The emotional journey of motherhood in migration. The case of Southern European mothers in Norway

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Abstract

Based on focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with Greek, Italian, and Spanish mothers living in Norway, this article contributes to an emerging body of literature on the role of emotions in migration by exploring migrant motherhood as an emotional journey. Drawing on the work of Arlie Hochschild on emotions and her theoretical concepts of framing rules, feeling rules, and emotion work, the article explores how migrant mothers reflect on their emotions when raising their children in the context of migration. Migrant mothers' accounts illustrate the ambivalent and contradictory emotional experiences they have when they manage rules about how they should make sense of, and feel about their mothering in both host and origin countries. Emotions of guilt, blame, remorse, pride, satisfaction, confidence, and happiness shaped mothers' experiences of motherhood and social interactions across countries. Through emotion work, migrant mothers managed interdependent emotions and related to different feeling rules establishing and maintaining relationships across places, and negotiating, in this way, their belonging to multiple contexts. Using an emotions-based sociological perspective, we look at motherhood as a field for studying the functions of emotions and their interactions in the context of migration.

Keywords: intensive mothering, migrant mothers, emotions, feeling rules, emotion work

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1. Introduction

Traditionally, emotions have been a major domain of psychology, however, sociological and anthropological research have recently recognized their centrality in shaping how we experience and construct the world (Anderson and Smith 2001; Davidson and Milligan 2004; Svašek 2010; Walsh 2012). A focus on emotions has been claimed to be necessary in studies on work, housing, public policy, and human geography (Anderson and Smith 2001).

The field of migration has acknowledged the central role that emotions play in the lives and social interactions that migrants have within and across borders (Svašek 2010: 866; Campos-Delgado 2019). Migrants engage emotionally with host and origin countries through conflicting emotions that are felt before, during, and after migration. These shape their experiences and influence the meaning-making process. In this regard, there has been growing interest in exploring how emotions and mobility are interrelated (Ryan 2008; Svašek 2010), and studies have found that migrants strengthen social bonds and create or maintain attachment to places through their emotions (Baldassar 2008, 2015; Maehara 2010; Vermot 2015).

This study is part of a larger project that explored Southern European migrant parents' experiences of parenting in Norway. Although we did not primarily contemplate motherhood in migration as an emotional journey, the first author observed that migrants often reflected on the emotions they associated with raising their children in the context of migration, and did so in various contexts. Emotions come across as key elements in migrants' accounts, especially when trying to interpret their own mothering experiences, and when positioning themselves in relation to other people and places. For example, migrants often discussed what they experienced as typical feelings when encountering local institutions and Norwegian parents. As researchers, we realized that emotions needed to be addressed in order to gain a fuller understanding of what it is like to be a migrant mother.

This article explores the reflections of Southern European mothers regarding doing mothering in the context of migration. Motherhood in migration is a field that allows for the exploration of interdependent emotional processes where individuals establish and maintain relationships across contexts, and which shape the way they make sense of, and engage with, hegemonic mothering ideals in host and origin countries. Emotions are central in framing how individuals construct and live in the world (Anderson and Smith 2001). Therefore, knowledge of the role of emotions in the context of migration is of relevance because it contributes to unpacking how migrant mothers interpret their experiences, and construct their identities as well as their sense of belonging to different places. Considering migrant mothers' accounts as a window into the emotional dimensions of human mobility, this study contributes to sociological approaches that seek to understand the interactive nature of emotional processes in migration (Milton and Svašek 2005). Scholarship has addressed the emotional dynamics of transnational families (Baldassar 2008; Abrego 2014), yet the emotional implications of mothering in a new country have remained unexplored. As such, we address this gap by offering an analysis of how migrant mothers reframe their realities through navigating different feeling rules, and how they make sense of their experiences and emotions as active agents. By challenging the

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pathological perspective that has been dominant in studies of the functions of emotions in contexts of migration (Albrecht 2016), we focus on the analytical potential of a sociological emotion-based perspective for understanding human mobility instead of migrants' suffering.

2. The emotional journeys of motherhood and migration

Following a socio-constructivist framework (Brenneis 1990), we understand that migrant mothers' emotions are felt, constructed, and interpreted in interaction with others and within various contexts. In theorizing emotions as intrinsically relational, the work of Hochschild (1979) is especially useful because it brings together socio-cultural norms with individual embodied experiences of emotional responses. Rather than addressing how people unconsciously feel, as in psychoanalytical approaches, Hochschild theorized the way in which individuals actively manage their emotions through social interactions (1979: 560). Inspired by her work, we understand that emotion management has a relational nature and is actively exercised, as well as shaped by the meanings an individual has given to a situation and, simultaneously, influencing their perceptions of that situation.

Hochschild's theoretical concepts of 'framing rules' and 'feeling rules', which emphasize the social construction and social complexity of emotions, are central for our discussion. She defined 'framing rules' as 'the rules according to which we ascribe definitions or meanings to situations' (1979: 566) and that indicate 'what interpretations and meanings individuals should give to situations' (Turner and Stets 2005: 41). An example of these is the expectation that women should be stay-at-home mothers (Hochschild 2003: 127). Emotions are felt when individuals, delimited by the available 'framing rules', have interpreted and defined a situation (Hochschild 1979). Because feeling rules 'specify how people ought to feel in a situation given a particular interpretation demanded by framing rules' (Hochschild 1979: 565; Turner and Stets 2005: 41), framing rules act as the context for feeling rules (Tonkens 2012: 199). Together, they create the guidelines for assessing how appropriate it is to feel certain emotions in a given situation. Therefore, the norm that women should feel happy about being at home is a feeling rule (Hochschild 2003: 127). These feeling rules are learned through social interaction and compliance with them involves 'emotion work', which are techniques through which individuals try to direct their emotions (Hochschild's 'what I try to feel' 1979: 565). This shows how emotions are not just felt, but interpreted and actively managed (Tonkens 2012:196). Individuals try to avoid tensions that might emerge when there is a disassociation between feeling rules and an individual's lived experience of a situation through emotion work. By doing so, they are accepted as members of a particular social group (Ryan 2008; Maehara 2010).

Becoming a mother implies a journey of navigating cultural and gender norms, values, expectations, mothering practices, and emotions. Over the last decades, intensive mothering has prevailed as the framing rule for thinking about mothering in the western world. Guided by western, middle-class values about proper lifestyle, sexuality, maternal care, and order within an individualistic notion of personhood, intensive mothering includes

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ideas, beliefs, and opinions about what upbringing involves, and why some mothering practices are more appropriate than others (Hays 1998: 21). This particular cultural norm prescribes that mothers should be their children's main caregiver and perform labor-intensive, child-centered, financially expensive, emotionally absorbing, and expert-guided practices (Hays 1998: 81). Underlying intensive mothering is a construction of the vulnerable child and of mothers as the responsible party for their children's well-being and, thereby, society's future (James and James 2008). These contemporary ideas of children's vulnerability and parental determinism underpin current developments of policies that approach families as a mechanism to solve societal problems (Furedi 2001; Gillies 2012). Family policies have led to an increasing professionalization of family relationships and monitoring of parenting practices, which have been transformed into an activity that cannot be performed naturally but that parents need to learn from experts (Gillies 2012). In this context, mothers face high expectations on their mothering and are the recipients of blame when their children do not turn into 'good' citizens.

The emotional dimensions of framing motherhood within intensive mothering are complex and ambivalent. Feminist scholars (Caplan 1989; Chase and Rogers 2001; Jackson and Mannix 2004) have argued that the image of 'good mother' within intensive mothering prompts women to feel guilty when they do not meet the ideal's demands. Moreover, research has found that the high standards and pressure to be perfect and a 'good mother' within intensive mothering leads to experiences of stress and anxiety for women that do not fully subscribe to this ideal (Henderson, Harmon, and Newman 2016). These feelings interact with the supposed sense of fulfillment, happiness, love, and devotion to their children that 'good mothers' are expected to within this framing rule (Huppatz 2018: 151). A mismatch between normative morally laden assumptions of motherhood and a mother's lived experiences brings tensions and complex emotional responses (Michaels and Kokanović 2018), which need to be managed through extensive emotion work (Maehara 2010).

Migration also implies an ongoing emotional journey (Ryan 2008) through hope, disillusion, fear, uncertainty, satisfaction, shame, guilt, pride, and nostalgia. Hochschild's concepts of feeling rules and emotion work have been relevant for studies on mobility and emotions. Belonging, longing, loneliness, shame, and guilt have been explored as 'feeling rules' within migration (Ryan 2008; Svašek 2008, 2010; Baldassar 2015; Vermot 2015). Because different feeling rules are dominant in particular times and places (Reddy 2001), the emotional dimensions of mobility are complex. In order to manage conflicting feeling rules, migrants engage in emotion work, which allows them to reframe the situations they are in, as well as establish and maintain relationships across places (Ryan 2008; Lau 2010; Maehara 2010; Lindqvist 2013). In this regard, research on transnational families has found that guilt is an emotion that helps women to feel attached to their parents or children back in their countries of origin (Baldassar 2008, 2015; Abrego 2014; Vermot 2015). Likewise, emotion work has been argued to be intrinsic to migrants' integration in the host society (Maehara 2010; Lindqvist 2013). The centrality of emotions and their role in navigating ideals around migration and mothering, as well as in interactions, identity, and belonging construction means we cannot overlook them when trying to understand motherhood in the context of migration.

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2.1 Mothers' experiences of intensive mothering

Researchers view intensive mothering as the cultural script for mothering among Western middle-class mothers, one which places emphasis on the idea of spending time, resources, and energy on children (Faircloth, Hoffman and Layne 2013). However, it is important to note that intensive mothering includes ideas about child-rearing that 'are certainly not followed in practice by every mother, but they are, implicitly or explicitly, understood as the proper approach to the raising of a child by the majority of mothers' (Hays 1998: 9). Not all mothers perform the same mothering practices, but intensive mothering is the normative standard by which mothering is assessed (Arendell 2000). This supposes a hierarchy of knowledge about the proper approach for child-rearing within which mothers can choose from a variety of practices to 'intensively' raise a child (Faircloth 2013; (Jaysane-Darr, 2013)).

Recent studies framed by a global perspective have pointed out that there is no uniform interpretation nor performance of the ideal of intensive mothering (Faircloth, Hoffman and Layne 2013; Jaysane-Darr 2013). Factors like social class and culture influence how mothers navigate and internalize the ideology of mothering. Regarding the former, research has shown that the family circumstances and financial constraints of working-class mothers shape their experiences and meaning-making of mothering. This results in practices that promote less organized activities and instead include directives more often than, for example, providing explanations to children (Lareau 2002; Nelson 2010).

As for culture, variations regarding beliefs about gender roles, a child's needs, childhood, and child-rearing play a role when mothers engage with the framing rule of intensive mothering. Because of their cultural understandings of childhood and children, migrant mothers might perform mothering practices that differ from that of the society in which they live (Jaysane-Darr 2013). Furthermore, the migration-related challenges that this group of mothers faces may hinder them from meeting the time- and resource-demanding standards of intensive mothering (Berry 2013). Difficulties to live up to this ideal may also make migrant mothers more vulnerable to marginalization in the host society, and reinforce complex and ambivalent emotions about their mothering.

3. Data and methods

3.1 Participants and methods

Data were collected in three Norwegian municipalities in 2017, in the context of the aftermath of the 2008 economic recession. Southern Europe was one of the most crisis-stricken regions and suffered longstanding economic, political, and social consequences (Capucha et al. 2014; Lafleur, Stanek and Veira 2017). As a result, there was a rise in South-to-North intra-European mobility. This was not only economically driven migration. It was also motivated by Southern Europeans' desires for stability (Bygnes and Erdal, 2017). In Norway, the Spanish community grew from little more than 1,500 residents in 2004 to a population of 6,211 in 2017. Other growing groups include migrants from Italy (4,315) and Greece (2,828) (Statistics Norway 2004, 2017).

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To recruit informants, information leaflets were distributed through organizations, churches, preschools, schools, and libraries, as well as online. Most participants were recruited via Facebook groups that acted as migrant fora through the use of the snowballing technique (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981). The study participants were 15 mothers, and included women from Greece (two), Italy (two), and Spain (11). Ten of them had lived in Norway for more than five years, with the rest having done so for less time. Our informants shared a recent macroeconomic history of financial recession, which shaped the experience of migration for the majority of them. Most informants had a university degree (10), but only six of them worked in their professional fields (oil, construction, consulting, and academia). Eight participants had manual jobs, such as housekeeping or preschool assistant, and one was unemployed at the time of data collection.

Because mothering norms and experiences are class-related, it is important to consider participants' social class. This is a challenging task given the fluid character of class in the context of migration, where mismatches between education and occupation, and between class positions in the host and origin countries, are experienced by many informants. Taking into account occupation and educational attainment as socioeconomic indicators (Stefansen and Farstad 2010), we can tentatively, group six of the mothers as middle-class, as they had both university degrees and typical middle-class jobs (professional/managerial positions in the public and private sectors). Five mothers could be classified as working class, given that they had no higher education and had typical working-class jobs (skilled/unskilled manual work or office work). Finally, exemplifying the complexity of class expression, four mothers could be placed between these categories (middle/working class) because they had university degrees but held working-class jobs (three), or were highly educated but unemployed (one).

Informants had one or two children, aged from eight months to 17 years, and most of them became mothers after migrating (nine). Nine of them had a Southern European partner, while five had a Norwegian one, and only one was a single mother. Reasons for migrating varied from career opportunities to marrying a Norwegian. Apart from one who lived in the countryside, study participants lived in three larger Norwegian cities. Most informants had daily experiences with ethnic Norwegian parents and welfare professionals. Eight participants had children enrolled in kindergarten, and three of them worked as assistants there. Others attended school meetings (nine), interacted with their Norwegian in-laws (five), or had experiences with neonatal and maternal care in Norway (nine).

Data were collected through two focus group discussions (FGDs) and 11 in-depth interviews. In the FGDs, participants were asked to reflect on being a mother in Norway and of meeting other parents and welfare professionals in the country. Informants were grouped based on the length of stay in Norway. Each FGD lasted 120 minutes. One was held in English, with six mothers who migrated more than five years ago; and another in Spanish with four mothers who had lived in Norway for less than five years. Individual in-depth interviews were conducted with nine mothers at a place of their choosing, either their home, workplace, university, or a café. Six of them had previously participated in the FGD. Moreover, two mothers were interviewed together with their partners. Interviews lasted 75–120 minutes and were conducted either in English (four) or Spanish (seven). They followed a narrative approach with exploratory questions aiming to collect

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detailed pre- and post-migration experiences to contextualize the storytelling. Although emotions were not a topic expressly included in the interviews or FGDs guides, they emerged as an important theme.

In addition to the interviews and FDGs, the first author participated in events organized by the Spanish and Italian communities in Norway, such as a Christmas dinner, a Sunday lunch, and a barbeque. These were opportunities to get access to informal and 'naturally' occurring conversations among migrant parents, and to interact with the informants and other migrants in informal settings. The first author was part of Facebook fora where Southern Europeans living in Norway shared information, gave and asked for advice, and engaged in discussions which became additional windows into migrant mothers' reflections. In these settings, migrant mothers often discussed mothering and welfare interventions for families, showing self-awareness of the interventionist role of the Norwegian state in family life and the predominance of discourses in Norway that portray mothering as child-centered and dialogued-based. Emotions about raising children in the context of migration were often discussed in these informal gatherings or spaces, in which the first author also observed a sense of community among migrant parents.

Data were transcribed and translated into English verbatim and later imported to qualitative analysis software NVivo for coding. The FGDs and interview transcripts were thematically analyzed with particular attention to how mothers talked about doing mothering in a cross-cultural context. We followed Braun and Clarke's six steps for conducting thematic analysis (familiarization with the data, coding, generating initial themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up). We did so because thematic analysis is a theoretically flexible method that focuses on identifying and analyzing patterns across the data, and it suits questions related to people's experiences, understandings, and perceptions (2006).

3.2 Reflexivity and the researcher's positionality

The FGDs were a collective meaning-making process in which the members of the group drew on the available discursive repertoires to talk about mothering in migration (Gedalof 2009). Participants constructed a group identity through sharing similar emotions about raising their children in Norway. Due to its interactionist character, emotions acted as a 'glue' (Turner and Stets 2005: 1) that bound the group members together and separated them from other groups of mothers.

Although the socially organized situation and controlled setting that FGDs entail may have had an impact on the research, we are convinced that the data collected through the FGDs were not just a result of FDG-related social dynamics. Following Goffman (1981 cited in Smithson 2000: 105), we saw 'natural' discussions as performances embedded in conversational situations. Migrant mothers engage in conversations about their children's upbringing, mothering, and migration in a variety of contexts that influence how they display their opinions and emotions. Based on the interviews and observations, we claim that migrants often engage in conversations about parenting in migration and its emotional implications in a similar way to that of the FGDs participants.

Important positionalities of the researchers, such as gender and age, may impact the study during its different stages (Berger 2015). Being a female immigrant from Spain, the

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first author shared some identity categories with the informants, which, together with her personal network of Spaniards living in Norway, facilitated the recruitment of participants and her interaction with them. Her firsthand knowledge of migration helped her to identify and follow-up important topics related to the research questions. Likewise, it is relevant to highlight the researcher's unfamiliarity with motherhood, since she was not a mother herself, and to reflect on how the way that participants interpreted this may have influenced the study. In the interviews, the mothers positioned the interviewer in a familiar situation of young woman who would like to form a family in Norway. This prompted detailed descriptions of their experiences of motherhood through attempts to help the interviewer to understand an unknown reality for her, and through giving her advice based on their own experiences.

4. Findings

Two main themes emerged in the migrant mothers' discussions about raising their children in the context of migration: (a) dialogue-based and child-centered mothering ideals; and (b) cultural differences in social interactions, eating, and drinking patterns. Participants reflected on the emotions they felt in relation to both themes. In this section, we present such reflections showing how emotional responses are fluid, ambivalent, interrelated, and situated in temporal, spatial, socioeconomic, and cultural contexts.

4.1 Navigating emotions: dialogue-based and child-centered mothering ideals

In their discussions, participants stressed the different images of 'good mother' they perceived as hegemonic in both host and origin countries, giving great importance to national contexts in the construction of mothering ideals. Migrant mothers associated Norway with an ideal of 'good mother' that includes child-oriented and dialogue-based practices aiming to encourage children's autonomy and self-sufficiency. When they reflected on mothering in their countries of origin, they referred to more obedience-based and protectionist practices.

> Agnese (FGD1): I feel that they (Norwegians) . . . feel that a child knows what he can or can't do, of course, the adult is there to guide, but it isn't like in Italy, and probably in Spain and Greece, where "you can't do that, you can't do this"

This made the act of raising their children in Norway be seen as an opportunity to interact with dialogued-based and child-centered mothering ideals, and to learn practices that would help them to provide a 'good' childhood and upbringing for their children. Practices like listening to and engaging in conversations with children, as well as giving them space to make their own decisions were assessed as beneficial for their children. Mothers often associated such practices with Norway and the learning process that, according to them, they had experienced after migration. This brought emotions of pride and satisfaction because it promoted their liberation from practices they wanted to avoid.

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> Sabrina: Agnese, I'm like you, I lose my temper. I'm like: "I've said it three times now!" ... but, I've tried to embrace the Norwegian way and it helps me, it's a good thing for my kids and for me.
>
> Agnese: Yeah, because as a parent you feel horrible when you scream to your children. You feel better when you are able to [speak calmly to them] (FGD1).

At the same time, encountering dialogued-based and child-centered mothering ideals in the host country brought on negative emotions. Mothers expressed that when they do not live up to these ideals, they feel judged by Norwegian parents, professionals, and community, which brings feelings of shame. Informants felt blamed by engaging in the common practice of approaching their children in an authoritarian way, which was described as a practice mothers were not blamed for in their countries of origin.

> Agnese: Norwegian parents never scream or lose their temper ... Sometimes I get really pissed off and I scream
>
> Marta: Me too
>
> Agnese: Of course I don't like when I lose my temper, it's horrible
>
> Vanessa: Imagine having a Norwegian husband ... He never screams, and then, you do, and he looks at you like: "what's wrong with you? Do you really think that this is gonna work?" That's everyday crisis.
>
> Agnese: Exactly ... sometimes, I get pissed off, I scream, and I think [that] in Italy, nobody would react to that. Nobody would say: "you are a bad mother because you scream to your children". They'd say: "I understand, you lose your temper." (FGD1)

As the previous quote shows, the informants who reported a reinforcement of their guilt through their interactions with their partners were those cohabitating with Norwegians. Contrary to mothers whose partners were Greeks, Italians, or Spaniards, they felt that their companions more often questioned their mothering when they performed practices they associated with their countries of origin.

The disclosures of feeling negative emotions for not living up to the mothering ideals encountered in the host society were accompanied by mothers' discussions of the socio-institutional context in which they raise their children and how it influences their mothering experiences. Lack of social capital, economic challenges, and instability was presented as migration-related stressors that hinder them from meeting the expectations set up by the mothering ideal in Norway. Mothers used their migrant status to handle negative emotions and absolve themselves from feeling guilty for not living up to that ideal.

> Sonia (FGD1): When I became a mother, I felt I didn't have time for anything and I wasn't good enough, ... my husband told me: "you cannot compare yourself with a Norwegian. Norwegians who go for strolls every day and they walk, and they do whatever they want but when they feel like doing something they want to do, they put the kid in their parents' house and they do whatever. You don't have that". Because we have more stress, don't have escape, don't have time for ourselves ... I've been unemployed for a year!

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It is important to note that the mothers' navigation of dialogued-based and child-centered mothering ideals in their encounters with Norwegian professionals and parents brought both negative and positive emotions, which were interwoven in complex ways. For instance, informants criticized the child-led learning approaches and lack of competition within Norwegian primary schools, particularly the absence of a grading system based on exams, and they doubted the benefits of such practices for their children's future. Meanwhile, they expressed pride and confidence about adult-led approaches they associated with their cultures of origin like demanding more homework, and using discipline by setting clearer boundaries, rules about mealtimes or the use of electronics, and taking away activities or children's belongings. These were described in contrast with the more child-centered practices observed in Norway in public spaces or institutional encounters, like letting the child make decisions about what to wear. Another example of how positive and negative emotions were interrelated can be observed through Marta's experience of comparing the way she approaches her daughter to how Norwegian mothers who 'patiently explain things to children' do. She feels 'bad' and reminds herself that she 'probably hugs her children more than they do'. Referring to a practice she felt proud of, this showing of affection to her children, was a way to counterbalance negative emotions prompted by not living up to dialogued-based mothering ideals.

Participants' interactions with mothering ideals in Norway prompted reflections on their mothering prior to migration, which was accompanied by emotions of guilt for having raised their children in ways that could have a negative impact on their well-being, future, and development. Past mothering practices they felt guilty about included not being patient with their children, approaching them in an authoritarian manner, not spending time with them, or not giving them freedom. Mothers made sense of these practices by locating them in the past and in their countries of origin, not only in terms of geographical location but also in terms of cultural understandings, values, and socioeconomic and institutional contexts.

> Isabel (FGD2): Here [in Norway], I had the time to get to know my daughter, her needs and wishes, to spend time with her, to listen to her, and all these are valued and expected. I couldn't do all that with my first son, in Spain, where the maternity leave is ridiculous, and the working conditions aren't family-friendly at all.

Guilt for their past mothering was reinforced by the informants' comparisons between the child-rearing practices they engaged in the past and the practices they associated with Norway. For instance, Rocío (FGD2) disclosed the guilt she feels when she compares how she raised her children in Spain with how Norwegian mothers do.

> Rocío: I work in the [kindergarten's] department for children aged 1-3 years ... If a 1 year-old child says: "I'm already full, I don't want any more [food]", you don't force him ... Here you see that the child has his own personality! It's incredible!
>
> Isabel: Yes, it's so
>
> Rocío: sometimes it gives me nostalgia because I think I didn't give my daughters what I know now, the opportunity to express themselves when they were 1-3

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> years. I didn't stop to see them as they were on the inside, and here you realize that a 1-3 year-old child has a personality of his own.
>
> Nieves: You must not feel remorse because you did what you thought was the best for them . . . You didn't know some things because of ignorance.
>
> Rocío: but here I see the parents who come to kindergarten and take their time with their children.

Rocío shared that she felt remorse, frustration, and guilt for not having raised her children using the practices observed in Norway. During the FGD, there was shared anguish because of the impossibility of undoing their mothering, and its potential negative consequences on their children's future. Guilt and remorse for the past were interwoven with pride and satisfaction for what participants described as their personal growth as mothers. Yet instead of pointing only at time as a key element in the process of becoming 'good mothers', they gave importance to place. Norway was seen as a place that gave them the opportunity to learn desired practices. Place also played an important role when informants justified their past mothering practices, particularly those they do not feel proud about doing. In this regard, mothers stressed their ignorance at that period because of living in a country where the practices, which they see today as adequate, were not common.

Disclosures of guilt for past mothering were accompanied by discussions on the structural challenges participants faced when they raised their children in their countries of origin. Migrant mothers reflected on how employers and policymakers make it difficult for parents to balance family and work in Greece, Italy, and Spain, unlike the family-friendly Norwegian environment. Reflecting on the context in which they raised their children helped informants to absolve themselves from guilt for not having been the ideal mothers.

> Rocío: I look at the parents, who come to the kindergarten and take their time with the children, speak with them and "Bye dad, bye mom". I left my daughter in the kindergarten, I had to run; "Bye" and the girl stayed crying. I didn't have time. It's also because of the work, the pace of life that we all have there [in Spain]
>
> Miriam: It's more stress there
>
> Rocío: How do I say to my boss that I'm going to be 10 minutes late because my daughter is crying in the kindergarten?
>
> Isabel: Yes, in Spain that's unthinkable. . . . I don't know if I'm the worst because sometimes you have that feeling of: "was it that bad how I raised the eldest [in Spain] compared to the way I'm doing it with this one [youngest child born in Norway]?"
>
> Rocío: I feel remorse when I think that I didn't give the eldest all the freedom in her moment. (FGD2)

4.2 Navigating emotions: cultural differences in social interactions, eating, and drinking patterns

Migrant mothers shared that they experience cultural clashes in different spheres of their daily lives and discussed them in connection with their mothering. They reflected on their

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positions as migrants and how their cultural backgrounds bring complex and ambivalent emotions. Because they drew on a broader set of culturally informed practices to ensure their children 'proper' upbringing, mothers felt proud, grateful, and satisfied regarding their cultures of origin. For instance, having a Mediterranean diet was presented as a practice rooted in their culture of origin and promoting their children's well-being.

> Eva: At the kindergarten, I got shocked with the food, the *matpakke* (lunchbox); you say "they (children) can't eat bread every day". They (kindergarten staff) look at you "what have you cooked for her today?" like surprised because you have made something else than a sandwich .... My daughter is the only one with a proper diet, because I make pasta, salmon, a proper meal with many fruits. A proper meal for a child cannot be bread! I'm glad she has a Mediterranean diet.

As Eva, all mothers were critical of the dietary practices observed in Norway, which were consistently described as inadequate for their children's healthy development in contrast to those from their countries of origin. They showed resistance toward the Norwegian diet and felt proud and satisfied for keeping, and instilling, a Mediterranean one.

Informants' experiences of what they defined as cultural clashes also brought emotions of guilt, stress, and anxiety about their mothering. This was the case when mothers reflected on patterns of social interaction common in their countries of origin that differed from those encountered in Norway, like including children in the social activities that adults held in the evening or that involved social drinking. Performing these practices in Norway brought negative emotions when mothers perceived that Norwegians blamed them for such practices.

> Miriam: Imagine I'm going to visit somebody on a Friday and it gets late, 9pm, ..., you realize there is no child [on the bus], everyone goes with alcohol in the bags, and all look at you like: "what are you doing with a girl on a bus at 9?"
>
> Isabel: They give you a dirty look. In my case, once, the normal thing that you miss the bus, you have to wait for the next one, and you are late and say: "they're going to give me a dirty look", and they do
>
> Nieves: Yes, and they make you feel bad (FGD2).

Because the migrant mothers' feelings of guilt came up when they performed some practices either in Norway or in their countries of origin, they decided to be selective regarding the country in which they would perform them. An example was their decision to drink alcohol in public spaces with their children present only in their countries of origin in order to avoid the emotions of guilt and shame that this practice would bring in Norway. This shows the special importance that migrant mothers gave to national contexts in their reflections on the emotional implications of mothering in migration. Yet it is relevant to point out that negative emotions were again interrelated with positive ones. Participants' reflections on shame for their drinking practices came accompanied by descriptions of condescension, critique, and contestation of Norwegian ideals in this respect. Shame was, therefore, interwoven with pride and confidence about the drinking culture of their country of origin.

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> Marta (FGD1): There is nothing wrong with drinking a glass of wine with food as we do in Spain. What is really bad is drinking to death on a Saturday, which is a very Scandinavian thing. So, please, don't judge me!

Finally, informants described the approaches toward their children's social life in both Norway and their countries of origin as culturally informed. In the next quote, Sabrina, an Italian mother, shares how she is fighting against her worry for her son's safety and her restrictive attitude toward him, which she described as 'learned in Italy', and how she tries to embrace the more 'relaxed' attitude that she has encountered in Norway. She describes this as a learning process that brings feelings of stress, anxiety, and satisfaction.

> I do worry, yesterday, he (son) was ten minutes late, "OMG, what happened? . . . What if he falls from a three?" . . .

> I saw that this wasn't right, I saw it from my husband, he is Norwegian, so it was so clear for him, and from my colleagues at kindergarten, and I accept it and I fight it "son, you can go out, but please take your phone with you" . . .. So, I try to find other ways to feel a bit more relaxed and let him do whatever he wants because actually I've realized that it's wrong that he isn't allowed to do things, because I'm afraid . . .. It's difficult, it's a process, and it takes a long time to adjust, but I'm getting better and I feel good and proud to embrace those things because I think that it's actually better. If it's better for my son, then, I have to try.

From the participants' perspective, the cultural clashes have also prompted a transformation in their mothering practices. Mothers became conscious of this when they re-encountered their societies of origin and realized that they gave more freedom to their children than other parents do. Despite feeling that this practice would have positive outcomes for their children's well-being, their perceptions of being judged and blamed for it in their countries of origin brought emotions of shame and guilt.

> Nieves (FGD2): When we are in Spain, for my daughters it is natural to go alone to the parks, but other children are so scared.

> Isabel: Yes, when we went in the summer [to Spain], she [daughter] was one and a half years old, we went out on the street and the girl ran, she did everything by herself. I didn't even think of being all over her "don't climb, don't. . .", and other friends who have children . . . were all over her all day: "don't worry, I look at her" I thought: "I'm so bad; I must be the worst because I'm not over her all time". I had the sensation of being bad, like negligence.

This again mirrors the importance that mothers gave to place when they made sense of their emotions, and how the same practice brought ambivalent emotional responses depending on the country in which it was performed.

5. Discussion

Migrant mothers raise their children in a context of mobility in which they encounter rules for doing, thinking, and feeling about their mothering. Hochschild's concepts of framing rules, feeling rules, and emotion work may be useful to better understand our

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informants' reflections on their emotional experiences and the functions of emotions in the context of motherhood in migration. We discuss the ambivalent array of emotions our participants go through in their attempts to make sense of context-dependent framing rules and to manage inconsistent feeling rules about their mothering. Further, we look into the emotion work through which mothers tried to comply with feeling rules maintaining and building a sense of belonging across places.

When informants made sense of motherhood, they reproduced key notions within the ideology of intensive mothering (Hays 1998), which came up as a framing rule that indicates 'what interpretations and meanings individuals should give to situations' (Hochschild 1979: 566), in this case, to motherhood. Migrant mothers saw themselves as responsible for taking child-focused and time-consuming practices to ensure their children's well-being. This understanding of their mother role is in line with the notion of parental determinism underlying intensive parenting, which argues that what parents do with their children will have a decisive impact on the child's future opportunities and development (Lee et al. 2014).

Migrant mothers identified that in Greece, Italy, Spain, and Norway, intensive mothering is the framing rule according to which motherhood should be understood. However, they reflected on the existence of cultural values and understandings of children, childhood, and family that they see as differing across these societies. For instance, they shared that their cultures of origin stress more children's vulnerability and dependence, and the reciprocal responsibilities between family members, whereas the host society's culture puts the focus on individuality and children's rights. Migrant mothers associated Norway with a dialogue-based mothering ideal, in contrast with the more obedience-based mothering practices that they knew from their countries of origin. Influenced by the values and understandings that stem from their cultures of origin, the migrant mothers found it undesirable to meet some of the mothering ideals that they perceived as expected from the Norwegian society. The participants' cultural backgrounds also shaped how they engaged with intensive mothering. They perceived that this rule for framing their mothering allowed them to choose from a range of context-dependent practices to 'intensively' care for their children (Faircloth 2013: 123). They shared different practices regarding children's schedule, sleeping, and feeding within intensive mothering that were common either in Norway, Greece, Italy, or Spain.

Migrant mothers' social class and work status shaped also how they engaged with the framing rule of intensive mothering. Research has found that middle-class mothers are more likely to meet the time- and resource-consuming demands of intensive mothering (Fox 2009; Romagnoli and Wall 2012). This contrasts with working-class mothers, who have been argued to be more critical to intensive mothering because the egalitarian, nonjudgmental attitude, and emphasis on dialogue within this ideal may be a 'predicament that is not realized into society's functioning' for this group of mothers (Raffaetà 2015: 1206). In our study, all mothers were critical of certain aspects of intensive mothering regardless of their social class. They were concerned that the focus on egalitarianism encountered in Norwegian educational institutions would not prepare their children to live in an unfair world. Furthermore, the migration-related challenges faced by all participants, like lack of family support in Norway, intensified the feeling of being unable to keep up with the expectations on their mothering under the framing rule of intensive

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mothering. This is in line with previous research that identified language barriers, lack of social support, and knowledge about bureaucratic norms, cultural clashes in understandings of children's autonomy, and economic difficulties as factors that hinder migrant parents from achieving the standard of intensive parenting (Aarset and Sandbæk 2009; Staer and Bjørknes 2015; Fylkesnes, Iversen and Nygren 2018; Friberg and Bjørnset 2019).

As a framing rule, intensive mothering shaped our informants' meaning making and experiences of mothering. It also provided the context for rules that defined how they should feel about their mothering (feeling rules; Hochschild 1979). Although migrant mothers were critical of the high expectations that intensive mothering put on them, they seemed to feel guilt, fear, uncertainty, shame, and anxiety in the face of the ideal's high standards. This is in line with Henderson et al.'s study (2016), which argued that emotions of guilt and pressure to be 'good mothers' are inescapable to all mothers. At the same time, framed by intensive mothering, happiness, joy, and satisfaction arose as feeling rules mothers were expected to feel when they raised their children and made sacrifices for their well-being (Hays 1998).

Doing mothering in a context of mobility added more complexity to our informants' emotional experiences because of conflicting feeling rules on their mothering from host and origin societies. In Norway, our informants discussed that they are expected to feel confident, proud, and satisfied when they perform practices that promote their children's participation and autonomy. On the contrary, they referred to fear, anxiety, and worry as feeling rules they experience in their countries of origin when they perform some practices that would bring the aforementioned positive emotions in Norway, like letting a child go to the park by themselves.

As Svašek and Skrbiš noted (2007: 374), the emotional dispositions learned in the country of origin might differ from which emotions are 'acceptable' for the host society, which might bring 'emotional destabilization'. However, inspired by Albrecht (2016), we claim that it is important to go beyond a pathological perspective on emotions that may overlook a migrant's agency. The cross-cultural context in which migrant mothers raised their children puts them in a position in which they access different rules in order to reframe their realities. In line with Gu's study on Taiwanese women in Chicago (2010), this position brought negative emotions. However, it also prompted satisfaction, pride, joy, and happiness. In this regard, our informants reflected that there are situations in which they can decide whether to act and feel in compliance with the feeling rules encountered in a particular context. This shows the relational nature of emotions and how migrants actively do emotion work in their attempts to reconcile conflicting emotions.

Migrant mothers learned feeling rules through interaction with others across countries, like professionals, other parents, and relatives. To comply with those rules, they engaged in 'emotion work' or strategies through which informants redefined situations aiming to shape their emotions (Ryan 2008; Wettergren, 2013), and to be accepted as members of host and origin societies (Ryan 2008; Lau 2010; Maehara 2010; Lindqvist 2013). As Maehara (2010) found, idealizing family life in the host country can be a way for migrants to manage their emotions. In our study, migrant mothers' idealization of mothering in Norway can be seen as a technique of emotion work to manage their guilt for the mothering practices they performed in the past in their countries of origin. This emotion work

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also shows the important role that place was given in migrant mothers' reflections on the emotional journey of motherhood. Participants associated their improvement as mothers with living in Norway and learning mothering practices that helped them to become better, instead of making sense of this as part of a learning process shaped by time and experience. Through emotion work, not only did informants manage emotions of guilt, but they also negotiated their belonging to the host society.

The discussions on the role that the structural context in which they raise their children has in supporting or hindering 'proper' mothering is another example of the emotion work that migrant mothers carry out. The family unfriendly working conditions of their countries of origin and their lack of social support in Norway were identified as barriers to fulfill the ideal of mothering in the past and in the present. This is in line with previous research that identified lack of social support and economic difficulties as challenges migrant parents face when they raise their children in Norway (Staer and Bjørknes 2015; Fylkesnes, Iversen and Nygren 2018; Friberg and Bjørnset 2019). For our informants, blaming the structural contexts for their past and present 'bad mothering' was a way to manage feelings of guilt and shame.

Finally, pointing at the positive aspects of their culture of origin on which they drew as resources to raise their children was another emotion work technique for our informants. Reminding themselves about values and practices they associated with their cultures of origin that would benefit their children's upbringing and well-being was a way for mothers to manage negative emotions about their current mothering, and to maintain a sense of belonging to their countries of origin. This shows how negative and positive emotions are interwoven in the journey of motherhood, and how mothers' experiences with host and origin societies are shaped by different feeling rules and techniques of emotion work. These reflections can help to bring a better understanding of the interactive nature of emotional processes in migration (Milton and Svašek 2005). Through emotion work, migrant mothers engaged with different feeling rules in Norway, Greece, Italy, and Spain, negotiating their belonging to host and origin societies. Feeling proud and satisfied for letting their children playing outdoors created a sense of belonging in Norway, whereas feeling guilty for the same practice connected them to their countries of origin. Mothers' emotional experiences about their mothering, therefore, shaped their belonging to host and origin societies, and the relationships they build and maintain across places.

6. Conclusion

This article aimed to shed light on the emotional journey of motherhood in migration by exploring the reflections of Greek, Italian, and Spanish mothers living in Norway on their experiences and emotions regarding mothering. The voices of migrant mothers show how social interactions, perceptions of own mothering and mothering ideals, and belonging to places are all shaped by emotional experiences. Migrant mothers reflected on emotions of guilt, shame, remorse, pride, happiness, anger, relief, satisfaction, stress, and anxiety as interwoven and navigated through place and time. Drawing on elements within the ideal of intensive mothering, they constructed an image of a 'good mother' and

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context-dependent mothering styles with which they struggled to comply. Through emotion work, they managed their emotions and engaged with different feeling rules from host and origin countries, negotiating their belonging to both contexts.

Our analysis contributes to deepening the understanding of the emotional dimensions of migration by illustrating the ambivalent range of emotions of migrant mothers. This knowledge is of relevance from a social science perspective because emotion work is intrinsic to migrants' meaning making and experiences, as well as to the navigation of ideals and feeling rules around mothering and migration, and social interactions. Moreover, a focus on emotion has been proven to be fruitful for unpacking how migrant mothers navigate their identities as mothers and as migrants, and create a sense of belonging in different places.

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