority of interviewees admitted that their mothers' behavior was the most influential over their own behavior. On one hand, the mothers' absence and the change of the relationship amplified the stress factor (Boss 1999, in Schapiro et al. 2013, 56). On the other hand it influenced children's perception of the world and future,

contributing to the improvement of their self-esteem. Interviewees perceive their relationship with their mothers as having been formed by their behaviors and identities, highly influenced by one another. They have understood their mothers' reasons to migrate, and that they feel guilty about having left (Schapiro et al. 2013, 49). Now children work towards re-mapping the old relationship with their mother. They desire a new relationship, based on new values and expectations, drawing attention to the continuous construction and enacting of their identities, shaping their practices (Bathmaker 2010, 3). Rita, for instance, is glad to confess that today she and her mother "have a more mature relationship, one of mutual help, support, understanding" (61). After all that happened, she admits: "[Laughs] Um, I'd tell her that I forgive her for the difficulty in which she put me, willy-nilly. And... that I love her! [Laughs]" (62). Sonia, though she still nurtures the same mother-daughter relationship, says that: "Firstly I think I respect them more than [laughs] before" (63). Paul compares his relationship to his mother during the separation and after the reunion and says that the latter is based on active and effective communication:

> Whatever I had... when I had something to... I always talked to her and told her... I always explained to her when something wasn't right or I didn't feel right. I always talked to her, and asked her and... I was... a bit more open to her, right? So whatever problem I had, I talked to her. (64)

In some of the cases discussed, the children have been reunited with their mothers in the host country, Italy. It has been indicated that family members have to negotiate and adapt to changes in the new environment and the possible different cultural attitudes it entails (Bonizzoni 2009, 86). In the process of adaptation, age plays a significant role, as well as the duration and separation from the family (Bonizzoni and Leonini 2013, 469). The children usually integrate into the relational spectrum through schools or new friendships, but as far as the family sphere is concerned, children face a new and perhaps unknown environment (Bonizzoni and Leonini 2013, 469). Rita explains how she feared moving to Italy because of discrimination. But once she started making Italian friends, all her fears vanished:

> And then, however, all these prejudices on how Italians would have received me were soon debunked, because, right from the beginning, I met really nice people in college, and that was the beginning of a beautiful friendship, that lasted all throughout… throughout college. (65)

The same goes for Paul. His mother remarried an Italian man and even if this led to occasional misunderstandings, it did not affect the general familial ties:

> I kept thinking about having escaped all... all hardships . . . That I've gone through in Romania. . . Yeah, I really liked it. I was carefree. Afterwards, later on, insignificant problems started to appear. But, they weren't problems such as... Like it happens in every family, right? Everyone has its problems. Well, and us being a bit rude, a bit naughty, with mom's husband. Well, it happens sometimes, right? [Laughs]. (66)

The reunification or readapting process can become problematic because the relationship between children and parents is influenced as a consequence of the loss of intimacy, due to the long separation experienced (Bonizzoni 2009, 94). In this respect, Rita vividly described how the transition to Italy took place for her:

> It was weird during the first year. Yes, it was a quite important transition year. Because suddenly I felt... I woke up... living with my parents. And this one time [Laughs]... It's a... a pretty significant episode. One evening I returned home late. I went out with some friends, and someone drove me back home. When I walked in the house, it was perhaps after midnight, it wasn't very late [Laughs] and my mom opened the door and started questioning me: "Where have you been? Who drove you home?" [Laughs] and I was taken aback, because I thought... I said to myself something like: "Oops, who's asking me? Why is she asking me?" [Laughs]. (67)

The negative aspects that follow family reunification hinder the maternal-filial relationship only temporarily. The interviewees declared that after a period of time, the relationships followed a different course, consolidating themselves in a positive manner. This can also be illustrated by Doroteea, who began feeling hopeful again about the relationship between her and her mother, after migrating to Italy. She says: "I mean, slowly, we started to become what we once were. We talk, we tell each other everything, we chat; simply as two girl friends" (68). This is valid for most interviewees who declared that their relationships with their mothers are improving.

3.7.   Interviewees as Observers and Interpreters

During the nine interviews on life narratives, the individuals were summoned to and inevitably did change their status from that of mere respondents to that of storytellers, observers, and above all, interpreters. As a result, in the ambiguous history and contextualization of transnational motherhood, the interviewees, by referring to specific

memories, have been able to construct the past in a way that reflects "their present need for meaning" (Ang 2001, 28). By distancing from themselves, for one's subjectivity is never equated with the speaking position one occupies at a particular moment, respondents practiced what Spivak called "speaking as" (1990, 60, in Ang 2001, 24). Having been positioned multiply in relation to their stories, respondents have automatically become co-producers of the narratives. They have been observers of their own environments and of themselves, by retelling and reevaluating past events, and of their maternal referent in the experience (Frankenberg 1993, 40). Encouraged to reevaluate their positions, interviewees have witnessed the implementation of a key component in a new kind of research.

Each interviewee was able to make assumptions according to their own experience. But rather than essentializing a particular discourse, they enabled multiple angles of interpretation. When asked whether they knew of any general prejudices connected to both the parents and the children of transnationalism, respondents found two perspectives standing out, one positive and one negative, according to the degree of the children's development. Maia thinks that:

> Usually, if that child doesn't become a junkie or a drunk or the girl doesn't gain a certain reputation, um, it is believed that the parents have done a good job and it was good they left because they could offer the child a better future. If the child ends up worse, everybody criticizes and accuses. Um, I think in our country, leaving one's home is regarded with disfavor because it's like making the commitment to have a baby, and then you somewhat leave it to its fate. And then everyone misjudges. (69)

Paul, on the other hand, had felt the victimizing opinion of the majority, which confirms the idea that negative outcomes can occur:

> Yes, there's no reason for one to say "Poor thing! They left you". But when certain cases... there are times when parents split up and begin to be... [the children] to be left with only one parent, then yes, one can say: "Look, those poor kids, were left alone and have no mother, or no father!" You know? (70)

Another important element that conveyed real-life meaning to the interviews is represented in the emotions that abounded in the interviewees' narrations. These are an intrinsic aspect of everyday life and crucial in the exploration of every emotional journey past and present events entail. Emotions are the "embodied and mindful phenomena that partially shape, and are shaped by our interactions with the people, places and politics that make up our unique, personal geographies" (Davidson and

Bondi 2004, 373, in Ryan 2008, 300). On the one hand they become the "glue" that brings people together, and on the other, they might "drive people apart" (Turner and Stets 2005, 1, in Ryan 2008, 300). But an almost ambivalent feature is triggered in using them, for emotions not only constitute a topic of research, they also have a strong impact on the research experience (Stanley and Wise 1993, in Ryan 2008, 309). Some may argue that emotions distort the material of research, making it unfit for academic levels. However, they should be taken into consideration in the social and humanistic research context, because to neglect emotions would mean to eliminate the essential components that form social relations (Ryan 2008, 300).

The invitation to observe and interpret their behaviors and feelings gave respondents the opportunity to realize the positive outcomes of the transnational process. Accepting the emotions that abound in retelling of events helps children to interpret events for the benefit of their present state of mind. Elena confessed to feeling "a bit nostalgic" (71) after remembering what had occurred while her mother was away, but this did not stop her from thinking clearly about the events: "I answered as I felt to, given that, I told you, our case was a bit undemonstrative, we weren't that attached" (72). Rita's evaluation of the whole occurrence and its outcomes made her feel happy about herself:

> It's almost absurd, but I feel... I feel quite happy! Because, well, talking about this argument, seeing the evolution it had, and... how much it meant for me and how... I realize that I could have as well elaborated all these things in a different way; probably negatively. Then seeing that even today I'm… um, standing on my own, I'm complacent, I have a history which... which I like because it's mine. It's like that and I cannot change it and I don't even want to change it. I try to take everything good it gave me. Oh, and I feel so, um... happy! (73)

By debunking the idea that emotions are not drawbacks, interviewees fully expressed their feelings. Thinking back on their experiences, respondents encountered several associations between their emotions and past events. Perhaps unconsciously, their emotional reactions might conceal something that cannot yet be articulated or even acknowledged in a particular social interplay. As Renato Rosaldo has argued, one's life experiences facilitate and also obstruct certain types of understanding; perhaps one way of acknowledging a new set of meanings is for respondents to come in contact with the recorded materials (1989, in Ryan 2008, 310). In this respect, it was fascinating to see how interviewees reacted vis-à-vis certain questions in the interview, and it would be

even more fascinating to register their reactions after they have engaged reflexively with the transcribed interviews. One example to illustrate this reflexive mechanism can be found in Rita's accounts of her feelings in relation to her mother:

> Lately I have managed to look deep inside myself on... on everything the past gave me, in my relationship with her, right? Um, everything I said so far, that as she left, that I was alone, it also gave way inside of me to a sort of grief, to... I don't know if we have a term... it's not just grief. It's a sort of... I don't know, a feeling... I can think of it in Italian because... You speak Italian, right? . . . Rabbia. Collera . . . Of frustration, something like that. Yes, exactly, something like that. And I had all these feelings towards her because it wasn't easy, because I felt abandoned, alone... Um, growing up, I managed to work out all these feelings and understand her. Because I realize why all of this has happened. All of it [Laughs]. (74)

Confronting past events, respondents once again had the chance to re-conceptualize their effects. The acknowledgment of emotions as valid for research goes hand in hand with the concept of autonomy that the interviewees acquired though their life narratives. Autonomy targets two sets of recipients: the interviewees themselves, and their mothers. Autonomy can be understood as being "fundamentally about capabilities, specifically about the ability to assess one's options, reflect critically about them, and make choices that allow one to exert some control over one's life" (Hirschmann 2003, 36, in Bastia 2013, 163). The interviewees declared feeling motivated to take their lives into their own hands, up to a point. Regardless of still being financially dependent on their parents, they felt motivated to make their own decisions about events in their lives. Claudiu feels that the generation gap between him and his mother influences their relationship: ". . . we rarely have something in common… and well, each minds their own business" (75). Maia for example, resents her mother's not supporting her morally:

> Um, I'd appreciate her not telling me every time I wanted to do something, in a way, not threatening me by saying: "You'll see one day when you have your own kids what it will be like and how hard it'll be, and then you'll actually see what I'm going through now!" And of course I'll have, and every mother at one point has difficult moments with her kids... I don't know. Basically I'd like to have more support from her in the decisions I take. Instead of putting a spoke in my wheels or of telling me that it won't work, that it won't be any good, that I'll realize how hard it will be and take her views. I want her to tell me: "Yes, it will be difficult! I'll stand by your side! I hope you succeed!" (76)

Although some have criticized the concept of autonomy as hinting at "androcentric notions of atomized, individualized behavior and devaluing relatedness, interdependence and social aspects of people's lives" (Bastia 2012, 162), the analysis of the interviews reveals this is not the case. The interviewees did interpret their mothers' decision of migrating as one way of proving autonomy, but this was a consequence of migrating for financial reasons. The interviewees stated they knew and felt that their mothers would not have chosen to migrate if their economic situation had been different. Sonia says that the only motivation for somebody to leave their countries would be that of financial improvement: "Obviously, the most common reasons for which everybody leaves to a foreign country, of course, is to work, for money, for... and that's the reason I myself left, hoping for a better life, for other possibilities, of course. We know very well what the situation in Romania is . . ." (77). Also, migration did not completely alter the mother-child relationships, as Bastia mentioned (2012, 162). For instance, Elena favors her mother's decision to have migrated and internalized it as a gesture that should belong to the individual alone, and that should be respected and accepted. She says:

> Honestly we always encouraged each other to follow our hearts, to do what we wanted and what we believed was good, what was for our own good. And if I were to tell her something I'd tell her that if that was her wish, if that was what she felt like doing, to do it, to follow her heart. [Laughs] Because she knows and I know that this won't last much longer and then she'd be coming back and be with us, and enjoy the time with her children, and of course, her grandchildren [Laughs]. (78)

Combining her feelings about the mother's decision and the thorough analysis of her mother's reasons to migrate, Elena was able to understand better the problematizations the process entailed, and moreover to give her mother the space to effectuate her actions.

Migration takes place within a context of obvious gender inequalities, in which the dominant ideology still assigns women the principal reproductive role as mothers (Bastia 2013, 164). However, women still continue to migrate, as a direct response to market or welfare strategies (Mitchell et al. 2003, in Bastia 2013, 163). Mothers become self-reliant by detaching themselves from "normative expectations of gendered behavior" and taking "a step towards achieving gender equality" (Bastia 2013, 162). Although mothers challenge patriarchal control, it has been observed that migration does not necessarily entail freedom. The choices mothers have made work against their

supposed autonomy, "as they negotiate the shouldering of increased responsibilities in a context of market liberalization" (Bastia 2013, 163). By taking up care or domestic work abroad, mothers reinforce their connection to the domestic sphere. Claudiu explains how his mother even enjoyed caring for others: "But no, she always liked to look after kids, even if they weren't hers. For this [Italian] woman at least, she took care of all her children" (79). This illustrates that in order to care for their children back home mothers have to reenter the same circle of gender norms and roles that they once left. Also, women's migration and employment in the care work sector "produced new divisions between women" (Lyon 2006, 222). These distinctions were reflected in the domestic work itself: native Italian workers dominate the more professionalized fields, whereas migrants do the menial works in the house, allowing Italian mothers to enjoy more quality time with their children. Claudiu declared that the Italian female employer might have envied his mother:

> Well, they wanted her back afterwards, but she didn't want to go anymore. I don't know, I told you, why she left. Probably, that one [the Italian lady] was jealous of her or something. Because the Italian man was praising her all the time. Like: "Look how she works", and so on. The Italian man's wife was rather smug; she didn't fancy working, because she never had a job. (80)

Even if aware that his mother was paid to do care and domestic work, he could figure out that gender discrepancies emerged: "Yes, but well, she [the Italian lady] envied her . . . Maybe that's why there were some tensions" (81).

The interviewees' engagement with the notion of family and the consequences of its newly acquired transnational character is also important. Transnational families are shaped by various interconnected identities and it is therefore impossible to fix certain qualities that would define them (Phoenix and Seu 2013, 302). Even though different children—sons or daughters—engage differently with their parental referents, they develop subjectivities while remaining both connected, and separated from the mother's subjectivities (Van Mens-Verhulst 1993a, 1993b, in Phoenix and Seu 2013, 300). Therefore children's subjectivities should not be taken for granted, for transnational families involve both groups of generations. Respondents admitted to vacillating between gratitude towards their mothers'efforts put in their education and the impulses of accusation for not providing an adequate emotional support (Salazar Parreñas 2010, in Bonizzoni and Leonini 2013, 483). Aware that the intention of the mothers was to perform the same moral and emotional role from afar, interviewees

declared having derived the ability to grow on a personal level, and that over time they have rebuilt the once-lost relationship with their mothers, basing it on mutual knowledge, trust, affection and intimacy (Bonizzoni and Leonini 2013, 485-487). Andi's words reflect this ongoing realization: "I can say that without her departure… I can say that . . . I have a different kind of thinking now" (82). To have been able to think about the mechanisms and effects of transnationalism is perhaps one of the greatest achievements of the interviewees, who have minutely observed and interpreted the events.

3.8. The Researcher's Contribution

Turning to the subjective part of this project, the researcher herself becomes an object of study. Therefore the use of 'I' will invade the flow of the narrative and argumentation of this subchapter. In the process of data gathering, as well as in the reviewing of the existent literature on transnational motherhood and its outcomes, it has dawned on me that writing about my own story in the aforementioned context becomes almost therapeutic. It becomes a state of holistic realization that coming forward with my story alludes to the idea of having the 'best of both worlds', mentioned in the title of the chapter. On the one hand my experience counts as material for the analysis, situating myself among the other respondents. On the other hand, being a researcher offers me a somehow privileged position from which to stand and from which to be able to interpret what I have experienced. However, I will not use this privilege in distorting possible results, nor to overshadow the other life narratives.

The decision to include my story in the analysis has sometimes been placed under the sign of hesitation, because I doubted whether such a subjective addition would count as academic. That is why my part of experience will be interpreted in parallel or as a response to my sister's narrative, interview no. 2. This has proved to be a risk worth taking. Although aware of running the risk of being 'too' autobiographical, or coming across as "self-indulgent or narcissistic, of restoring personal experience as a privileged source of authority" (Ang 2001, 23), the act of 'speaking' for and through this thesis could not be stopped. Hopefully, my story will not prove itself to be "unamendable" (Ang 2001, 23). Hall claims that, usually, autobiography is perceived as "seizing the authority of authenticity" (1992, 277, in Ang 2001, 23). However, in order

not to become authoritative, one must therefore "speak autobiographically" (Ang 2001, 23).

To further add value to the act of speaking autobiographically, I can draw on Gunn's assertion that autobiography is conceived as "the cultural act of self reading", not necessarily as "the private act of self writing" (1982, 8, in Ang 2001, 23). Thus, what is at stake in this kind of autobiographical discourse is not the condition of authenticity, but rather "the subject's location in a world through an active interpretation of experiences that one calls one's own" (Ang 2001, 23-24). It is then particularly important that I position myself reflexively in "worldly" contexts—history and culture (Ang 2001, 24). My sister said she rarely though about what happened, and that past events no longer have a power over her: "I mean, if they happened, it's all gone now, I moved on. No, I never looked back, to analyze, and... I was glad they were gone, I left them behind" (83). She did not consider this type of discussions necessary, productive, or life-changing. However, I tend to think otherwise. There were so many words I could not utter out loud at an earlier age, words that accumulated a negative energy inside me. I would remember things. I would get angry. I would cry myself to sleep. So this project seemed like an opportunity to feel connected to other such 'children' who might have felt the same.

Along with Ang, I too consider autobiography a "more or less deliberate, rhetorical construction of a 'self' for public, not private purposes" (2001, 24). To a certain extent the strategically displayed self is a "fabricated performance" (Ang 2001, 24), whose identity can be beneficial in certain contexts. Therefore it can be argued that the politics of the autobiographical discourse is determined by the quality of the usefulness that the very identity embodies (Ang 2001, 24). Armed with this self-empowering privilege of both a researcher and direct experiencer of a transnational relationship with my mother, I intend to "mobilize the autobiographic" (Ang 2001, 24). Though the position from which I speak is fragile, I intend to rescue notions of experience and emotion from the overgeneralization of transnational phenomena (Ang 2001, 24). Though in recent years the migration studies on the families left behind have flourished, I sense that the existent literature on the children specifically has been written in their absence.

I also sense that my recalling of the events, or analysis of the events, may have been distorted, or exacerbated, because of the intensity of emotions implied. The

conversation I had with my sister, which was our first 'serious' talk, revealed things about me that I did not realize then, nor now. For example, she described me as follows:

> Well, you were very... recalcitrant. No one could reach out to you, talk to you, get close to you. You wouldn't let me sleep in the same bed with you. I know that for a long time I slept in dad's bed, because you wouldn't let me in your bed. (84)

I have to admit that I was taken aback, because I did not necessarily see myself that way. Perhaps I concentrated too much on observing others, and not observing me. Maybe she is right. I do remember feeling afraid, though. And this feeling, like all other negative feelings in my life probably, was triggered by my father's aggressive behavior. When I was a child, twelve-thirteen years old, my mother migrated to Italy and left us with our father. I remember perfectly the day she left. It was a summer day, in the afternoon, and we had to walk her to the train station. But on the way I pretended my tummy ached and returned home and cried like a baby. I could not stand the thought of her leaving. So I did not see her leaving. But I hoped time would fly by and she would be back. And I tried to survive until her return. My sister describes how almost mechanically, she tried to go on:

> Right then, immediately after she boarded the train and the train left, I know we went back through the park, as the road took us. And I began, I think, to cry. And I don't know if dad hugged me or not, and I said: "But she'll be back soon, right?" and I don't know if he said anything back. I know we got in front of the town hall and there was a wedding, and he said: "Let's go watch the bride!" . . . And we stayed there until the bride showed up and then we went upstairs, home, and everything was normal, as if mom was on an afternoon shift and wasn't home. I mean, that kind of atmosphere, when she was on an afternoon shift. (85)

So I think we both wanted to deceive or comfort ourselves that she would be back in a couple of hours. But in little over one year my father contributed to the discourse of victimization of children with transnational mothers. While I was a child, I belonged to the category of the victimized. And it is funny how our mother was still to blame. As my sister described, our mother was forced to come back not because we could not bear the separation, but because our father's negligence and violence left her no other option:

> Once I was home alone and I picked up the phone, and I started crying, and saying: "Mommy, come home! Mommy, come home!" And she said: "Why?" And I said: "Come home because dad treats us very badly!" And in that instant dad came in through the door and I hung up, because I didn't want him to know who I was talking to,

because he didn't let us talk to her. And I was crying. And he started saying: "Who are you talking to?" And I didn't want to tell him. And I kept silent. And I didn't want to tell him. And then he threatened to beat me if I didn't tell him. And then I told him that I talked to mom and he asked me: "What did you tell her?" He wanted to know what I told her at all costs because he knew how he actually treated us, but he didn't want anybody to know. He wanted people around us to believe that everything went on perfectly with us; even if mom's gone, he's doing fine with two kids, he can even do better alone with two kids, than the two of them together, and us. And, he forced me to tell him everything I talked to her. And I told him: "I told her that you treat us badly, and I told her to come home!" That's what I told him. (86)

I was speechless after this. I did not know about the happening. I did not know what to say to her. So I moved on to the next question.

Tillie Olsen once wrote that "most of what has been, or is, between mothers, daughters, and in motherhood, in daughterhood, has never been recorded, nor written with comprehension in our own voices, out of our own lives and truths" (1984, 275). To further sustain this, I can refer to Edward Said who spoke about the disparities between one's experience and the representation of that subject, and cautioned that in order to be able to produce knowledge one has to have the "power to be there" ("Edward Said on Orientalism" 2012). In this sense, my intention to produce a grain of knowledge in the ongoing debate on transnational families has to stem from the subjective. 'Having been there' encourages me to think that my experience has not been deceptive or distorted. Therefore I will "make myself" (Phoenix and Seu 2013, 304) through my life narrative, relying on my memories. These memories do not simply re-present the past, but in parallel construct that past and identities (Phoenix and Seu 2013, 304). What I remember depends much on the way events fit with the constructed experience and life narrative, and the manners in which I "refashion" myself via those memories (Polkinghorne 1988, in Phoenix and Seu 2013, 304).

Every time I read the nine stories, I see a part of myself reflecting itself back at me. Reflecting itself in multiple angles that pertain to multiple memories. In a way I am the other nine stories, the other nine children. I have felt alone, sad, frustrated, depressed, afraid, insecure, angry, unprotected and victimized. But I have also felt hopeful, joyful, loved, motivated, secure, confident, enthusiastic, encouraged and happy. The first series of feelings marked every day of my first separation from my mother. I was a child. The second series of emotions abounded in my second separation from my mother. I was seventeen years old and the separation has not ended until this

day. I guess age, maturity and activities influence one's perception over his or her transnational relationship with his or her mother. My sister said that, once she grew up, she could put it all behind:

> I think I'm really OK from this point of view. There's nothing to retain me, to make me think about what happened. I'm very used to her being gone and no, it no longer has any influence over me like the time I was a kid. I have a totally different life. I'm busy all the time. I don't have time to think about it. And I got used to it. (87)

However, we cannot forget the benefits the transnational phenomenon brought us, from food on our tables to the privilege of studying. Like my sister, who said that "If I am to think about it, to take it step by step, and to analyze all events, and to weigh them, I think that many things I have are because she had gone and she had made this sacrifice for us, and yes, in a way, yes, indeed it's good" (88), I owe everything to my mother. I do not want to think about whether my life would have been different if she had not left, because I am glad things happened the way they did. The power to be here today and briefly mention these things, to tell you—you readers—everything you need to know. I have seen and known myself, my sister and my mother, develop through this complex process of transnationalism. Our mother-daughter relationship has been fed by communication across kilometres and through euros and packages with food. Our identities were born from the telepathic endurance and invisible contacts. And today, as always, our relationship is one of mutual empowerment. We thank each other for believing and never letting go. It is said that it is the events in our lives that shape us, but it is the choices we make that define us. Now my dream would be the exact same thing my my mother dreamt for us when she decided to migrate: to offer her a better future. But perhaps not from a distance.

Conclusion

The vividness and naturalness of each experience told for this research has brought the debate around the concepts of transnational motherhood, and transnational childhood respectively, closer to both academic and non-academic audiences, facilitating the understanding of this phenomenon. Various findings have stemmed from the analysis of the interviews, both as contradictions and confirmations of existent theories. Among the first observations was the interviewees' enthusiasm and interest to engage with the topic of the research by recounting and developing on their experience of their transnational relationship with their mothers working in Italy. Respondents showed great openness in the opportunity to talk about themselves and the consequences of their mothers' migration on their development, and even desired to be informed on the results of this project. Most of the respondents agreed that taking part in the discussion had made them rethink their position on the matter. However, not all deducted significant meaning from their retelling of their stories, apart from a general feeling of relief; some of them believed that participating in this sort of discussions is not highly necessary, and that it would not help them in any particular way in the future.

Memories also played an important role in the interviewees' stories. On the one hand they could select and use specific memories in their descriptions, be them from childhood or adolescence, debunking the myth that children are not reliable sources. On the other hand they could re-evaluate those memories through their present mindset, and thus be able to give a different meaning to their or their mothers' actions. These re-interpretations and new and distinct opinions helped in producing non-essentialist characterizations of both transnational mothers and children. Moreover, memories enabled the telling of children's experiences in the form of stories. Providing their stories, the subjects embarked in a non-traditional way of doing research. Also, by sequencing and prioritizing, the interviewees produced life narratives and acquired a narrative identity which allowed them to actively engage with their 'text'. Their current identities, respondents declared, have been largely shaped by their transnational relationship with their mothers.

The exposition of the children's opinion on the phenomenon has drawn attention to the fact that the concept of transnational motherhood has never been a one-way process. It implies the interdependency of mothers and children, but in some cases other third parties have to be considered: the father, the extended kin, or other substitute

carers that are mainly missing from the picture. Interviewees constantly related to the persons they were left with, and this showed that a good relationship with the carer influenced their thinking on the prospects of their relationship with their mothers. The feelings of solitude, desolation or fear intensified if the father's behavior in particular was negative, and triggered their urgent desire of reunification with their mothers. However, it should be observed that the respondents who experienced the phenomenon at an early age wished to be reunited with their mothers, irrespective of the carer's behavior or of the material benefits.

Understandably, the age of the child at the moment of their mother's absence, influenced greatly their opinion on this aspect. The respondents who were children or adolescents at the time of the experience constantly wanted to be reunited with their mothers. However, the respondents who were young adults at the time of the experience did not perceive the absence as negative. At the same time, the interviewees' opinions on the outcomes of the transnational experience proved negative when at an earlier age. But after growing up and having taken into consideration both advantages and disadvantages, they favored their mothers' decision to migrate. In clarifying the discrepancies in their positions, as children and as adults, the respondents helped in conveying a new meaning to the concept of transnational families. Aware that society perceives transnational families in a negative light, with parents often accused of neglecting their children, the interviewees tackled general assumptions that lead to the essentialization of the children as victims of the transnational process. They mainly contradicted the assumptions, but they also confirmed the idea of victimization in various episodes, referring both to the feelings of solitude they felt and the hardships endured due to their fathers' violent behaviors.

The effects of parental migration on the development of children have been clarified through the life narratives of the nine subjects. Each individual case was characterized by different internal and external contexts and each respondent reacted to different stressors. However, many common traits could be observed within all stories. Interviewees declared that the reason behind their mothers' migration to Italy has been that of financial difficulties. At first they favored the idea, but soon started to feel the mother's both physical and emotional absence, and wished their mothers had not migrated. Their financial situation indeed did improve, many of the respondents recalling the monthly flux of remittances from their mothers. In spite of this improvement, the interviewees drew attention to the fact that they did not get

considerably richer, despite the outsiders' impression. According to some stories, this false impression had created certain differences between them and their peers.

All interviewees maintained regular contact with their mothers and preserved a certain level of intimacy and affection. However, they declared that the distance during the experience only worsened their relationship. Some had developed a relationship of close friendship with their mothers, which gradually disappeared due to the separation. But this type of relationship has been revived step by step after the two parts reunited. In the case of the young adults experiencing the phenomenon, the relation was fairly the same. After the interviewees reached adulthood, the relationship between them and their mothers were mainly positively described, including more respect and appreciation, frequent contact and open communication. Yet in some cases the relationship was shown as problematic because of the mother's incapacity to perceive the child as an adult with full decision-making abilities. Some inhibiting traits could be observed in the mother's behavior towards the young adult, and the child's resentment was felt in the tone of voice during the interview.

Another common characteristic stemming from the interviews was the positive impact the mothers' migration had on the development of children. Most of the respondents, after analyzing their overall experience, declared that their mothers' departure contributed greatly to who they were presently as persons. They were (self-) motivated both financially and morally to overcome the pain caused by the separation, and to concentrate on their education and self-education. All interviewees spoke about the enhanced sense of responsibility that they acquired, along with that of diligence. The transnational experience made them grow more confident and powerful in overcoming possible obstacles. And upon analyzing their own stories, interviewees were able to better understand their mothers' decisions and to accept them. They rethought the feelings of abandonment that the separation instilled in them and conveyed new meanings to those particular feelings. In this sense, their opinions changed mainly after reaching adulthood and after having interiorized all outcomes. Yet some respondents believed that their mothers' absence did not make a great difference on their progress. They did feel they were helped more, but not in a decisive manner. They claimed they would have managed even without their mothers' leaving to Italy.

The fear of repeating the same trajectory as their mothers was evident in the majority of life narratives. Storytellers said to have understood their mothers' decision to migrate and showed their appreciation for their sacrifice, but confessed that they

would have never taken the same decision. Some even confessed that, after witnessing the extreme emotional privations due to the separation, they would have preferred to endure the same financial difficulties but to have their mothers by their side. The attachment of the respondents to the mother has been stronger than to the father, this exacerbating the importance of a maternal figure still present in the domestic sphere. The subjects insisted in having deliberately decided to concentrate on their studies so as to avoid experiencing the same migratory pattern. Other respondents, again those who experienced the phenomenon at an older age, accepted the mother's departure and all associated consequences, and even encouraged the mother to migrate. On the one hand they visualized the importance of financial stability and support, and on the other they perceived this aspect as empowering for the mother who was able to be financially independent.

An important outcome of this project has been to motivate interviewees to become active observers and interpreters in the process of theory formation around the concept of transnational families and its consequences specifically on the children. This has been done through the questions asked by the researcher and the insistence to develop on the feelings issued from certain episodes in children's transnational experiences. Encouraging the subjective, the interviews produced different kinds of reactions. Aware that each story is different, the subjects also concluded that producing knowledge about the phenomenon should start from the 'inside'. One example to illustrate this has been the tackling of the condemnation of transnational mothers as 'bad' mothers. Respondents engaged in the debate about what constitutes good mothering in transnational terms by defending their mothers' integrity. Providing detailed real-life experiences and analyzing them at the same time, interviewees have gauged negative criticism, distancing their mothers from the negative models often portrayed in the media or culture. As a result, they have helped to create new definitions of mothering standards that go beyond the fixations of traditional definitions.

The researcher's contribution to the debate has been made visible both in the analysis of the available data and in the inclusion of her own experience as a transnational child. By finding a common link to the other subjects, I played with the idea of inseparability between the subject and object of research. On the one hand this has facilitated the flow of discussion of the other interviewees by placing myself on the same level as the respondents. On the other hand, it lessened the power differentials that might have aggravated the exchange of information. Still aware of the possible

disconnections appearing along the conducted interviews and the privileged position acquired, I chose to engage actively in the discussion, not just by urging respondents to develop more on their experiences, but by intervening with my own answers and opinions, with my own experience and interpretations. So by integrating the researcher's subjective evaluations next to the respondents', a new way of doing qualitative research has been brought to the public's attention. Therefore the yet solid uni-dimensionality of the transnational motherhood and childhood phenomena can be understood from a different perspective, that of the children's.

The research on maternal-filial interaction in transnational contexts is still limited. Once again this calls for the necessity to find new ways in developing methodologies for children with transnational mothers to deal with their experiences and the emerging consequences. One way to do so has been to bring forward the transnational children themselves, along with their diversified stories and opinions. Another way has been to integrate the researcher's own story to the discussion, allowing for subjective evaluations to occupy a scientific position. Through these processes, a greater openness towards accepting the plurality of migrant mothers' care arrangements and their new ways of doing motherhood has been put forward. But more importantly, the project has managed to give space to the recipients of this labor migration mechanism, the children themselves. New discourses dealing with family ties and organizations triggered by the process of transnational motherhood have been instituted through the children's declarations. Under the form of life narratives, the data has been made understandable to various kinds of readers.

References

Adumitroaie, Elena and Ion Dafinoiu. 2013. "Perception of Parental Rejection in Children Left Behind by Migrant Parents". *Revista de Cercetare şi Intervenţie Socială* 42: 191-203. http://rcis.ro/images/documente/rcis42_10.pdf.

Ainsworth, Mary and Silvia Bell. 1970. "Attachment, Exploration and Separation: Illustrated by the Behavior of One-year-olds in a Strange Situation". *Child Development 41* (1): 49-67.

Ainsworth, Mary, Mary Blehar, Everett Waters and Sally Wall. 1978. *Patterns of Attachment: a Psychological Study of the Strange Situation*. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Alvesson, Mats and Kaj Sköldberg. 2000. *Reflexive Methodology: New Vistas for Qualitative Research*. London: Sage.

Andall, Jacqueline. 2000. *Gender, Migration and Domestic Service: The Politics of Black Women in Italy*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Ang, Ien. 2001. "On not Speaking Chinese. Diasporic Identifications and Postmodern Ethnicity". In *On not Speaking Chinese. Living Between Asia and the West*. London and New York: Routledge: 21-36.

Asis, Maruja, Shirlena Huang and Brenda Yeoh. 2004. "When the Light of the Home is Abroad; Unskilled Female Migration and the Filipino Family". *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 25: 198-215.

Baldassar, Loretta. 2007. "Transnational Families and the Provision of Moral and Emotional Support: the Relationship between Truth and Distance". *Identities* 14 (4): 385-409.

Bastia, Tanja. 2013. "'I'm Going, with or without You'": Autonomy in Bolivian Transnational Migrations". *Gender, Place and Culture: A journal of Feminist Geography* 20 (2): 160-177. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2011.649354.

Bathmaker, Anne-Marie. 2010. "Introduction". In *Exploring Learning, Identity and Power through Life History and Narrative Research*. Edited by Ann-Marie Bathmaker and Penelope Harnett. London and New York: Routledge. 1-10.

Bailey, Kenneth D. 1994. "Survey Sampling". In *Methods of Social Research* (4th edition). New York: The Free Press. 81-103.

Bieste, Gert, Phil Hodkinson and Ivor Goodson. 2005. "Combining Life History and Life-Course Approaches in Researching Lifelong Learning: some

Methodological Observations from the 'Learning Lives' project". Paper presented at the TLRP Research Capacity Building Networks Methods and Methodologies in Teaching and Learning Research in Cardiff, 22 February 2005. http://www.tlrp.org/dpace/retrieve/1369/EX_GB_PH_IG_TLRP+conference+Cardiff_Feb_2005+paper.doc.

Bondi, Liz. 2005. *Gender and the Reality of Cities: Embodied Identities, Social Relations and Performativities*. Online papers archived by the Institute of Geography, School of Geosciences, University of Edinburgh. 1-18.

Bonizzoni, Paola. 2009. "Living Together Again: Families Surviving Italian Immigration Policies". *International Review of Sociology* 19 (1): 83-101. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03906700802613954.

Bonizzoni, Paola and Luisa Leonini. 2013. "Shifting Geographical Configurations in Migrant Families: Narratives of Children Reunited with their Mothers in Italy". *Comparative Population Studies* 38 (2): 465-498. http://www.comparativepopulationstudies.de/index.php/CpoS/article/view/116/131.

Boss, Pauline. 1999. *Ambiguous Loss: Learning to Live with Unresolved Grief*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Bowlby, John. 1970. *Attachment and Loss: Loss, Sadness and Depression*, vol. 3. New York: Basic Books.

—. 1973. *Attachment and Loss: Separation and Anger*, vol.2. New York: Basic Books.

—. 1977 (Fall). "The Making and Breaking of Affection Bonds. I. Aetiology and Psychopathology in the Light of Attachment Theory. An expanded version of the Fiftieth Maudsley Lecture, delivered before the Royal College of Psychiatrists." *British Journal of Psychiatry* (130): 201-210.

—. 1988. *A Secure Base: Parent Child Attachment and Healthy Human Development*. New York: Basic Books.

Bränström Öhman, Annelie. 2012. "Leaks and Leftovers. Reflections on the Practice and Politics of Style in Feminist Academic Writing". In *Emergent Writing Methodologies in Feminist Studies*. Edited by Mona Livholts. London and New York: Routledge. 27-40.

Bruner, Jerome. 1990. *Acts of Meaning*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Caplan, Paula. 2000. "Don't Blame Mother: Then and Now". In *Mothers and Daughters: Connection, Empowerment, & Transformation*. Edited by Andrea O'Reilly and Sharon Abbey. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield: 237-245.

Chant, Sylvia. 1992. *Gender and Migration in Developing Countries*. London: Belhaven.

Chase, Susan E. 2005. "Narrative Inquiry: Multiple Lenses, Approaches, Voices". *In The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Edited by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (3rd edition). London: Sage: 651-680.

Cinco, Maricar. 2009. "NGO Rebuilts OFW Families". *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, March 15.

Davidson, Joyce and Liz Bondi. 2004. "Spatializing Affect: Affecting Space: An Introduction". *Gender and Culture* 11 (3): 373-374.

"Edward Said on Orientalism". 2012. YouTube Video, 40:32, from an interview with Edward Said on *Orientalism*, directed by Sut Jhally in 1998, for MEF Catalog (The Media Education Formation). Posted by "Palestine Diary". October 28, 2012. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fVC8EYd_Z_g.

Ehrenreich, Barbara and Arlie Russell Hochschild. 2004. "Introduction". In *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy*. Edited by Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Russell Hochschild. New York: Owl Books. 21-33.

Erel, Umut. 2012. "Engendering Transnational Space: Migrant Mothers as Cultural Currency Speculators". *European Journal of Women's Studies* 19 (4): 460-474. http://ejw.sagepub.com/content/19/4/460.

Escriva, Angeles and Emmeline Skinner. 2008. "Domestic Work and Transnational Care Chains in Spain". In *Migration and Domestic Work. A European Perspective on a Global Theme*. Edited by Helma Lutz. Hampshire: Ashgate. 113-126.

Falicov, Celia Jaes. 2005. "Emotional Transnationalism and Family Identities". *Family Process* 44 (4): 339-406.

Fedyuk, Olena. 2012. "Images of Transnational Motherhood: The Role of Photographs in Measuring Time and Maintaining Connections between Ukraine and Italy". *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 38 (2): 279-300. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2012.646422.

Fenstermaker, Sarah and Candace West, eds. 2002. *Doing Gender, Doing Difference: Inequality, Power and Institutional Change*. New York: Routledge.

Fernandez-Borrero, Manuela A., Pablo Alvarez-Perez and Octavio Vazquez-Aguado. 2013. "Building Families in a Migration Context. Romanians in Spain 2000-2001". *Revista de Cercetare şi Intervenţie Socială* 42: 166-190. http://rcis.ro/images/documente/rcis42_09.pdf.

Flyvbjerg, Bent. 2006. "Five Misunderstandings about Case-Study Research". *Qualitative Inquiry* 12 (2): 219-245.

Frankenberg, Ruth. 1993. "White on White: The Interviewees and the Method". In *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness*. Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press. 22-41.

Fraser, Nancy. 1989. "Women, Welfare, and the Politics of Need Interpretation". In *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse, and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press. 144-160.

Gamburd, Michele Ruth. 2000. *The Kitchen Spoon's Handle: Transnationalism and Sri Lanka's Migrant Housemaids*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Glenn, E. Nakano. 1994. "Social Constructions of Mothering: a Thematic Overview". In *Mothering: Ideology, Experience, and Agency*. Edited by Evelyn Nakano Glenn, Grace Chang, and Linda Reenie Forcey. New York: Routledge. 1-29.

Gluck, Sherna. 1977. "What's so Special about Women? Women's Oral History". *Frontiers* 11 (2): 3-14.

Goodman, Gail S., Leslie Rudy, Bette L. Bottoms and Christine Aman. 1990. "Children's Concerns and Memory: Issues of Ecological Validity in the Study of Children's Eyewitness Testimony". In *Knowing and Remembering in Young Children*. Edited by Robyn Fivush and Judith A. Hudson. New York: Cambrodge University Press. 249-284.

Gorfinkiel Diaz, Magdalena. 2011. "Migrant Domestic Work and Changes in the Ideas of Childcare". *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 42(5): 739-749. http://web.a.ebscohost.com.proxy.library.uu.nl/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=a1954324-911f-4781-8917-445f3a842657%40sessionmgr4002&vid=2&hid=4104.

Grosz, Elisabeth. 2010. "The Untimeliness of Feminist Theory". *NORA – Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research* 18 (1): 48-51. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08038741003627039.

Gunn, Janet V. 1982. *Autobiography. Towards a Poetics of Experience*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Hagemann, Gro. 2010. "Dutiful Wife – Disloyal Worker: Fragments of a Scholarly Ego-Histoire". In *Making Sense, Crafting History. Practicing of Producing Historical Meaning*. Edited by Izabella Agárdi, Berteke Waaldijk and Carla Salvaterra. Pisa: Pisa University Press, Edizioni Plus. 13-31. Accessed November 20, 2013. http://ehlee.humnet.unipi.it/books5/4/00.pdf.

Hall, Stuart. 1990. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora". In *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference.* Edited by Jonathan Rutherford. London: Lawrence & Wishart. 222-237.

—. 1992. "Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies". In *Cultural Studies*. Edited by Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson and Paula Treichler. New York: Routledge. 277-285.

Hays, Sharon. 1996. *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Hirschmann, Nancy J. 2003. *The Subject of Liberty: Toward a Feminist Theory of Freedom*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Hoang, Lan A., Brenda S.A. Yeoh and Anna Marie Wattie.2012. "Transnational Labour Migration and the Politics of Care in the Southeast Asian Family". *Geoforum* 43 (4): 733-740. http://www.sciencedirect.com.proxy.library.uu.nl/science/article/pii/S0016718511002181.

Hochschild, Arile Russell. 2000a. "The Nanny Chain". *American Prospect* 4: 32-36.

—. 2000b. "Global Care Chains and Emotional Surplus Value". In *On the Edge, Living with Global Capitalism*. Edited by Will Hutton and Anthony Giddens. London: Jonahtan Cape.

Hondagneu-Sorelo, Pierrette. 2001. *Domestica. Immigrant Workers Cleaning and Caring in the Shadows of Affluence*. Berkely: University of California Press.

Hondagneu-Sotelo, Pierrette and Ernestine Avila. 1997. "'I'm Here but I'm There': The Meaning of Latina Transnational Motherhood".*Gender and Society* 11 (5): 548-571. http://www.jstor.org.proxy.library.uu.nl/stable/pdfplus/190339.pdf?acceptTC=true&acceptTC=true&jpdConfirm=true.

Hodkinson, Phil and Heather Hodkinson. 2001. "The Strenghts and Limitations of Case Study Research". Paper presented at the Learning and Skills Development Agency Conference, Cambridge, 5-7 December 2001.

Irimescu, Gabriela, Dumitru Stan, Maria Cojocaru and Mihaela Pitea. 2008. "Children in Difficulty. Comparative Study Iaşi-Chisinău". *Revista de Cercetare şi Intervenţie Socială* 22: 27-44.

Kofman, Eleonore and Parvati Raghuram. 2009. "The Implications of Migration for Gender and Care Regimes in the South". Social Policy and Development Programme Paper Number 41. Geneva, United Nations Research Insitute for Social Development.

Koven, Seth and Sonya Michel. 1990. "Womanly Duties: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States in France, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States, 1880-1920". *The American Historical Review* 95 (4): 1076-1108. http://ww.jstor.org/stable/2163479.

Langellier, Kristin M. and Eric E. Peterson. 2004. "A Communication Approach to Storytelling". In *Storytelling in Daily Life. Performing Narrative*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. 1-5.

Levitt, Peggy and Nina Glich Schiller. 2004. "Conceptualizing Simultaneity: A Transnational Social Field Perspective on Society". *International Migration Review* 38: 1002-1039.

Licoppe Christian and Zbigniev Smoreda. 2005. "Are Social Networks Technologically Embedded? How Networks are Changing Today with Changes in Communication Technology. *Social Networks* 27 (4): 317-335.

Lieblich, Amia, Rivka Tuval-Maschiach and Zilber Tamar. 1998. *Narrative Research: Reading Analysis and Interpretation*. Thousand Oaks and London: Sage.

Longman, Chia, Katrien de Graeve and Tine Brouckaert. 2013. "Mothering as a Citizenship Practice: An Intersectional Analysis of 'Carework' and 'Culturework' in Non-Normative Mother-Child Identities". *Citizenship Studies* 17 (3-4): 385-399. http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ccst20.

Luca, Cătălin and Alexandru Stelian Gulei, coord. 2007. *Methodology. The Legal, Psychological, and Social Assistance of Children Left Behind by Migrant Parents*. Iaşi: Terra Nostra.

Lykke, Nina. 2010. "Shifting Boundaries between Academic and Creative Writing Practices". In *Feminist Studies: A Guide to Intersectional Theory, Methodology and Writing*. New York: Routledge. 163-183.

Lyon, Dawn. 2006. "The Organization of Care Work in Italy: Gender and Migrant Labor in the New Economy". *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies* 13 (1): 207-224.
http://www.repository.law.indiana.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1325&context=ijgls.

Madianou, Mirca and Daniel Miller. 2011. "Mobile Phone Parenting: Reconfiguring Relationships between Filipina Migrant Mothers and their Left-behind Children". *New Media and Society* 12 (3): 457-470.
http://nms.sagepub.com/content/13/3/457.

Marchetti, Sabrina. 2010. "Narratives and practices of work and identity". In "Paid Domestic Labour and Postcoloniality. Narratives of Eritrean and Afro-Surinamese Migrant Women". PhD dissertation, Utrecht University.

Margold, Jane A. 2004. "Filipina Depictions of Migrant Life for Those at Home". In *Coming Home? Refugees, Migrant, and Those who Stayed Behind*. Edited by Lynellyn D. Long and Ellen Oxfeld. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 49-62.

McAdams, Dan P. 2008. "Personal Narratives and the Life Story". In *Handbook of Personality: Theory and Research* (3rd edition). Edited by Oliver P. John, Richard W. Robins and Lawrence A. Pervin. New York: Guilford Press. 242-262.

van Mens-Verhulst, Janneke. 1993a. "Introduction". In *Daughtering and Mothering: Female Subjectivity Reanalysed*. Edited by Janneke van Mens-Verhulst, Karlein Schreurs and Liesbeth Woertman. London: Routledge. xi-xiii.

—. 1993b. "Beyond Daughtering and Mothering". In *Daughtering and Mothering: Female Subjectivity Reanalysed*. Edited by Janneke van Mens-Verhulst, Karlein Schreurs and Liesbeth Woertman. London: Routledge. 154-159.

Mertens Oishi, Sabine. 2002. "A Few Words about Qualitative Interviewing". In *How to Conduct In-Persons Interviews for Surveys* (2nd edition). Thousand Oaks, London and New Delhi: Sage Publications. 171-179.

Mithcell, Katharyne, Sallie A. Marston and Cindi Katz. 2003. "Life's Work: An Introduction, Review and Critique". In *Life's Work: Geographies of Social*

Reproduction. Edited by Katharyne Mithcell, Sallie A. Marston and Cindi Katz. Oxford: Blackwell. 1-26.

Moraga, Cherie. 1983. "A Long Line of Vendidas". In *Loving in the War Years. Lo que nunca paso por sus labios*. Boston: South End Press. 90-143.

Moscardino, Ughetta, Constanza Bertelli and Gianmarco Altoè. 2011. "Culture, Migration, and Parenting: A Comparative Study of Mother-Infant Interaction and Childrearing Patterns in Romanian, Romanian Immigrant and Italian Families." *International Journal of Developmental Sciences* 5 (1-2): 11-25. http://www.metapress.com.proxy.library.uu.nl/content/k8721p684r825070/?volume=5&spage=11&issn=2192-001X&issue=1&genre=article.

Olsen, Tillie. 1984. *Mother to Daughter, Daughter to Mother*. New York: Feminist Press.

Paragas, Fernando. 2008. "Migrant Workers and Mobile Phones: Technological, Temporal, and Spatial Simultaneity". In *Reconstruction of Space and Time: Mobile Communication Practices*. Edited by Richard Ling and Scott W. Campbell. Edison, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers. 39-66.

Pearce, Diana. 1979. "Women, Work, and Welfare: The Feminization of Poverty". In *Working Women and Families*. Edited by Karen Wolk Feinstein. Beverly Hills: Sage.

Phoenix, Ann and Bruna Seu. 2013. "Negotiating Daughterhood and Strangerhood: Retrospective Accounts of Serial Migration". *Feminism and Psychology* 23 (3): 299-316.
http://fap.sagepub.com.proxy.library.uu.nl/content/23/3/299.full.pdf+html.

Polkinghorne, Donald. 1988. *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

—. 1995. "Narrative Configuration in Qualitative Analysis". In *Life History and Narrative*. Edited by J. Amos Hatch and Richard Wisniewski. London: The Falmer Press. 5-23.

Pottinger, Audrey M. 2005. "Children's Experiences of Loss by Parental Migration in Inner-City Jamaica. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 74 (4): 485-496.

Raijman, Rebeca, Silvina Schammah-Gesser and Adriana Kemp. 2003. "International Migration, Domestic Work, and Care Work: Undocumented Latina Migrants in Israel", *Gender and Society* 17 (5): 727-749.

http://www.jstor.org.proxy.library.uu.nl/stable/pdfplus/3594707.pdf?acceptTC=true&acceptTC=true&jpdConfirm=true.

Richardson, Laurel. 2000. "Writing as a Method of Inquiry". In *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd edition). Edited by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln. London: Sage: 923-948.

Riessman, Catherine Kohler. 2008. *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Robila, Mihaela and Ambika Krishnakumar. 2004. "The Role of Children in Eastern European Families". *Children and Society* 18: 30-41.

Robila, Mihaela. 2009. *Eastern European Immigrant Families*. New York: Routledge.

—. 2010. "Parental Migration and Children's Outcomes in Romania". *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 20: 326-333. http://download.springer.com.proxy.library.uu.nl/static/pdf/717/art%253A10.1007%252Fs10826-010-9396-1.pdf?auth66=1392755055_b26d90f4cb24bd88e3bce8e3eeea4139&ext=.pdf.

Rosaldo, Renato. 1989. *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*. London: Routledge.

Ryan, Louise. 2008. "Navigating the Emotional Terrain of Families 'Here' and 'There': Women, Migration and the Management of Emotions". *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 29 (3): 299-313. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07256860802169238.

Salazar Parreñas, Rhacel. 2000. "Migrant Filipina Domestic Workers and the International Division of Reproductive Labor". *Gender and Society* 14 (4): 560-581.

—. 2001a. *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration, and Domestic Work*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

—. 2001b. "Mothering from a Distance: Emotions, Gender and Inter-Generational Relations in Filipino Transnational Families. *Feminist Studies* 27 (2): 361-390.

—. 2001c. "Transgressing the Nation-State: the Partial Citizenship and 'Imagined (Global) Community' of Migrant Filipina Domestic Workers. *Signs* 26 (4): 1129-1154.

—. 2005. "Long Distance Intimacy: Class, Gender and Intergenerational Relations between Mothers and Children in Filipino Transnational Families". *Global Networks* 5 (4): 317-336. http://www.umbc.edu/blogs/llc/Parrenas05.pdf.

—. 2006. *Understanding the Backlash: Why Transnational Families are Considered the 'Wrong Kind of Family'in the Philippines*. Rutgers: Rutgers Global Child Institute

—. 2010. "Transnational Mothering: a Source of Gender Conflicts in the Family". *North Carolina Law Review* 88: 1825-1881.

Sandu, Dumitru. 2006. *Living Abroad on a Temporary Basis. The Economic Migration of Romanians: 1990-2004*. Bucharest: Open Society Foundation.

Sarti, Raffaella. 2008. „The Globalisation of Domestic Service – A Historical Perspective". In *Migration and Domestic Work. A European Perspective on a Global Theme*. Edited by Helma Lutz. Hampshire: Ashgate. 77-97.

Schapiro, Naomi A., Susan M. Kools, Sandra J. Weiss and Claire D. Brindis. 2013. "Separation and Reunification: The experiences of Adolescents Living in Transnational Families". *Current Problems in Pediatric and Adolescent Health Care* 43 (3): 48-68. http://ac.els-cdn.com.proxy.library.uu.nl/S1538544212001708/1-s2.0-S1538544212001708-main.pdf?_tid=2fbe7440-5c4-11e3-8288-00000aab0f01&acdnat=1386093548_5cde293ffbe3a9c05962e5a84ef09a99.

Siar, Sheila. 2008. *Migration in Romania—A Country Profile*. Geneva: International Organization for Migration.

Smith, Sidonie and Julia Watson. 2001. "A Tool Kit: Twenty Strategies for Interpreting Life Narratives". In *Reading Autobiography. A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*. Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press. 165-179.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 1990. *The Post-Colonial Critic*. Edited by Sarah Harasym. New York and London: Routledge.

Stanley, Liz and Sue Wise. 1993. *Breaking Out. Feminist Consciousness and Feminist Research.* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Sternberg, Rosa Maria and Charlotte Barry. 2011. "Transnational Mothers Crossing the Border and Bringing Their Health Care Needs". *Journal of Nursing Scholarship* 43 (1): 64-71.

Tungohan, Ethel. 2013. "Reconceptualizing Motherhood, Reconceptualizing Resistance: Migrant Domestic Workers, Transnational Hyper-Maternalism and Activism". *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 15 (1): 39-57. http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rfjp20.

Turner, Johnatan H., and Jan Stets. 2005. *The Sociology of Emotions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wilson, Clare and Martine Powell. 2001. "Understanding a Child's Mind". In *A Guide to Interviewing Children. Essential Skills for Counsellors, Police, Lawyers and Social Workers*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin: 1-22.

Winnicott, Donald W. 1965. *Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment: Studies in the Theory of Emotional Development*. London: Hogarth Press.

Wright Mills, Charles. 1970 (1959). *The Sociological Imagination*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Appendices

Appendix 1

<div style="border:1px solid">

Isabela Veronica Dămoc – Erasmus Mundus student
GEMMA: Master's Degree in Women's and Gender Studies
Utrecht University, the Netherlands – University of Oviedo, Spain (2012-2014)

</div>

Interviewee Data Form   **Interview No.:** ....

          Date: ....

Pseudonym:...

 Sex: .... **Age**: .... **Location**:................................

     As an interviewee, I willingly participate in this interview, I understand the purpose of this interview, which consists in providing personal information, and:

o I agree to the information provided by me be used only for academic purposes, strictly in the academic research for the student's Isabela Veronica Dămoc dissertation, entitled:

....

....

o I agree to the recording of the data using the Sony IC Recorder ICD-PX333, face to face, or on-line, via Skype;

o I agree to the translation of the recorded data, from Romanian to English;

o I agree to the selection, fragmentation and the use of the data, but not to the alteration or wrongful reassemblage, which does not correspond to the original recording;

o I reserve the right to refuse the answer to some or all the questions, interrupt the interview at any time and request the deletion of the recorded data;

o I reserve the right to withdraw at any time, parts, or all the data provided to the student Isabela Veronica Dămoc, recorded on ...., by contacting her (E-mail address: isabeladamoc@gmail.com) before the final editing and handing in of the dissertation (May 1st 2014);

o I would like to be sent an electronic copy of the dissertation at the following E-mail address:

....

o I, **Isabela Veronica Dămoc**, undertake to strictly abide by all the above points in order to ensure the confidentiality and integrity of the interviewed person, and the quality of the academic research.

GEMMA student's signature   Interviewee's   signature
……………………….....   …………………….…

Formular Date Intervievat

Pseudonim:………………………………………………………….

Sex:…………. **Vârsta:**………........ **Locație:** ....

Isabela Veronica Dămoc – studentă Erasmus Mundus
GEMMA: Masterat în Studii de Gen și ale Femeii
Universitatea din Utrecht, Olanda – Universitatea din Oviedo, Spania (promoția 2012-2014)

În calitate de persoană intervievată, particip de bună voie la acest interviu, înțeleg scopul acestui interviu, care constă în furnizarea unor informații cu caracter personal, și:

o Declar că informațiile furnizate sunt adevărate și fac referinţă la mine;

o Sunt de acord ca datele furnizate de mine să fie folosite numai în scop academic, strict în cercetarea lucrării de dizertație a studentei Isabela Veronica Dămoc, cu titlul: ....

o Sunt de acord cu înregistrarea datelor cu ajutorul reportofonului Sony IC Recorder ICD-PX333, față în faţă, sau on-line, prin Skype;

o Sunt de acord cu traducerea datelor furnizate din limba română în limba engleză;

o Sunt de acord cu fragmentarea, selectarea și folosirea datelor furnizate, dar fără a fi alterate sau reasamblate într-un mod necorespunzător, care să nu corespundă declarațiilor originale;

o Îmi rezerv dreptul de a refuza oricând răspunsul la anumite, sau totalitatea întrebărilor adresate, de a întrerupe oricând interviul și de a cere ștergerea datelor înregistrate cu ajutorul reportofonului;

o Îmi rezerv dreptul de a-mi retrage oricând anumite, sau toate datele furnizate studentei Isabela Veronica Dămoc, înregistrate la data de .... , prin contactarea acesteia (Adresă E-mail: isabeladamoc@gmail.com), până la redactarea finală și predarea tezei de dizertație (1 mai 2014);

Doresc să mi se trimită lucrarea de dizertație în format electronic la adresa de E-mail: ....

o Eu, **Isabela Veronica Dămoc,** mă angajez să respect cu strictețe toate punctele de mai sus, în vederea asigurării confidențialității și integrității persoanei intervievate și a calității cercetării academice.

Semnătură student GEMMA   Semnătură intervievat

....   …………………………

Appendix 2

Appendix 3

Nr.	Romanian	English
1	Spune-mi despre tine. Ce faci, cu ce te ocupi, câți ani ai, de unde ești, unde locuiești, etc.	Tell me something about you. How are you, what do you do, how old are you, where are you from, where do you live, etc.
2	În ce context a plecat mama ta în Italia? Când? Câți ani aveai tu? Unde a locuit? Unde a lucrat?	In what context did your mother leave to Italy? When? How old were you? Where did she live? What did she do?
3	Cum te-ai simțit la momentul respectiv? Mai ții minte?	How did you feel at that time? Do you remember?
4	Mai ții minte momentul dinaintea plecării ei și ziua în care a plecat?	Do you remember the moment before her departure and the day she left?
5	Ce s-a întâmplat după aceea?	What happened next?
6	Cum te-ai descurcat în absența ei? Cu cine ai rămas?	How did you manage in her absence? Whom did you stay with?
7	Cum păstrai legătura cu mama ta?	How did you stay in touch with your mother?
8	Ce anume s-a schimbat? (în rău sau în bine)	What exactly changed? (for the better or for the worse)
9	Descrie-mi o zi obișnuită din viața ta din perioada în care mama ta a fost plecata!	Describe to me one of your typical days from the time your mother was away!
1	Descrie-mi o zi/ situație bună, și una rea din timpul plecării mamei tale!	Describe to me a good and a bad day/ situation from the time your mother was away!
11	Te-a influențat plecarea ei?	Did her leave influence you?
12	Ai mai vorbit cu altcineva despre asta?	Have you talked to anybody else about this?
13	Simți că e necesar sau important să vorbim despre asta?	Do you feel it is necessary or important to talk about this?

14	Cum crezi că ar putea ajuta discuțiile de genul? Dar pe tine?	In what way do you think this kind of discussions might be helpful? How might they help you?
15	Te-ai confruntat vreodată cu persoane cărora a trebuit să le explici situația ta?	Did you ever confronted yourself with persons to whom you had to explain your situation?
16	Ai fi vrut ca mama ta să vină înapoi sau să mai rămână?	Did you want your mother to come back or to stay longer?
17	Cum ai beneficiat de plecarea mamei in Italia?	How did you benefit from your mother's stay in Italy?
18	Care au fost dezavantajele plecării ei?	What were the disadvantages of her departure?
19	Crezi că a contribuit plecarea și șederea mamei tale în Italia la cine ești tu astăzi?	Do you think your mother's leave and stay in Italy contributed to who you are today?
20	Dacă ar fi să-i spui ceva mamei tale, ce i-ai spune?	If you were to say something to your mother, what would that be?
21	Ce ai vrea să le spui celor care au o concepție greșită despre astfel de cazuri?	What would you like to tell those who have misconceptions about these kinds of cases?
22	Care e relația cu mama ta în momentul de față?	What is your relationship with your mother at the moment?
23	Cum te simți tu în general acum, după ce am purtat această discuție?	How do you generally feel now, after having had this conversation?

Appendix 4

Interview No.	Description
1	**Pseudonym:** Claudiu **Age**: 25 **Sex**: Male **Location**: Timișoara, Romania **Occupation**: Student **Education**: Graduate level **Familial status**: Only child **Marital status**: Unknown **Date of interview**: September 6th, 2013 **Type and Duration of Interview:** Face-to-face; 23 min 43 sec.
2	**Pseudonym:** Otilia **Age**: 23 **Sex**: Female **Location**: Timișoara, Romania **Occupation**: Student; Dental technician assistant **Education**: Undergraduate level; currently graduate level **Familial status**: One sibling **Marital status**: Unknown **Date of interview**: January 19th, 2014 **Type and Duration of Interview:** Face-to-face; 55 min 19 sec.
3	**Pseudonym:** Sonia **Age**: 23 **Sex**: Female **Location**: Turin, Italy **Occupation**: Waitress **Education**: High school; one year undergraduate level **Familial status**: One sibling **Marital status**: Married **Date of interview**: January 27th, 2014

	Type and Duration of Interview: via Skype; 39 min 04 sec.
4	**Pseudonym:** Andi
	Age: 15
	Sex: Male
	Location: Bucharest, Romania
	Occupation: Student
	Education: High school
	Familial status: Only child
	Marital status: Unknown
	Date of interview: January 28th, 2014
	Type and Duration of Interview: via Skype; 31 min 46 sec.
5	**Pseudonym:** Paul
	Age: 22
	Sex: Male
	Location: Turin, Italy
	Occupation: Driver
	Education: Unknown
	Familial status: Two siblings
	Marital status: Unknown
	Date of interview: January 29th, 2014
	Type and Duration of Interview: via Skype; 35 min 19 sec.
6	**Pseudonym:** Maia
	Age: 24
	Sex: Female
	Location: Timişoara, Romania
	Occupation: Trainer; employed in a multi-national company;
	Education: Graduate level: B.A. in Marketing; B.A. in Journalism; M.A. in Advertising;
	Familial status: Only child
	Marital status: Unknown
	Date of interview: February 4th, 2014
	Type and Duration of Interview: via Skype; 44 min 55 sec.
7	**Pseudonym:** Doroteea

	Age: 23
	Sex: Female
	Location: Rome, Italy
	Occupation: Currently unemployed
	Education: High school; one year undergraduate studies
	Familial status: One sibling
	Marital status: Married
	Date of interview: February 5th, 2014
	Type and Duration of Interview: via Skype; 40 min 14 sec.
8	**Pseudonym:** Elena
	Age: 24
	Sex: Female
	Location: Timișoara, Romania
	Occupation: Media analyst at an Advertising company
	Education: Undergraduate level: B.A. in Communication and Public Relations
	Familial status: Two siblings
	Marital status: Unknown
	Date of interview: February 6th, 2014
	Type and Duration of Interview: via Skype; 27 min 38 sec.
9	**Pseudonym:** Rita Seghet
	Age: 26
	Sex: Female
	Location: Milan, Italy
	Occupation: Currently unemployed; project manager in the past
	Education: Graduate level
	Familial status: Only child
	Marital status: Unknown
	Date of interview: February 14th, 2014
	Type and Duration of Interview: via Skype; 37 min 12 sec.

Appendix 5
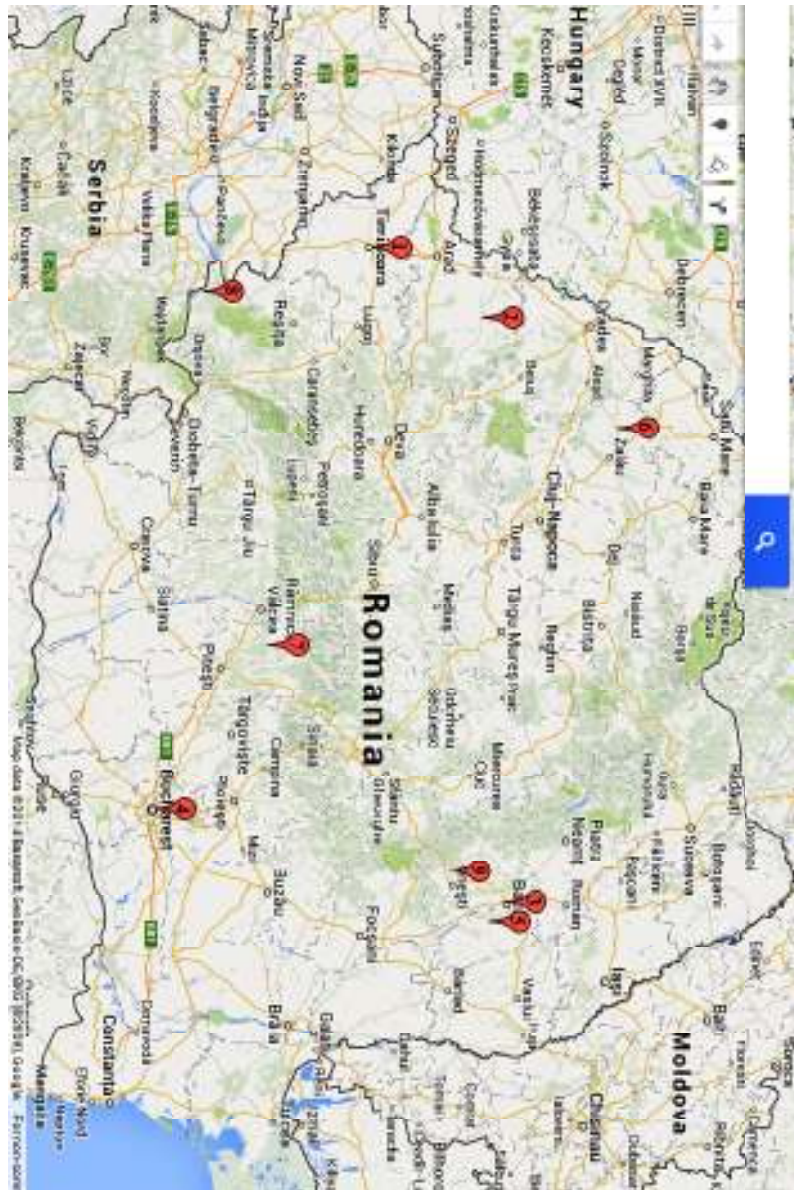

Fig. 1. Interviewees' places of origin. Source: Google Maps. Available online at
https://mapsengine.google.com/map/u/0/edit?hl=en&authuser=0&mid=zXzB4434xmm
8.kFRW7-_a62yI

Appendix 6

Fig. 2. Interviewees' current location. Source: Google Maps. Available online at
https://mapsengine.google.com/map/u/0/edit?mid=zXzB4434xmm8.k9BzUfMcI7wM

Appendix 7

(1) Nu, toate întrebările au fost în ordine. Doar că nu știu cât am răspuns de în regulă.

(2) Ziua exact, nu mi-o amintesc. Îmi amintesc... știu că era o zi de vară, dar nu-mi amintesc exact ziua sau luna . . . Cred că era iunie sau mai, prima (It.> *înainte*)… nu, nu-mi mai amintesc.

(3) Că el în momentul ăla trece prin așa ceva, știi? Și... io acuma na, gândind tot ce-a fost în trecut, nu mi se mai pare... na... Nu pot să-ți mai spun ce simțeam, nu? că am trecut. Sunt atâția ani care-au trecut. Dar dac-ar fi să... na, să găsești o persoană care trece în momentul de față, cred c-ar fi mult mai... Nu știu, ți-ar spune ceea ce simte el în momentul de față. Ar fi altceva, știi?

(4) Nu știu, a mea, eu n-o văd mega importantă sau mega relevantă. Nu știu. Cu cât mai mult atunci îți faci așa clar o impresie și poți să începi să tragi niște concluzii. A mea e, na...

(5) OK. Păi, ce pot să fac? Am cincisprezece ani, sunt din București; sunt la liceu, tocmai am intrat; sunt boboc, clasa a noua. Cu ce să mă ocup? Mă, ocupație să zic așa, nu am. Hobby, nici atât. Practic gen, baschetul ca un sport. Ocupație, sincer, nu, n-am… cam așa.

(6) Am douăzeci și trei de ani, sunt din Bacău, România, dar trăiesc în Torino, Italia. Muncesc… fac barmaniță, ca să zic așa. Sunt căsătorită.

(7) Mă numesc [Maia], am douăzeci și patru de ani, m-am născut în Sălaj, în Șimleul Silvaniei, și de aproximativ ă, cincisprezece ani, poate chiar șaisprezece, m-am mutat în Timișoara împreună cu părinții. Ca și studii, am terminat... am absolvit două facultăți și-un master. Ă, facultățile fiind în Marketing și Jurnalism, iar masterul în Publicitate. Ă, îmi place tot ceea ce ține de publicitate, film. Ă, țin traininguri în timpul liber, când nu lucrez—lucrul fiind într-o corporație foarte mare și foarte mâncătoare de timp.

(8) Cu siguranță. Tot ce s-a întâmplat până acuma a influențat persoana care am ajuns să fiu.

(9) Dar când ești mic, atunci nu. Spun că nu... nu mai gândești... Ă, acum... vreau să spun de mine că acum nu mai gândesc cum gândeam când aveam cinșpe ani când a plecat mama. Adică am o... gândesc altfel.

(10) Ă, cu mintea de astăzi cred că ajută pentru că pe de-o parte îți exprimi emoțiile pe care le trăiești și nu-ți rămân ca niște răni înăuntrul tău; ă, pe de alta, reușești să dai un nume lucrurilor pe care le trăiești. Și când dai un nume, e ca și când le-ai domina într-un oarecare fel. Și ai reușit să te detașezi de ele ca să nu rămână vreo urmă semnificativă.

(11) Asta se întâmpla weekendul. Weekendul, ă, mă trezeam. Mă trezeam la ce oră vream; n-aveam nimic, eram OK; și, cum spuneam, dormeam la această vecină. Ă, mă mai trezea ea din când în când sau mă lăsa să dorm, dar de cele mai multe ori ea, pentru că ea trebuia să plece, iar pe mine nu putea să mă lase singur acolo, că na, n-aveam cheile, nu, poate nu mă descurcam cu închiderea ușii și așa mai departe. Îmi plăcea. Ă, la început îmi dădea micul dejun după aia mă mai lăsa o oră, două. Ea având două pisici și un cățeluș, mă lăsa să mă joc, nu știu ce, eram fericit. După aia a spus… îmi spunea… mă ducea acasă, gen, ca peste hol așa, mă ducea acasă. Mă lăsa să mă uit la televizor [Rasete].

(12) Mi-a convenit când am aflat că stau cu acea persoană; adică îmi plăcea să-mi petrec foarte mult timpul cu ea. Ea era dulce și bună așa la inceput… nu că la inceput… ă… deci felul ei. Dar când era să aibe grijă de mine, să mă învețe și știind că e pentru educația mea și în folosul meu, desigur, devenea mai aspră.

(13) Era diferit pentru că aveam persoane care se ocupau mai îndeaproape de... de noi. Bineînțeles cazau doar fete și am întâlnit chiar surori care s-au... Ă... au avut mai multă... erau mai apropiate să zicem de... m-am simțit susținută.

(14) Da, dacă tata era la țara… el venea numai in weekend; noi ne descurcam.

(15) Știu… țin minte oricum că tata oricum suferea mult. Mi-amintesc perioada că... chiar dacă mă… dacă e s-o iei așa, doi ani nu-s chiar așa mulți. Să zicem un… nu o fost… o fost un an și-apoi alt an, știi? Dar, pentru o persoană care-i obișnuită să stea în fiecare zi, este greu, normal.

(16) Taică-miu; taică-miu mai mult. El a devenit femeia în casă . . . Da, făcea. Eu nu prea am făcut niciodată curat; sau am făcut când a fost musai musai.

(17) Pentru că având un tată… un pic . . . absent în viețile noastre. Era un pic... era tânăr și el . . . nu prea era prezent foarte mult în viețile noastre. Era mai mult prin treburile lui [Râsete].

(18) Țineam mai… ce? eram mai așa... mai mult cu mama stăteam, nu? Și s-o simțit o diferență foarte mare.

(19) Ne reproșa nouă faptul că de ce e mami plecată, deși noi, ca și copii, nu i-am spus niciodată mamei: „Pleacă tu de-acasă să muncești, ca nouă să ne fie bine!" Ei au venit cu ideea asta. Și totuși el ne reproșa nouă . . . Dar în timp a văzut că nu poate face față cu doi copii, să le gătească, să... nu știu, poate nu poate face față să fie părinte singur, să se implice mai mult.

(20) Numai trei băieți și tata, o fost... nu pot să zic c-o fost chiar bine . . . nu prea aveam mare confidenza cu tata . . . eram trei frați, nu? Ăla cel mai mic avea doi ani că trebuia să-i dau lapte cu biberonul, nu? [Râsete]. O trebuit să stau după el, să-l îngrijesc, că, având situația... Tata nu prea avea grijă cine știe ce de el. Mă lăsa pe mine să am grijă de el.

(21) Deci [Râsete] ajungem oricum tot la soră-mea [Râsete]. Facem cum facem și tot de soră-mea-i vorba. Pentru că, faptul că pentru ea era perioda aia, mă afecta și pe mine într-un fel, știi? . . . Mă afecta un pic și pe mine pentru că . . . mă simțeam neprotejată, știi? Într-un fel.

(22) Bine, plus [ininteligibil] toată bătaia care-am mâncat-o de la soră-mea [Râsete] . . . Bine, dar asta nu are nicio legătură. Mă bătea oricum, și dacă erau ai mei.

(23) Am încercat să fiu puternică şi să merg mai departe. Şi să... să merg mai departe exact cum ar fi vrut... cum ar fi vrut ei. Na, nu să mă apuc să fac tot felul de prostii, ce ştiu eu, să beau să, să... din astea. Nu, am încercat să merg că şi cum ar fi vrut ei, ca şi cum ei ar fi fost în ţară şi... Îmi spuneau: „Tre' să mergi la şcoală, trebe să-nveţi, trebuie să vii"... na, „Să ai grijă cu cine vorbeşti pe stradă" sau, na... „Să nu intri într-un anturaj din ăsta rău" să zic aşa.

(24) Cu siguranţă am avut parte de... de mai multe haine, mai multe... cam... cam tot ce-aveam nevoie ei încercau să-mi cumpere, probabil ca să compenseze lipsa lor. Şi nu pot să zic c-am fost o răsfăţată—dacă vreau, atunci o să am! De obicei trebuia să demonstrez că merit ceva, dar, în principiu, situaţia noastră financiară a fost mult mai bună datorită plecării lor, decât dacă ar fi rămas aici.

(25) Şi când îi spuneam, încercam să vorbim cu ea că, ca să-i explici nevoia de ea, să fie ea lângă tine, ea avea tot timpul tendinţa să se apere şi-mi zicea: „Dar nu vă trimit atâtea?" că „Uite câţi bani vă trimit!" şi eu îi ziceam că „Dar nu-i vorba de bani, mami, e vorba că sunt singură"; că „Da, dar uite că vă trimit atâtea"; şi tot timpul îmi întorcea vorba şi-mi spunea: „Dar vă trimit atâtea! Uite câţi bani vă trimit!" şi tot timpul am rămas cu... Asta-mi amintesc; că îmi trimitea aşa de multe lucruri ca să compenseze plecarea ei. Probabil pentru ea era atunci mai important să avem noi lucruri materiale şi bani, decât să fie lângă noi.

(26) Dar, na, îmi aduc aminte că, când era plecată şi când ne dădea telefon, ă, mereu… eram mărişoară, doişpe ani, eram de-acuma… nu ştiu dacă mă mai jucam cu păpuşile, dar, mi-amintesc, când ne suna, şi mă dădea pe mine la telefon să vorbesc, îmi cânta mereu, ă, melodia să zic aşa, de când îmi cânta de când eram mică, când mă alinta [Rasete].

(27) De asta mă… şi mă punea şi pe mine să i-o cânt! Că „Hai cântă-i lui mama, hai cântă-i lui mama!" . . . [Râsete] râd de ea!

(28) De ceva timp mi-am dat seama cu adevărat ce-nseamnă să munceşti printre străini şi ce sacrificii au făcut şi ei, totodată.

(29) Păi acuma, ți-am zis: nu pot să zic că, uite, asta-i rețeta pentru tot și asa o să se întâmple. Depinde de copil, zic eu. Și de vârstă, și de cât e de matur, cum gândește. Sunt cazuri în care copiii au de pierdut foarte mult când pleacă părinții sau unul dintre ei . . . Deci depinde acuma de cât de mult s-au ocupat în copilărie. Deci îs chestii ce țin de individ, așa nu-i... Dar zic eu că per general așa pe fiecare afectează.

(30) Dar, în primul rand, eu aș spune că nu este nimic de judecat, că... bine, cum ți-am spus, sunt cazuri și cazuri. Sunt persoane care lasă familia, poate pentru totdeauna, în sensul să... plece undeva mai bine, știi? Dar la noi n-o fost un caz așa. O fost c-am avut nevoie de bani și na . . . Normal, că unu are intenția să plece pentru a oferi familiei, copiilor, nu? Ceva mai bun, nu? . . . Dar, cum să spun? Persoanele alea probabil nu au trecut prin asta și de asta vorbesc. Dar nu pot să zic... că sunt cazuri și cazuri.

(31) Mda, și aici părerile pot fi împărțite bineînțeles, doar că, sincer, fiecare știe mai bine ce se-ntâmplă în interiorul familiei lui, știe cum se descurcă, cum poate gestiona situația, ce le pot oferi copiilor. Și oamenii chiar nu știu.

(32) Cum o fost în situația noastră, da, ai putea zice. Dar când o familie merge foarte bine, se înțeleg foarte bine, și unul chiar dacă pleacă și lasă copiii cu celălalt, nu? și familia merge foarte bine, nu poți să zici așa ceva. Nu poti victimiza: „Sărmanii! Or rămas singuri!" pentru că părinții încă-s împreună, nu, n-au... Îi doar plecat unu', plecat pentru viitorul lor, să le fie lor mai bine, nu?

(33) Ei încercau foarte mult să mă protejeze când erau plecați, ca nu cumva s-ajung să sufăr sau să-mi fie rău, și-așa mai departe, și prea... încercau prea mult să aibă grijă de mine, dar mă-ngrădeau mai mult decât să... să mă lase să iau eu deciziile pentru mine. Și asta m-a făcut oarecum să fiu dependentă de ei. Cel puțin din punct de vedere sentimental.

(34) Sincer, mă apucă nostalgia când mă gândeam că mi-ar fi plăcut să fie prezentă cu mine. Și vorbeam la telefon; mă suna mereu, mă felicita. Și i-am zis „Da, da, dar, știi că nu e tot una, ca și când ai fi aici cu mine" [Râsete]. Dar înțelegeam că așa-i situația și nu

poate fi cu mine [Râsete] . . . Atunci sau când vroiam să împart orice bucurie cu ea. O sunam pentru că nu era aici. Și se bucura cu mine de la distanță.

(35) „Nu-mi trebuiesc bani, nu-mi trebuiesc haine, nu-mi trebuiesc nimica, doar să veniți voi acasă!"

(36) La liceu aveam impresia că mă considerau... să zicem, cu bunăstare, bogată, doar pentru că părinții mei erau în Italia. Ci... fapt care nu era adevărat, cum îți spuneam. Și nu stăteam eu să le explic că nu-i adevărat pentru că nu... nu mi se părea cazul. Dar era... era o distanță care se crea între mine și ceilalți. Chiar anumiți profesori au avut replici de genul și nu mi-a plăcut deloc. Vedeau pe subînțeles, nu? că... dacă ai părinți în Italia atunci ai de toate [Râsete]. Și nu e chiar așa.

(37) Păi trebuia să-i fiu ca un fel de . . . mamă sorei mele, pentru că era mai mică. Ea e mai mică cu doi ani ca mine. Ea i-a simțit mult mai mult lipsa mamei, pentru c-a fost mult mai apropiată—mai mămoasă, să zic așa. Pentru mine nu a fost fost chiar atât... nu m-a afectat atât de mult cum a afectat-o pe ea.

(38) Când ești mică nu-nțelegi anumite lucruri. Ă, doar după ce crești îți dai seama de anumite lucruri și sacrificiul pe care l-au făcut ei și tot. Când ești atunci nu dai... Ă, doar simți că te-a abandonat și gata! Doar că ei pun mai presus banii și nu pe tine. Momentele alea și când ai vârsta aia, asta simți. Simți că... că pe ei nu-i interesează de tine și au plecat și vor doar să facă bani. Dar apoi după ce crești…

(39) A fost o singură dată. Țin minte că... cred că dacă nu... s-a discutat... țin minte c-atunci... Da! S-a spânzurat un copil din cauză că părinții au fost plecați în... nu mai știu în ce țară! Și el, de dorul lor, s-a spânzurat! Și-atunci au băgat programul ăsta: ca psihologii să vorbească cu copiii care sunt cu părinții plecați, dacă mi-aduc aminte fix... bine. Ceva de genul a fost . . . Pentru că copilul respectiv a lăsat o scrisoare în care spunea că din cauza asta el la, la, la... nu mai suporta și că el [ininteligibil] își pune capăt zilelor.

(40) Deci n-am găsit nicio problemă, nimic. A fost ceva OK. Adică nu sunt cazul în care să fi fost ceva nașpa sau greu, dramatic. Și aici, cât am stat cu taică-miu nu ne-am certat, nu au apărut probleme; totul a fost OK . . . Sunt un caz fericit!

(41) Probabil că nu aș fi făcut două facultăți, sau nu aș fi făcut cursuri de canto și orga sau... am mai facut dansuri doisprezece ani sau...

(42) Mă, ar fi prins bine să mai stea, sincer. Măcar doi ani. Ar fi prins super bine. Chiar ar fi prins . . . Din punct de vedere financiar, din punct de vedere că ei își asigurau cât de cât traiul pe mai mulți ani, știi? Și-aveau acolo o rezervă unde na, în caz de probleme să aibe de unde...

(43) Da, am fost, am fost acolo, am fost la ea la... unde muncea; i-am cunoscut familia, o familie foarte de treabă. Știam că e pe mâini bune, că nu o exploatează, că se simte bine cu ei. Se simte bine cu ei dar în același timp îmi spunea, na, „[Elena], știi, casa-i casă, oricât ai fi, trăiești pentru străini, lucrezi pentru străini; mai bine acasă la tine!” [Râsete]

(44) Ă, țin minte de fiecare dată când plecau și de fiecare dată când plângeam că sunt singură și-asa mai departe, mergeam la școală și eram foarte mândră că învățam și luam note mari, pentru că-mi spuneam că eu o să fac tot posibilul să fac școală, să învăț foarte bine, s-am un job foarte bine plătit ca . . . să nu ajung eu în situația lor; să trebuiască eu să-mi las copiii singuri acasă, să crească fără mine. Și cred că plecarea asta m-a facut pe mine să-mi dau seama de ceea ce nu vreau eu să se întâmple cu copiii mei.

(45) Foarte mult. Ă, cum îți spuneam, în primul rând, am crescut destul de repede. Ă, m-a făcut... asta m-a făcut mult mai înțelegătoare cu ceilalți... Ă, mi-a deschis ochii, cum s-ar zice; mult mai devreme. Și... și poate că datorită acestui fapt, după aceea, am înfruntat lucrurile cu... cu mai mult curaj. Și schimbarea nu m-a mai speriat după aceea. Am avut niște schimbări în ultima perioadă, în ultimii ani, și văd că le-am înfruntat cu... cu seninătate.

(46) Relația dintre noi și mama a fost totdeauna una de prietenie, n-a fost chiar una de mamă-fiică, să zic așa. Adică aveam... vedeam în ea o prietenă, nu o mamă. Puteam să

vorbim cu ea deschis, ă... era... era frumos na... mai ales sărbătorile că le făceam împreună tot... tot timpul. Eram o familie.

(47) Na, și era tot asa, fericirea aia că acum am cu cine să mănânc la masă, că acum am cu cine să povestesc. Și era sentimentul ăla de ușurare, de regăsire, de fericire.

(48) La telefon. Câteodată mai mergeam la verișoara mea și vorbeam cu ea pe Skype. Rareori pentru că na, nici ea nu putea să vorbească din moment ce era la muncă. Spuneam... O întrebam cum e-acolo în Italia, ce face ea, cum e vremea acolo, cum sunt lucrurile. Mă întreba și ea la fel; ba mai vorbeam cu tata—tata fiind plecat la fel în Italia—și na, ce pot să zic? Mi-era greu, dar vorbeam cu mama; parcă era mai bine.

(49) Erau momente când mi-aduceam aminte de ea, mă puneam în pat, mai plângeam, îmi spuneam, îmi ziceam în mintea mea: „Mai bine rămânea acasă și plecam eu!" și chestii din astea. Că m-a afectat într-un fel, că mi-era dor de ea. Mă uitam la o poză cu ea. Mă uitam: „Wow, uite-o pe mama!" nu știu ce; că n-o vedeam deloc în acei trei ani, trei-patru ani dac-o vedeam în vacanță, și numai în vacanță, cam așa și... nu era destul de mult încât să zici… mă uitam la poze… mi-aduceam așa aminte de ea și-n-cepeam să mă smiorcăi pe'acolo.

(50) Pur și simplu aveam un pic de ură așa, pentru că la noi în țară nu se putea face nimic și trebuia… a trebuit să plece. Din cauza asta... nu știu... eram... pot să spun c-aveam un pic de ură-n mine pentru că nu... Vedeam că-n țară nu se făcea nimic, nu era... nu vedeam... nu era nicio... nicio schimbare. Auzeam că... tot mai mulți colegi care spuneau că le plecau părinții în străinătate pentru bani.

(51) Am continuat să mă dedic studiului pentru că era ceva ce mă pasiona . . . Ă, la sfârșitul clasei a noua am primit premiul pentru cel mai bun elev al liceului și am avut o călătorie în Franța, pe timpul verii.

(52) Și, nu știu, era așa ciudat; pentru că eram obișnuiți să fim acasă, să fim toți [Râsete]. Și apoi, parcă, nu știu; cu toate că da, sunt destul de mare și eram destul de mare când a plecat—la nouăsprezece ani nu mai ești totuși un copil—și-a fost așa un pic ciudat, un pic divers [Râsete]; un pic străin, cumva; să pleci, să nu... să se… nu să se

destrame; pentru că nu s-a destrămat; doar că știam că trebuie să plece; asta a fost decizia ei; și dacă ea a decis așa, na, trebuia să-i respectăm decizia.

(53) Dar, bine, la început nu prea i-am simțit lipsa; na, n-am știut ce să zic, că, adică… Măi, eram OK. Mă simțeam bine la început. Dar, cu timpul, am început să-mi fie dor de ea, s-o mai sun, mă mai gândeam la ea și na... încercam să vorbesc cât mai mult cu ea. Când venea în vacanță eram foarte fericit. Mereu cand o vedeam, vedeam și… Eram ca orice copil.

(54) Nu mai era cum era înainte. S-a cam răcit. Pentru că, ă, eu m-am închis în mine, nu mai vorbeam, adică nu mai stăteam să-i spun toate astea; preferam să le țin pentru mine și-atât.

(55) După ce am început să mai cresc și am început să am un prieten sau să am persoane cu care să stau mai mult timp împreună, ă, s-a simțit oarecum dată la o parte . . . Și-am stat și m-am gândit și i-am zis că toată afecțiunea pe care aș fi vrut s-o primesc, sau simțeam că am nevoie s-o primesc de când au fost ei plecați, am încercat s-o găsesc de la altcineva. Și nu puteam decât de la o persoană de sex opus. Și eu, simt că, lor li, nu știu... îs oarecum așa egoiști. Sau încă nu și-or dat seama c-am crescut. Și-ăsta-i un lucru destul de dificil, pentru că relația noastră acuma tot timpul se bazează pe: ei îmi spun ce-ar vrea să se-ntâmple, eu îmi iau deciziile mele. Și nu mai sunt de-acord cu chestia asta. Și cred că toată distanța asta și perioada în care ei au fost plecați, mmm, ne-o-ndepărtat. Și față de taică-miu, și față de maică-mea. Și nu-i cel mai plăcut lucru.

(56) Nu! Nu, ți-am zis că pentru mine nu-i un șoc. Și dac-ar pleca acuma nu ar fi ceva care să mă marcheze. Îs, cred că, la vârsta când înțeleg că lucrurile astea se întâmplă și atât. Nu, dacă eram mai mic poate era un șoc, poate simțeam lipsa, poate… dar n-o fost niciodată super…

(57) Ă, nu… nu neapărat. În sensul că, cât… cum să zic? Puteam să fiu ceea ce sunt azi, un pic, și fără plecarea ei, în sensul că… Da, poate un pic de caracter, da. De caracter, da. Pentru că poate ne-a învățat să fim un pic mai puternice, un pic mai… știi?

(58) Ă, mie tot timpul îmi era frică de maică-mea pentru că ea era cocoşu-n casă, şi-n faţa ei trebuia să răspund când făceam câte-o prostie şi o vedeam tot timpul ca fiind partea severă. Taică-miu era ăla gluemţu' cu care mă jucam şi eu... eu îi ... îi respect şi na, îi respectam tot timpul pe părinţii mei, îi ascultam, şi încercam tot timpul să fiu copilul ăla de nota zece care îi cuminte şi care le face părinţilor pe plac, ca ei să fie fericiţi şi mulţumiţi. În principiu când ceva mă supăra sau când maică-mea încerca să fie mai severă cu mine, atuncia mergeam şi mă plângeam la taică-miu şi-atuncia se rezolva cumva problema.

(59) Eu, tata pentru mine nu mai există. Îl respect, tot respectul pentru el, dar m-am obişnuit, mi-am făcut o idee că nu mai îi mama şi tata. Acum tata nu mai există pentru mine . . . Ştii că pe de-o parte... că-l respect, nu vreau niciodată să-i vorbesc urât sau să-i zic ceva de urât. Că na, mi-o dat viaţă, nu poţi să vorbesti urât la părinţi! Dar mi-am făcut obişnuinţa asta că eu tata... pentru mine nu mai este! Deci eu, pentru mine, numa' mama am!

(60) Probabil la un moment dat, dar asta ştiu, după ce a venit mami acasă şi au început scandalurile şi-aşa, eram foarte tensionată. Ştiu că am vorbit odată cu X, şi-mi spunea, când ne-am întâlnit în facultate, şi a zis: „Măi, aveai un timp, o perioadă când erai, foarte aşa, nervoasă, dacă cineva se... îţi lua caietul de pe bancă şi asta, ziceai: «Nu, lasă-l, e-al meu, nu pune mâna!»” Ştii? Eram aşa, foarte posesivă. Probabil, nu ştiu, eram aşa posesivă din cauza... ă, nu ştiu; ce se întâmpla acasă. Şi probabil fiind obişnuită în atmosfera aceea stresantă unde se ţipa tot timpul, aveam şi eu tendinţa să ţip, să-mi protejez lucrurile, aşa...

(61) o relaţie mai matură, de ajutor reciproc, de susţinere, de înţelegere.

(62) Ă, i-aş spune că o iert pentru dificultatea în care m-a pus, vrând, nevrând. Şi… c-o iubesc! [Râsete]

(63) În primul rând cred că îi respect mai mult decât [Râsete] prima (It.> *înainte*).

(64) Orice-am avut de... ce-am avut... când am avut... mereu am vorbit cu ea şi i-am zis... i-am explicat mereu când am avut ceva care nu mergea sau nu mă simţeam bine.

Mereu i-am vorbit, și-am întrebat-o și... am avut... cu ea am avut un raport un pic mai deschis, nu? Deci orice problemă, vorbeam cu ea.

(65) După care, în schimb, toate prejudecățile astea față de cum m-ar fi primit italienii au fost destructurate imediat pentru că am întâlnit persoane foarte de treabă la facultate, chiar din prima zi, și s-a legat o prietenie care a durat toată... durata facultății.

(66) Ma gândeam c-o să scăpăm de toate... de toate greutățile . . . Ce-or fost în România . . . Da, mi-o plăcut foarte mult. N-am avut nicio problemă. După aia, mai târziu, o-nceput foarte mici probleme. Deci, nu erau probleme ca... ca-n fiecare familie, nu? Are problemele lui. Na, și noi fiind un pic mai răi; nu eram chiar cuminți; cu bărbatu' lu mama. Na, se mai întâmpla să facem prostii, nu? [Râsete]

(67) A fost ciudat în primul an. Da, a fost un an pasaj, destul de important. Pentru că brusc m-am sim... m-am trezit cu... să locuiesc cu părinții. Și mi s-a-ntâmplat [Râsete]... e o... un episod destul de semnificativ. Într-o seară m-am întors mai târziu. Ieșisem cu niște prieteni, și cineva m-a adus acasă cu mașina. Când intru eu în casă, era poate miezul nopții, nu era foarte târziu. [Râsete] Și-mi deschide mama și mă-ntreabă: „Unde-ai fost? Cine te-a adus acasă?" [Râsete] și am rămas surprinsă pentru că ziceam... în mintea mea era ceva de genul: „Ops, cine mă-ntreabă? De ce mă-ntreabă?" [Râsete]

(68) Adică încet, încet am început să redevenim ce-am fost înainte. Vorbim, ne spunem tot, discutăm... suntem pur și simplu ca două prietene.

(69) În principiu dacă copilul respectiv nu ajunge un drogat sau un bețiv sau fata să-jungă c-o anumită reputație, ă, se consideră că părinții au făcut o treabă bună și că a fost bine c-au plecat, c-au putut să-i ofere copilului un viitor mai bun. În cazul în care copilul ajunge mai rău, toată lumea critică și acuză. Ă, eu cred că la noi, plecatul ăsta de-acasă nu-i privit cu ochi foarte buni, pentru că ca și cum îți iei un angajament să faci un copil, și după aia îl lași oarecum în voia sorții. Și-atunci toată lumea judecă.

(70) Da, n-ai de ce să zici, bă, „Sărmanii de ei! I-au lăsat." Dar situația cum o fost... sunt situații când părinții se despart și încep să fie... să rămână doar cu un părinte, atunci da,

se poate să zici „Uite, sărăcuţii, or rămas singuri şi nu mai au mamă, sau nu mai au tată!” Ştii?

(71) un pic nostalgic.

(72) Am răspuns cum m-am simţit, având în vedere că, ţi-am zis, la noi situaţia a fost un pic mai rece, nu am fost aşa de ataşaţi.

(73) Mă simt ă... e aproape absurd, dar mă simt... mă simt chiar bucuroasă! Pentru că, na, vorbind despre argumentul ăsta, văzând evoluţia care a avut, şi... cât a însemnat pentru mine şi cum... îmi dau seama că puteam să elaborez toate lucrurile astea şi în alt fel; probabil negativ. Atunci văzând că totuşi astăzi sunt... ă, pe picioarele mele, sunt mulţumită, am o istorie care... care-mi place pentru că este a mea. E aşa şi nu o pot schimba şi nici nu vreau s-o schimb. Încerc să iau tot ce mi-a lăsat bun. Ei, şi mă simt ă... bucuroasă.

(74) În ultima perioadă am reuşit să privesc înăuntrul meu tot ce... ce-am avut din trecut, în relaţia cu ea, nu? Ă, tot ce-am spus până acum, că ea a plecat, c-am rămas singură, a... a facut spaţiu în mine şi unei supărări, unei... nu ştiu dacă avem un termen... nu e numai supărare. E un fel de... nu ştiu, un sentiment... în italiană îmi vine că... Tu ştii italiană, nu? . . . Rabbia. Collera . . . De frustrare, ceva de genul. Da, exact, ceva de genul. Şi... aveam sentimentele astea faţă de ea pentru că nu mi-a fost uşor, pentru că m-am simţit abandonată, singură... Ă, şi acum, crescând, am reuşit să elaborez toate sentimentele astea şi să o înţeleg şi pe ea. Pentru că îmi dau seama pentru ce s-a întâmplat toată... toată treaba asta. [Râsete]

(75) avem rar puncte comune şi na, fiecare îşi are stresu'.

(76) Ă, mi-ar plăcea să nu mai îmi spună de fiecare dată când vreau să fac un lucru, cum ar veni să mă ameninţe că: „Lasă c-ai să vezi tu când ai să ai copiii tăi cum o să fie şi cât de greu o să-ţi fie, şi-atunca o să vezi de fapt prin ce trec eu acuma!” Şi clar că... o să am şi eu, şi fiecare mamă la un moment dat are momente mai dificile cu copiii. Nu ştiu, în principiu mi-ar plăcea să am mai mult sprijin din partea ei în deciziile pe care le iau. În loc să-mi pună piedici sau să-mi spună că n-o să mergă bine, că n-o să fie bine, c-o să

vad eu c-o să fie greu și-o să îi dau ei dreptate, să-mi spună: „Da, o să fie greu! Eu o să fiu lângă tine! Sper să reușești!"

(77) Normal, motivele cele mai comune pentru care toți pleacă spre o țară străină, normal, este pentru muncă, pentru bani, pentru… și motivul pentru care am plecat și eu, sperând la o viață mai bună, la alte posibilități, normal. Știm foarte bine care este situația în România.

(78) Sincer mereu ne-am încurajat să facem ce simțim, ce vrem și să facem ce considerăm că ne face nouă bine, ce este spre binele nostru. Și dacă ar fi să spun ceva i-aș spune că dacă asta e dorința ei, dacă ea simte că asta vrea în momentul respectiv, să facă! Să meargă cum crede ea! [Râsete] pentru că ea știe și eu știu că treaba asta nu va mai dura mult timp și-atunci se va-ntoarce înapoi și va fi cu noi, și se va bucura alături de copii și bineînțeles, de nepoței [Râsete].

(79) Dar nu, tot timpul i-a plăcut să aibe grijă de copii, chiar dacă nu erau ai ei. Cel puțin la femeia asta o avut grijă de toți copiii ei.

(80) Na, vrea s-o ia înapoi după aia, dar n-o mai vrut ea să se ducă. Nu știu, ți-am zis, de ce-o plecat. Probabil ăla… aia era geloasă pe ea sau ceva de genul. Că ăla, italianu', tot o lăuda. Că: „Uite că muncește, că…" nu știu ce. Soția lu' italianu', aia, era mai fudulă așa; nu-i plăcea ei munca, că n-o muncit niciodată în viața ei.

(81) Da, dar na, aia o invidia . . . probabil de aia or fost ceva tensiuni.

(82) Pot să zic că fără plecarea ei… pot să zic că . . . am o altfel de gândire acuma.

(83) Adică dacă s-a întâmplat, a trecut, am mers mai departe. Nu, n-am stat niciodată să mă întorc, să analizez, și... m-am bucurat c-au trecut; le-am lăsat acolo.

(84) Măi, tu erai foarte... recalcitrantă. Nu putea nimeni să ajungă la tine, să vorbească ceva cu tine, să se apropie de tine. Nu mă lăsai să dorm în pat cu tine. Știu că o perioadă lungă de timp am dormit cu tati, că tu nu mă primeai în pat.

(85) Chiar imediat atunci după ce-a urcat în tren și-a plecat trenul, știu că ne-am întors înapoi prin parc, cum era drumul acela. Și am început, cred că, să plâng. Și nu mai știu dacă tati m-a luat în brațe sau nu, și am zis: „Dar o să vină repede, nu?" și el, nici nu mai știu dacă a răspuns ceva. Știu că am ajuns în față la primărie și era o nuntă, și-a zis: „Na hai să vedem mireasa!" . . . Și am stat acolo până a ieșit mireasa și pe urmă am venit sus, acasă. Și a fost totul, așa, normal, ca și cum mami ar fi fost la o tură de schimbul doi și n-ar fi fost acasă. Adică na, atmosfera aceea, când ea era schimbul doi.

(86) Am fost odată singură acasă și am răspuns, și am început să plâng, și-i ziceam: „Mami, hai acasă! Mami, hai acasă!" și zicea că: „De ce?" și ziceam: „Hai acasă că tati se poartă foarte urât cu noi!" Și-n momentul acela a intrat tati pe ușă și-am închis telefonul, că nu vream să știe cu cine vorbesc, pentru că nu ne lăsa să vorbim cu ea. Și plângeam. Și a început să zică: „Cu cine vorbești?" și nu vream să-i spun. Și tăceam. Și nu vream să-i spun. Și m-o amenințat că mă bate dacă nu îi spun. Și atunci i-am spus că am vorbit cu mami și m-a întrebat că: „Ce i-ai spus?" Vrea să știe neapărat ce i-am spus pentru că el știa de fapt cum se comporta cu noi, dar nu vrea ca nimeni să știe. Vrea ca cei din jur să creadă că la noi totul merge perfect; chiar dacă mami-i plecată, el se descurcă bine cu doi copii, poate se descurcă mai bine el singur cu doi copii, decât ei doi împreună, și noi. Și, m-a obligat să-i spun tot ce-am vorbit. Și i-am spus că: „I-am spus că te porți urât cu noi, și i-am spus să vină acasă!" Asta i-am spus.

(87) Cred că sunt foarte OK din punctul ăsta de vedere. Nu mai am nimic care să mă țină în loc, să mă facă să mă gândesc la ce s-a petrecut. Sunt foarte obișnuită că-i plecată și nu, nu mai are influență asupra mea ca atunci când eram copil. Am o cu totul altă viață. Am timpul care mi-e ocupat tot timpul, na, nu am timp să mă mai gândesc. Și m-am obișnuit așa.

(88) Dacă ar fi să mă gândesc, s-o iau așa, pas cu pas și să analizez toate evenimentele și să cântăresc, cred că foarte multe lucruri pe care le am se datorează faptului că ea a fost plecată și că a făcut sacrificiul ăsta pentru noi. Și da, într-un fel, da, într-adevăr este bine.