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TRANSNATIONAL MIGRATION AND FAMILY TIES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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I hereby declare that all the data used in this work, have been obtained and processed according to the rules of the academic ethics as well as the laws that govern research and intellectual property. I also declare that, according to the above-mentioned rules, I quote and refer to the sources of all the data used and not constituting the product of my own original work.

Abstract

There is a continuously increasing number of people who are migrating from poorer countries to economically and politically developed ones, known as the Global North, seeking a higher standard of living. Additionally, the tightening migration policies, particularly in the European Union and North America since the early 2000s, have led to a growing trend of families living separately, the so-called transnational families. Prior to the 1990s, migration was seen as a unidirectional flow from the home country to the host country and distance considered a barrier to connections among family members. Nowadays, migrants are perceived as transmigrants who create connections with their host country when at the same time maintain their ties with their country of origin, creating transnational spaces. This study aims to explore the impact of social ties and more precisely family ties on migration decisions, focusing on labor migrants. It seeks to examine migration as a transnational process and drawing on existing ethnographic studies, it explores how transnational family ties are sustained and their influence on migrants' experience in the host country. The main arguments are that social and family networks play a role in migration decisions, facilitating the process. Additionally, it assumes that migration, in turn, affects family ties, and the study aims to uncover the emergence of transnational practices between family members, such as communication and the preservation of cultural elements, in order to maintain a sense of belonging within the family despite geographical distances. The methodology that was used in this particular study was the comparative bibliographical approach. It was based on ethnographic accounts and research and the cases chosen were the Ukrainian transnational families in Italy and Albanian transnational families in Greece.

Key Words: transnational, family, migration, transnational practices, networks

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INTRODUCTION

The inspiration of this study on family ties and transnational migration comes from my background as a psychologist and family therapist, driven by my curiosity about how family ties impact and are impacted by migration. Moreover, my personal experiences shaped my interest in this area. During my early years, my family became transnational when my father resided in Italy for academic pursuits for a duration of four years. This experience made me acutely aware of the adjustments and strategies families employ when faced with migration. In our case, we witnessed significant shifts in our family dynamics. The extended family, including my grandparents and aunt, assumed more active caregiving roles to compensate for my father's absence. Additionally, there was a noticeable change in gender roles, with my mother taking on the primary breadwinner role while my father was abroad and these personal experiences fueled my desire to explore these dynamics further through comparative research. Consequently, this study serves as a means to address the myriad of questions that have arisen from my own experiences and to contribute valuable insights to the field of transnational migration and family dynamics.

There is a continuously growing number of people migrating mainly from poorer countries to the countries and regions of the world that are considered to be economically and politically developed, and have a higher standard of living and quality of life, the so-called Global North (Odeh, 2010). Additionally, the increasingly restrictive migration policies especially in European Union and North America since the turn of the millennium (Bryceson, 2019) have as a result a rising number of families living apart, approximately 193 million migrant workers and their families left behind (IOM, 2015). The fact that migration in the contemporary world is more visible creates the perception that families whose members live separately is a new phenomenon. This assumption is groundless due to the fact that families throughout the centuries have been separated for years or even decades. This separation could be a result of opportunities and prosperity seeking, like job, education, higher societal status or due to security reasons or economic necessity (Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002).

Before the 1990s, migration was viewed as an one-way movement from the originating country to the receiving country, and the distance between family members was viewed as an obstacle to continued connections (Baldassar, Kilkey & Merla, 2014) but it is not the case anymore. In recent studies rather than just the physical distance between families, the way that family members interpret the strength of their relationships affects how they perceive the experience of being separated from their loved ones (Sorensen, 2007). Access to information and easier transportation, as well as the profit-driven nature of the capitalist system, are major contributors to the rise of families in which members live apart. In the globalizing world of the twenty-first century, these families are trying to promote a sense of connectedness and mutual dependence, covering emotional but also material needs, and members tend to maintain their connections and ties with the family and the country of origin (Byrceson, 2019).

The methodology that was used in this particular study was the comparative bibliographical approach. It was based on ethnographic accounts and research especially for the comparison of the two cases but also on organization reports, organization websites and scientific articles. There were a couple of texts that functioned as guide in order to build the context of analysis and to base my main arguments. The first one is the article of Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch and Cristina Blanc Szanton (1992) *Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration: Race, Class, Ethnicity, and Nationalism Reconsidered* as it was one of the key anthropological articles which insert the notion of transnationalism which is a key notion for my work. The introductory chapter of Deborah Byrceson and Ulla Vuorela (2002) with title *Transnational families in the twenty-first century* gave me the main analytic framework of the transnational families as it focuses on their relational nature. Another key text for my study was, the multi sited ethnographic study of Loretta Baldassar (2007) as she let me translate this effort that transnational families make in order to maintain their ties in the prism of transnational caregiving, exchange of care through borders. In regard to gender, the article of Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo & Ernestine Avila (1997) gave insights for the transnational mothering that is one of the cases examined in this comparative study. Lastly, for the gender perspective in transnational migration a key text for this study was the *Who Cares for the Children and the Elderly? Gender and Transnational Families* of Yu-Kang Fan and Rhacel Salazar Parrenas that gave me the

insights for the gender perspective of transnational caregiving when children or elderly parents are the ones left behind (2018).

I analyzed transnational migration based on the work of Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller, and Cristina Szanton Blanc (1992), who in the late 1990s challenged the prevailing notion that migrants were disconnected from their country of origin. They underlined through their field research with Haitian and Philippines migrants in USA, that migrants continue to maintain ties with their country of origin, such as economic, political, religious, social, when in the same time try to have links with their country of settlement and build fluid and multiple identities, that process was called transnationalism and the migrants, transmigrants (Basch, Glick Schiller & Blanc-Szanton, 1992). In my study one of the main objectives is that in both cases migrants are transmigrants and try to maintain ties with their country of origin and more precisely with their family. All these notions will be examined in more details in the following chapters. Brycenson and Vuorela (2002) acknowledge the impact of transnationalism on families and focused more on the transnational families, defining them and highlighting their relational nature instead of just blood ties. They inserted the notion of *relativizing*, the ways that family members attempt to maintain their ties and it will play a crucial role in my study as I will analyze the ways that family members try to maintain their ties in distance. Baldassar multi-sited ethnographic study (2007) inserts the transnational care as a way that migrants and their left behind families use in order to maintain their ties and she mentioned that also left-behind relatives are transnational as also they try to connect with their migrant relatives, it is a reciprocal process. She argued that in spite of distance the majority of transnational families do continues exchange care, that is one of my arguments in my study, and that state policies affect the exchange of this caregiving that I also argue in my study.

For, the gender perspective I was based on Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila work with Latina mothers in the USA, explaining that mothering is not biologically predetermined but socially constructed and mothers who migrate attempt to maintain their ties with their children through transnational caregiving. They introduced the notion of transnational motherhood and highlighted that transnational caregiving is taking place through breadwinning and remittances but also emotional support and communication that are all the arguments that I will support in my study. Fav and Parrenas (2018) in their work with Taiwanese and Philippine transnational families, setting the question of

who cares for the children and the elderly, gave a gender perspective to the transnational caregiving and claimed that women are taking a greater responsibility in caring across borders and that gender dynamics change in family mainly when women are those who migrate, and only in this case other feminized networks are involved in the family caregiving. This argument will be partly supported by this study. These texts were chosen as key text mainly because they were based on ethnographic studies and they included the key word transnational.

For the Ukrainian case analysis, the main text was the ethnographic study of Olena Fedyuk that was part of her PhD research, her multi-sited ethnography took place from 2007 until 2008, with Ukrainian migrant women in Italy, Bologna and Naples. According to her study there is transnational caregiving between migrant mothers and their left behind children but the flow of care seems to be unidirectional from the migrant woman to the family left behind creating a sense of intimacy and her motherhood role overlaps any other identity. For the case of the Albanian transnational families, the main text was the multi-sited ethnographic study of Julie Vullnetari, that took place between 2006-2007 with 150 in-depth interviews with migrants in Thessaloniki and other European countries and their elderly parents back home. According to her research Albanian migrants and their parents left behind are engaged in transnational care practices.

The choice of the specific ethnographic examples, Ukrainian transnational families in Italy and Albanian transnational families in Greece also stems from my personal interest. Growing up in 21st century Greece, I have a significant number of Albanians in my social network who, for several years, had to live separately from their close relatives such as parents and grandparents. This sparked curiosity regarding the methods employed by these individuals to maintain their family connections. Additionally, my current interest in the Ukrainian case arose from the work with Ukrainian refugees in Greece following the onset of the war in Ukraine in March 2022. The host countries, Greece and Italy, are chosen not only because the first one is my country of origin but also because they share a same identity in regard to migration flows. Both countries belong to the buffer zone of Europe and they have received recently massive flows of migrants and refugees. That has driven to state policies that share a lot in common in regard to migration in general. While the present study focuses on economic migrants rather than refugees, I consider a future comparative study

between these two populations regarding the role of gender in migration decision-making and the utilization of transnational practices to preserve family ties to be highly intriguing. Furthermore, these two examples share similarities as post-communist countries experienced a massive migration during the 1990s and 2000s with families being separated by this migration. One last reason was that there was available material.

The current study aims to explore the significance of social ties and more precisely family ties in migration and how these transnational family ties are maintained by drawing upon existing ethnographic studies and how they affect the lives of migrants in the host country. The main focus will be on migrants who left their country of origin for labor purposes. It seeks to examine migration as a transnational process and investigate its impact on the familial connections between migrants and their family members in the country of origin, the ways that migrants remain connected with their families back home when they create new ties in the host country. The first hypothesis is that social and family networks influence migration decisions, the already existed transnational ties and networks can make the decision for migration easier. Secondly, it can be assumed that migration, in turn, affects family bonds with family members left behind and it is important to explore how transnational ties between family members emerged if they do. The study will explore the transnational practices employed by family members to stay connected, mainly communication and the migrant's maintenance of transnational identities to maintain a sense of belonging within the family, preservation of family values, traditions, customs, belongings.

At this point, in order to explore the impact of migration on family relationships, it is crucial to conduct a literature review on key anthropological concepts related to this topic. By doing so, one can better understand and analyze the role that migration plays in family ties.

1. TRANSNATIONAL FAMILIES

1.1. MIGRATION, FAMILY AND TIES IN ANTHROPOLOGY

In the current chapter, the focus will be on exploring the intricate relationship between migration, family, and ties through an anthropological lens. This exploration aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how migration impacts family structures,

the ways in which familial bonds are shaped and maintained during the migration process, and the cultural and social contexts that influence these dynamics. All these elements characterize the transnational family that is the main body of this study. By drawing on anthropological theories and perspectives, this chapter will shed light on the multifaceted aspects of migration, family, and ties, uncovering the complexities and nuances that underlie these interconnected phenomena. Through a thorough analysis of anthropological literature and ethnographic studies, this chapter will contribute to the existing body of knowledge and provide valuable insights into the interplay between these notions.

1.1.1 FAMILY IN ANTHROPOLOGY

The first step to analyze transnational families and the ways they manage to maintain their ties, is to deepen into the notion of the family itself as it is analyzed in Anthropology. There has been a tendency in Anthropology, until recently, to provide a universal definition of the family. However, given the diverse range of family structures in the contemporary world, it appears challenging to formulate a single definition capable of encompassing this plurality. One of the earliest endeavors to establish a universal definition was put forth by Polish-British social anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski. In his book *The family among Australian aborigines* that was published in 1913, Malinowski, describing the nuclear family, suggested that there are three fundamental characteristics that can be found in families worldwide. These are the reproduction, the insurance of the financial wellbeing of the family members and the transfer of the values and he gave importance on the emotional bonds between the family members (Yanagisako, 1979). His emphasis on the emotional bonds between the family members made his work important for my study. However, these features, which highlight the primary function of family as nurturing, common residence, and emotional connections, seem to describe the nuclear family model and fail to encompass the diverse range of family structures found universally. Later, when anthropologists worked on family and kinship, in the beginning of 20th century, they took for granted that family kinship was based on the rules of descent, marriage and common residence. Lewis Morgan characterized the family as a network of consanguinity rooted in a shared biological connection, blood. Blood family ties refer

to biological relationships between individuals who share genetic material (Peletz,1995).

This conservative point of view claimed that being a family is based on blood, origins and the past, common ancestors. This perspective emphasizes the importance of biological relatedness in shaping family relationships so individuals who share a same residence and blood. This perspective about the family as a structure based on recreation and genealogy changed in 1960s mainly due to the work of anthropologist David Schneider who was the first who introduced the double nature of family kinship as biological and sociocultural system of relationships. In his work *A Critique of the Study of Kinship* (1984), Schneider raised doubts regarding the prevailing belief in the primacy of ties formed through sexual procreation. Instead, Schneider argued that family should be understood as a system of symbols, rather than merely roles and statuses. According to his proposal, kinship relationships are defined and upheld through symbolic and cultural practices. This perspective challenged the notion that blood ties are the only or primary basis for family relationships, and instead emphasized the importance of cultural meanings and practices in shaping kinship relationships (Schneider,1984).

A family relationship can be based on blood ties, like in mother-child relationship, but every day practices such as feeding or bathing are those that validate the relationship and provide the symbolic perspective of mother-child's bond, the so-called care, that will play a very important role in the current study. Janet Carsten in her book *After kinship* mentioned that the kinship dichotomy between social and biological is not enough but she explored how the meaning that somebody gives to symbols, like feeding or even blood, affect the kinship relationships. She gave an example, of adopted persons who in order to establish relations with their birth kin have to rethink what kin symbolizes (Carsten, 2004). Consequently, it is not the feeding as an act but the way that somebody symbolizes this act as important for a relation.

From a Westernized perspective, there has been a tendency to make the family synonymous with the household (Byrceson & Vuorela,2002). However, Donald Bender underlines that family and household are logically distinct notions , highlighting that they are not synonymous. The main characteristic of the household is the propinquity as the members shares a common residence, there is a closeness in regard

to the location, a physical proximity. The family has more to do with what is called kinship, the relationships between the members no matter if they share the same residence or not. Consequently, Bender indicated that families must be examined through the prism of kinship relationships and the ties between the members and not in terms of co-residence (Bender, 1967) a direction that is a lot related to the current study. Anthropologist Sylvia Jungo Yanagisako, in her attempt to define family and household in her article *Family and Household: The analysis of domestic group*, defined family as a kin group when household can be a group of kin or non-kin group who share a common residence (Yanagisako, 1979, pp.163). What can be understood is that family can still exist even if its members live apart, as in the case of the forthcoming analysis on transnational families.

In the 21st century, the concept of family evokes a multitude of diverse forms and varied ways in which family members are interconnected. Given the intricate and multifaceted nature of families, it becomes challenging to depict them as a singular unit. Thus, it becomes imperative to introduce the concept of a family network. Family can be understood as a social system that can be viewed through the lens of a network of social relationships. The term social networks was initially employed by anthropologists like Barnes in 1954 to comprehend social relationships within complex communities, noticing that even though there were inequalities in regard to class between residents in a Norwegian region, they gave emphasis on social equality in their direct interactions with family and friends (Wolfe, 1978). Consequently, it becomes crucial to delve deeper into the nature of relations and ties that family members have with each other and to elucidate their characteristics. Keith Hart (2000) in his fieldwork added in networks the dimension of trust that will be analyzed in detail in the following chapter.

Consequently, the question of defining family has become increasingly intricate due to changing patterns of living and simply identifying a domestic group or taking for granted procreation is not enough. In the upcoming subchapter, the nature of familial ties will be explored in greater detail. Modern families include same-sex partnerships, divorced parents living in separate households, and families with transnational kin relationships spanning continents and multiple households (Finch, 2007). While it is essential to acknowledge these various family forms to grasp the complexity and

fluidity of family dynamics, this study primarily focuses on families that lack a common residence due to the migration of one or more family members.

The current study will focus on the symbolic perspective of family ties through every day practices and behaviors between the family members. The ways that family members who share the same blood, and more specifically parents, attempt or not to maintain their family ties with their children, through distance. These practices are symbols of care and belonging that are core elements in families (Baldassar, 2007). But before we analyze what transnational families are, it is important to examine the main element that characterizes these families, migration. This will be done examining and analyzing what was called by Bryceson and Vuorela (2002) relativizing, which are variety of practices persons use in order to establish or maintain relational ties with specific family members. I argue that these practices intend to offer a sense of relativity, of being related that is very important for the families that are separated from the distance.

1.1.2 TRANSNATIONAL MIGRATION AND TIES IN ANTHROPOLOGY

Based on Elizabeth Horevitz's (2009) review of migration in Anthropology where she analyzed the main theoretical frameworks of migration studies in anthropology, she mentioned that in transnational migration the experience of migrant is central. A novel and effective aspect emerges when considering the theory of transnationalism and transnational migration. It surpasses the conventional focus on political and economic elements by encompassing social, cultural, and identity-related dynamics within the experiences of immigrants and migrants who traverse borders (Hoveritz, 2009). Additionally, cultural anthropologist Glick Schiller and her collaborators, in the introductory article of their 1992 compilation titled *Transnationalism: A New Analytic Framework for Understanding Migration* underlined through their field research with Haitian and Philippines migrants in the USA, that migrants continue to maintain ties with their country of origin when simultaneously building links with their host country. The core premise of transnationalism is that globalization has rendered borders insignificant, placing emphasis on the interconnected relationships of many migrants across national boundaries (Glick Schiller et al, 1992). This perspective enables researchers to understand migration as a transnational process.

While the concept of the transnational first emerged as a way of describing commercial and other organizations whose activities spanned national borders, in the early 1990s anthropologists of migration began to use the term to refer to other sorts of practices that they could see also crossed national borders (Baldassar et.al, 2007). It is worth noting that initially, familial transnational activities were regarded as relatively subdued instances of cross-border interactions with the main focus on transnational practices occurring in the public domain. However, as Vertovec highlighted in 2009, a significant portion of everyday migrant transnationalism actually occurs within families (2009). In the introductory chapter titled *Transnational Families in the Twenty-first Century*, Bryceson and Vuorela (2002) adopted a family-centric approach to examine transnational migration referring to those migrants as *transmigrants* because they endeavor to establish lives in the host country while simultaneously maintaining connections to their countries of origin, even when those countries are geographically distant. As a result, everyday migrant transnationalism is based on personal connections, involving the cultivation and management of close relationships across distances through various practices like remittances, communication, and visits (Boccagni, 2012).

However, it is essential to acknowledge the critical perspectives that scholars have expressed towards the theory of transnational migration. Some arguments posit that migrants have maintained connections with their countries of origin for centuries, primarily through practices like remittances. These critics contend that the transnational migration doesn't bring forth substantial novelties, except for advancements in communication and transportation technologies. Additionally, there is a suggestion that transnational activities may not persist beyond the first generation of migrants, thereby diminishing their significance (Kivisto, 2001). Another point of criticism pertains to the concept of transnationalism being viewed as an etic category. This means that the term transnational, although gaining popularity in academic circles, may not effectively capture the perspective of labor migrants themselves who usually describe their involvement with their home countries in terms of emotions like nostalgia, affection and loyalty (Boccagni, 2012).

However, despite the existing criticism of transnationalism, it remains the framework that best describes and aligns with the focus of this present study. It places a significant emphasis on the experiences of migrants and treats them, along with their families left

behind, as active participants in the effort to sustain connections across national boundaries (Hoveritz, 2009), recognizing the ongoing and transformative impact of migration not only on migrants but also on non-migrating family members and the communities where migrants reside (Baldassar, 2007). As emphasized by Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton in their fieldwork, migrants construct social fields and identities that bridge their home and host countries (1992). This concept closely aligns with the primary aim of our study, which is to investigate how migrants from Albania and Ukraine endeavor to maintain their connections with their families back home as a means of staying connected to their countries of origin.

1.2. TRANSNATIONAL MIGRATION, FAMILY AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXTS

What can be understood until this point is that our focus has been on transnational connections, particularly those that exist among kin. Given that transnational connections are established between multiple countries where family members reside (Brycenson & Vuorela, 2002), it is imperative to consider the contextual factors, particularly national and international policies, that impact these connections in various ways. The impact of state policies on transnational migration remains significant in regard to who migrates, who is not allowed to, and the transnational practices adopted between family members (Kilkey & Merla, 2014). The sustenance or cessation of connections within transnational families can't be examined only under the lens of the actions of individuals or families at the micro level of daily conduct but various contextual factors at the macro level must be considered too. As noted by Vertovec (2007) the aforementioned factors pertain to the institutional contexts, as well as national and international policies and regulations, serve to enable or restrict the transnational practices between family members such as the visits, remittances or object exchanges.

As previously mentioned, there has been a shift towards stricter border policies, particularly in the European Union and North America, since the beginning of the millennium (Brycenson, 2019). The tightening of border policies is of great significance, as highlighted by Majella Kilkey and Laura Merla (2014) in their research on Salvadorian and Polish migrants in the UK. They observed that state migration policies have a direct impact on caregiving arrangements among transnational family

members residing in both the home and host countries. They identified several key factors influencing caregiving in transnational contexts, including entry and exit rights, which primarily affect the ability to provide proximate care during visits, as well as access to the labor market and associated rights, which mainly impact the remittances sent to family members (Kilkey & Merla, 2014). Other factors such as telecommunications infrastructure, travel visas, and health insurance can also play a crucial role in the transnational practices between migrants and their families back home (Merla, Kilkey, Baldassar & Wilding, 2021). These policies play a crucial role in both the Albanian and Ukrainian cases and significantly influence the available caregiving arrangements for these transnational families, which is the primary focus of our analysis.

Furthermore, Merla, Kilkey, Wilding & Baldassar (2021) mentioned that social policy gaps in the home country can also affect the transnational practices that family members use, for instance the non-existence or weak welfare system in the home country may influence the importance of the remittances sent back to the family. Accordingly, gaps in the host country's institutional system, such as the lack of access in child care services may lead grandparents pay visits to migrants' children in order to take care of their grandchildren (Merla, Kilkey, Baldassar & Wilding, 2021). If a host country does not offer a way for migrants to regularize their stay in the country, providing all the necessary documents such as residence permits and visas, as is the case for many Ukrainians in Italy and Albanians in Greece (Fedyuk, 2011 ; King & Vullnetari, 2012), it makes it more difficult for them to find a well-paying job in order to support their families back home and to visit home. The present study aims to analyze the institutional context of Greece, and Italy, with a focus on examining the potential relationship between contextual factors and the strategies employed by family members in preserving their transnational ties. By delving into the institutional contexts of these nations, this study aims to shed light on the factors that either facilitate or hinder the preservation of transnational family ties.

Despite the presence of strict international and state regulations in many cases, individuals from both familial and extended community make concerted efforts to maintain their connections with migrants, even when separated by great distances. According to Bryceson (2002), individuals who remain in their home regions have experienced changes in their daily routines, despite not physically moving. This

observation is also supported by Loretta Baldassar, who noted that individuals who do not migrate themselves, but actively work to stay in touch with their migrant relatives, also adopt a transnational mindset and engage in transnational actions (Baldassar et al., 2007). Schiller, Basch, and Blanc's (2005) work, *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments, and Deterritorialized Nation-States*, highlighted the importance of communication, remittances, material objects, and photographs in transnational migrant communities. The authors of the study pointed out the significance of not only remittances but also the exchange of commodities, including tapes, videos, and records, among Vincentian and Grenadian migrants in New York and their countries of origin. They mentioned that the act of exchanging material objects has a dual purpose, forging significant connections across borders, as well as serving as proof of the presence of transnational social fields. In this current study, the main focus will be on migrants and their experience of migration in regard to their attempt to stay connected with their families back home, but also voice will be given to the family members left behind for their experiences as members of transnational families and the practice they use to maintain their family ties (Basch, Schiller & Blanc, 2005).

Following all the above-mentioned ascertainments for the importance of the family in migration, what was appeared was the transnational family's literature that is a wide-ranging concept of family that extends beyond just nuclear families and incorporates inter-generational and intra-generational connections (Brycenson, 2019). These exchanges between the family members can be characterized as an attempt to maintain their family ties that as it has been mentioned above have a symbolic and emotional dimension that can be interpreted as care. All of these elements of the families living apart due to migration such as distance, care , ties maintenance will be analyzed in the next subchapter.

1.3. TRANSNATIONAL FAMILIES' DEFINITION

The reason that all the above-mentioned notions and processes have been analyzed in depth from an anthropological scope (Glick Schiller et.al, 1992, Schneider, 1984, Brycenson, 2019), is to understand the core element of this comparative study, the transnational family. The notion of transnational families or multi-located families has been firstly developed in European scholarship as a way of conceptualizing how families are affected by migration and how they live or not their transnational family

life (Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002). For Sorensen, transnational family actually is a family, that members share ties of blood, legal or social agreements and symbols but not all of them share a common residence (Sorensen, 2007 p.156-157) as they are separated by one or more national borders. Transnational families straddle two or more households located in different cultural and political settings (Bryceson, 2019). For this certain study, the main definition of transnational family that will be focused on is the one given by Bryceson and Vuorela in the introductory chapter of the book edited by them, *The Transnational Family: New European Frontiers and Global Networks*. The book presented the results of a conference on migrant families in Europe held at the African Studies Centre in Leiden in 1999 and they described transnational families as “families that live some or most of the time separated from each other, yet hold together and create something that can be seen as a feeling of collective welfare and unity, namely familyhood, even across national borders” (2002, p.3). The selection of this particular definition primarily stemmed from its focus on the relational dimension within transnational families. It places significant importance on familyhood, which entails a sense of connectedness, collective prosperity, a feeling of belonging, and the preservation of a source of identity for its members. Consequently, this definition places greater emphasis on the symbolic aspects of familial connections rather than exclusively concentrating on the biological ties that may exist among family members (Bryceson, 2019). Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004), in their concept of transnational social fields, note that individuals actively prioritize or disregard blood ties and fictitious kinship (p.1017). As Bryceson and Vuorela (2002) point out, the sense of familyhood can be attained by the act of *relativizing*, which encompasses the diverse methods family members employ to initiate, sustain, or modify emotional and material exchanges within their familial relationships (p. 14).

Another crucial aspect related to this definition is the concept of care, which can manifest through the strategies and practices that family members employ to uphold this sense of familyhood. This concept aligns with the anthropological findings of Loretta Baldassar, Cora Vellekoop Baldock and Raelene Wilding who, in their ethnographic research conducted with migrants in Australia and their elderly parents residing in Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and Singapore (2007), identified a phenomenon termed *transnational caregiving*. This phenomenon entails the exchange of care and support transcending geographical boundaries and national borders (p. 14).

They underscored the importance of comprehending the efforts undertaken by family members to preserve their sense of belonging and kinship ties, even when spread across multiple countries, while also acknowledging the impact of distance and borders on these relationships and the practices associated with transnational caregiving. They drew on Finch and Mason's (1993) analysis of a broad definition of care as involving emotional, physical, financial, and practical support, as well as accommodation (Finch & Mason, 1993).

Care assumes a pivotal role in this current study, as it serves as the overarching lens through which all transnational practices are examined. It's crucial to recognize that care isn't the sole responsibility of an individual rather, it hinges on relationships, is multidirectional like a flow among family members (Bell & Bivand Erdal, 2015). Additionally, it's essential to acknowledge that the roles of caregivers and care-receivers, are fluid and subject to change across different phases of life, family and migration cycles (Kilkey & Merla, 2014) and is usually centered on inter-dependency and the ones who are the recipients of care are the dependent members such as children, the elderly and those who are sick or disable who are unable to earn or provide for themselves (Brycenson, 2019).

The provision of care is contingent upon factors such as capacity, including access to communication technology or financial resources. Moreover, the specific practices of transnational caregiving are shaped by a sense of obligation which is closely intertwined with cultural constructs of duty and societal roles and responsibilities driven by culturally ingrained ideals regarding proper family (Baldassar et.al, 2007). But obligations and expectations are also related with the identities that are formed such as the reliable son or the good mother. This sense of obligation is often strongest between parents and children in comparison to one exist between siblings and in both cases chosen for this certain study, the main ties explored are those between parents and children (Brycenson, 2019). For this reason, many times transnational families are rejected and perceived as the wrong kind of family, due to their lack to provide proximate care (Fan & Parrenas, 2018). According to Rhacel Salazar Parrenas and Yu-Kang Fan in their fieldwork with Philippine migrant fathers and mothers who have left behind their children and Taiwanese migrants who have left behind their elderly parents a question that is raised is "Who cares for children and elderly?" (Fan & Parrenas, 2018). This question will play a crucial role in this current study, as in the case of

Ukrainian migration in Italy children are those left behind and in Albanian case, elderly parents. In the context of this study, I aim to investigate whether specific cultural obligations exist in Ukrainian and Albanian context in regard with the provision of care and if there is a mutual exchange of support and care among family members in these two cases, Ukrainians and Albanians, or if there is an asymmetry in the caregiving dynamic.

I have previously examined the significance of relationships within transnational families (Brycenson & Vuorela, 2002) and the central role that care plays in sustaining familial bonds (Baldassar, 2007). An intriguing question that arises is whether the act of migration can be viewed as an expression of care on the part of migrants toward their families. As mentioned earlier, in numerous instances, migration represents a response to global inequality and a quest for improved life prospects. It is worth noting that migration decisions often involve the entire family rather than being individual choices, with migrants taking risks to enhance the well-being of their families. Consequently, their migration tends to be a strategy aimed at safeguarding the prosperity of the family unit rather than an individual endeavor (Brycenson, 2019). This holds true for numerous labor migrants, as observed in many studies, when questioned about their reasons for migrating, it is frequently articulated that their primary motivation is to provide support to their families in their country of origin (Madianou & Miller, 2012; Fedyuk, 2011; King & Vullnetari, 2012). In these instances, the emotional and symbolic dimensions of familial bonds can be construed as an expression of caregiving, where migration itself is regarded as a manifestation of care. In the ethnographic research conducted by Madianou and Miller (2012), they investigated the significance of technology and social media in facilitating communication and preserving family connections among Philippine migrant mothers in the United Kingdom, who have left their children behind. In their research, some reasons given by the migrant mothers for their decision to migrate was to improve their families' life covering the education cost of their children or gaining money in order to buy to family an apartment. The endeavor of constructing a house is often intertwined with the desire to uphold connections, not just with family in the homeland but also with the broader community and the country of origin. Simultaneously, it serves as a symbol of social mobility resulting from migration, signifying the accomplishment of a successful migration (2012)

Except of the role that family plays in the decision-making stage, as it was mentioned above migration doesn't come to an end with the settlement of the migrant to the host country but migrants continuously attempt to keep contact with their kin group and vice versa (Kilkey & Merla, 2014). Justyna Bell and Marta Bivand Erdal in their ethnographic study involving Polish migrants in Norway made a distinction between transnational family practices and transnational family identifications in order to explain the ways of doing family. The transnational practices refer to concrete cross-border actions, such as remittance sending, visits, or using communication tools, which clearly contribute to leading a transnational family life. On the other hand, family identifications such as political and religious beliefs, gender dynamics in the family, maintenance traditions encompasses more abstract aspects like emotional bonds, processes of identity formation, and the negotiation of a sense of belonging. Although intangible, these elements are also integral to the dynamics of transnational family life (Bell & Bivand Erdal, 2015) and it will be interesting to explore the ways that doing family is formed in the case of Ukrainian in Italy and Albanians in Greece.

An Intriguing area of this study as it was mentioned above, would involve examining the initial impact of family ties and networks on migration decisions, followed by an exploration of the strategies employed by transnational families to maintain or sever those ties. This becomes particularly relevant in the 2^{1st} century, given the significant advancements in communication and transportation technologies. At the next subchapter, will be analyzed if the decision to migrate can be affected by family networks both in host and home country.

1.4. THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY NETWORK IN THE MIGRATION PROCESS

Migration, according to Charles Tilly, is a networked phenomenon so networks can play an important role in migration process (Tilly, 2007). Tilly, in his research, introduced the concept of trust as a fundamental element in relying on social networks. In this context, it's worth referencing Keith Hart's fieldwork conducted with the Frafras, a group of northeastern Ghanaian migrants living in the capital city, Accra. Frafras primarily resided in informal settlements, such as Nima, and were actively involved in the informal economy. Hart observed that trust played a central role in the economic transactions of Frafras. Instead of relying on legal contracts, their economic agreements

were primarily built on trust, which was nurtured through mutual knowledge, shared experiences and emotional bonds (Hart, 2000) and they based their economic prosperity on trust networks as in the research of Ticanese migrants in New York

In Charles Tilly's study on Ticanense migrants in New York, where he explores the connection between network and trust, trust plays a significant role and trust networks are complex interpersonal relationships primarily characterized by close connections. Within these networks, individuals entrust significant and valuable for them assets and endeavors to the potential risks associated with the misconduct, failure, or mistake of others. It signifies that future migrants rely on information and advice provided by individuals in the host country, and their families back home trust that the migrant will fulfill their obligation of care through transnational practices. This mutual obligation forms an integral part of networked migration (Tilly, 2007). Family network not only constitutes a support environment for migrants but they also provide a motivational source for migration. That means that family itself is present from the outset of migration, the decision-making process as it was mentioned above (Bryceson, 2019). I argue that trust plays an important role to the reliance in networks both in the case of Ukrainian and Albanian migrants.

It was only in the latter part of the 20th century that Boyd (1989) recognized that decisions for migration are influenced by the existence and participation in social networks that link people in different locations (Boyd, 1989) and more importantly the existence of familial networks. As highlighted in the ethnographic research conducted by Madianou and Miller, it was revealed that all of their Philippine migrant participants had at least one family member living abroad. This familial connection played a pivotal role in their choice of destination, facilitating their migration and also legitimizing their decision to depart (Madianou & Miller, 2012, pp. 45). Transnational family ties and networks can play a role to the decision to migrate and then migration itself can alter the structure and organization of families as the absence of a family member can result in increased involvement from extended family network, such as uncles, aunts, and grandparents, in caregiving responsibilities for children or elderly parents (Fan & Parrenas, 2018) and migrants easier decide to migrate when there is familial network that could take care of their children back home during their absence (Madianou & Miller, 2012). This can transform the family's internal dynamics, affecting the division of labor and responsibilities within the household (Guendell Rojas, Saab & Taylor,

2013) and will be discussed in further details in the next chapter under the prism of the gender dimension

In the particular case studies, Albanian migrants in Greece and Ukrainian migrants in Italy I argue that the involvement of family networking can significantly impact the overall journey of migration for individuals or multiple members of a family. The presence of a familial network in the home country or other nations may influence the choice to migrate. Having a person with whom one shares a close bond and has connections can facilitate the process of moving to a different country. Additionally, knowing that there is a family network in the country of origin can provide a sense of relief and trust, especially when it comes to the care of one's children or older parents like in the cases that I will analyze.

1.5. TRANSNATIONAL FAMILY PRACTICES – DOING FAMILY

Having extensively explored the definition of transnational families, the pivotal role of caregiving in upholding family bonds, and the influence of existing family networks on decision-making, it is now pertinent to shift our focus to the primary subject of this study, the transnational caregiving practices adopted by migrants and their family members back home to preserve the sense of familyhood. As previously emphasized, Brycenson and Vuorela's concept of relativizing encompasses the various strategies employed by separated family members across national borders to maintain their connections (Brycenson & Vuorela, 2002). The entire study is based on a relational perspective of families, aligning with Morgan's view of family life as a series of actions, doing family, rather than mere roles or statuses, mothers or fathers. Instead, family members engage in activities such as mothering and fathering in their everyday lives, contributing to the overall sense of familyhood described in Brycenson and Vuorela's definition of transnational families (Morgan, 2011).

Because this study specifically focuses on transnational families, the factor of geographical distance plays a crucial and significant role and it becomes intriguing to explore how migrants and the family members in home country navigate the various aspects of doing family, so to provide care and ensure that their connections remain strong. As the physical care such as feeding, bathing, and clothing may often be limited due to the geographical separation it is very important to explore the transnational practices that Albanian and Ukrainian families use in order to provide transnational

care-giving. The main transnational practices that will be explored in this study under the prism of transnational caregiving is communication through ICTs, visits, objects exchange, remittances and family identification maintenance.

Having in our mind that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has become a crucial topic in the study of transnational relationships Merla, Kilkey, Wilding and Baldassar in their article for key developments have highlighted the significance of ICT as a means for families to stay involved in each other's lives (Merla et al, 2021) introducing an emotional dimension in communication (Merla et.al, 2021) as families can feel the others through their voice (Madianou & Miller, 2012). Transnational families have a plethora of direct and indirect means of retaining familial contact, support, and caring relationships, thanks to more trustable and faster ways of international transport, internet communication, and global banking (Bryceson, 2019). However, communication through the ICT's involves a significant commitment of both time and finances, which is an essential factor affecting not only the transnational migrants but also their family left behind (Kilkey, 2014; Madianou & Miller, 2012). According to Baldassar (2007) there is an asymmetry in the obligation to communicate, that migrant is the one who is obliged to communicate more often but also asymmetry on the information shared as it is much easier for a migrant to gather a range of sources of useful information than for kin in the home country to obtain reliable information for migrant's life I argue that in both case studies, Ukrainians in Italy and Albanians in Greece ICTs are playing an important role in transnational practices and consequently in the maintenance of family ties and that these asymmetries on who initiates the communication and the information shared will exist too.

Even though, the importance of ICTs in doing family has been extensively analyzed they can not undermine the importance of face-to-face caregiving that can take place only through visits. In accordance with Baldassar's (2007) perspective, visits as a transnational practice hold great significance, as they provide a means for individuals to evaluate the welfare of their distant family members and as a migrant's mother mentioned "I made this trip and saw my daughter's life with my own eyes. I feel much better now" (*p.150*). Through these visits family members have the chance to express their sense of closeness, reassuring that they still know each other and their relationship is not affected by the distance (Baldassar, 2007), so they can strengthen the family ties. The main argument in this point is that in both cases, Ukrainians in Italy and Albanians

in Greece, visits will play an important role in family ties maintenance and it will be interesting to explore if both migrants and left behind family members will be engaged equally in visits.

Another way of communication between the members of a transnational family is related with certain transnational objects that either migrant or family members in the home countries send. These objects, such as pictures, letters and presents can be physically touched and bridge the emotional gap created by the absence of a loved person or place symbolizing the sense of longing and absence experienced (Baldassar, 2008). The act of touching, seeing, smelling, and hearing these objects, such as letters or audio messages, can make them powerful symbols of emotion and commitment (Kilkey, 2014). For migrant also these objects are a way to stay related with the family back home and create a corner that look like home.

Remittances also are part of the broader framework of continued communication between members of the transnational family and they have been called *currency of care* (Singh, 2010). Yeates and Owusu-Sekyere (2019) in their study with Ghanaian and Nigerian migrants in UK named the migrated family members absent providers when the care that they provide has become financialized (Yeates and Owusu-Sekyere, 2019, p.137). Singh (2010) suggests that these remittances have a great contribution to the improvement of the well-being and the financial ability of the family left behind but it has as a cost the absent provider. But also for the remittance senders there is the feeling of fulfilling the obligation as they have a sense of family belonging when at the same time the cost for them is personal sacrifices and financial hardships (Yeates & Owusu-Sekyere, 2019). As previously stated, in numerous instances, the act of sending money back home, remittances, serves as the primary motivation for a person's decision to migrate, aiming to improve the quality of life for their family members, particularly children (Madianou & Miller, 2012) In the event that a migrant fails to uphold this commitment, it can have adverse consequences not only on familial bonds but also on their relationship with the home country, as they would be perceived as untrustworthy or disloyal. I contend that Albanian and Ukrainian migrants are actively involved in transnational activities, which include sending various items and, more notably, remittances. In these practices, migrants predominantly assume the role of providers and asymmetries are present in this transnational practice too.

At this juncture, we will concentrate on transnational family identifications, the less tangible sense of belonging to a family than transnational practices. Transnational family identifications are the complex processes through which individuals and families maintain emotional and cultural ties across international borders. Transnational families frequently maintain cultural traditions and customs that serve as a connection between the host country and the country of origin, celebrating cultural holidays, speaking native languages, preparing traditional foods, or attending community events (Bell et.al, 2015). Through these identifications, migrants are trying to make the host country to look like home as it is mentioned in Al-Ali and Koser introduction, “homes are gendered spaces, inhabited by people of various social classes, different generations and political orientations with diverse experiences of previous and current homes and the movements between them” (Al-Ali & Koser, 2002 pp.60). Transnational family identities are dynamic and influenced by a variety of factors, including migration policies, economic conditions, and social networks (Glick Schiller, 1992). In the case studies that follow, I assume that both Ukrainian and Albanian migrants are trying to preserve their family identifications in the host country, creating a transnational identity in order to feel connected both with the family back home but also with their country of origin.

In the current chapter it was examined transnational migration, family and family ties via an anthropological lens. The most appropriate definition of transnational family for this study was given and also it was analyzed the importance of care in these families whose members live apart for shorter or longer periods. Then it was analyzed how this transnational caregiving (Baldassar, 2007) is expressed through transnational practices between family members and the role of institutional context in the choice of the transnational practices. And at the final part of this subchapter, it was analyzed how migrants attempt to preserve family identification through values, language, and customs in order to connect their home back to their country of origin with their new home in the host country.

In the second chapter, a gender perspective will be given to all the notions analyzed above. The influence of gender will be investigated in the migration process, decision-making, care responsibilities and the existence of social networks. Furthermore, the study will examine whether gender plays a role in the expectations families have regarding transnational practices and how migrants maintain ties with their relatives

left behind, especially migrant parents with their children left behind and adult migrants with their parents left behind.

In the fourth and fifth chapters of this thesis, the focus will shift to case studies examining Ukrainian transnational families in Italy and Albanian transnational families in Greece, respectively. In these chapters, it will be analyzed how family ties affect and are affected by migration and the transnational practices that those families use in order to exchange transnational caregiving.

2. GENDER IN TRANSNATIONAL FAMILIES

The preceding chapter conducted a comprehensive analysis of the fundamental principles on which the forthcoming comparative study will be grounded, migration, transnational families, familial network and the connections between their members. As it was mentioned in the introduction, this study will examine the influence of familial network ties on migration decisions and the ways in which migrants and their families utilize various approaches in doing family in order to uphold these ties. It is important to acknowledge that not all migrants and their transnational families across the globe adopt identical transnational practices or maintain consistent family identifications. Other factors, such as culture, socioeconomic status, the migrant's age and role within the family hierarchy, and, notably, gender, play significant role in determining the strategies employed by transnational families to either sustain or sever their familial bonds. While it is not feasible to consider all of these factors simultaneously, gender of the migrant emerges as a crucial aspect to be examined in this comparative study. From migration decision making, the available transnational network and transnational practices chosen, transmigrants continue to be influenced by gender and patriarchal customs within immigrant families and communities (Pessar, 1999, p. 63).

The key aspect that requires attention is the significant gender contrast observed between the two scenarios. In the context of Ukrainian migration to Italy, the predominant migrants were women, whereas in the case of Albanian transnational families in Greece, the primary migrants were initially men, with their wives and children following suit. As a result, it becomes imperative to take this parameter into account. Additionally, the gender dimension aligns with my research interests,

particularly in examining how it is portrayed in anthropological studies, specifically in relation to the topic of this current study, the role of gender in migration networks and how it contributes to the shaping of the practices employed to maintain family ties. However, it is crucial to initially analyze the role of gender in migration before delving into its significance in transnational families.

Regarding the topic at hand, gender is not merely a variable to be quantitatively measured. Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994) supports this perspective, asserting that gender relations play a pivotal role in shaping immigration patterns and in the same time the experiences and consequences of migration, in turn, reshape and redefine gender relations.

2.1. GENDER IN MIGRATION

In the 1970s and 1980s, scholars shifted their attention towards exploring women's experiences in this domain, leading to a significant paradigm shift and the emergence of a substantial body of academic research focusing on women's unique experiences in migration (George, 2005). The increased scholarly attention to gender and migration has led to the adoption of the term *feminization of migration* to describe this growing area of research (Pessar, 2003).

As this study focuses on Ukraine and Albania, both former communist states, it is crucial to explore gender and migration in the post-communist era. The collapse of communist regimes, as noted by Mirjana Morokvasic, brought a new phase in European migration as Eastern Europeans were allowed to leave for Western countries but also freely to go back to their homelands (2004). Departure didn't mean anymore a as there was always a possibility of return. In the aftermath of the fall of communism and the economic transition, the global migrant population increased significantly, reaching around 155 million by 1990, constituting nearly 3 percent of the world's population. Many individuals in the region migrated due to the collapse of communism and the ensuing economic changes. After 1989, the predominant trend in European migrations shifted towards cross-border movement for employment opportunities and short-term stays (Wallace & Stola, 2001). Migration emerged as a strategy to address inadequate income and counter the deterioration of social conditions in home countries. In contrast to the earlier South-North labor movements, which were predominantly male-

dominated in the 1960s and 1970s, the post-communist transition witnessed a significant increase in the participation of women in migration. These women engaged in migration to explore opportunities, navigate new market conditions, or escape from the prevailing discourse of nationalist projects in their home countries (Morokvasic, 2004).

The pivotal year of 1990-1991 marked a significant transformation, transitioning Albania and Ukraine from socialist states to democratic state structures with liberal markets, and from Soviet-controlled population management to liberalized migration of people (Fedyuk, 2020). In the years of communism, both in the former USSR countries and Eastern European nations, workers enjoyed job security and social rights inherited from the socialist system. However, during this period, high rates of unemployment were prevalent, leading to situations where individuals had no income or received insufficient wages (Constitutional Rights Foundation). Any form of international migration, whether leaving the Soviet Union or going abroad, was viewed as an act of betrayal and was strongly discouraged. As a result, migration statistics were not made public. However, after the year 1991, the transition to a market economy brought about significant changes, providing workers with greater freedom and opportunities (Solari, 2010).

Regarding the gender dimension, the constitutions of socialist states enshrined women's equality in both public and family life. They introduced universal education and healthcare, ensured access to the workforce for all citizens, protected women's reproductive rights, and established state services to cater to various social care needs, including childcare and support for the ill and elderly. During this period, women's labor force participation was notably impressive when compared to Western countries (Massino & Penn, 2009). However, women tended to dominate low-skilled and low-paid positions, especially in sectors that were heavily affected by the widespread unemployment that followed in the aftermath of 1989. Furthermore, because state provisions primarily focused on industrial aspects, efforts to socialize certain family-related responsibilities, such as childcare, were not fully realized in most countries of the region. These shortcomings, coupled with the persistence of patriarchal attitudes, often resulted in what was termed a double burden for women. They had to manage both household responsibilities and work responsibilities simultaneously. In the USSR, even when both partners were employed, the time devoted to domestic work remained

unevenly divided between genders, with women spending significantly more time compared to men in 1970. But, it is important to note that some women in Eastern Europe considered this situation as normal, viewing the combination of work and family roles as multiple identities rather than burdens. This perspective provided them with a sense of independence and empowerment (Christian, 2020).

Post-socialist transformations in the Eastern bloc saw a common phenomenon where women retreated into domestic roles, partially as a response to the worker identity imposed on them during the socialist years. Francis Pine's field research with Polish women during the transition to a post-socialist era revealed a noticeable increase in the exclusion of women from the public domain (Pine, 2002). What stands out here is that while gender roles in socialist communities blurred the distinction between the domestic and public spheres, following the fall of socialism, this distinction resurfaced, often relegating women to the household with primary caregiving responsibilities. In this context, it becomes intriguing to explore how migration can be interpreted, particularly for women. Are they merely passive followers, as they were described in previous decades, or does migration allow them to maintain their previous position between the domestic and public spheres?

The gender reconstitution prompted by migration does not completely dislodge the gender inequalities in the household division of labor. This is evidenced by women's greater practice of transnational parenting and transnational eldercare provision. Parrenas (2008) mentioned women's migration stipulates the reconfiguration of the gender relations in transnational families, while the migration of men maintains them as they were prior the migration. This happens because the existing literature presents recurring linkages between motherhood and caregiving, and between fatherhood and breadwinning. Consequently, migration allows a man to better provide for his family, as far as he has access to potentially higher incomes in Western countries. This enables him to successfully meet expectations as a father or son breadwinner. While migration is a way to fulfil the ideal of good father or a good son, it is a barrier to accomplishing the ideal of good mother or good daughter which is linked with the caregiving (Souralova & Faviola, 2017).

2.2. GENDER IN CAREGIVING

Fan and Parrenas (2005) in their fieldwork highlighted that care, especially children caregiving and elderly caregiving is gendered. Women are bonded with the rest of family members through care practices when men are connected with the family through the provision of financial support and security. Participation, responsibilities, costs, and benefits of transnationalism are gendered. When mothers are those who migrate they engage in *transnational motherhood* when fathers engage in *transnational fatherhood* (Parrenas, 2008) and when adult children migrate leaving behind elderly parents they engaged in *transnational elderly caregiving* (Baldassar, 2007). In this current study the main focus will be on the transnational motherhood in the case of Ukrainian migrants in Italy and transnational elderly care in the case of Albanian migration in Greece. It was coined by Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo and Ernestine Avila (1997) to describe the transnational motherhood created by Latin American women leaving their children back home in order to work in the United States, becoming the primary breadwinners and taking on a role that defies traditional gender expectations. By leaving their children behind to care for them from afar, these transnational mothers betray the expectations of their family, relatives, and community, and they often have to grapple with stigma, guilt, or criticism from others, as it is the case for Ukrainian migrant mothers too as it will be explored in the next chapters. Therefore, it becomes essential to explore how transnational mothers establish and maintain ties with their children back home and their kin. For transnational parents, remittances hold emotional significance as well, as they serve as a way to provide for their children's nutrition, clothing, and education (Madianou & Miller, 2012; Sorensen 2007), just as they would if they were physically present, actively supporting and caring for them.

Regarding transnational elderly care, parents who remain in their home country and have an immigrant son tend to receive fewer interactions compared to parents with an immigrant daughter. Sons often justify their limited contact by delegating the responsibility of eldercare to women, assuming that it is the labor of daughters and daughters-in-law, especially in cases where cultural norms mandate that sons should look after their elderly parents, as is the situation in places like Taiwan (Fan & Parrenas, 2018). A similar pattern is observed in the Albanian context, where younger sons are

expected to care for their elderly parents but, in practice, transfer this duty to their wives, as will be explored in our case study.

3. UKRAINIANS TRANSNATIONAL FAMILIES IN ITALY

Ukrainian transnational families in Italy, will be extensively analyzed and the main text for this analysis is the ethnographic study conducted by Olena Fedyuk that was part of her doctoral research. Her research took place between 2007-2008 conducting interviews with Ukrainian labor migrants, mainly mothers, in Naples and Bologna who had left family members behind and in a later migration stage they brought at least one of their children to Italy. A part of her research was conducted in the western regions of Ukraine, specifically in Lviv and Ivano-Frankivsk. This involved participating in pilgrimages organized by the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC) community in Bologna, as well as enduring 30-hour drives in minivans from Italy to Ukraine.

Fedyuk's ethnographic study was selected as the primary text due to her assertions that migration to Italy represents a family strategy. It goes beyond a mere departure from home and employment abroad, evolving into a familial, cross-generational endeavor that introduces disruptions in family dynamics due to geographical distances. Nevertheless, family members actively engage in transnational practices in an attempt to bridge these ruptures. These transnational practices but also the experiences of migrants are affected by national legislations but also transnational networks. Another Fedyuk's argument that is very important for my research is that migrants and their family members who remained behind negotiate mutual but not equal responsibilities based on their age, gender and role in migration, and as a result the flows of care often become unidirectional, mainly from migrants to the non-migrating family.

3.1. UKRAINIAN FAMILIES

It's crucial to consider that Ukraine, being a post-Soviet nation, experienced significant social and economic transformations which had notable effects on the structure and dynamics of family units. In traditional Ukrainian families, father had significant authority making it a patriarchal structure, extended family network was the norm and

in many cases multiple generations shared the same residence. In contrast, during Soviet era gender equality was promoted in families and the participation of women in the workforce, challenging traditional gender roles. The Soviet government also implemented policies that aimed to provide social support and services to families, such as free healthcare and education (Gumenuik et al, 2021; Solari, 2014).

Understanding the development of gender dynamics during the post-Soviet period is crucial, as it likely influences migration patterns, the decision of who will migrate, and the establishment of specific transnational practices. As part of Cinzia Solari's field research that took place between 2003-2010 with Ukrainian migrant women in Italy and USA and their adult children back to Lviv Ukraine, there is a statement attributed to a migrant named Nadya in Rome. During an event organized by the Ukrainian Cultural Association of Rome where Nadiya was the main organizer, she opened the event giving a description of the Ukrainian family and the role of women in this. She described Ukrainian family as the Pillar of the Ukrainian nation and the Ukrainian woman had always a special role in this, teaching children the Ukrainian cultural traditions, religion and language. They are dedicated in family always placing their needs below the needs of their children and husband (Solari, 2014 pp.1825).

This speech was chosen because it highlights certain attributes associated with Ukrainian families, with a particular focus on the women within these families. The narrator likely discussed the role of women, given that she herself is a woman and, more specifically, a migrant woman in Italy. The description that Nadiya, a Ukrainian migrant woman gave to Ukrainian family in the context of this event could symbolize the bonds manifest through the mother's caring of her children and her spouse, prioritizing their needs over her own, and imparting to her children the values, language, and culture associated with Ukrainian families linked to Ukraine itself. I argue that this importance given to the role of parent and more precisely mother in Ukrainian families is playing a very important role in the expectation that society has in regard to the obligation of the mother to take care of her family and also to which extent they would sacrifice themselves for the prosperity of their family. As Solari continues, in contemporary Ukraine, the envisioned ideal Ukrainian woman is Berehynia, an ancient pagan goddess revered as the foundation of the traditional Ukrainian family, a symbol of Ukrainian national identity and as it was mentioned above in this family, the mother is a stay-at-home mother rather than the Soviet mother-worker, the father is the main breadwinner,

and a nuclear intact family was the norm that comes in higher agreement with the European family model (Solari,2014) . As per Fedyuk's analysis, the idealization of these conventional gender roles is intertwined with a nationalist agenda aiming to establish Ukraine as an independent state rooted in traditional, pre-Soviet values, in contrast to its historical association with the USSR (Fedyuk, 2012). All these aspects of Ukrainian family dynamics are significant because, as previously noted, the expectations of the proper family and the duties and roles in this are culturally oriented (Baldassar, 2007). This analysis on the Ukrainian family is important in order to understand the relations that are formed prior, during and after the Soviet era and consequently to better understand the way that migration affects these relations and if the gender, the age and the role of the migrant in the family plays a role in the transnational practices that are emerged.

3.2 UKRAINIANS' MIGRATION IN ITALY

Understanding the migratory patterns of Ukrainians following the dissolution of the Soviet Union can offer valuable insights into how it impacts families. This understanding can shed light on which family members are more likely to migrate and for what reasons. Ukraine underwent substantial changes during this period due to the decline of Communism, transitioning from a state-controlled economy to a market-driven one. This shift involved the privatization of state-owned resources, a decrease in real wages, and rising prices. In a comparative study by Ludovica Banfi and Paolo Boccagni (2011), which examined Ukrainian migrants in Italy alongside Ecuadorian and Polish migrants, Ukrainian migrants experienced high levels of unemployment, poverty, and increased social inequality as a result of these economic transformations after the collapse of Soviet Union in 1991 . These effects were particularly pronounced in rural areas and small urban centers mainly in the Western parts of Ukraine (Banfi & Boccagni, 2011; Fedyuk, 2012) . These economic shifts serve to underscore the primary motivations driving Ukrainians to emigrate, primarily driven by economic and employment prospects. As a consequence, Ukraine emerged as a significant source of emigration during the 1990s, with the peak occurring between 1994 and 2004, resulting in an estimated 4.5 million Ukrainian migrants worldwide (Ueffing, Adhikari et.al, 2023) out of 50 million in total population between these years, so the 1/10 of the total population. Consequently, Ukraine was recognized as a country characterized by mass

economic emigration, commonly referred to as *zarobitchany* (Montefusco, 2008). The term *zarobitchany* for men and *zarobitchanka* for women in Ukrainian language literally translates to “the person who earns money” (Fedyuk, 2012, pp.20) and reflects the economic perspective of Ukrainians’ migration.

Since 1991 Italy was one of the four main destinations for Ukrainian migrants (Vakhitova & Fihel, 2020) and they are one of top five immigrant groups since 2009 having around 225,000 residents in 2015 (European Commission, 2022) and this migration was characterized by a predominance of female migrants, with approximately 84% of all Ukrainians in Italy being women (Fedyuk, 2012). During the 1990s and 2000s, the influx of Ukrainian women migrating to Italy coincided with the growing demand for caregiving and domestic services that was influenced by other social factors, including Italy’s aging population, smaller family sizes with reduced reliance on extended families, and the increasing participation of women in the labor force without being able to take care of the household. Additionally, Italy’s longstanding lack of comprehensive welfare systems, for the daily support of children and the elderly, intensified the demand for caregivers, reaching approximately 1.5 million care workers by 2013 (Degiuli, 2016). According Cristina Montefusco (2008), a significant portion of Ukrainian migrants to Europe, including Italy, originated from Western Ukraine. The significant migration from western regions can be ascribed to the severe breakdown of industries in western Ukraine following the collapse of the Soviet Union. This led to widespread job cuts and a scarcity of chances for finding new employment (Fedyuk, 2012). The age distribution of Ukrainian migrants in Italy typically fell within the range of 40 to 60 years old, and they typically are mothers of teenage or young adult children or even grandmothers back home and this is probably the reason that it was characterized as motherly migration (Fedyuk, 2012) or grandmother-led migration (Solari, 2014). The main emphasis on the current study will be on mother migrants, as they are the majority migrating to Italy and this is one more reason that is mainly based on Fedyuk’s study (2012).

Institutional context played also an important role in this migration, as Italy has prioritized and open the doors to domestic and care workers by those who resided in the country irregularly in 2002 and 2009 (Fedyuk, 2020) and providing special entrance and work permits for care and domestic workers from specific countries of origin including Ukraine (Marchetti & Venturini, 2013). Nonetheless, the process of

regularization occurred at a later stage, with the majority of Ukrainian migrants residing in Italy without legal status during the initial two to three years of their stay. During this period, they faced restrictions on accessing legal employment, or gaining residence status, and had limited opportunities for travel between Italy and Ukraine (Fedyuk, 2012; Vianello, 2013). Attaining legal status holds particular significance for most migrants, as it opens up the possibility of traveling to Ukraine either for vacations or even extended stays. As emphasized in the theoretical section, these visits to their country of origin carry considerable importance for both migrants and their family members residing in Ukraine. They contribute to a sense of belonging, presence, and serve to strengthen family bonds (Baldassar, 2014). Therefore, it is noticed that, particularly during the first years, state policies could affect the transnational practices available for the migrants, restricting the visits which is one of the ways that transnational families have in order to maintain their ties.

But even though the initial institutional difficulties with the regularization and the entry/exit policy, Ukrainian migration can be considered as a transnational migration and this is one of the reasons that was chosen for this study. This transnational character emerged by the significant attempt and time that migrant women invest in maintaining connections with their families back. At the same time, migrant women were trying to make connections in Italy finding ways of establishing their new lives creating transnational social fields (Schiller et al, 1992) and this made them transmigrants (Brycenson, 2002). In Olena Fedyuk's ethnographic study with Ukrainian migrants in Italy, they were remaining connected with their families back home through a continuous investment of time, energy and money, they tried to combine their daily working tasks in Italy with their children's school schedule in Ukraine. A woman was crying when she went on the bus for a 3-month visit in Ukraine, and when the driver told her that in a few months she will be back to Italy she mentioned that then she would cry because she would have left Ukraine (Fedyuk, 2012 pp. 61). This is the case also in Vianello's research published in 2013 and based on in-depth interviews with Ukrainian migrant women in Italy between 2005-2008, for her PhD thesis and focus on circular migration. She mentioned that Ukrainian migrant women are doubly present both in Italian and Ukrainian societies. In Italy, they offer vital support to an inadequate welfare system, while in Ukraine, they continually devise strategies to overcome geographical

distance (Vianello, 2013). That is an example of the emotional connection that migrants have with both countries.

3.3 THE ROLE OF NETWORKS IN UKRAINIAN MIGRATION

In Fedyuk ethnographic study (2012) most of the interviewees, formulated their reason for departure as for “the sake of their children’s good”. Similarly, in Cristina Montefusco’s study (2008) with Ukrainian migrants in Italy who left their children behind and in Banfi and Boccagni fieldwork (2011) found that the main reasons that led them to migrate was the need for money in order to support the family for the payment of basic needs, cover children’s education, build or renovate a house and have a pension (Montefusco, 2008; Fedyuk, 2012; Banfi & Boccagni, 2011). In Tolstokorova’s fieldwork (2010) with Ukrainian migrants and experts in migration and gender issues a 49-year-old migrant interviewee who was living in Italy as a live-in careworker, mentioned that when she complained to her mother for the difficulties of her migration, her mother reminded her that her priority is her children and she is obliged to take care of them offering money for their food and their education. (Tolstokorova,2010 pp.190). So I argue that in this case migration as it was questioned in the theoretical chapters, could be translated as a an ultimate form of care and reveal very strong ties between family members.

Olena Fedyuk’s ethnographic study introduced a gendered perspective regarding Ukrainian women’s decision to migrate in Italy. She correlates this choice with the elevated likelihood of women, compared to men to gain legalization in Italy, as per the Decreto Flussì regulations requiring employers to submit applications for employee legalization. Women employed in the domestic sector tended to have more personalized connections with their employers, unlike men engaged in construction or seasonal work. Consequently, women in such roles had greater opportunities to secure legal documentation. As explained by participants in her research, there was a perception that for a man to survive in Italy, a woman needs to support him (Fedyuk, 2012 pp. 30). As it can be understood is that one of the reasons that mostly women migrated in Italy was that because of their occupation in domestic work, they had better chances to be legalized. Other reason that was referred to Fedyuk’s study as one for the decision of migration of women in Italy was the initial unsuccessful attempt of their husbands to become labor migrants to other countries, like in the case of Tonia a 45-years old

migrant woman in Italy for 7 years. She decided to migrate after the unsuccessful effort of her husband to be a labor migrant in Israel but one year later he proved to be insufficient according to her to take care of his family and he return back to Lviv (pp.36). That means that in many cases their migration was the last resort.

In regard the role that networks play in the decision making in Ukrainian migration to Italy, it seems that although Montefusco observed in her small-scale empirical study involving three families that new emigrants typically had a friend or contact in Italy who facilitated their arrival and assisted with finding initial housing and employment (Montefusco, 2008), this observation does not seem to align with the findings of Vianello's study (2013). In the early 1990s, as Vianello's research reveals, the initial pioneers often embarked on their journeys with limited information and they relied on fragmented information from friends and acquaintances about care work job opportunities for women in Italy. These first migrants played a crucial role in disseminating information about Italy to Ukraine as during their visits to their home country, shared their work experiences abroad, showing the benefits of their migration through property and expensive belongings (Vianello, 2013). The less prominent role of social networks within the Ukrainian migrant community is also evident in the study conducted by Banfi and Boccagni where the majority of Ukrainians relied on travel agencies or other intermediaries to assist with visa arrangements and to organize their travel and even in some cases initial information about the destination country was received from fellow women who were also traveling to Italy on the same bus (Banfi & Boccagni, 2011). Fedyuk observed that mini-vans from Ukraine to Italy, open parks, Sunday bazaars in Bologna and Naples parking lots, and the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church served as the primary sources for networking upon arrival in Italy. These venues provided newcomers with opportunities to socialize but also to have access in information about job vacancies or accommodation. Because of their personal connections at border crossing points, drivers of mini-vans established a network of trust that goes beyond, and sometimes bypasses, transnational family ties, facilitating the transportation of packages from migrants to their families in Ukraine. They offered personalized services, such as sending small packages containing medicine, letters, news, and messages (Fedyuk, 2012), forming a network based on trust (Tilly, 2007). This changed for the later migrants who had the whole information about the Italian

context , jobs and housing and many times replaced migrant relatives or friends who were going to retire (Fedyuk, 2012).

In regard to the network in the home country, it was noticed that in Ukraine, more than 200,000 children are left behind by at least one parent, a phenomenon affecting up to 25 percent of all children in certain regions (Migration Partnership Facility ,2021) Based on the fieldwork conducted by Banfi and Boccagni, particularly within Ukrainian transnational families, children in the migrant's home country are typically are taken care of extended family members such as grandmothers, aunts, and, less frequently, fathers (Banfi & Boccagni, 2011; Tolstokorova, 2010). This indicates that migrant women often rely on existing familial relationships in their home country when making the decision to migrate without their children, even though, as previously described, their children are usually in or nearing adulthood.

Thus far, it is evident that the primary motivation for Ukrainian mothers to migrate is financial, driven by the responsibility of providing for their families. This underscores the central role of family even in the decision-making process. Furthermore, it appears that while migrants depend on their family networks in Ukraine to care for their children left behind, they do not rely on similar networks in the host country, particularly during the initial phases of migration.

3.4 UKRAINIAN TRANSNATIONAL FAMILIES IN ITALY

The massive, feminized, transnational character of this migration was mentioned a lot by various media public and political discourses and described as a tragedy threatening not only the unity of the families but the integrity of the nation (Fedyuk, 2012) and it will be discussed in details later.

The preceding discourse enhances our comprehension of the form that Ukrainian transnational families may have following migration and how family connections are influenced. As my comparative research centers on transnational families, one of the initial steps was to reference the definition provided by Brycenson and Vuorela where are primarily characterized by geographical separation, yet the members actively strive and desire to maintain their sense of togetherness (Brycenson & Vuorela, 2002, pp. 3).In contrast, in a handbook published by the Ukrainian Academy of Science these families were called *distant families*, based on Fedyuk's interpretation from the

Ukrainian term, and the main characteristic given were lasting absence of one or several family members, conflicting relationships between the parents, lack of time to spend with child, mistakes in upbringing (Fedyuk, 2012). From this definition, one might infer that migration completely severs family ties, which contrasts with Brycenson's definition and appears to carry a somewhat accusatory tone. It comes with an agreement with what Fan & Parrenas mentioned in their work with Philippine migrant transnational families that many times transnational families are rejected and perceived by as the wrong kind of family (Fan & Parrenas, 2018).

It becomes apparent that the majority of Ukrainian migrants are mothers, highlighting the potential impact on familial relationships, particularly between mothers and their children, blood ties. As a consequence, in this case the family ties will be analyzed in the prism of transnational mothering (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997). The phenomenon of women migrating away from their families was a subject that frequently gained attention in Ukrainian media and was even discussed within the context of political campaigns. According to Fedyuk (2020), this migration was shown as a threat to established family norms, a disturbance to conventional gender roles, a subversive action undertaken by women, and a possible cause of intergenerational deprivation, wherein children are raised without maternal support. As previously indicated, the children who have been left behind were commonly referred to as social orphans or Euro-orphans in Ukrainian media, academic discussions, and political conversations. The term Euro-orphan was initially introduced during a round table discourse convened in Lviv and coordinated by the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church (UGCC) in 2006. The event under the title "*Children of Labor Migrants: Emerging Categories of Social Orphan*" had participants from the media, education sector, and local government. During the occasion, a topic of discussion involved the proposal to potentially revoke parental rights for labor migrants who had left their children in Ukraine for prolonged periods (Fedyuk, 2021). According to Cinzia Solari's research on Ukrainian migrants in Rome, women who choose to migrate without their families are seen by the Ukrainian society as deviating from the Berehynia ideal and accused of being responsible for various societal problems which lead to deterioration of the bonds in the family (Solari, 2014). Similarly, Fedyuk observed in her ethnography that public discussions often blame migrant parents, especially mothers, for neglecting their parental responsibilities when parents assert that migration is a way to fulfill their duty

of securing a better future for their children. However, they simultaneously grapple with the challenges of distance and the loss of intimacy with their children (Fedyuk, 2012). The current allegations against Ukrainian migrant mothers bear resemblance to the stigmatization, guilt, and condemnation experienced by Filipino mothers, as documented in Parrena's study (2005).

Through these public discourses, I understand that Ukrainian media supports that solely having blood ties is insufficient for being a parent, but a parent must validate their role through actual caregiving and presence. This is one of the reasons I selected the Ukrainian case for study, as it posed a challenge for all migrants to demonstrate that they and their families back home are actively maintaining their familial connections through transnational caregiving practices, striving to preserve a sense of family cohesion. Moreover, the considerable effort exerted by migrant Ukrainian mothers to counter accusations of being improper parents and to align with the expectations of their traditional parental role has, in my view, led them to heavily invest in maintaining family ties back home rather than establishing new connections in Italy.

To support this point, I will once again refer to Fedyuk's ethnographic study. In this study, the majority of interviewed migrants revealed that the most criticized Ukrainian women in Italy were those who engaged in relationships with Italian men without deriving any tangible benefits from these relationships. One 47-years old migrant woman who was living in Italy 6 years, for instance, expressed her hesitation to enter into a relationship in Italy due to uncertainty about whether she would still be able to financially support her children. When questioned about various aspects of their lives in migration, the most common response from these women was, "We are here (in Italy) to earn and send money back to our children" (Fedyuk, 2012, pp.200). The lived experience of Ukrainian migrant women is primarily linked to their role as mothers in their home country. In Italy, their emotions and priorities are centered around the understanding that they migrated for the sole purpose of earning money for their families, rather than seeking an improved their life or personal satisfaction.

3.5 GENDER IN UKRAINIAN MIGRATION

Fedyuk observed that both Ukrainian men and women held deeply ingrained beliefs about the qualities defining an ideal woman or man, influencing migrants' personal experiences and shaping their evaluations of success and failure in their migration

endeavors (Fedyuk, 2012). As previously discussed, there exists an expectation for women to fulfill the role of preserving traditional family values and passing them to the next generation. Women who are not following socially accepted norms, such as migrating away from their families, may face even harsher accusations of betraying their familial responsibilities (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994). In traditional gender roles, women are associated with the domestic sphere, responsible for tending to family needs, while men are traditionally regarded as the primary breadwinners. Consequently, in the case of Ukrainian migrants to Italy, there was an expectation for men to migrate in order to fulfill their role as providers, but actually women were the ones who did (Fedyuk, 2012; Tolstokorova, 2010 ; Vianello, 2013). Women would only migrate to Italy if their husbands had proven to be incapable of providing for the family (Fedyuk, 2012). Again a part of the interview of 45-years old Tonia is important to be presented, “I think it’s very wrong that a woman has to leave. But if you have a man, who cannot put together things, and cannot advance his family even a bit, a woman has to take everything into her hands and help her family” (Fedyuk, 2012, pp.36). From this perspective, it can be inferred that men face accusations regarding their incapacity to provide, and probably this is the underlying cause of tension in spousal relationships, which may emerge as early as the pre-migration phase. In Vianello’s study on circular migration in Italy, which involved a secondary analysis of interviews with 12 Ukrainian migrants comprising both men and women, one explanation offered for this apparent paradox was that women can more readily secure employment in Italy than men due to the nature of available job opportunities, particularly in the care sector (Vianello, 2013) and also as it was mentioned, it was easier for them to secure legalization (Fedyuk,2012).

This chapter primarily focuses on gender dynamics, and an additional fieldwork study conducted by Tolstokorova, which I will draw upon, delves into migration and gender issues. In her research, Tolstokorova contends that while Ukrainian migration can potentially alter gender roles from the outset, with women assuming the role of breadwinners, its primary impact is on mothers who take on the responsibilities of being breadwinners and providers. This leads to an increase in their familial obligations without necessarily empowering them (Tolstokorova, 2010). According to Fedyuk, in this migration the concept of motherhood, therefore, takes on a dual role, serving not only as a basis for accusations against women but also as a narrative employed by

migrant women themselves to justify their actions and strategies through their maternal sacrifices (Fedyuk, 2012), as observed in Tylduk's study (2015). Referring to Parrenas' fieldwork on familial roles among Filipino migrants, it becomes evident that, although community representatives often uphold strict gender boundaries for mothering and fathering, they are more flexible in their concepts of mothering than fathering. This implies that men are less able to cross these gender boundaries, whereas women can assume a wider range of responsibilities (Parrenas, 2005, pp. 45). That comes in accordance with what Fedyuk mentioned that women's responsibilities are not restricted to the nurturing of the children but after migration they are taking the primary responsibility of family's financial wellbeing but also to preserve their marriage in order to stay intact. Having in our mind also the description given above for the Ukrainian family and the role of women to put children's and husband needs over their needs I argue that the expectations in regard the maintenance of transnational family ties are extremely high for Ukrainian migrant women from the society and the rest of the family.

Migrating mothers often strive to become what Tolstokorova describes as *super moms*, performing all the functions of emotional and material provision, albeit from a distance. Parrenas refers to this phenomenon as creating "contradictory constructions of gender" (2005, pp.119), wherein migrant mothers take on the breadwinner role traditionally associated with males without relinquishing any of the traditionally female roles as nurturers within their families (Fedyuk, 2012). Tolstokorova further elaborates that there are changes in the gender roles of fathers concerning their caregiving responsibilities, but these changes are temporary and contingent upon their wives' migration. Once the family is reunited, the expectation is that the traditional gender roles will be reactivated (Tolstokorova, 2010). Upon their return to Ukraine, women often face the choice of reverting to the traditional gender roles they had before migration or experiencing marital dissolution because they are unwilling to readjust to these traditional roles, while their husbands are unwilling to embrace their new roles as breadwinners (Tolstokorova, 2010).

What we can understand from this part of the case study is that in Ukrainian migration to Italy there are changes in gender roles which are temporary. In many cases there is a sense of men's failure to fulfill their duties at their families as women are forced to become the main breadwinners and that women even though undertake the role of breadwinner they are not freed from the role of intensively take care of the family, as

super-moms (Fedyuk,2012). I argue that in this context spousal ties are more possible to decline when the main focus of the migrant is to maintain ties with their children. At this part it is important to explore through which transnational practices and preservation of specific family identifications Ukrainian women keep the ties with their families back home.

3.6. TRANSNATIONAL FAMILY PRACTICES - DOING FAMILY

This subsection of the case serves as the primary foundation for my central argument, which posits that Ukrainian migrant women, in the majority of cases, invest significant effort in preserving their connections with family members back home. This assertion is substantiated through an examination of various transnational caregiving practices. These practices encompass both the strategies employed within transnational family dynamics to reinforce the concept of doing family as elucidated in the theoretical framework, and the family identifications that serve to foster a sense of belonging among family members, particularly the migrants (Bell & Bivand Erdal, 2015). Fedyuk's fieldwork characterizes Ukrainian migration as transnational, as migrant women effectively manage to handle their daily activities, simultaneously tending to their work-related responsibilities in Italy and supervising their children's school activities in Ukraine. Some women, for instance, made multiple calls a day to ensure their children have received proper meals and are dressed warm and nicely (Fedyuk, 2012). As Baldassar has highlighted on numerous occasions, migrants endeavor to efficiently manage their time and resources to fulfill these caregiving obligations (Baldassar, 2008). Furthermore, Banfi and Boccagni affirm that Ukrainian migrant women maintain connections with their left-behind children through remittances, long-distance communication, and periodic visits to their home country (Banfi & Boccagni, 2011). Given the significance of these transnational practices to this particular study, especially in their symbolic capacity as indicators of familial ties, they will be subjected to more detailed analysis, commencing with an examination of remittances, which represent the primary impetus for this migration.

In the comparative study conducted by Banfi & Boccagni, the predominant rationale for their migration, as voiced by most interviewees, was the vital role played by remittances in sustaining their families' daily livelihoods. This sentiment was echoed by participants in Fedyuk's ethnographic study as well (Fedyuk, 2012). These

remittances serve a multifaceted purpose, encompassing expenses related to housing, children's education, healthcare and special events. They may also be directed towards supporting the migration of other family members or even offered as loans to prospective migrants. The amount of remittances sent is closely tied to the continued presence of dependent children in the home. Typically, migrant women send these remittances to the individuals caring for their children, thereby ensuring the well-being of the children and often the caregiver as well (Banfi & Boccagni, 2011).

I contend that remittances constitute the primary means of connection between migrant women and their family members left behind, and this underpins the justification for Ukrainian mothers' migration. They embarked on this journey for the betterment of their children, for their well-being, and the principal method of substantiating this commitment is through remittances. As Singh mentioned through remittances migrants have a feeling of fulfilling the obligation take care of the family and they have a sense of family belonging (Singh, 2010). Stopping to send remittances implies a failure to fulfill their maternal role, and their migration can no longer be seen as a means of securing family prosperity. At that point, accusations that they left solely for personal gain could gain credence, validating the public discourse that stigmatized them. In this context, remittances serve as the foremost measurable indicator of the continuity of family ties.

However, economic remittances do not stand alone as the sole resource exchanged by Ukrainian migrants. In this particular context, the exchange of physical objects and photographs plays a significant role, with Fedyuk's study shedding light on this form of exchange. According to Fedyuk's research (2012), minivans in Italian parking lots were regularly laden with items and photographs that Ukrainian migrants sent back to their families in Ukraine and named these objects, objects of care, providing emotional and other types of support across the borders and as it was mentioned in the theoretical chapters, the specific contents of these packages were not as crucial as the emotional resonance of the objects themselves, which could be touched, smelled, giving a sensory connection among family members (Kilkey, 2014). The exchange of photographs served as a valuable tool for showing the flow of care, and how migrants' families strive to maintain transnational connections. Moreover, these photographs are thoughtfully selected by Ukrainian migrants to perpetuate the image of the perfect motherhood, diligent migrant, and caring family amidst separation (Fedyuk, 2012).

What is need to be underlined is that Fedyuk mentioned that there is an asymmetry in the infrequency of packages sent to migrants from their families back home with minibus leaving Italy back to Ukraine overloaded with goods and just a few packages to be sent from Ukraine to Italy. In some instances, migrants requested the drivers to buy items from Ukraine rather than their family members, as illustrated in Fedyuk's study (Fedyuk, 2012, pp 69). Additionally, family members often possess limited knowledge or understanding of the experiences of their migrant relatives in Italy. Migrants' homes are adorned with photographs from their families, their homeland, and Ukraine, creating a semblance of Ukrainian culture within their apartments. In contrast, it is rare to find a photograph of the migrant relative in home back to Ukraine. From an emotional perspective, one could surmise that this disparity may stem from the symbolic representation of the absence felt by family members (Baldassar, 2008). Dealing with this absence on a daily basis can be a challenging task, particularly for the children left behind.

These disparities in maintaining connections within transnational families often result in the neglect and oversight of the lived experiences of migrants. It appears that the responsibility for upholding these connections with the family back home falls primarily on the migrants themselves. They are expected to demonstrate their interest in the events unfolding in Ukraine. However, when it comes to sharing their own experiences, migrants are often compelled to portray their time and life in Italy as a static existence, where life is just connected to work, and the only that matters is the separation from the family (Fedyuk, 2012). For instance, as illustrated in Fedyuk's study, a migrant woman maintained contact with all her relatives in Ukraine, remaining intimately informed about every facet of their lives. Astonishingly, her family members were unaware that Valentina had gotten married and became a widow during her time back in Italy (Fedyuk, 2012, pp.72). Part of this imbalance can be attributed to the inherent difficulty for family members who have stayed behind to envision the realities of life in the host country of migration (Carling, 2008).

On the flip side, from the migrants' perspective, the images sent by their families back home serve as a visual representation of the time that has elapsed since their departure, showcasing the changes that have occurred in their absence and the family's overall progress adding a sense of normalcy in life in Ukraine (Fedyuk, 2020). Furthermore, the exchange of material items, seen as tokens of dedication, love, and familial unity,

reassures migrants that while they may be sacrificing their presence at home, the significance of their migration for the family should not be doubted. While migrants labor abroad, their families take care of the home in country of origin, ensuring that when the family is eventually reunited, the sacrifice of separation (Tyldum,2015) will not have been in vain.

As it has to do with the communication through ICTs , much like the case of Madianou's research on Filipino migrant mothers in the UK and their children left behind (Madianou & Miller, 2012), Ukrainian mothers have found it easier to maintain communication with their family members back home thanks to information and communication technologies (ICTs). The availability of free internet communication platforms such as Skype and various chat programs, reasonably priced phone calls from Italy to Ukraine, and the widespread use of cell phones enable individuals to stay virtually connected at any given moment and improved the communication between transnational families (Fedyuk, 2012). As outlined in Tolstokorova's study (2010), migrant women made diligent efforts to stay connected with their families, even starting from the very first day of their migration. One interviewee aptly stated that "I bought my mobile as soon as I came here, so I call home very often. I learned how to use Internet as well, since we have free access to Internet here". On the other side, the *Children Left Behind by Labour Migration* (CASTLE) project, that aimed at improving child protection frameworks and migration-related policies in the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, and addressing the social and legal repercussions of labor migration within transnational families, it has been observed that Ukrainian transnational families faced constraints in online communication. This is primarily because, as non-EU citizens, they lack access to free roaming services and mobile internet connectivity from their home country (Migration Partnership Facility, 2021).

All women interviewed by Banfi & Boccagni were used to calling their family, including their children and caregivers, daily to weekly. Most moms tend to purposely block out or hide their life circumstances, especially their struggles, when talking with their family (Banfi & Boccagni, 2011). Tolstokorova's research showed that ICT can also be used to force migrant mothers to outsource their finances and emotions, draining their time, money and energy. As it has mentioned many times, migrants' time and money spent communicating with family back home can reduce local resources for meeting local needs, especially when these resources are scarce (Kilkey,2014). But

migrants' effort to maintain connections through communication is not always successful as sometimes younger children who couldn't understand the financial needs that had driven their mothers away may not want to talk to them on the phone, while others seemed to form close relationships with other important adults instead of their mothers (Tolstokorova, 2010). Additionally, Fedyuk found that neither in communication through ICTs there is an equal investment as it still remains primarily the responsibility of the migrant to keep in touch (Fedyuk, 2012).

As mentioned earlier, physical contact and hands-on care for migrants primarily occur during visits back home or when other family members migrate or pay a visit (Baldassar, 2008). Ukrainian migrants were faced stringent visa regulations that result in extended separations from their families. On average, most Ukrainian women spent approximately two to three years in Italy before obtaining some form of residence permit that allowed them to visit home, this verify that macro-level factors like the regularization policy of Italy can affect the caring practices and consequently the family ties in transnational families (Merla, Kiley et.al, 2021). Typically, obtaining the first residence permit granted them the opportunity to return home at least once a year, particularly for special occasions such as weddings or funerals of relatives (Fedyuk, 2020).

During these visits, migrants aimed to ensure their family's well-being and to cover their need for physical presence and belonging within the family unit (Baldassar, 2014). Another practice that Ukrainian migrants use in order to visit home according to Vianello's 2013 research, which was based on in-depth interviews with Ukrainian migrant women in Italy between 2005 and 2008 for her PhD thesis, is the circular migration. This form of migration involved return trips lasting few months, often coinciding with the death of the employer or when migrants seek new job opportunities. While back home, migrants reconnect with their families, reestablish social ties strained by distance (Vianello, 2013).

I posit that these transnational practices employed by both migrants and their families in their home countries served the overarching purpose of preserving a sense of belonging within their transnational families and upholding their familial bonds, despite the geographical distances that separate them. Notably, in the context of Ukrainian mothers, these practices exhibited an inherent asymmetry. Migrant mothers were

required to invest significantly more in terms of time, effort, and financial resources to maintain these connections. Paradoxically, they often found themselves constrained from sharing details about their relationships, personal lives, work experiences, and concerns in Italy with their families back home.

As it was mentioned before, Ukrainian migrants in Italy were trying to make a “Ukrainian corner” in their apartments, composed of icons, family pictures from home, political and religious souvenirs and, often, a Ukrainian flag in order to preserve a strong connection with home (Fedyuk, 2012). In agreement with Fedyuk I argue that in these pictures, migrants assert their belonging to Ukraine, at the same time reminding families at home that, even in Italy, they live a Ukrainian life in order to make the host country to look like home (Al-Ali & Koser, 2002).

But as it was mentioned, all these identifications have a gender perspective too and what was noticed is the primary importance that Ukrainian culture and Ukrainian family gives to the motherhood and that is what the Ukrainian migrant woman did, identifying herself primarily as a mother, even if she had adult children and was often a grandmother (Marchetti and Venturini 2013). Migrants stories are characterized by a discourse of sacrifice where they work abroad solely to fulfill their mission to ensure the economic welfare of their family while deferring their own well-being (Fedyuk, 2012). As it was mentioned previously, the only identity that they had focus on and shared with their family back home is the one of parent, and more precisely mother.

3.7. WHAT IS THE EFFECT OF UKRAINIAN MIGRATION ON FAMILY TIES?

As it was noticed in this migration, migrants and their non-migrating family members assumed and negotiated mutual but not equal responsibilities in relation to each other based on their age, gender and changing position within an ongoing familial migration project (Fedyuk, 2012). In this case families left behind tended to neglect and ignore migrants’ lived experiences and very often, the maintenance connections under conditions of separation became the migrant’s responsibility. It was usually the duty of the migrant mother not only to be in touch by phone but also to constantly indicate their interest in life in Ukraine and to present their period in Italy as an empty period. Strikingly, the unequal distribution of duties idealized not only by migrants’ families but also by migrants themselves who had to pick up the larger emotional and practical

share of the family's communication (Fedyuk, 2020). As a mother of a family, a migrating woman should be careful not to suggest that she has found a new self, a new life, or been able to experience something that was otherwise repressed by her situation at home.

Conjugal relationships were affected to by the migration but are not part of this specific study that is mainly focused to the relationship between mother and children. What only can be noticed is that in many cases conjugal relationships were affected more negatively due to the migration separation (Banfi & Boccagni, 2012) in comparison with the ties between mothers and children. In many cases, tensions exist between the spouses even before the departure of the wife, and in other cases due to migration experience and independence that the women may feel during the period away from home. An example like that is of a 39-years old interviewee who was four years migrant in Italy, and mentioned that she maintained a regular communication with her children but the relationship with her husband worsen due to the distance, the creation of a network in Italy and the continuous mistrust between each other (Banfi & Boccagni, 2012, pp.299). The idea that migration will ruin a marriage is repeated in almost all the interviews conducted in the fieldwork of Tyldum with non-migrants and return migrants in Ukraine. Thus what was expressed was that women who went abroad not only failed as mothers, they also failed as wives as they are putting their marriages at risk (Tyldum, 2015)

Tolstokorova argued that in her research Ukrainian transnational families were not correspond to Bryceson and Vuorela (2002: 3) definition of transnational families who described them as those whose members live some or most of the time separated from each other but yet create a feeling of collective welfare and unity, namely familyhood, even across national borders but instead there is a defamiliarization between the family members (Tolstokorova, 2010). Instead, I argue based on Fedyuk's ethnography that migration may bring ruptures in family ties but there are transnational networks and transnational family practices that can create continuities and a sense of familyhood even though there are asymmetries in the effort paid (Fedyuk, 2012).

To sum up, in Ukrainian case the massive migration of women to Italy was interpreted by public discourses as a national tragedy (Solari, 2008, Fedyuk, 2012, Tolstokorova, 2010) even though migrants interpreted as an act of caring for their families. These

negative connotation of this migration by media created suspicions in transnational families forcing migrants to hide the positive aspects of their experience of migration and their personal as it was safer for women to frame their migration only as a pain of separation and a motherly duty to provide for their children. Even though, there was a mutual investment both from migrants and their left behind families to create connections between them through networks and transnational practices. But it is crucial to note from Fedjuk's research that migrants often bear the responsibility of relativizing and maintaining transnational connections. (Fedjuk, 2012).

4. ALBANIAN TRANSNATIONAL FAMILIES IN GREECE

As the case of Ukrainian migrants in Italy has been extensively analyzed in the previous chapter, It is turn of the second case, Albanian transnational families in Greece to be analyzed too. The analysis of this case will be mainly based on the ethnographic study conducted by Julie Vullnetari in the context of her Master and Doctoral studies between 2004-2007. During this ethnographic study were conducted 160 in depth interviews with migrants from Tirana, Korce , four villages in South-eastern Albania and Thessaloniki in Greece but also with their family members remaining back to the Albanian villages and between them with 38 older parents who had left behind to their villages. Additionally, Vullnetari observed participants both in their home and host countries in their daily life contexts such as houses, workplaces, chores , neighborhood and she also had a travel route from Albania to Thessaloniki as migrants did by public transportation and car.

Vullnetari argued that post-communist migration from Albania was a process that affected families and more precisely, it brought a sudden rupture as families were used to live closely and provide cross-generational proximate care. Following the collapse of the communist governance in 1991, there was an outmigration and a lot of young people left as labor migrants, so there was a physical separation through borders for Albanian families (Vullnetari and King 2008). The reason that this ethnographic study was chosen is the fact that the researcher argued that both migrants and their family back to Albania are trying to stay connected through transnational practices in order to maintain a sense of familyhood.

4.1. ALBANIAN FAMILY

As outlined in King and Vullnetari's research (2009), it is evident that family holds substantial importance in Albania, mirroring the observations made in the Ukrainian context, and as a patriarchal society produced similar family relations. Their study includes an interview excerpt from a middle-aged father living in a village of Northeast Albania who had emigrant children in Greece, that described the significance of family in Albania. According to his sayings, "Family is the regulator of people ... life does not finish with us ... you have to think about the future, about the continuity of your blood line ... You are a human being only if you have family". (Vullnetari & King, 2009 pp.28). This statement underscores the significance of familial bonds and more precisely the blood ties in Albanian society, where placing family above individual interests is strongly emphasized. This perspective shares similarities with the Ukrainian context regarding the importance of family, but it differs in that it promotes a collective responsibility among all family members, rather than a gender-based division as it has been seen in the Ukrainian example.

Additionally, what sets the Albanian example apart from the Ukrainian one is the historical practice of viewing children as a form of social security in old age. Many older parents imagined spending their very last years of their life together with their youngest son and his family and this expectation has deeply ingrained social meaning as it also enhanced social prestige in the local community (Vullnetari, 2016). It has been customary for the youngest son and his spouse to care for his aging parents. This is why the youngest son is referred to in Albanian tradition as *the son of old age - djlli i pleqërisë*- (Vullnetari & King, 2008). This implies that the youngest son carries the responsibility of providing care to his parents, which, in turn, shapes the parents' expectations regarding receiving care. As Fan and Parrenas mentioned in their field research with Taiwanese mothers and fathers of migrants, the eldercare provision of immigrant families remains gendered (Fan & Parrenas, 2018) and women offer support to stay-behind parents more than men. Consequently, it's important to note that in the Albanian context, the assumption that care responsibilities are solely entrusted to males, specifically the youngest son, is not accurate. The son as a carer is the symbolic perspective, the daughter-in-law is the de facto carer and even in some Albanian

families the caregiving responsibilities was dependent on extended family networks, neighborhood and nurseries. (King & Vullnetari, 2016).

Similarly, in the Ukrainian context, women primarily bear the responsibility for family caregiving. However, unlike Ukrainian families, in Albanian ones, marriage brought about a shift in female caregiving responsibilities. Following marriage, women are tasked with caring for their husband's parents rather than their own. Notably, the youngest son carries the ultimate obligation of caring for aging parents (King & Vullnetari, 2016). Consequently, upon marriage, wife's biological ties and, by extension, her relationships with her own family tend to be weaker than her social ties with her husband's family. This redistribution of gendered generational roles carries significant implications for caregiving, particularly in the context of children emigrating to another country (Vullnetari & King, 2009).

Concerning women during communism as it was mentioned in Ukrainian case too, their engagement in the labor force was made more accessible through a network of state-managed facilities, including childcare centers, kindergartens, public laundries (Vullnetari, 2012). These services were part of a broader strategy aimed at communalizing reproductive roles. However, it's important to note that these services frequently fell short in meeting demand, particularly in rural highland regions (Penn and Massino, 2009). This mirrors the situation observed among Ukrainians during the socialist era, when the state provided support to families in caring for their members, including children and the elderly, by offering various state services and relieving women of some of their traditional responsibilities. Following the end of socialism, with the state no longer providing these services for the more dependent and vulnerable members, family was once again required to assume the full spectrum of caregiving responsibilities, which often fell upon women. Consequently, women were compelled to withdraw from the public sphere and concentrate primarily on household care duties (King & Vullnetari, 2009).

4.2. ALBANIANS' MIGRATION IN GREECE

Albanian and Ukrainian migrants share a common background marked by the aftermath of the Soviet Union's dissolution and the collapse of the Albanian communist regime. This significant historical event brought about economic, political, and social disruptions in their respective home countries. From 1944, Enver Hoxha implemented

the nationalization of all industry and banks, establishing a socialist society under state control (Vullnetari, 2009) and Albania endured nearly 45 years of communist rule, characterized by isolationism and a ban on emigration, which was considered an act of betrayal. The transition from communism led to substantial changes in institutional structures, much like the Ukrainian experience. These changes had a profound impact on Albania's economy, resulting in widespread job losses and reduced wages among the working population. A defining feature of the post-socialist Albania has been the phenomenon of mass migration, both internally and abroad, primarily to Greece and Italy. According to the European Commission website in 2013, Albania has experienced one of the most dramatic migration flows in its history since the 1990s, with over a million Albanians, almost 27.5% of the population has emigrated abroad (European Commission, 2013). According to additional sources, approximately 1.5 million Albanians, which is nearly half of the 3.2 million resident population, are believed to have migrated between 1990 and 2010 (World Bank 2011, pp.54). Similar to the Ukrainians, the primary driver of Albanian migration has been economic motives (King & Vullnetari, 2016). Consequently, in both cases, migrants can be classified as economic migrants, and I contend that their experiences away of their families have been significantly influenced by this economic dimension.

In contrast to the Ukrainian migration, this one during the early and mid-1990s was largely comprised of men, constituting over 70% of the migrants (King & Vullnetari, 2006). Initially, these men were predominantly single, and it was later that women, primarily as wives, joined the migration, transforming it into a family-centered phenomenon. The principal destination for these migrants was Greece, with a total of 600,000 migrants (European Commission, 2016). Drawing from the research conducted by King and Vullnetari in 2008, a middle-aged mother of a migrant son interviewed by them described the situation in the following manner, "Most young people are in Greece. My son is there, someone else's nephew, brother, father. There are no young men here" (King & Vullnetari, 2008 pp.150). The reason for highlighting this information is its significance in understanding which family bonds are most affected by migration, a topic we will delve into later in detail. In the case of Albania, since 1990, there has been a widespread rural outmigration, exemplified by regions like Dorres, as observed in Vullnetari's fieldwork in both 2012 and 2008. In another study by Vullnetari (2006), where left behind elderly were interviewed, census data revealed

not only significant population declines resulting from extensive outmigration in most rural areas but also a resulting much older age demographic in these declining districts (Vullnetari, 2006). This confirms that the primary group affected by rural Albanian migration were older people, giving rise to the phenomenon of *socially-isolated elderly orphans*, which will be explored in greater detail in the following sub-chapters. Similarly, the United Nations (2002) has identified older people in rural areas as particularly vulnerable to the massive migration of young adults who are migrating to distant cities and even other countries. So in contrast to Ukrainian case, in the Albanian case, it was the elderly parents who were left behind. In this case what is needed is a cross-generation care and this casts the migrants in the role of caregivers and the elderly parents as care receivers (Baldassar et al., 2007). As observed by Fan and Parrenas in their fieldwork, immigration raises the question of... “who cares for the elderly” as adult children immigrate and elderly parents stay behind (Fan & Parrenas, 2018, pp.85).

Albanian migrants, like Ukrainians, primarily entered Greece through illegal routes due to the absence of legal entry options. A common route for migrants entering Greece was on foot, traversing the Greek mountains, as documented by Vullnetari and King in 2006 and Vullnetari in 2012 (Vullnetari & King, 2006 ; Vullnetari, 2012). The irregular entry in Greece resulted in Albanian migrants lacking legal status for an extended period after their arrival. It is approximated that by the end of the 1990s, over 550,000 undocumented immigrants had been employed in Greece, predominantly in seasonal occupations (European Commission, 2013). The bureaucratic procedures for regularization were notably inefficient, and it was only in 1998 that the Greek government initiated policies for the legalization of Albanian migrants and the provision of social insurance (Maroukis & Gemi, 2011). This aspect is noteworthy because it significantly influences the transnational practices employed by migrants and, consequently, their family ties. For instance, this irregular status had a profound impact on their ability to visit their families in Albania or reunite with family members in their host country, as mentioned by a migrant’s 70- years old father who lived in southern Albania, one main reason for the inability of his children to visit him was that they lack the necessary legal documents (Vullnetari & King, 2006 pp.24). What can be noticed in this situation is the father’s attempt to rationalize the absence of visits from his migrant family back home by attributing it to state policies rather than

interpreting it as a lack of familial concern, which could potentially harm their relationships.

The challenge of obtaining legal status was also a topic of discussion in the Ukrainian case in Italy, where many migrant women were able to secure legal status following the regularization decision of 2009. As we have previously explored in earlier sections, the role played by host countries' policies, as well as those of the migrants' home countries, is significant in both facilitating and maintaining transnational family ties. As highlighted in the theoretical part of this study, Merla, Kilkey, Wilding, and Baldassar (2021) argued that macro-level factors, such as regularization policies, and travel visa regulations, have a substantial influence on transnational ties and caregiving among family members, as is evident in both cases examined in this study.

4.3. THE ROLE OF NETWORKS IN ALBANIAN MIGRATION

As previously mentioned, Albanian families traditionally place great importance on proximity, hands-on care, and intergenerational bonds, and migrants typically understand their responsibilities toward their parents and elderly relatives. This inclination is similar to the Ukrainian case, where the desire to provide care and support for their families back home is a significant motivation for Albanians to migrate. It is worth noting that migration itself can reshape family structures, as observed in the research by Vullnetari and King in 2008. In the Albanian context, the act of migration itself can be interpreted as an expression of concern for the family, as it brings in necessary income that enables the family's survival. Both parents and children view migration and the physical distance it entails as necessary sacrifices in pursuit of a better life for the entire family (Vullnetari & King, 2008; Vullnetari, 2006).

The primary distinction between Ukrainians and Albanians lies in their migration patterns. Ukrainians often migrate to support their families and typically leave behind their entire families, including husbands, children, and elderly parents. Conversely, Albanians tend to migrate in Greece either alone when single or with their nuclear families, leaving behind mainly their elderly parents. In-depth interviews with elderly parents reveal that their migrant children motivation for poverty alleviation includes a strong commitment to supporting them who have suffered job loss in the economic upheaval post-1990 or rely on meager pensions (King & Vullnetari, 2006). So adult children left in order to care financial for their elderly parents, but similar to the

Ukrainian case, the elderly parents left behind have been referred in public discourse as *orphan pensioners* (De Soto, Gordon et. al, 2002).

It is crucial at this juncture to assess the potential influence of familial networks on Albanian migration decisions. In this particular scenario, the elderly individuals left behind face considerable challenges, given their meager pensions, which make it nearly impossible to secure paid care. Furthermore, social services have been scarce since the socialist era, and the economic hardships in Albania have exacerbated this situation (King & Vullnetari, 2009). Particularly in rural areas, the kinship networks that typically provide primary assistance during such times have significantly weakened. In interviews conducted by King and Vullnetari with older parents left behind, some interviewees expressed a sense of abandonment, describing themselves and their lives as out of meaning and purpose (King & Vullnetari, 2006, pp. 31). These testimonies seem to align with society's perception that elderly individuals left behind are left without care, highlighting the symbolic and social dimensions of family ties. In contrast, Vullnetari's study, published in 2016, indicated that the presence of social networks in the migrants' home country also plays a substantial role. It offered migrants the comfort of knowing that their family members left at home are receiving sufficient care. In instances where elderly parents are left behind, caregiving responsibilities are frequently taken on by extended family networks or community networks in the migrant son's absence. Typically, this duty falls upon other female family members, as mentioned by one interviewee, an old woman with her two sons abroad and her only daughter living in a village close to her mentioned that only her daughter is taking care of her in a daily basis due to the migration of her sons and her daughters in law (Vullnetari, 2016, pp.21). In rural settings, when there are no family members available, the responsibility of caring for the elderly may be assumed by the community. Local women often offer daily care to the older parents of migrants, receiving small payment for tasks such as cooking, cleaning, washing, or other household chores (Vullnetari, 2016). As mentioned earlier, when adult children migrate, elderly parents typically receive personal care from other women, including daughters-in-law, additional female relatives, and female caregivers, thereby forming a gendered care network (Fan & Parrenas, 2005). Like in the Ukrainian case, the majority of migrants affirm that there is the available network to offer hands-on care to their parents during their absence

In the context of Albanian migration to Greece, the presence of social networks, coupled with the geographical proximity between the two countries, played a significant role in shaping migration decisions. Initially, male migrants were the first to arrive, establishing networks for the exchange of information regarding migration opportunities for women, children, relatives, and friends who would follow them later (Vomvyła, 2012). Essentially, these men acted as pull factors drawing other family members and friends to migrate as well. A similar pattern was observed in Vaiou's fieldwork (2012), where the husband migrated first, and subsequently, Mimosa, a 29-year-old mother of two from a previous marriage, followed him, leaving her children behind. Her decision to migrate was influenced by the choices and links established by her husband (pp. 5). In Mimosa's case, the uncle of her husband, already residing in Greece, played a pivotal role in the decision-making process (Vaiou, 2012). Vomvyła's study, which focused on two Albanian families in Greece, also emphasized the importance of networks within the Greek context. Most of these families had Albanian relatives and friends living nearby (Vomvyła, 2012). These networks proved vital for migrants, as they facilitated various aspects of migration, including travel arrangements, accommodation, finding employment upon arrival, assistance with administrative tasks, and becoming acclimated to the new environment. It is worth noting that these networks did not always meet the migrants' expectations (Vullnetari, 2012).

Drawing from these observations, it seems that that initial argument is confirmed and the presence of familial bonds and networks, both within the home country to offer hands-on care for elderly parents left behind and within the host country to provide initial guidance and support, emerged as pivotal factors in the Albanian migration experience, setting it apart from the Ukrainian case.

4.4 ALBANIAN TRANSNATIONAL FAMILIES IN ITALY

As was done in the Ukrainian case, it becomes highly meaningful at this juncture to analyze the prevalent form of transnational Albanian families that emerged following the migration of their members. When I refer to the most common form, I do so with the understanding that it may not represent the sole pattern or an absolute rule but rather the one that is most frequently encountered. As extensively discussed earlier, Albanian family structures traditionally leaned towards extended families and were

closely tied to geographical proximity. In the context of migration, a typical scenario unfolded, young men would initiate migration, often followed by the migration of their wives and children after obtaining regularization status. Consequently, it was the older generations who were left behind in Albania, giving rise to the phenomenon of left-behind elderly characterized by their lack of migration (Wilding & Baldassar, 2018, pp. 228). In Albania, these elderly individuals have been referred to as *Orphan pensioners* (De Soto, 2002). The term pensioner was likely employed due to the remarkably low pension amounts received by Albanians in the 1990s, which typically ranged from approximately 60 to 80 euros. Drawing a parallel with the Ukrainian case, it is imperative to highlight the recurring use of the term orphan in public discourse to characterize family members left behind. This terminology is linked to the perception of a lack of caregivers, implying the absence of family bonds, despite the fact that it is, in fact, blood ties that are impacted in both cases. In this context as well, there exists a prevailing sentiment that migrants do not fulfill their caregiving responsibilities toward their parents, leading to them being unfairly criticized for this perceived neglect.

I argue that this accusation from the society in regard the caring for their parents significantly influences the day-to-day experiences of migrants in Greece. As it was mentioned multiple times, in Albanian society, demonstrating respect and care for one's parents is not merely a responsibility but also highly esteemed. As Loretta Baldassar mentioned in her fieldwork study with migrant families between Italy and Australia, migrants many times feel a duty to their transnational kin in order to fulfill their culturally constructed ideals about appropriate family responsibilities (Baldassar, 2007). In the Ukrainian context, the central emphasis regarding the direction of care, which symbolizes the maintenance of familial bonds, primarily rested on mothers caring for their children. The spotlight was placed on mothers to demonstrate their role as caring mothers. In this situation, it is the adult children, especially sons, who are tasked with proving themselves as dutiful and caring sons, the sons of old days (Vullnetari, 2006). All of these dynamics inevitably influence the expectations held by both society and the family members who are left behind regarding the transnational caregiving practices that the children will embrace, underscoring the substantial effort required to uphold these connections.

However, migration not only impacts the elderly left behind changing the way that they receive care, but also deprives them of their role as caregivers to their grandchildren. This loss carries significant emotional and cultural significance because, for them, grandparenting is considered the very essence of their purpose in later life (King & Vullnetari, 2006). Therefore, in this context, the flow of care assumes a dual role, involving both the provision of care to the elderly and care from the elderly, an aspect that differs from the Ukrainian migration experience. Consequently, it becomes necessary to consider the adjustments required in the relationships between grandparents and migrating grandchildren as well.

One way elderly parents, particularly grandmothers, adapt to migratory situations is by relocating to join their migrant children abroad. In doing so, they can assume the traditional and practical caregiving role as previously explained. However, this wasn't always feasible due to factors such as advanced age, documentation challenges, or a lack of willingness on either or both sides of the family. In cases where parents were unable to travel abroad, a different form of adjustment comes into play, transnational care (Vullnetari & King, 2008). As outlined by Baldassar, Wilding, and Baldock (2007), this type of care involves several practices, including financial support through remittances and gifts, hands-on assistance during visits, and emotional and moral support via the exchange of photographs, videotapes, and telephone calls. These various transnational practices will be explored further in the subsequent chapter.

4.5 GENDER IN ALBANIAN MIGRATION

However, before delving into the analysis of the transnational practices employed by Albanian migrants, I will once again examine the role that gender plays in both the migration process and the preservation of transnational family bonds, much like I did in the case of Ukrainian migration. What becomes evident in the Albanian context is that the position of women within the family structure has a notable impact on the dynamics of Albanian migration.

It is crucial to note that, in the fieldwork studies under consideration, women predominantly migrated abroad to join their husbands, or they undertook the journey together with them, with limited instances of single female migration (Vullnetari, 2012; Vaiou & Stratigaki, 2008). The prevailing scenario depicts a migration pattern that adheres to traditional gender roles, with males typically departing first, often

clandestinely, followed by women and children, especially after the males had achieved regularized status (King & Vullnetari, 2009). Furthermore, as observed in previous chapters, Albanian women continue to shoulder the majority of responsibilities within the home, encompassing tasks related to cooking, cleaning, and household upkeep. It is noteworthy that, as seen in the Ukrainian case, there is a shift in gender roles and relationships within migratory contexts. For instance, when both parents are employed in Greece, they may share some of the housework or childcare duties. However, akin to the Ukrainian case, when migrants return to Albania for visits, these roles tend to revert to their traditional roles (Vullnetari, 2012).

But what is happening with the transnational care to the elderly parents? As we comprehensively discussed the one who has to take care of them is the youngest son and his wife. What needs to be highlighted here is that in the case of only-daughters families, women may send financial remittances to their parents while they are single, but these become less frequent or even dry up when they marry. This practice is linked to the Albanian tradition, wherein, upon marriage, women become part of their husband's household. If the husband is the youngest or the only son in his family, it implies that a part of the young couple's income will be sent to support his parents (Vullnetari, 2006). In this scenario, there is a reversal concerning elderly caregiving, where the significance of social ties supersedes that of blood ties when women enter into marriage.

4.6 TRANSNATIONAL FAMILY PRACTICES- DOING FAMILY

As it was mentioned in the case of Ukrainian migrants in Italy, similarly in the case of Albanian migrants in Greece there are ways that transnational families use in order to maintain their ties even though they are spread in different countries. In the Albanian context, similar long-distance care practices occur, including financial support through remittances and gifts, hands-on care during visits, and communication (King & Vullnetari, 2009; Vomvyla, 20012) . The existence of all these transnational practices verifies the initial argument that the family ties continued to exist in Albanian transnational families, even though the term orphan was used by the public discourse for those left behind. Additionally, the examination will extend to understanding the impact of these transnational practices on the day-to-day experiences of migrants and the elderly parents they left behind. Migration represents a pivotal event in the family's

life story, leading to a transformation in both perceptions and practices related to expectations and responsibilities for providing care and support (Baldassar et al., 2007). Elderly parents who were left behind and interviewed in the study by King and Vullnetari (2009) acknowledged the existence of these transnational care practices but emphasized the paramount importance of physical closeness. The absence of physical proximity amplifies their feelings of isolation and abandonment, particularly when they are the ones offering care (King & Vullnetari, 2009). Indeed, long-distance caregiving does occur in the ways elucidated by Baldassar et al. (2007, pp. 276), encompassing hands-on assistance during visits, financial aid through remittances and gifts, as well as moral and emotional support through telephone conversations, video recordings, and photographs. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that the elderly individuals interviewed predominantly linked the notion of care with the concept of physical closeness (Vullnetari & King, 2008). In the study conducted by King and Vullnetari regarding the role of remittances within Albanian families, they emphasized the critical role that migration and remittances play in sustaining numerous households (King & Vullnetari, 2009). Based on the CESS report from August 2003, which cited a survey conducted in January 2003, it was found that 82.2% of Albanian migrants sent remittances to Albania and 71.3% of those remittances were sent to their parents (Center for economic and social studies, 2003). Much like the Ukrainian migration, Albanian migration is primarily motivated by economic factors, and the significance of remittances lies in their validation of the success of this migration. Consequently, I posit that this transnational practice holds pivotal importance for family ties, serving as a counterbalance to the disruption of normal family life.

Remitting stands out as a highly significant transnational practice encompassing intra-family care, which serves to alleviate the economic challenges faced by parents left behind. Without these remittances, these parents would otherwise endure a life of poverty, relying solely on their meager old-age pensions (King and Vullnetari, 2006). In most cases, the elderly parents who are left behind view their children's emigration as a necessary family survival strategy, with remittances being the sole means to maintain a modest level of well-being. A 58-year-old mother of a migrant son in Thessaloniki, interviewed during King and Vullnetari's fieldwork (2008), succinctly conveyed this perspective. She shared that she and her husband had worked diligently throughout their lives to secure the essentials, and now, with their children abroad, they

can enjoy a more comfortable life. However, they also expressed the longing for their absent children but they find joy in knowing that their children are leading prosperous lives (pp. 151). In another example, a 59-years old mother left behind by her son and her daughter, migrants in Greece, revealed that the bulk of the remittances received from her son in Greece was allocated towards purchasing clothing and conducting household repairs (Vullnetari, 2012, pp.169). In Vullnetari's ethnographic study, remittances are also directed towards constructing or renovating family homes in Albania. These financial arrangements allow the sons' families and their parents to reside in close proximity to each other in the future (Vullnetari, 2012). Consequently, these statements suggest that Albanian family members left behind perceived remittances as an expression of care, recognizing that it is primarily through migration that their children can provide financial support. Furthermore, in certain cases, both migrants and their parents who remain in Albania perceive these remittances as investments in the collective future of the family that the hands-on care will be possible.

Another aspect that can be discussed in regard to remittances is that their flow follows the traditional Albanian gender and generational structure of the family, respecting the existing norms. In this context, remittances typically flow from young male emigrants to their fathers or other male family members. Larger sums are often sent to parents by single men or those who migrated independently, with the highest remittances typically occurring in the initial years of migration to fulfill their intended purpose and enhance their parents' quality of life. In the case of married couples working abroad, financial matters are typically overseen by the husband, who primarily directs remittances to his own parents, resulting in fewer remittances being allocated to the wife's family, especially in families with only daughters. The control over both sending and receiving remittances is generally exercised by men, with emigrant sons sending funds to their fathers, who then manage the finances for the extended family. As one interviewee stated, "We have daughters... daughters have husbands. They send us money only if the husband agrees to it. If he doesn't, there is no money" (Vullnetari, 2006). This gendered distribution of remittances is a distinctive feature of the Albanian context.

In the Albanian context, a noteworthy observation is the presence, albeit in a limited number of cases, of money flowing from left-behind parents to their migrant children. This financial support aims to assist the children in getting settled or bridging temporary income gaps when migrants face difficulties securing employment in their host country.

However, this practice is relatively rare, primarily due to the economic circumstances of the parents. Additionally, receiving financial assistance from parents in Albania may affect the pride of young migrant men (Vullnetari, 2012). Moreover, there is a practice of in-kind reverse remittances sent to migrants abroad, often comprising ethnic foods. Grandparents reciprocate by sending gifts, such as hand-knitted cardigans and slippers, to their grandchildren in the migration destination (Vomvyla, 2012) or food items like raki, bakllava, and clothing, bring memories of home and transfer an emotional meaning expressing love and affection among family members (Kilkey, 2014). In the Albanian context, as opposed to the Ukrainian one, I argue that there is a noticeable endeavor on the part of family members left behind to provide care and support to the migrant, thereby fostering a more balanced effort to maintain their connection..

Apart from remittances, the role of communication holds significant importance in maintaining family ties. Migrants remain in regular contact with their families through mobile phones, with both migrants and family members in their home villages ensuring access to this communication tool. Mobile phones serve as perhaps the most crucial instrument in preserving family cohesion across great geographic distances, echoing the sentiment expressed by Vertovec that telephone calls constitute the social glue of transnational life (Vertovec, 2004). Migrants make routine phone calls to their parents back home as a means of staying in touch and monitoring their well-being (Vomvyla, 2012). In the homes of older parents, the mobile phone, eyeglasses, and a blood-pressure measuring device often occupy a prominent place on the sofa and as one interviewee featured in Vullnetari's research (2012) referred to mobile phones as blessed and described how she and her husband eagerly stay at home waiting for their migrant children phone call in order to hear their voices and receiving updates. This statement provides a stark contrast in terms of the effort family members put into staying connected and nurturing family ties. In the Albanian context, it appears that the lived experiences of migration are intertwined with the family's sense of connection. I argue that this distribution of communication efforts is more equitable when compared to the Ukrainian case, where migrant mothers were often limited to their roles as mothers when communicating with their family back home, concealing their other identities such as migrants and workers. In this context, migrant children typically initiated the phone calls and determined the duration and frequency, based on economic considerations. If parents needed to urgently speak with their migrant children, they

would initiate a brief call, after which the son or daughter would return the call (Vullnetari & King, 2006). However, in this case, any asymmetry in initiating contact appeared to be primarily related to financial reasons.

In addition, visits play a highly significant role in preserving family ties in this context, underscoring the commitment of migrant children to their parents and their success as migrants. Migrants usually visited Albania in significant occasions like weddings or funerals. Importantly, during the summer, children frequently stay with their grandparents in Albania (Vomvyla, 2012). In the context of Albanian families, these visits occur not only when traveling to Albania but also when grandparents and extended family members visit them in their new places of residence (Vomvyla, 2012). Sometimes, even the provision of childcare takes on a transnational dimension, with grandparents dividing their time between their village in Albania and the homes of their migrant children abroad. This arrangement serves to maintain and nurture intergenerational connections and, notably, enables the practice of grandparenting, a role of utmost importance in Albanian society. These grandparents effectively become transnational grandparents or flying grandmothers as were called by Baldassar and Wilding (2014) who travel between their countries of origin and the countries where their children reside (King & Vullnetari, 2009). This intra-family mutual care not only enhances the position of older individuals as recipients of care but also establishes them as caregivers themselves, supporting also the migrant children as it was noticed in the field study of Russel King, Eralba Cela, Tineke Fokkema and Jullie Vullnetari in 2014 with migrants in Italy and Greece and their left behind parents, focusing mainly on left behind parents experience of migration. A 38-year-old migrant woman in Italy explained that she and her husband made the decision to bring his parents to Italy, enabling the wife to work and contribute additional income (*pp.733*). However, it's important to note that in the study conducted by Vullnetari and King with parents left behind, the majority expressed a preference for visiting their children for limited periods rather than permanently residing abroad with them. Their desire to maintain ties with their home country is a significant factor in this preference (Vullnetari & King, 2006).

Despite the mutual willingness and efforts on both sides to maintain their relationships, immigration regulations exert a significant influence on the separation of families across borders, as observed in the previous case. The typical initial illegal status of

Albanian migrants during the first few years following their entry into Greece, coupled with the obstacles faced by parents left behind in obtaining travel permits, consistently hinder their ability to visit their children and grandchildren (Vullnetari, 2012). For the migrants, bureaucratic delays in acquiring the necessary documents for travel to Albania and re-entry into Greece created prolonged hardships. As a 64-year-old mother who remained behind explained how Greek consular authorities make it hard for old Albanian people to visit their children by not providing visas (King & Vullnetari, 2008, pp.156).

In recent years, bilateral agreements between Greece and Albania have allowed migrants to visit their families in Albania up to four times a year. However, this regulation appears to overlook emergency cases when a migrant may not be able to travel to Albania outside these specified periods, for example, in the case of a sudden illness or death of a family member (Vullnetari, 2012). Notably, Greek immigration laws from 2001 and 2005 do not recognize parents as part of a family for the purposes of reunification (Kanellopoulos & Gregou, 2006 pp. 15). Once more, It is noticed that transnational ties and caregiving among family members are influenced by macro-level factors in both the home country and the host state (Merla, Kilkey et.al, 2021). In the case of Albanian migrants, in addition to the practices employed by migrants and their families to maintain contact, there is a strong effort to preserve elements of their Albanian identity and their family's cultural heritage, including customs, traditions, and value systems. This preservation serves as a demonstration of their ethnic identity and family histories.

Much like the Ukrainian case, as observed in the study by King and Vullnetari (2006), objects and photographs played a crucial role in making their homes in the host country resemble their homes in Albania. Souvenirs, the Albanian flag photographs of cherished individuals or ancestors and personal belongings serve as touchstones for personal and family histories. These items act as a means of re-establishing connections with relatives left behind and reveal cultural identity themes that are deeply ingrained within the families. This symbolic connection with Albania is manifested through cross-border ties with family members who have remained in Albania (Vomvyla, 2013).

In Vomvyla's research with transnational Albanian families residing in Athens, a primary method employed to maintain a connection with their homeland was the

preservation of the Albanian language, which they actively passed down to their children. Within the confines of their homes, these families communicated predominantly in Albanian (Vomvyla, 2009). This approach aimed to create a sense of familiarity in the new country and to keep their ties with family members in their homeland as robust as possible.

Furthermore, similar to the Ukrainian case, Albanian migrants endeavored to preserve and instill gender perspectives within their families that were characteristic of Albanian culture. In Vomvyla's fieldwork, parents instilled values in their children that they themselves had acquired during their upbringing in Albania. For instance, young girls were encouraged to become proficient good housewives and were familiarized with household chores, including cooking, from an early age. Additionally, there was an emphasis on cultural values related to sons taking care of their parents. In one family, this commitment was so strong that the husband arranged for his father's leg surgery in Albania, despite being far away, as he was the youngest son (King & Vullnetari, 2006).

4.7 WHAT IS THE EFFECT OF ALBANIAN MIGRATION ON FAMILY TIES?

In the context of Albanian migration to Greece, it is evident that the older generations, particularly the parents left behind in the home country, are the ones most significantly impacted. The family bonds that are primarily affected are those between the migrant young adults and their elderly parents. This primarily pertains to the parent-child relationship, which encompasses blood ties. This situation mirrors what occurs in the Ukrainian case. However, a key distinction lies in the fact that, in the Albanian scenario, it is the adult child who chooses to migrate, and the caregiving role flows from the child to the parent. Even if migration had not taken place, the adult children would still hold the caregiver role. Therefore, once again, it is the migrant who assumes the role of the caregiver.

From the side of the older parents left behind as it was noticed in Vullnetari's ethnographic study even though they understand and even sometimes want the migration of their children as a way of family's survival. They commonly articulate feelings of isolation or unease about the alterations in the family dynamics they were accustomed to. For instance, a 58-year-old father, who remained in a village in southeast Albania, expressed in an interview with Vullnetari (2012) that with the younger generation migrating, elderly individuals in Albania experience a sense of

detachment and nostalgia for the traditional family gatherings around the table for a shared meal, symbolizing the impact of this separation. (Vullnetari, 2012 pp.193). The separation is causing significant anguish among the older generations, who traditionally place immense importance on inter-generational bonds and their symbolic manifestation through caregiving practices, unity, and the cohesiveness of families (King, Caro et.al, 2014).

Older generations have deprived of the opportunity to serve as caregivers, particularly for their grandchildren as they repetitively mentioned due to the massive migration of the younger generations making the migration experience very distressing for them (King, Caro et.al, 2014). Thus, in the Albanian context, another set of relationships affected are those between grandparents and their grandchildren. This bond between grandparents and grandchildren is notably robust in Albania, where it is commonly stated that older individuals love their grandchildren even more than their own children. All the interviewees expressed regret over missing out on spending time with their children and grandchildren and being unable to lend a helping hand with family responsibilities (Vullnetari & King, 2006).

To sum up, in Albanian families, the concept of belonging and familyhood, as described by Byrcenson and Vuorela (2002), appears to hold more significance compared to Ukrainian families. Family bonds are upheld, as evident in the various transnational practices employed by family members to provide care for one another. While feelings of loneliness and a yearning for the proximity of caregiving are often expressed, particularly by the parents who remain in their home country, it's noteworthy that both migrants and those left behind are actively striving to maintain contact and foster this sense of belonging. From both sides, there is a mutual commitment to sustaining these family ties, and they engage in transnational caregiving practices based on their available resources and means.

5. DISCUSSION

The primary inquiry of this comparative study based on the exploration of the impact of migration on family ties in two cases, Ukrainian migration in Italy and Albanian migration in Greece. It identified which familial ties are most significantly influenced in these cases and in what ways. Additionally, the study investigated how family ties

play a role in the migration process, encompassing decision-making and the migration experience.

First of all, it was highlighted that family has a fundamental importance in both cultures (Solari, 2014; Vullnetari & King, 2009) and it is important to be mentioned that both Ukraine and Albania share similarities in their historical and political background as post-communist states facing a transition from a more state-centric regime to a more market oriented one after 1991, with the end of Soviet Union. This transition brought economic decline with all the relevant consequences such as unemployment and financial and social instability (Banfi & Boccagni, 2012; Vullnetari, 2009). Both societies place a strong emphasis on the family's role in shaping individual identity and collective well-being and also there is a clear gender division in caregiving responsibilities within the family with women being the primary caregivers especially when it comes to the elderly and children.

In both cases, economic factors are the primary drivers of migration where migrants are seeking better economic opportunities abroad to support their families back home (Fedyuk, 2012; King & Vullnetari, 2006). The same reasons were provided by Philippine migrants in the fieldwork of Madianou and Miller (2012) who mentioned that their motive was to improve their families' life covering the education cost of their children or gaining money in order to buy to family an apartment. Institutional context in the host countries affect the transnational practices that the family members use in order to maintain their family ties. In both cases the irregular status that migrants have in the host country doesn't allow the visits of migrants in their family back home but also, family members faced the difficulty to visit their migrant relatives due to the lack of visas. Consequently, during the first years the exchange of hands-on care during visits is impossible.

In regard with the form of transnational families in the two cases, in Ukraine, there is a predominance of female migrants, especially in the caregiving sector in Italy and those left behind are children and husbands (Tolstokorova, 2010). When in Albania, initially, the migration was predominantly male, but women joined later as wives (King & Vullnetari, 2009) and elderly parents are often the ones left behind. In both cases, migration challenges traditional family structures and roles that are based in proximity and proximate caregiving. In both cases, migrants are seen as deviating from societal

norms when Ukrainian migrant women, face stigmatization and condemnation for leaving their children behind (Fedyuk, 2012), while Albanian migrants are criticized for not fulfilling their caregiving responsibilities toward their parents (Vullnertari & King, 2006) In Ukraine, there is an expectation that practical caregiving and presence validate one's role as a proper parent, while in Albania, demonstrating respect and care for parents validate one's role as proper son. The notions that society and media has given to left behind members, social orphans and orphan pensioners, are like the blood ties do not have any importance and only social aspect of ties play role but again they can't performed appropriately in distance. As it was mentioned transnational caregiving are shaped by a sense of obligation which is closely intertwined with cultural constructs of duty and societal roles and responsibilities driven by culturally ingrained ideals regarding proper family (Baldassar, 2007).

The different migration patterns in the two cases affect changes in gender dynamics following the migration. Ukrainian migration to Italy challenges traditional gender roles, with women taking on the role of primary earners, while in Albania, migration follows more traditional gender norms, but there is still a temporary shift while abroad. This gender distinction influences the roles and expectations of migrants within their families. In Ukrainian case, the phenomenon of women migrating to secure employment is explained by the nature of available job opportunities, particularly in the care sector (Vianello, 2013). This shift in gender roles, while temporary, leads to changes in family dynamics, particularly in spousal relationships. On the other side, in the Albanian context, women predominantly migrate abroad to join their husbands or migrate together with them, adhering to traditional gender roles. Women in Albanian households continue to bear the majority of responsibilities within the home, including cooking, cleaning, and household upkeep. Similar to the Ukrainian case, there is a temporary shift in gender roles when both parents are employed in the host country, with some sharing of household and childcare duties. However, these roles tend to revert to their traditional form upon returning to Albania (Vullnertari, 2012). As it come to the transnational caregiving and to answer to the question "Who cares for the children and the elderly?" it seems that again the transnational caregiving is gendered (Fav & Parrenas, 2005). In Ukrainian case, it seems that even though the migrant mother has received multiple responsibilities like taking care of the children back home financially and emotionally, fathers seems to not have undertake carework responsibilities back

home where other women and mainly grandmothers are taking care of the migrant's children more than fathers, so other women supportive network (Fav & Parrenas, 2005). In Albanian context, even though the migrant youngest son has to undertake the care responsibility for his elderly parents back home, what it actually happens is that the main responsibility for the transnational caregiving is again up to the son's wife, who because of the marriage has to take care of his husband parents (Vullnetari, 2012).

In both cases family members even though they are separated by distance they try to maintain their ties with the rest of the family far away and it can be proved by all the transnational practices that they use in order to provide transnational care. As it was noticed in the cases they use both communication, remittances, objects exchange and visits (Fedyuk, 2012; Boccagni & Banfi, 2012; Vullnetari & King, 2009; Vomvyla, 2012). In both cases, remittances play a significant role in maintaining family ties as they are and the main reason that the migration emerged. In Ukrainian case it seems that the meaning given to remittances sent by migrant woman is that she is a proper mother, the same is happening to the Albanian case where through remittances sons prove that they are proper sons. Additionally, communication plays a significant role in maintaining family ties, and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), particularly mobile phones, are essential tools for communication in both cases. Migrants use mobile phones to stay in touch with their families and the internet was not referred that much in these studies probably due to the fact that the field work took place the first years of 2000s in both cases

It is important to be mentioned that an asymmetry was noticed in the transnational practices between migrants and left behind members who are children and elderly parents, and it agreed with the theoretical part where care flow is usually centred on inter-dependency and the ones who are the recipients of care are the dependent members such as children and elderly (Brycenson, 2019). More particularly, the level of effort required to maintain family ties appears to be more equitable in the Albanian context where both migrants and their left-behind family members actively engage in communication, visits, and caregiving efforts. Additionally, only in Albanian case it was referred a reverse flow of money from the left behind parent to the migrant son in rare cases. In contrast, in the Ukrainian case, migrant women, who are often mothers, seem to bear a more significant burden of maintaining connections. and they can not exchange any information for their lives but only hear about their family news , that

creates an asymmetry. This asymmetry exists also in visits as in Ukrainian case only migrant mothers visit their family back home when in Albanian cases both migrants and the left behind parents pay visit to their children host country.

In both cases it seems that migrants in the host country are trying to preserve a sense of belonging in their family through the preservation of cultural identity, creating a corner with family photos, souvenirs from home country and national symbols.

Furthermore, in both cases migrants maintain their gender identity as it is defined by family tradition, There is also an emphasis on cultural values related to sons taking care of their parents and also in the preservation of Albanian language. In conclusion, both in Ukrainian and Albanian transnational families, it can be inferred that migration significantly impacts the structure and interconnections within families (Fedyuk, 2012; King & Vullnetari, 2006). In both instances, the primary motive behind migration was economic, with the aim of providing financial support to the family (Vomvyly, 2012; Fedyuk, 2012). It can be deduced that family ties constitute the primary driver for these migrations, and concurrently, both migrants and the families left behind strive to uphold their ties through transnational practices, even though in many instances the obligation to preserve them is mostly on the migrant.

6.BIBLIOGRAPHY

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