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2021-10-04

Kara, H & Wrede, S 2021, 'Love's Labour's Lost? Separation as a Constraint: Displays of Transnational Daughterhood', *Sociology*, vol. 56, no. 3, 00380385211043671, pp. 522-537. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00380385211043671>

<http://hdl.handle.net/10138/344350>

<https://doi.org/10.1177/00380385211043671>

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Sociology

1–16

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DOI: 10.1177/00380385211043671

journals.sagepub.com/home/soc**Hanna Kara** 

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Abstract

This article develops sociological knowledge on daughterhood through an analysis of how separation shapes the emotional and moral dynamics of transnational daughterhood. Building on Finch, we look at daughtering as a set of concrete social practices that constitute kinship and carry the symbolic dimension of displaying the family-like character of relationships. Within this framework, we analyse how Latin American women living in Barcelona discuss their transnational family lives and filial responsibilities. We see family as finite, evolving in the past, present and future, and develop a threefold understanding of filial love as an institution imbued with formal expectations, a strong and complex emotion, and reciprocal embodied caring. We consider persisting physical separation in migration as a circumstance that demands not only practical solutions but also ongoing moral labour that sustains transnational bonds and notions of being a 'good enough' daughter.

Keywords

caring imagination, family display, migration, moral labour, separation, sociological ambivalence, time, transnational daughtering

Introduction

This article examines transnational daughterhood, paying particular attention to how awareness of (potentially) permanent separation shapes the emotional and moral dynamics of the filial bond. We draw from a study on the everyday lives and subjectivities of 15

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women who had migrated as grown-ups from Latin America to Barcelona, Spain (Kara, 2016). We focus our analysis on a subset of 11 participants who discussed transnational filial relationships in their interviews. We examine how these women, who were working primarily in low-paid services, describe and reflect on their family exchanges and filial responsibilities and discuss their identities as transnational daughters.

Research on intergenerational relationships in transnational families has focused mostly on the solutions that transnational migrants have developed for responding to care needs in ways that do not require co-presence. 'Doing' transnational family and caring from afar has been studied as, for example, extended visits (Krzyżowski and Mucha, 2014) and distant thinking; that is, people's engagement with and orientation towards far-off family (Baldassar, 2007; see also Mason, 1999). Perhaps most importantly, research has emphasised the potential of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in providing opportunities for support at a distance (e.g. Baldassar, 2016; Baldassar et al., 2016; King-O'Riain, 2015). While we value the recognition of the practices of transnational kinship and care, we wish to draw greater attention to the self-understandings and concerns of transnational daughters for a fuller analysis of how they make moral and emotional sense of their transnational family bonds.

The gendered family statuses of women as wives, mothers and daughters remain culturally vested with the expectation of 'being there' for others, not only by showing love through words and gestures but through a willingness to provide practical support and care (Schmid et al., 2012). Early feminist literature famously identified such family caring as 'labour of love' (Graham, 1983). Much of the research highlighted the economic relevance of women's unpaid contributions and their links to the devalued status of women's work in society. Women have since become better established in the labour market, but labour markets remain gender-segregated and much 'women's work' is low-paid. From a global perspective, vast numbers of migrating women, often discussed in research literature under the rubric of feminisation of migration, entail that numerous women have entered the labour market as working migrants under precarious migration statuses that severely limit their family life (e.g. Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2002).

Our study of transnational daughterhood takes the precariousness of family life in the context of feminised labour migration as a starting point. In what follows, we first discuss transnational family exchanges, after which we consider their precariousness as a predicament for transnational daughterhood. In our first empirical section, we analyse the everyday actions and adjustments involved in transnational family and filial bonds, after which we examine the managing of uncertainties in transnational daughterhood. We discuss the moral labour involved in transnational family life and daughterhood, arguing that the concept of display (Finch, 2007) helps us to highlight how transnational daughters sustain filial bonds, but within the constraints of persisting physical separation. We further argue that the analysis of the emotional conflicts of transnational daughters adds to the sociological understanding of the ambivalence felt by adult daughters of later-life families (Hillcoat-Nallétamby and Phillips, 2011). While the sense of incurring obligations may cause complex feelings in constantly evolving personal relationships, being unavailable, even if for widely accepted and valued life choices, may also generate ambivalence in the face of daughterhood as a finite relationship.

Transnational Family Exchanges in an Era of Unequal Migrations and Differentiated Virtual Connectivity

Previous research points to a profound transformation in the personal meanings of transnational migration in recent years, due to the rise of ICTs that challenge the overall premise that strong intimate relationships require face-to-face interaction (e.g. Baldassar et al., 2016). ICTs may allow the creation and maintenance of shared social fields (Wilding, 2006), emotional streaming (King-O’Riain, 2015), virtual co-presence (Baldassar, 2016) and ambient co-presence (Madianou, 2016). Researchers do recognise that these notions should be used with caution, however. Circumstances such as time difference, age, education and economic resources continue to produce differential access to ICT connectivity (Baldassar, 2008; Benítez, 2006; Madianou, 2015).

A second positive aspect of regular virtual contacts for sustaining transnational bonds has been observed in making travel, and therefore physical co-presence, more likely (Baldassar, 2008; Baldassar et al., 2016). However, travel requires time, financial resources, the necessary documents, as well as an adequate physical condition (Lulle, 2014; Vullnetari and King, 2008). Even relatively affluent migrants do not necessarily enjoy unlimited transnational connectivity, let alone visits, as geographical distance, work obligations, everyday constraints and changing priorities through a person’s life course frame transnational connectivity in many ways (Ryan et al., 2015).

Researchers have pointed out that physical separation may sometimes help people to get along with each other, as it may encourage and demand more effort be put into staying in touch (Baldassar, 2016; also Madianou and Miller, 2013). However, the gap between those who enjoy satisfactory long-distance relationships and those who do not may be widened by differential access to the technologies required (Madianou, 2014; also Wilding, 2006). Scholars have criticised the idea of transnational ‘care circulation’ as effortless flows, claiming that such interpretations exclude the various costs and obstacles migration may create for the emotions and acts of family caring and responsibilities (Merla and Baldassar, 2016; Ryan et al., 2015).

Precarities of ‘Love’ and Displays of Transnational Daughterhood

An overwhelming interest in transnational motherhood has overshadowed the fact that women migrants are daughters, many of whom are expected to show caring for non-migrant family members in ways that are important for their everyday lives and identities (Bastia, 2015; Takeda, 2012). Family sociology also largely neglects the experiences of adult daughters, as the main interest is directed to the relationships between spouses and between parents and children (May and Lahad, 2019). Yet the interdependencies within later-life families play important roles in the lives of adult children, particularly those of daughters who often face conflicting demands of ‘being there’ for their ageing parents as well as their children and partners, while at the same time their pursuits of valued careers and opportunities are encouraged. Parents’ potential future dependency, which cannot be addressed or resolved in the immediate present, is therefore a common source of ‘prospective ambivalence’ (Hillcoat-Nallétamby and Phillips, 2011: 207).

Transnational migration research often focuses on how people organise their caring commitments at a distance. Social research generally, and agentic readings of people as social subjects in particular, focus on what people do, and turn away from what is absent (Scott, 2018). Yet the experiences under analysis here are often about what one cannot do and what cannot be, as the emotional distress of ‘transnational daughterhood’ derives from the difficulty and (potential) failure in catering to the needs of one’s parents. At the same time, the accounts of our research participants serve as dense portraits of people’s need to exist meaningfully in relations (Wilson et al., 2012). To reach this level, we turn to Finch’s (2007) work, in which she, drawing on Morgan’s (1996) understanding that contemporary families are upheld through *family practices*, offers the complementary insight of *family displays*. Given that families are defined more by ‘doing’ than ‘being’, Finch (2007: 66) argues, ‘families need to be “displayed” as well as “done”’.

Following Finch (2007), we see acts of family caring as integral to other routine, small and intimate actions and interactions in daily life (also James and Curtis, 2010). We consider persisting physical separation as a circumstance that demands not only practical solutions but also ongoing moral labour that sustains transnational bonds. The practical acts of caring for the well-being of significant others are often normatively expected, culturally deep-rooted displays of love and affection. The weight people give to such cultural norms may vary, and the normative character of family relationships may be a source of ambivalence. Nevertheless, displays of considerate love remain symbolically important for many people’s self-understanding as ‘good’ daughters and sons. Our characterisation of displays of family as ‘labour of love’ aims to capture the powerful relevance of family for personhood, particularly under constraining conditions of inequality and disadvantage (McCarthy, 2012).

Furthermore, recognising the temporal dimension of family ties becomes important to our perspective, as the life courses of family members interlock at both ideational and practical levels. Ideas regarding family relations – parenthood and daughterhood, to mention just a few – underpin intertwined social, cultural and moral dynamics (Finch, 2007; Ryan, 2008; Ryan et al., 2015). Accordingly, the relations of family caregiving and receiving evolve in constant tension with the shaping of the individual life courses of various family members and the resources and orientations that limit or enable their caregiving practices. The migrant women interviewed in Barcelona identified and discussed expectations concerning family and filial responsibilities both in the present and in their scenarios for the future. As they typically did not consider return migration as an option or even something they desired, they faced moral and emotional predicaments as transnational daughters. We gradually became aware of a linkage between caring and the feelings of sorrow and loss that the women expressed, on the one hand, and their ways of maintaining an identity of a ‘good enough’ daughter on the other. This revealed to us that physical separation interferes with caring in ways that require moral labour.

Against this backdrop, we employ a threefold understanding of filial love as a complex sociocultural phenomenon. First, the filial relation is a societal *institution* imbued with both social and legal norms and moral and formal expectations. Second, filial ties are associated with strong and complex *emotions*. Third, family ties involve reciprocal *embodied caring* that builds on knowing the other (Hamington, 2004). We think of families as finite, constantly changeable constellations (Finch, 2007; also Baldassar, 2007;

Ryan et al., 2015), and maintain accordingly that, in talking about their transnational online interactions and visits, the research participants depict kinship trajectories that not only shape their everyday lives but also construct their life courses in the past, present and future. These morally precarious trajectories are particularly salient expressions of how migration shapes personal lives, contributing to the risk of losing particular kinds of interpersonal experiences that people link with close kinship and generational ties.

Data and Methods

The original study (Kara, 2016) was conducted in Barcelona in the spring of 2012, with local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) acting as gatekeepers. Each of the 15 study participants was typically interviewed twice. The interviews were conducted and transcribed in Spanish and translated into English by the researcher for publication (see Kara, 2016).

The study participants came from various parts of the Latin American and Caribbean region. The 11 participants forming the subset in focus here were between 20 and 60 years of age. Eight of them had experience of migration status irregularity, and almost all had been working unofficially. One of the participants already held dual citizenship upon arriving in Spain. Roughly half had visited their parents in the country of origin or their parents had visited or even lived in Spain for a while. One participant had an elderly parent living in Barcelona at the time of the research. Most of the participants had children, and the women who had minor children were all living with them in Barcelona. In all, the participants, here given pseudonyms, formed a varied group in terms of age, country of origin, family situation, educational background, work situation, the duration of their migration, and their migration status, and their experiences reveal both variabilities and similarities across these circumstances.

Overall, the participants' accounts do not correspond to an image of intense transnational connectivity in migration. Some of the research participants kept infrequent transnational contact, typically once or twice per month. Others had more frequent and spontaneous contact, involving phone calls, emails, Facebook, chats and Skype sessions. Circumstances limiting contact included living in different time zones, differences in the rhythms of daily life, financial cost and lack of access to a computer or internet, either for their family members in the country of origin or for the participants themselves (Boccagni, 2010; Svašek, 2008).

Access to digital connectivity has improved substantially in the years after the empirical phase of this study was completed (e.g. Madianou, 2016). Nevertheless, unequal access to devices or sufficiently stable internet connections and communication technology know-how remain important limitations for migrants' digital connectivity (Ryan et al., 2015; Share et al., 2018). Precarious migration status and the lack of economic resources further limit the modes, frequency and quantity of transnational contact keeping (Kara, 2016; Kilkey and Merla, 2014).

For the analytical focus of this article, the authors have discussed and worked on the results of Kara's (2016) study and the original data. Extracts in which the research participants speak of separation and not being able to 'be there' for parental family caught our particular attention, due to what we interpreted as ambivalent feelings expressed in

them. To advance the analysis of the expressed conflicts, we jointly developed the perspective of moral labour involved in transnational daughterhood, caring and filial relationships by employing the concept of family display (Finch, 2007). Our shared ambition was to explore ways of conceptualising and studying the meanings of love and separation in important kinship relations, specifically daughterhood, that evolve over the life course. The extracts from the data we have chosen to discuss in greater detail below serve as concrete illustrations of these meanings.

Transnational Daughtering and Practices of Being in Relations

In addition to the frequency and quantity of transnational contact keeping, it is important to consider the quality and the content of transnational connections (Kara, 2016). Bárbara speaks of attempts to avoid burdening transnational family exchanges with troubles and adversities when the other person is unable to offer concrete support. This ‘thinning out’ helps Bárbara and her kin in ‘managing worry’:

Because I think that a person suffers more when she knows that another person is suffering, and she cannot do anything. Because when I hear about things that are happening in my country, with my mother, with my brothers and sisters, I suffer here because I feel powerless, you know. (. . .) I have never wanted to give them that burden, to no one of my family, you know. They know very superficially about my problems, but thoroughly never, never. I don’t tell them. (Bárbara)

Previous literature suggests that migrants, in their contacts with family in the country of origin, give one-sidedly positive accounts about their situation (Baldassar, 2007; Boccagni, 2010; Wright, 2012). They may remain silent about challenges such as difficulties in acquiring housing, the type and availability of jobs, various health issues and experiences of discrimination and loneliness. Carrying the consequences of the decision to migrate often requires emotional management (Ryan, 2008; Svašek, 2010). Omitting information may be an attempt to protect the migrant from moral dilemmas (Baldassar, 2015), since, after all, their decision to migrate is the very cause of the separation.

The practice of omission can be seen as one form of emotional support and an act of love in itself (Baldock, 2003). Bárbara explains her silence through the limitations that distance poses for reciprocal concrete assistance when the family is separated by migration. She speaks of her feelings of powerlessness and suffering when she hears about the hardships faced by her family members, and hopes that she can protect her family from worrying about her (also Vullnetari and King, 2008).

Yet, as remaining silent about hardship often works both ways, some participants expressed worry and frustration over sensing that their kin were not revealing what was really going on in their lives (Lulle, 2014; Zickgraf, 2017). Although selective sharing of information about one’s life with family members is not limited to situations of migration, migration might require greater omission and offer more opportunities for it. While these acts of concealment result in a demise or lack of support in the present, they may also have further, long-lasting consequences, as ‘relationships have a history in which

meanings are rooted, and they anticipate a future' (Finch, 2011: 205). Thinning of exchanges may thus be a contradictory practice, both in terms of doing and displaying family. Although it actively aims to protect others from worry, it depletes the richness of the relation in the longer term (also Baldassar, 2007; Mason, 1999). Furthermore, not sharing one's life with family members has moral dimensions, as it may be interpreted as being reserved and secretive, which in its turn may evoke emotional distancing.

Visits, for their part, can play an important role in enriching transnational connectivity in that they temporarily disrupt physical distance. Visits offer opportunities for cultural engagement and transmission, and for giving and receiving help and personal care (Krzyżowski and Mucha, 2014; Von Koppenfels et al., 2015). They also serve as focal points for shared kinship biographies (Mason, 2004). While physical co-presence may be important during emotionally stressful situations or at times of celebration, it is also needed in the everyday (Ryan et al., 2015; Urry, 2003). Visits may, however, also serve to concretise the implications of migration for relationships, including the realities of disconnection and being out of place (Lulle, 2014; Vermot, 2015).

The reciprocal nature of visiting and its impact on transnational relationships has not been extensively tackled in research (as one exception see Zickgraf, 2017). Many of the women encountered in Barcelona considered ICT connections insufficient in comparison with being able to concretely show and share different aspects of one's life in migration. This became apparent if a non-migrant family member was able to visit, as happened in the case of Catalina, whose mother visited Barcelona:

In the beginning (. . .) my mom was like: come back, come home, I'll buy you the flight ticket so you can come back (. . .) And when I then stayed on, the very same year my mom came to visit, and it was so good because, of course, she saw the neighbourhood, she saw the house . . . The day she arrived, my boyfriend had booked us a table to go to have dinner (. . .) She in fact told me that it had been really important to know the people . . . We visited [Catalina's workplace] (. . .) And so after that, no, not anymore any of that pressure of 'I miss you', you know. Of course, I miss her too, a lot, I mean, and when I feel bad the first thing I do is call her up, poor thing, and tell her everything, bla bla bla, we write each other emails and so on. (Catalina)

Catalina's description of the visit presents it as a compression of the family displays that help to build a concrete base upon which to reforge the relationship, which over the long haul has relied on telephone calls and emails. For Catalina the visit is a turning point, in that her mother, who hitherto has been worried and unsupportive, changes her attitude and no longer demands her return. Similarly, it alleviates any guilt Catalina might have felt over the previously repetitive, morally laden demands to return that she was not willing to comply with.

The quote reveals the importance of the mother's constant emotional support for Catalina's well-being. Their spontaneous connectivity is part of her regular contact keeping with her family, which Catalina discussed in her interviews. Their moments of sharing created a space for feeling, even dwelling on, nostalgia, and resulted, for example, in routine-like 'Sundays of yearning' (Kara, 2016: 234), thus also providing a display of temporal synchrony and shared routines (Thomas and Bailey, 2009). Finch (2007: 67)

refers to displays as processes in which ‘individuals and groups of individuals, convey to each other and to relevant audiences that certain of their actions do constitute “doing family things” and thereby confirm that these relationships are “family” relationships’, and these regular bursts of yearning may be read as such, for example among the family members involved or for the researcher in the interview situation.

Catalina’s frequent transnational connectivity, rich in possibilities, stands in contrast to Bárbara’s situation of thinning exchanges. These differences refer to context-specific hierarchical social locations (e.g. Reher et al., 2013). Catalina had been able to acquire Spanish citizenship as her family originated from the region. In addition, her family had resources to support her mobility and life in Barcelona. Bárbara lacks similar socio-economic resources and direct claims to citizenship based on ancestry. The differences in these experiences point to a double gap in which satisfactory digital connectivity is coupled with opportunities to visit, and scarce digital communication combines with the lack of possibilities of visits.

Previous literature on transnational support has discussed family ties becoming more straightforward in quality in a positive way due to the distance caused by migration (e.g. Baldassar, 2016). In the following account, Rocío states that migration has brought a ‘healthy distance’ into her family relations and that she now enjoys a deeper and more concrete connection with her kin:

Your family relations also change and mature when you’re away . . . this healthy distance which makes you view things from other perspectives and you seek support from your family and find strength in them in another way, you know. Not like when you’re close and you must gather for a meal together every Sunday, and it’s more of a ritual than a real closeness. But the distance, different rhythms, the time difference in which you may coincide for a moment and talk, perhaps on fewer occasions (. . .) it forces you to be much more concrete, there’s no time to lose, you know. (Rocío)

In a sense, Rocío claims here that ‘these are my family relations, and they work’ (see Finch, 2007: 73). This display may be for the interviewer and it may also be something she has discussed and built with her family members living at a distance. While she accepts that some features of separation are insurmountable in that they disrupt the type of intimacy that depends on time spent together, she holds that her transnational family relations are in a way more authentic than her previous connections. It is evident, nevertheless, that migration has transformed her family relations, creating the need to actively sustain them from afar (Ryan et al., 2015; Share et al., 2018) in ways that require moral labour. Rocío contrasts her earlier life, which allowed easy encounters, with the present situation, consisting of intense connectivity that needs to be planned beforehand and in which every minute counts (on deintensified ICT-interactions in migration, see King-O’Riain, 2015).

Our observations from the data support the idea of family time as having non-verbal dimensions that require time and co-presence, the importance of which is not necessarily constantly evident but the absence of which can be ardently felt. The participants generally emphasised that contact through the internet or phone calls falls short in comparison to everyday proximity and support (Baldassar, 2008; Ryan et al., 2015; Urry, 2003). They

also valued the idea of their children's closeness to their grandparents as an emotional connection that enriches their lives in numerous ways. Yet transnational relationships between children and grandparents and other kin living elsewhere require effort, creativity and resources, and still are not always rewarding (Share et al., 2018). While transnational contacts maintain and strengthen family bonds, they also highlight the separation and differences in daily lives, such as rhythms, customs, accent and vocabulary, and the irrefutable impossibility of reaching out and giving a cuddle (Ryan et al., 2015: 208; also Baldassar, 2008, 2016; Wilding, 2006):

Sometimes there's the lack of that role, you know (. . .) or the grandmother or the aunt or something like that so that [her child] could say: ok, there's my mother always but there's also my grandmother and she teaches me this and that, you know. (María)

María discusses here the absence of practising and displaying concrete family roles and routines. Her account expresses sadness and guilt regarding the thinness of their everyday family in this respect. The extract hints at the struggles and effort involved in enabling and nurturing the roles of a grandchild, grandmother, niece and aunt, at a distance. It can also be read from the point of view of María's own role and position in the chain of family relations. She, too, is missing out on the opportunity to live and act as a mother in a daily context as part of such relations.

Times Wrought with Uncertainties: Transnational Daughterhood from a Physical Distance

The participants describe their transnational daughterhood as being constrained by temporal stagnation in terms of their efforts to secure work, official migration status or financial stability. Their awareness of their inability to fulfil the generational responsibilities that they identify leads them to feel sadness and guilt (Baldassar, 2015; Takeda, 2012; Vermot, 2015):

If I had a good job, economically well and stable you know, I would bring my parents here to live with me. But at the moment I cannot do that, but yes, I have this idea. They are older (. . .) My greatest worry is that they will be left alone. I would like them to be with me. (Sofía)

Sofía's parents live with her younger siblings and are still in good health, but she worries about their future and about not being able to look after them as she would like to or feels obliged to. Having settled far away from her parents, Sofía worries that she has potentially left them vulnerable in the face of old age. The same disadvantaged circumstances that spurred Sofía to move may result in her siblings migrating in the future, to Spain or somewhere else. She is also likely to be aware of the limited support available for older people in her country of origin as she places the responsibility for her parents on herself and her siblings (Díaz Gorfinkiel and Escrivá, 2012; Vullnetari and King, 2008; Zickgraf, 2017).

Sofía's situation reflects the precariousness of everyday life both in Spain and in her country of origin. Her family in Barcelona consists of her husband and their small child.

At the time of the interview, she had acquired a residence permit, following a period of irregular residence. Her economic situation is precarious, leaving her no real opportunity for arranging visits, neither 'here' nor 'there'. Sofia talks about bringing her parents to live with her in Barcelona once her situation becomes stable enough. Yet she has no guarantees that this would actually be possible, or that her parents would feel comfortable about leaving their country of origin (also Díaz Gorfinkiel and Escrivá, 2012; Zickgraf, 2017). Nevertheless, her ambivalent situation as daughter pushes her to 'harbour prospective action' as a way to resolve potential caring scenarios (Hillcoat-Nallétamby and Phillips, 2011: 213).

Sofia's migration status and the associated rules for family reunification, as well as her labour market position, remain steep structural obstacles to her hopes of caring for her parents in Spain. Many migrant women are in precarious employment and do not earn enough to satisfy family reunification requirements (Gil Araujo and González-Fernández, 2014). On a personal level, nurturing her dream of family reunification may help Sofia to cope with her position as a transnational daughter, keeping alive the idea of the prospect that when the time comes, she might successfully assume the role of the daughter actively caring for her elderly parents.

Our emphasis on family relationships as finite and evolving over time in the past, present and anticipated future (Finch, 2011: 198–200, 205) serves to highlight particularities of the lives of these migrant women. They encounter a multitude of problems related to the passing of time under circumstances beyond their control. They worry about their futures, and the passing of time is threatening in that it potentially deepens the distance between them and their loved ones. Their accounts of their lives as transnational daughters brought up a paradox: they themselves live in halted time in many ways, with their lives put on hold. Yet they are aware of time never standing still (Anderson et al., 2009). They are also aware that some life situations are more fundamental than others, and failing to 'be there' for a loved one at such times may be a cause for persistent sorrow:

I mean, you can miss your mother (. . .) because you don't see her for a week or for a month, you know. But to come to a place and know that . . . while you don't have the legality, you cannot go back and see your family, or while you don't have the money, you cannot go back and see your family (. . .) So you think about it, one year goes by, then two, then three, and I can't go back. The only thing I can do is to ask, ask the one who is in all places, and say: look, take care of her, keep her safe so that when I go back, I can see her. (Bárbara)

Bárbara enjoys a close relationship with her mother, who at the time of the interview was not physically well. All of us face the possibility of losing someone we love without being able to reach them in time, but Bárbara's situation of migration status irregularity and scarce economic resources effectively prevent her from travelling to her mother at a time of a concrete threat of her passing away. Migration, often discussed in terms of flows and mobilities, for many people means limitations of movement, stagnation and immobility (Ahmad, 2008). In the absence of a policy-level recognition of her transnational daughterhood, Bárbara seeks personal solace in her belief in God. She cannot be physically there for her mother but what she can actively do is to pray for the one 'who is in all places' to be there for her instead.

The situations of Sofia and Bárbara speak of a multitude of structural obstacles to fulfilling the roles they might envision for themselves as daughters. At the individual level, their accounts can be read as expressions of a search for ways to symbolically display an emotionally and morally valid daughterhood. Sofia manages the moral dilemma posed by future uncertainties through actively envisioning a future in which she could be present for her parents and able to offer them help and support when needed. Bárbara, for whom this alternative is currently unavailable, even at the level of an optimistic plan, turns instead to prayer as a powerful display of love.

Discussion

This article has looked at the complexities of family relations and caring for women migrants who live in interminable separation from their close kin, including their parents. In talking about their lives and futures, they are faced with the limits that transnational migration poses on their daughterhood. These include limited concrete intergenerational family presence in their own everyday lives and the probability of not being able to ‘be there’ for their parents when they age. We have shown that the realisation of the inevitable implications of migration as living in separation is an emergent phenomenon, the meanings of which are shaped not only by family trajectories but also by the structures regulating their migration and the resources available for them to counterweigh the consequences of separation.

We have considered the moral dilemmas brought about by migration and the restrictions of the mobility of care and associated inequalities. The emotional and moral work that transnational daughterhood involves is influenced by gendered expectations, social class and socioeconomic status, and access to resources (also Mason, 1999). We suggest that the concept of ‘care’ needs to be employed cautiously in the context of transnational kinship relations, as transnational families might find it difficult to replace opportunities for ‘being there’ with good enough ways; that is, in ways that would constitute caring in their own eyes. The ideals of practical involvement in each other’s everyday lives in embodied ways strike a chord with the theorising that argues for the active form ‘caring’ rather than ‘care’ to highlight how the activity consists of both feelings and physical labour (James, 1992).

The participants took great effort to create and maintain intergenerational family relations in the presence of separation and distance. Yet, as part of attempts to manage worry, there was also purposeful thinning of interactions, which might prove a contradictory family display in the long run. Symbolic displays of daughterhood, such as actively imagining and planning a different future for the family or praying for loved ones, offered a way to counteract the hindering of practical displays. They served as expressions of a *caring imagination* that helped transcend the temporal and spatial limits that persisting separation imposed on relations (see Hamington, 2004). But imagination did not overcome the lack of *caring knowledge*; that is, bodily knowledge of care acquired and developed through time (Hamington, 2004). The participants spoke of an absence of concrete family roles and routines in the day to day, and their lack of opportunities to share everyday lives. They also foresaw a dearth of opportunities to display a variety of future roles that they identified in their family trajectories which unavoidably proceed in time

even when the obstacles they face as vulnerable migrants put their own lives on hold. The ambivalence they expressed extended to the future in, for instance, facing the moral dilemma of possibly not being able to 'be there' to care for their parents in the future if their parents were to need their support.

Interestingly, the concept of family display generally seems to integrate an idea of satisfying family relationships ('these are my family relations, and they work') (Finch, 2007: 73). With Rocío as an exception, this type of proud family display was precarious in the data. The participants mostly dealt with feelings of loss, uncertainty, worry and guilt when discussing transnational family relations. A focus on family display leads to a question of what ultimately is displayed – family or (its) respectability and normativity, or are these part and parcel? Some work has stressed that family display needs to be successfully recognised as falling within the norm of what is considered acceptable and respectable (Seymour and Walsh, 2013; Walsh, 2018). Finch (2011: 203) has suggested that displaying family is not necessarily connected to 'making claims for respectability or conventionality'. She argues that she introduced the concept to emphasise the 'fluid and diverse nature of contemporary families'. The emphasis on fluidity has also been criticised, particularly with reference to the unequal contextual demands and opportunities for family display that critics claim cannot be set aside when employing the concept (Heaphy, 2011; James and Curtis, 2010).

A further important question refers to the audience: is the display primarily for oneself, for one's family members, for external audiences (bureaucrats, officials, neighbourhood) or the researcher sitting opposite (e.g., Doucet, 2011; Haynes and Dermott, 2011)? Finch (2011: 203) notes that the ways in which displays are 'experienced, observed and understood by others is central to the concept', as it is a process of 'conveying social meanings' and as such 'inherently interactive'. Yet it seems difficult to evaluate precisely whose feedback is important (Almack, 2008; Dermott and Seymour, 2011; Finch, 2007, 2011). It has also been stressed that the idea of family displays' effectiveness being achieved 'through their successful externalisation' could result in a denigration of the personal and 'emotional value of relational experience' (Gabb, 2011: 53).

Here, we have offered a threefold understanding of filial love. Transnational daughterhood is an institution imbued with norms and expectations, but, at the personal level, it also involves deep-rooted, reciprocal emotions. Furthermore, it builds on a history of mutual embodied caring, the present and future of which are uncertain. Through critical consideration of how Latin American women in Barcelona talked about the feelings and emotions they identify in connection to their interactions with their close family while living at a distance, this article complements discussions about transnational care relations. Based on our analysis, we hold that, in addition to gendered ideologies regarding caring, transnational daughters need to come to terms with not being able to show love and affection in the non-verbal and informal ways that persisting proximity enables. This continuous 'labour of love' may be a limiting and at times exhausting source of ambivalence, not only in the present but in the past and the future (Hillcoat-Nallétamby and Phillips, 2011). Yet lacking the opportunity to display one's love through practical caring acts appears emotionally taxing. Missing out on caring represents a source of moral and emotional labour as such, related to how a person perceives her opportunities to be a 'good' daughter in her own eyes and in those of significant others, both of which may be

seen as imbued with larger cultural and social expectations. While regret for migrating does not necessarily present itself as an important dimension of the ambivalence the participants face, we maintain that it is important to recognise the grief that transnational daughters face due to their incompatible life circumstances.

Immigration policies and economic forces sanction transnational family exchanges in inescapable ways. The migrant women in focus here walk a tightrope between the expectations associated with daughterhood, their limited opportunities in the labour market, and the gendered implications of their societal status as migrant women. On a personal level, the meaning of family and filial responsibilities varies for all people, as do the patterns for how such expectations are negotiated. Yet we argue for the understanding of migration as a transformative, structuring life event and the recognition and revaluation of how migration policies order the realities of kinship ties in transnational families.

Finally, rather than devaluing distant thinking and the streaming of love and compassion, we wanted to advance an analysis of the challenges that migration poses for filial caring relations. We perceive transnational filial relationships of adult migrants as vital but vulnerable social bonds, in that immigration and social policies tend to ignore them. We further emphasise the need to account for the intersecting inequalities that structure migrants' transnational family bonds and their opportunities for transnational caring. To conclude, we call for future migration and family policies to recognise and value transnational family ties, for instance through supporting bidirectional visits, extended stays and family reunification.

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to thank the anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments. The authors contributed equally to this work.

Funding

The authors disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article: research was funded through Academy of Finland project Ordering the Migrant Family: Power Asymmetries and Citizenization in Restructuring Welfare Bureaucracies (*MigraFam*), #310610, and through Academy of Finland Centre of Excellence for Research on Ageing and Care (*CoAgeCare*), #312310 and #336669.

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Date submitted June 2020

Date accepted July 2021