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Belonging and Ontological Security Among Eastern European Migrant Parents and Their Children

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Research has given increasing recognition to the important role that children play in family decisions to migrate and the significant impact of migration on family relationships. At the same time, the role of emotional labour involved in feeling ‘at home’ and the sense of ontological security and everyday belonging that families develop post-migration can benefit from further exploration. Drawing on data collected with Eastern European migrant families in Scotland, this article explores intergenerational understandings of (in)securities by comparing parents’ and children’s views on their lives post-migration. It shows that, while adults constructed family security around notions of stable employment and potential for a better future, children reflected more on the emotional and ontological insecurities which families experienced. Family relationships are often destabilised by migration, which can lead to long-term or permanent insecurities such as family disintegration and the loss of a sense of recognition and belonging. The article reflects on the ways in which insecurities of the past are transformed, but are unlikely to be resolved, by migration to a new country. It does this by grounding the analysis in young people’s own understandings of security and by examining how their narratives challenge idealised adult expectations of family security and stability post-migration. It also shows that young people’s involvement in migration research brings an important perspective to the family dynamics post-migration, challenging adult-centred constructs.

Keywords: migrant young people; family migration; ontological (in)security; East–West migration; belonging

Introduction

Parents’ desire to secure ‘a better future’ for their children is often mentioned in research as a key motivator in decisions to migrate (Ni Laoire, Carpena-Mendez, Tyrell and White 2011; Orellana 2009; Salazar Parreñas 2005). Children’s own understandings and experiences of family migration are important in establishing the

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extent to which their views coincide with those of their parents in relation to the benefits of migration for family life and a secure future. Migration provides adult and child migrants with different standpoints when it comes to reflecting on the experience of migration. In the case of Central Eastern European (CEE) families, adult migrants are likely to draw on their experiences of (in)security in socialist and post-socialist states, while their children might have not experienced insecurities in the same way. This study is situated in the context of emerging literatures which deconstruct both the mythologisation of migration as a safe route to family security and prosperity (Ryan 2010, 2011), as well as the literature on migrants' belonging and identities. To address the proposed intergenerational perspective, I explore families' sense of (in)security and understandings of 'a better life' post-migration by comparing adults' and children's narratives. As I look at experiences of family migration/reunion, I examine these narratives through various lenses, drawing on the existence of kinship ties and social connections as well as on the emotional and ontological aspects of security and aspirations and motivations for the future.

While research has documented CEE-born children's experiences as migrants (Devine 2009, 2011; Ni Laoire *et al.* 2011; Sime and Fox 2015a, b), we know less about the impact which migration has on their sense of ontological security, understood as having a sense of stability, rootedness, continuity and control over their everyday lives and futures. The notion that a person's self or identity and his/her social environment are in synergy has been linked to the concept of belonging (May 2011). Building on the existentialist tradition of Sartre in philosophy, Laing (1965) emphasised the importance of maintaining a core sense of self which transcends places, time and social contexts and allows individuals to relate to others without feeling under threat or excluded. More recently, Giddens' concept of 'ontological security' (1984, 1991) has gained traction in the context of modernity – often seen as void of tradition and stability and leading to psychosocial fragmentation. For Giddens, a person can only feel secure when experiencing a sense of order, continuity and stability, which leads to a sense of control. Modernity has made the self a reflexive project, where social position is less relevant and individuals experience both new freedoms and new challenges while constructing the self. In this study, I examine the extent to which migration, as a feature of family life, impacts on children and their parents' sense of security and belonging or feeling 'at home' in a new place. I examine the effects of uprooting the family in the hope of a more prosperous future on individuals' sense of connectedness and trust in the stability of their futures, both individually and as a family. In order to do this, I begin by looking at the literature on migration and ontological (in)security and show how this relates to family relationships and migrant children's experiences. After outlining the methodology, I use data collected with migrant families in Scotland to explore the interrelation of notions of emotional attachment and material (in)security, ontological security and belonging and connectivity with a community and place. I then reflect on the ways in which children relate to notions of family security in the present and in relation to an uncertain future, and how their narratives challenge idealised narratives of family security.

Family migration, ontological security and children

Migrant children have traditionally been portrayed as 'luggage' in migration research (Orellana 2009), as victimised by the significant structures of inequality which force them to follow their parents abroad and as part of the adult-dominated power relations within their families and communities. As migration has become a global phenomenon, issues of integration, social cohesion and national identity have moved to the forefront of current political and policy debates. In the case of Brexit, for example, the case for Britain leaving the European Union was built on a campaign which emphasised the need to take back control from the EU over national affairs, especially in relation to the economy and immigration. While sometimes veiled and at other times more explicit in the debates on Britain's place in Europe, the presence of migrants, often seen as 'the

others' in national debates and the media, has been a key factor in the majority vote to leave the Union. During the Brexit debate, 'uncontrolled' immigration was debated in terms of the risks posed from outside the national borders, through potential terrorism and illegality associated by some of the 'Leave' campaigners with refugees and new migrant groups, while migrants already in the UK were portrayed as posing a threat to local jobs and increasing demand for public services.

Recent policies in Britain have placed an increasing emphasis on community cohesion and the integration of minority groups, participation and the recognition of migrants' identities, although the responsibility for this agenda seems to be particularly on migrants to adapt, rather than on receiving communities to facilitate their integration (Spencer 2011). Virdee and McGeever (2017) examined how the recent case for Brexit was intimately bound with questions of migration and race relations, a claim also substantiated by the increase in rates of racist hate crimes reported post-Brexit, with many Eastern Europeans said to be among the victims. Their analysis shows how a new politics of resentment has emerged in Britain over the last two decades, closely linked to increasing rates of immigration after EU enlargement; this was soon followed by economic decline and the anti-immigrant feeling encouraged at times by a political will to racialise national politics and build on an anti-immigrant working-class vote. These structural factors have contributed to migrant families' particular positioning, within a political climate mainly focused on regulating and reducing migration. In the context of austerity programmes and anti-immigration rhetoric, research on migrant families poses new challenges in relation to documenting families' strategies for coping with risks and insecurities.

Given the focus in this study on CEE migrant families, it is important to look back in time at what security meant for the adults who grew up in the ex-communist territories – the migrant parents in this study. In countries with limited state provision, individuals depended mainly on family and community relationships in time of need (Read and Thelen 2007). The parents in this study had grown up in the post-socialist societies of Europe where the dismantling and fragmentation of state provision is ongoing. In addition, many have experienced the economic insecurities of precarious and low-paid jobs and possibly personal and political insecurity. The dichotomies between state/non-state, formal/informal, public/private and even traditional/(post)modern types of provision are at the centre of our understanding of how migrant families produce securities (financial, emotional, personal, political and social) and mitigate risks – such as those brought about by migration. In examining how parents and children understand (in)securities and how their ideas and practices of financial, emotional and personal security are adapting over time to the new transnational circumstances, I explore not only the pre-conditions of a person's sense of security, but also the types of relationship and social distribution mechanisms which family members value and rely on.

These everyday practices of engaging or producing securities may include a combination of formal and informal networks from past and present, and depend on the nature of those social relationships which are available in their new communities. By focusing on the emotional and ontological dimensions of security, as well as on the material aspects, I draw on sociological theory and the concept of belonging (Yuval-Davis 2006), with an individual's sense of rootedness or identification with a place developing in time and experienced as a dynamic process. A sense of belonging and connection to place is likely to link to a sense of confidence and optimism in a secure future. May defines belonging as 'a sense of ease in oneself and one's surroundings' (2011: 368), which requires an active process of identification with one's place and culture, and a sense of being actively involved with the development of a community and its collective values. In this sense, insecurities from the past – including economic, personal or political insecurities – which may have pushed adults to migrate, can be vindicated by achieving a more secure present and future and a sense of recognition as an individual. The temporal dimension of individuals' (in)securities is an important consideration when studying migrant families, as family migration may be seen as involving short-term sacrifices in the hope of a more secure future.

A key aspect of reaching psycho-social security is the emotional labour involved in making a new start, with the vision of a better life. Research has documented the experiences of emigration and settlement and the strain that doing families transnationally poses for relationships (Mazzucato and Schans 2011; Ryan 2011). While this literature documents the struggles and routes to material and economic prosperity in the West for many, as well as the failure and perpetual marginalisation for some, there is less research on the impact of migration on the existential aspects of young migrants' lives. Research on migrant families remains mainly adult-centred, as a significant body of research on children's well-being in transnational families relies on adults' accounts (Mazzucato and Schans 2011). Beck (1992) has argued that the normative basis of late-modern society is about safety and the prevention of harm and risk anxiety – especially in relation to an unpredictable future – which has become a feature of Western societies. These ontological insecurities are channelled in part through societal concerns about children's security and young people's futures.

Children's diverse roles in family migration are well documented, from influencing the timing of family migration, to the choice of a destination country and decisions to stay or return (Ní Laoire, Carpena-Mendez, Tyrell and White 2011; Ryan and Sales 2011; White 2011). Family migration is, in the main, a difficult matter for children. Studies have acknowledged the significant challenges that they have to cope with, including disrupted relationships with friends (Haikkola 2011; Reynolds 2007; Sime and Fox 2015b), changed family structures after migration (Salazar Parreñas 2005; White 2011), hostility and segregation at school (Devine 2009, 2011), as well as challenges to identity and sense of belonging (Ní Laoire *et al.* 2011). Nevertheless, in the last decade, research on migrant children has concentrated on challenging assumptions of migrant children as problematic and permanently 'trapped in a miserable structural conflict of living between two cultures' (Mannitz 2005: 23) and has focused on their resilience, agency and voice.

This article adds to this literature by examining migrant children's views of security post-migration, with a focus on their sense of belonging and hope for a secure future. I aim to show that their understandings of ontological securities develop across place and over time and that these understandings may often differ from those of their parents. By focusing on the emotional and ontological dimensions of security, I also draw on feminist approaches to care and 'doing family', which include notions of kinship, domesticity and reliable social relations. These build on an individual's sense of connectedness with family networks as well as on a sense of connection with place and community. The everyday practices of engaging or producing securities may include a combination of formal and informal networks and may depend on the nature of social relationships available to them. In this sense, I aim to contribute to existing scholarly debate on the notion of belonging which, as Yuval-Davis, Kannabiran and Vieten (2006) claim, relates to 'important social bonds and ties' and encompasses feelings of emotional safety and being at 'home' (2006: 528). The affective dimension which lies at the heart of belonging, seen as a process rather than a fixity, reflects the emotional investments involved in doing family post-migration and the 'desire for attachments' (Yuval-Davis 2006: 202).

Methodology

The methodological approach for the study draws on semi-structured interviews with adult migrants and child-centred activities, inspired by the new sociology of childhood which advocates for the recognition of children as competent social actors with their own agency and subjectivity. Social theories of childhood (James, Jenks and Prout 1998; Jenks 1996) conceptualise children as social actors, active in their engagement with adults, institutions and ideologies, which they interpret, reinvent or negotiate in their own ways. Corsaro calls this process 'interpretive reproduction' (2011: 21), to reflect the creative aspects of children's participation in society and their active contribution to cultural production and change. This approach has prompted researchers to think of the 'competent child' (James *et al.* 1998), whose perspective on society, possibly different from

that of adults, needs to be heard and considered in equal manner. Children's voice cannot genuinely be heard unless adults change the ways in which they see children and their competence. As research with children moves into new realms which tackle the long-standing issues around children's lack of representation and power, childhood remains a highly contentious topic, as different historical, spatial, social, political and moral positions are conjured up to discuss it. In this paper, I show that involving children as research participants can highlight internal dynamics in migrant families and challenge adult-centred constructs of family migration as a route to family security.

The data collection for this study took place in 2009–2010, at a time when Scotland was just beginning to experience the effects of the economic crisis which started in 2007/2008. Since the accession of A8 countries to the EU, Scotland had seen a significant increase in the number of EU migrants arriving in search of work. In the years 2004 to 2008, just before this study started, migration to Scotland was on the increase – in the region of 45 000 arrivals per year, the highest since migration records began in 1951. However, by 2011–2012, migration rates were already decreasing, probably as a direct consequence of the economic crisis. The data were collected in urban and rural areas with a high proportion of new migrants and involved 11 focus groups with 57 children who had migrated to Scotland with their parents between 2007 and 2010. The participants included 31 girls and 26 boys, the majority were Polish (N=48) and aged between 8 and 16 years; they came from a range of socio-economic backgrounds and were mostly recruited through schools in urban and rural locations. The focus groups involved child-friendly activities, where children discussed first the experiences of an 'imaginary migrant family' arriving in their area and then their own experiences.

In the second stage, 23 in-depth family case studies were completed, including 29 children – some from the focus groups but also some newly recruited – to ensure a more diverse spread of nationalities. In addition to 13 Polish children, these cases involved five Lithuanian, four Slovak, two Bulgarian and two Romanian children and one Hungarian, one Russian and one Czech family. In total, 15 girls and 14 boys were involved, between the ages of 8 and 16. The families lived across Scotland in both urban and rural areas; most parents were in low- and middle-income employment, including agriculture, factory work or the retail and hotel sectors. All families were visited twice at home and invited to complete diaries of their daily activities and take photographs of their lives, which were then used as prompts for discussion. In each family, one or both parents were also interviewed in the participant's native language – either using an interpreter or by the researchers – or in English if the families preferred this. The article draws on the data from families with young people aged 12–16 in order to unpack the experiences of young people who are likely to find migration more challenging, when friendship relationships and identity formation have distinct characteristics (Baptiste 1993; White 2011). By exclusively selecting newly arrived families, we were more likely to capture the anxieties and insecurities inherent to the initial stages of settlement; however it was important to document these experiences at a time of increasing inward mobility in Scotland.

Homes are complex spaces in which to study children and they often offer a richness of information that participants might not express in words because of the normalised nature of their everyday lives (Sime 2015). Carrying out research in homes has increased advantages in terms of empowering children, as the home may be perceived as a familiar space where the researcher is a guest. However, although homes may offer a less formal setting, they are not free from ethical dilemmas. Homes are shared spaces, where children often do not control access to or use of spaces by other family members (Bushin 2007; Pyer and Campbell 2013; Sime 2008). This means that researchers have to be flexible and negotiate the domestic space according to the children's and adults' wishes. In this study, parents were usually comfortable about allowing the researchers to speak to their children in private and the children were mostly absent when their parents were interviewed;

sometimes, however, the entire family was in the room. We had to take account of the likely power relationships between the family members who were present, aware that the parents may have influenced what their children felt was appropriate to say in their presence and *vice versa*.

Focus groups and activities with young people were recorded, transcribed verbatim and analysed using a grid analysis approach, thematic coding and retrieving methods (Boyatzis 1998). An overview thematic grid was produced to map out the descriptive summaries of the issues emerging from the data. Relevant sections of the transcripts were assigned appropriate thematic codes and refined sub-categories emerged and were allocated to text in transcripts. An NVivo package was used to facilitate the organising and classifying of the data. In the next sections, I identify some of the key themes that the analysis of the dataset revealed in relation to the parents' and children's understandings of migration as a source of individual and family (in)security, and explore in particular the extent to which children and adults had different notions of security. All names used are pseudonyms.

Children's security as a motivating factor in family migration

The decision to migrate was often linked, in the adults' narratives, to opportunities for better paid employment. Parents wanted to find work that provided better financial support for their families, often expressed as 'a better standard of living' and a better quality of life. Financial security was seen as a pre-condition of family security, with an assumption that emotional security would follow. Many parents described having good jobs in their home country but struggling financially and feeling stressed by the demands of that job and their stretched finances. Financial insecurity, determined by the ratio of pay to the cost of living; the constant struggle to secure basic items such as food, and the emotional insecurity linked to work, made adult participants think of migration as a route to a 'better future', as Grzegorz, a Polish parent, stated:

All I wanted was to have a good life. A good life for my children and to [be able to] provide for them. And I want to make sure that my children are happy and try to give them what other children have, so they don't need to ever feel ashamed.

Like Grzegorz, many other parents were of the view that emotional security follows material security and that a better income would help the family to overcome not just shortages of goods or services but also the parents' deep sense of guilt and even social embarrassment. The children's future played an intrinsic part in the adults' decisions to migrate, often constructed by parents in terms of educational opportunities, as well as financial gains in the short term. Parents, such as Aldona from Lithuania, below, tended to feel that education in Scotland was more prestigious and that the opportunity for their children to go to a good school or university was either unattainable or less likely in their country of origin:

Here, there is less stress getting into university, a better quality of study, accommodation. Also financially it's easier; you don't really need to overstretch yourself to get children into education. In Lithuania, it would be a struggle.

For some parents, moving was justified in terms of 'a new beginning' as a family unit, with a clear desire to escape the post-socialist environment of ongoing deprivation, the stigma of poverty and a marked shift in aspirations for a different social, political or cultural context. These parents, and again Aldona, said that they did not like what had become of their country of birth and they took the opportunity to leave:

We told my son, 'We want a better life for you'. So that's [leaving] for the children. I don't want them to become like a lot of Lithuanians, you know [don't want them to be] like all the other people over there.

Changes to the state provision of services and support mechanisms across the CEE region have led to new levels of unemployment and welfare insecurities. Some of the parents explained how they experienced increasing inequality of opportunities, whereby employment depended on 'who you knew' and informal networks to accessing work or training opportunities. At the same time, the withdrawal of state-funded benefits – like full-time childcare or free healthcare – increased families' dependence on informal networks of support such as neighbours or grandparents. Drawing on these private, non-state networks and resources to recreate forms of care previously offered by the state also meant a sense of emotional (in)security; it put kinship relationships under strain due to an increasing demand for care by children or elder family members, as Magda, a Polish parent, illustrates:

My mother had to help more often and she was resenting it; I had to work longer hours and I was always stressed, then we would argue. So I decided coming here [Scotland] would be a breakthrough.

Migration was thus a break from the post-socialist past, an escape route from a perceived hopelessness in relation to potential social structures and mechanisms unlikely to develop at a speed that would deliver a secure future in the short term. A significant element of these decisions was the perceived opportunity to secure children's future opportunities. However, the data from children revealed that security after migration was complicated, especially in emotional terms.

Children's lack of control over the decision to migrate and implications for emotional security

Perhaps because they associated childhood with innocence and vulnerability, most parents did not feel it necessary to consult their children on their families' migration plans. As the majority of the children were 12 or younger at the time of their family's move to Scotland, the parents said that they did not think they would understand or, in some cases, said that parents just 'knew best'. 'The parent decides and the children must obey', stated Aldona, a Polish parent.

However, most parents described seeing the initial months in Scotland as a 'testing-the-waters' period after which, if their children were not happy or settled, the family would return to the home country. The 'wait-and-see' approach thus implied a recognition that children's emotional security mattered and might not simply be a given. Some of the children described not wanting to migrate and being angry or upset over their parents' decision. The older children, in particular, talked of feeling more frustrated about their lack of control over their parents' decision and were more likely to wish to return, as illustrated poignantly by 15-year-old Vincent from Lithuania:

Interviewer: What do you like about living in Scotland?

Vincent: Nothing at all.

Interviewer: You'd much prefer to be in Lithuania?

Vincent: Aye [yes]. I know, like schools are harder in Lithuania, but I'd rather be there.

Interviewer: *Is that maybe because you've got older, or because you live in Scotland?*

Vincent: *Oh just because she's [his mother] brought us here, just don't like this country at all.*

Interviewer: *Right. So you feel angry that you didn't have any control over moving here?*

Vincent: *Yes. Didn't have any choice at all.*

In Vincent's case, his mum migrated alone and then requested that Vincent follow her to Scotland. Only in a couple of exceptional cases did the parents say that they left the decision to migrate up to the children themselves. However, were the children to decide not to migrate, the alternative meant their being left behind with relatives – often grandparents – as the parents, like Danuta, had already made plans to leave:

Romek decided on his own that he did not want to come with me [to Scotland] and he wanted to stay back in Poland. I gave him the option to decide; I was fine with him staying with my mother [in Poland].

As a single parent, Danuta decided that moving to Scotland and leaving Romek in the care of her mother would be a satisfactory arrangement until she had secured a family home in Scotland, childcare and better employment. Kinship care was not always an option and some children were left behind on their own. Although both the children and the parents spoke at length about their understanding of the risks involved, such as the safety risks for children or the likelihood of being reported by neighbours to child protection services, they also rationalised their decisions in terms of a temporary and unavoidable sacrifice. In these cases, the young people spoke about how these arrangements impacted on their sense of emotional insecurity, which lingered for years, even after they were reunited with their parents. This also meant that, for the children, the pre-migration stages were marked by mixed emotions of not only excitement and anticipation but also considerable anxiety, which sometimes led to them blaming the parent. Benas (13) had lived alone for almost a year with his 14-year-old sister in Lithuania before coming to join his mother in Scotland:

Interviewer: *How do you think a child feels about their parents when they first come Scotland?*

Benas: *He hates them, definitely. He doesn't hate them, I mean, he just doesn't like them very much (laughs).*

Interviewer: *So that's why there's tension with the mother, you said.*

Benas: *Yeah, because, because the mother is trying to protect him and she goes first to find work and to check things are ok. But he still thinks that his mother is to blame.*

The parents were usually aware of their children's feelings and talked about their own emotional strain at having to leave them behind, while also dealing with pressure from the rest of their family to stay. They kept in touch regularly, to reassure their children that reunion would happen 'soon' although, in some instances, families had to wait years before the situation was favourable to family reunification. In this instance, transnational mechanisms of care and parenting were the only source of emotional security for both parents and children, with the promise of reunification once material security was achieved. This process of 'caring at

a distance' (Baldassar 2007) could do little, though, to address the significant changes that families were already undergoing on an emotional and relational level. Families who had experienced temporary separation often said, after reunion, that things were 'not the same' and it would often take children months and years to reach a state of emotional stability.

Children's and parents' views of (in)security post-migration

While aspirations for a secure future are often linked to adult migrants' motivations for moving, we have a less clear understanding of what children's views are on families' decisions to migrate for a 'better future' and of the extent to which family migration is experienced by them as a route to a secure future. In this section, I explore parents' and children's narratives of (in)security, directly linked to the desire for inclusion and belonging or feeling 'at home' and examining the often entangled and contradictory web of understandings they construct when talking about their lives in the new country. When compared, these narratives demonstrate the complex interactions between parents' and children's attitudes to migration as a route to future security, their distinct views of material and emotional (in)security, and the significant impact that migration has on family structures.

Financial (in)security

Financial concerns were a key part of the families' decision to migrate and the parents often talked about 'critical incidents' and the experiences of marked financial insecurity that made them decide to move. This included losing their employment, not being able to make ends meet or, in some cases, unhappy relationships or situations of domestic abuse and financial dependence on abusive partners. Many parents discussed how, despite being in highly qualified jobs, their income was low relative to the cost of living and they were experiencing constant financial struggle:

In Lithuania, I was dreading the weekends, what to put on the table, how to feed the children, will they ask to go anywhere and having to tell them we can't afford it; it was much more difficult, because of money (Alma, Lithuanian parent).

Now I can go to bed without this feeling that tomorrow I won't have money for living. Here [in Scotland], if you work you can afford many things. In Poland, we were struggling each month with many things (Beata, Polish parent).

As well as food and basic needs, the adults described the additional costs of services such as healthcare or education. Although the latter had remained free in most CEE countries, families had to pay for things like uniforms and textbooks, equipment and school trips and they had often struggled to cover these, as Simon, a parent from Poland, explained:

To buy everything for four children, like all books, notebook, school dress and so on, we needed a lot of money, it was around 2000zł [£440], more than I would earn some months.

The children seemed very aware of their families' insecure economic situation pre-migration, of how much things cost in their home country and of the strain that this was putting on their parents, as 13-year-old Jelena illustrates:

It was quite stressful there... prices are always up and quite expensive, everything, and stuff like that... sometimes, people didn't get much money or, like, the salary was not on time, and they had a lot of expenses.

Discussions about their awareness of the sacrifices that their parents had to make in the past, especially with a view to securing a better future for their children, were frequent in the focus groups like this Polish one:

Interviewer: *Why did your parents decide to come here, do you know?*

Klaudia (13): *I think it was because of school, our future. In Poland, education is very expensive; here, college is free.*

Ola (16): *Well, university is not free, but everything is much easier.*

Wioleta (13): *It is better than in Poland.*

Ola (16): *My mum said that she came here to give me a better future. It was for me, for my future, not for her, but for me and my brother.*

Children and young people were thus aware that their future depended on their families' financial stability as well as on the social, economic and political contexts in which they were growing up. Implicit in children's and adults' comments was the idea of dissatisfaction with the economic environment in post-socialist states and an awareness of the sacrifices made by the adult generation to secure a more democratic society – which had failed, however, to deliver the opportunities they wanted for their families. On this issue, the parents and children were mostly in agreement – their new situation in Scotland was a positive change in terms of immediate financial security although, in some cases, it was still precarious due to the uncertainty over long-term employment. What the parents and children did not always agree on was the extent to which financial security was a price worth paying in terms of other dimensions of security – such as emotional and ontological security – discussed next.

Emotional (in)security

Linked to the issue of employment and financial security, the parents talked about the emotional security that a stable job and recognition at work brought them, which shows that, in relation to the parents' work, their emotional and material securities seemed interdependent and aligned. This was often linked to aspects such as securing a permanent contract of employment and a more positive and supportive work environment. Maya, a Bulgarian teacher, talked about the shift in her well-being as a result of moving to Scotland:

One thing which brings more security is what I do – I can now sustain my family, although we are newcomers here. This, in the longer term, gives you more confidence, I'd say. Before [migrating], I was doing two or three jobs and under constant pressure, thinking 'What will help me get more money?' – not to get rich, but just to sustain your family. So I'm now happy, my boss recognises my work – and it's not just me; I see a difference in my children in that they have more positive feelings about school.

The children also commented on the opportunities that migration had created for their parents in terms of emotional security through employment. In some cases, they talked of how an ongoing, precarious political or

economic context in their home country was a drain on the energy of their parents, who had their hopes crushed in post-socialist period. Maya's two daughters, aged 13 and 16, agreed that the move had been to their benefit, as well as better for their mother's career, although they missed Bulgaria and their friends. Gintare, a 16-year-old Lithuanian, talks here about the 'typical migrant child' and what would make his or her family move to Scotland:

S/he would hate the political situation that forced us to move, that meant s/he had to move, I mean... s/he would know that s/he didn't have a choice. But still s/he would hate that. S/he would think that s/he could have stayed if the politicians weren't, if politicians were better. And for your parents, you don't have a choice in that situation. They waited for so long, they thought it would be better, but then it wasn't. So they decided, it's better to move, you have more money, and you can do whatever. So, like... you have freedom.

The sense of family (in)security draws thus on young people's knowledge about adults' experiences of the past and what the children were told about them, about their current access to resources and their estimations of the likely future. Most children said that they understood how their parents' experiences of insecurities in relation to work and money in the past compared negatively with their present chances of securing employment and the potential for better opportunities in the future. They often linked these interpretations to the wider political and economic uncertainties of post-socialism, showing a clear awareness of changes in the available state-regulated support and of the fluid and ambivalent nature of social relations and processes of care and support in their country of origin.

However, while the children were prepared to concede that their parents had gained some financial security and recognition through work, they often thought that this came with a heavy price in terms of emotional security for the whole family. This included the anxieties which they had to cope with on leaving close family members – such as grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins – behind as well as the struggle to leave their friends.

I miss my grandmother, I used to spend my summer holidays with her and she looked after me when my mum came first to Scotland. I'd help her in garden. Here, we don't have the garden like in Poland. And we'd do things like paint Easter eggs, play cards and so on (Agnieszka, 12, Polish).

The beginning, it's like, you can't remember them [your friends and family], or you don't want to, because you have so many problems, you have to start a new life and you have to find new friends and you have to live in a new city or town or you're having stress in your family and it's like, everything is like broken (Gintare, 16, Lithuanian).

Many young people talked openly about the resentment they felt towards their parents as well as that felt by those left behind – like older parents and siblings – with family rifts often mentioned. The children talked about the sense of loss they often experienced when leaving and how their emotional security had been affected by the realisation that certain relationships were now lost or at least transformed forever by their parents' decision to move the family, as 12-year-old Marta from Poland explained:

I have some Scottish friends, but my really, really good friends are from Poland. And I'll never get them back. You might call your grandmother, but it is not the same. Same with friends in Poland, even though you might contact them by Skype, on the phone or send letters, it is not the same. It will never be the same.

Young people commented on how grandparents left behind were affected by their families' move abroad, and the resentment they often felt towards their children, who had disrupted traditional family patterns and left the grandparents lonely and with limited opportunities to get involved in their grandchildren's upbringing. Others, like Marta, talked about the role of modern technology in maintaining transnational relationships; however, the closeness of their relationship had been affected and their interactions were 'not the same'. Uprooting the family reconfigures opportunities for everyday encounters and relationships, making the relational aspect of migration fraught with emotional (in)securities, particularly where immediate access to networks of emotional and moral support is not readily available. Technology, in this sense, goes some way in allowing connections over spaces but it also alters the potential for direct interconnectivity and emotional bonding.

Life post-migration often leads, therefore, to tensions between parents and children, as well as between parents and grandparents. Agata, a Polish single mother who had lived in Scotland for about three years, discussed the strain which migration had put on her relationship with her son, Bartek (12), and with her parents, who wanted them to return:

Bartek really misses his grandmother and his dogs, and he misses Poland a lot. I think he will never get used to this new place. He is torn between two places, Poland and Glasgow. He often gets mad at me that I took him from Poland, I ruined his life (laughs). And my mother didn't speak to me for months – now it's a bit better.

At the time of the interview, Agata had lost her job and was relying on job-seeker's allowance, a benefit for people seeking work. She saw unemployment as an opportunity to reconnect with Bartek, who was also encountering difficulties in finding meaningful friendships in his new school or neighbourhood:

Well, Bartek's teacher told me that he isn't doing his homework, and they have problems with him. I never had problems with him in Poland. I know that Bartek is doing his homework, but he doesn't want to show it. This is his way of saying to me that he doesn't want to live here, and that we won't do anything here. He needs to show me that he doesn't like it here. It's difficult, things are different from Poland, children are not coming to our house and they are not going outside together to play games. Everything is more formal, or maybe they treat Poles differently. Where we live, in these flats, there are a lot of social problems, teenagers doing drugs and drinking, so Bartek has no friends.

In the absence of extended family networks, young people also had to take on responsibilities such as looking after younger siblings, doing more household chores or even taking small paid jobs themselves, contributing thus to family divisions of labour. In some cases, this led to more reliance on siblings for emotional support; their siblings said migration had brought them closer together, as they bonded over shared feelings of dissatisfaction with the new family arrangements. In other families, the strain of migration led to the breakdown of the parents' relationships and to divorce, and the children found themselves in single-parent or reconfigured families, with their parents' new partners or step-siblings now living with them, as described by 16-year-old Lithuanian Gintare.

The parents in many families would be separated, yep. Because lots of people are coming here and, they are divorced. Or they divorce when they come. And after, they find someone [a new partner]. And then, the mother would be trying to protect the step-father, because he's new in the family and it's very hard for a child, it doesn't matter that he is, like, a teenager or whatever, it's just, like, the way it is and so I think that, as a child, you get further away from her [mother].

Emotional security is thus not always a given in the context of family migration and does not always align with financial or material security – families often experience significant disruptions in and reconfigurations of relationships and traditional roles and norms. The evidence seems to suggest the different temporal axes which shape adults' and children's conceptualisations of emotional security. While adult migrants seem to place more weight on their own and their children's future, the children themselves seem to emphasise more the present and the immediate sense of emotional (in)security and loss that come with migration. While migrating adults may often think that emotional insecurity is a short-term sacrifice and one worth paying for more long-term material and emotional gains, the children's own experiences and feelings of loss, interrupted kinship relationships and perceived lack of understanding on the part of their parents all contributed to a sense of emotional insecurity.

Ontological security and belonging

Giddens (1991) talks about ontological security as a sense of order and continuity in relation to an individual's experiences. In the case of migrant families, migration comes with discontinuities and new risks over individuals' place in society. In this section, I examine the resources that families draw on in order to produce new securities in relation to their sense of recognition and belonging in the wider community. When we asked families what they missed most, they described missing a sense of belonging to a place or wider family networks. In addition, most of the children and adults spoke of missing family traditions that took place around birthdays and annual celebrations, like Easter or Christmas, which used to give them a sense of cultural belonging:

I miss the family celebrations... getting together for birthdays, weddings and funerals, and being together, where everybody knows you. And the food, things like sausages and fresh meat. They taste different here (Katia, Polish parent).

When you walk around the town, and you meet familiar faces, friends or relatives – here [in Scotland] no one knows you (Marta, Polish parent).

Other parents, like Wera, described a constant sense of displacement and not belonging, and talked about a 'pull' towards their homeland, however indistinct:

Not sure how to say this, but you live abroad and, although your living conditions are better and you have better prospects for the future, there is something else missing... I can't say what it is that I miss about Poland: there is something special about the place you were born.

While many accepted that missing family get-togethers was part and parcel of the sacrifices made when moving abroad, the sudden absence of family and friends led to a sense of loss and change of self. Community norms which families had become used to over the decades, the reciprocal support between kin and community-based encounters were common before migration:

I'm the person who likes to meet with people and I must say I miss that here [in Scotland]. Our home in Poland was always busy, the house was full all the time, and here, no one opens our door (Beata, Polish parent).

As a consequence, many adults talked of experiencing a personal crisis in relation to their loss of place in the local community while, in their homeland, they used to be recognised on the street or had certain community responsibilities. In many narratives, the sense of a shared past was the ‘glue’ of local communities and, through migration, families had lost a sense of connectivity and togetherness. This went hand in hand with the absence of a sense of belonging – families did not feel that they belonged in Scotland while not feeling that they fully belonged to their homeland any more either, as this parent, Jurek, explained:

I won't ever feel like a Scot, no. See, to understand some things here, I would need to be born here. My heart belongs to Poland definitely but, if I'm here, I need to integrate in this society. You need to keep your culture and language, teach them to your children but, on the other hand, you can't isolate yourself from the new society. I like it when people you don't know ask how you are, wave, it is nice. It's fine but you are still a foreigner to them.

Weronika, a Polish mother who was now working in catering in Scotland, talked about the loss of a sense of recognition in a community. Whereas she had been a teacher in Poland, her teaching qualifications were not recognised in Scotland and her English language skills were still developing. Having worked all her life as a teacher, Weronika found a way to compensate for her loss of status through the establishment of a Polish complementary school, where teachers like her, who were now working in low-skilled jobs in Scotland, could get back some of their professional identity:

We are factory and hotel workers Monday to Friday, then we put on a suit at the weekend and we transform into teachers. Because that's who we really are, but no one here sees us like that [in the wider community].

The multiplicity of intercultural encounters, when a person had to deal with discrimination and cultural racism, was also exemplified by encounters which the children and parents mentioned when they talked about their struggles for recognition and participation in the public sphere, as did 12-year-old Weronika and her mother Basia:

Everyone was nice to me at the beginning, it was because I was new, from Poland, wow! But after some time they just stopped, and I had no friends, some days no one to talk to.

Yes, what I noticed in my work, there's hidden discrimination, everyone is nice, but when it comes to real help, they just don't help. They ignore you when you ask, but if some other Scots ask for that same help, then they will help straight away.

This points to the emotional labour involved in fighting for recognition, linked to the emotionality of being a migrant and the ways in which power relationships mapped on ethnicity and status are experienced and negotiated on an everyday basis across a range of sites, such as school and work. When thinking about the potential for one day belonging, some of the participants talked about the long-term possibility of becoming a British national, emphasising, therefore, formal citizenship. However, it soon became evident that, although citizenship might be secured, in practice, some of the adults and children felt that they would not be able to ‘fit in’ and be accepted in Scotland.

The sense of social or civic (in)security is linked to notions of feeling accepted as equal members of work or neighbourhood communities. Equally, while the parents thought that their children would become ‘like

natives' in time, the young people – such as 12-year-old Ana from Bulgaria – did not agree and felt that, on an emotional level, they could not achieve ontological or social security and feel that they completely belonged:

Interviewer: *Would you say that Scotland feels like your country or not yet?*

Ana: *No, not like my country. But it's the place I like to live in.*

Interviewer: *Do you think you might move to other countries then?*

Ana: *That's another like option. Yeah I could... I'm too young to think about that now. I still have, like, my life in front of me.*

Overall, the young people expressed uncertainty over their futures and many emphasised a global 'migrant' identity, rejecting the need for a local or national identity and connectivity:

Momchil (12): *My mum says I'm Bulgarian – I say I'm American.*

Interviewer: *American? Have you been to America?*

Momchil (12): *No, not yet, but I'd like to live there – or anywhere.*

I like being different. I mean, because it's, like, you're not the only different person in here. It's, like, there are all sorts of people in here... all kinds of religions, you know, different cultures and everything. It's great, it's fantastic. And you're one of that, you're one of that different kind of thing. It's like you are a citizen of the world, not of one country (Gintare, Lithuanian, 16).

While the young people seemed to be open about their expectations of an unpredictable future, the insecurity over their future preoccupied their parents more, many of whom, like Ludmila and Maya, from Lithuania and Bulgaria, respectively, realised that their long-term plans to stay in Scotland would depend on precarious work opportunities and returned to the prioritising of their children's future when considering their options for staying, returning or moving on:

The children were thinking of going back to Lithuania when they finish their studies at university. First we thought to go back, after a year, but now it seems that we're staying for at least eleven years, until they finish their studies. You never know what the future holds for us, now that this credit crunch is bad everywhere in the world. So you just don't know what's going to be next, but we're trying to focus on the children's education.

I don't know what will happen in four years. I'm flexible. Because it also depends on what my children will be doing. I mean my family, I'm now focusing on supporting them to continue their education, and then afterwards they will hopefully start their own lives, then I will see. Because it's one thing to be on your own but it's another thing when you have children.

Conclusion

This paper has offered some insights into migrant families' everyday struggles for a sense of security and long-term stability by also examining the emotional labour involved in the processes of constructing belonging and the challenges to the sense of feeling 'at home'. In this process, the agency of young people and their emotional resilience are manifest extensively and configured by intersections of existing and acquired identities, reconfigured spaces of belonging and transformed intergenerational relationships. While CEE adults' explanations for their decisions to uproot the family seem to be motivated mainly by a desire for a secure future for themselves and their children, family experiences post-migration seem to point not only to some acquired securities but also to some new insecurities created by the family's migrant status. In this context, examining the children's and adults' narratives of security post-migration can reveal the tensions that the act of migrating brings to family relationships, emotional dis/connections, sense of (not) belonging and ontological (in)security. These narratives are often shaped by discourses of modernity whereby the self and the family become reflexive projects, with often unanticipated risks associated with the loss of close kinship and friendship networks, and the sense of recognition that a person gets from family and community. The evidence presented in this article points to the fluid and individualised production of social (in)securities, whereby the complex material, emotional and relational aspects shape families' sense of security in unpredicted ways.

Bauman's 'liquid modernity' (2000) is applicable here, pointing to the vulnerable nature of relationships, the temporariness of many family plans and the expectations of still-to-come change emerging from the fragile nature of new beginnings abroad (see also Engbersen and Snel 2013). The perspective adopted here, with its focus on intra-family experiences, highlights the tensions that migration brings to family relationships, emotional dis/connections and threats to an individual's sense of belonging and ontological security. At the same time, it points to the temporal aspect of (in)security, where perceptions change over time depending on family circumstances, but with a sense of collective family memory of an insecure past. While, for the adults, migration brings financial stability and the belief that emotional and social security would follow, the children (and some adults) often question the family move abroad as they reflect on the sacrifices of family and friendship networks and of the emotional (in)security that comes from reduced networks of support.

This article has shown that the children's and their parents' views of their life post-migration were not always aligned in terms of perceived benefits and worthy sacrifices. While financial gains were undeniable in most families, the emotional strain led to family separation or tension between the generations. In terms of a secure future, both parents and children were still uncertain that their migration had put them on a safe and secure route to future stability and personal success. In this sense, the parents were taking precautions by investing in their children's education or working on a 'backup' plan, such as thinking about a possible return. While both generations seemed to acknowledge that migration had opened doors to better paid employment or better schooling, for example, the lived realities also meant an acute sense of loss of places and relationships and of not always belonging to a community. Most of the children saw themselves now as belonging 'here and there' – in the country of birth through relationships left behind and in their new country through new relationships – and found themselves at the centre of complex interactions between material, emotional and ontological (in)securities.

The article has also shown that involving children in migration research can highlight internal dynamics in migrant families and challenge adult-centred constructs of family migration. Understanding issues of emotional and ontological security in relation to family migration requires a clear recognition and positioning of children as a group who have distinct views and experiences. To a certain extent, children draw on their parents' narratives of security from the past, while they develop their own understandings. In the families in this project, the parents needed to believe that their decisions had not been in vain and that ultimately their children

would be able to achieve a sense of stability and grounding in their new country. While they sometimes expressed uncertainty over their own futures once their children would have grown up, the parents seemed confident, overall, that benefits had outweighed the risks in their families' migration. Their children reflected more openly on the emotional and ontological insecurities brought about by migration – while their narratives sometimes reproduced idealised views of family security, whereby migration was seen as a 'way out' to a better chance of success and security in the future, they also balanced the potential gains against the losses that occurred from leaving a home, family and friends behind. The ambiguity of their feelings has been apparent in the data presented – on the one hand, understanding their parents' decisions and feeling a sense of emotional debt and, on the other, resenting them for removing their children from kin and friends. The sense of (in)security is based on a combination of experiences of the past, current access to resources and estimations of the probable future. While the parents' experiences were nuanced by their post-socialist ones, their children's understandings were mainly based on their own experiences of a rupture in relationships and sense of belonging and place. The children's sense of security was thus mainly configured by what they saw as uprooting, reluctant departures, uneasy settlements and dislocated selves. This reflects the multilayered ways in which individual and collective worlds are actively reconfigured and reformulated post-migration, with a clear place for children's views in any research on migrant families.

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