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To mother or to migrate?

Ideal motherhood and normative migration:
Perceptions from Nicaraguan migrant mothers

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The MFS Scholarship Programme gives Swedish university students the opportunity to carry out fieldwork in low- and middle income countries, or more specifically in the countries included on the *DAC List of ODA Recipients*, in relation to their Bachelor's or Master's thesis.

Sida's main purpose with the Scholarships is to stimulate the students' interest in, as well as increasing their knowledge and understanding of development issues. The Minor Field Studies provide the students with practical experience of fieldwork in developing settings. A further aim of Sida is to strengthen the cooperation between Swedish university departments and institutes and organisations in these countries.

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Female transnational labour migrants account for half of Nicaragua's high volume of migrants, where women partake in international seasonal migration, primarily to Costa Rica, to improve the lives of themselves and their children. The migration processes are often informal, short-term and repetitive, often with reasons related to Nicaragua's high poverty levels and unemployment rates. Female migration often also involves becoming a transnational mother, i.e. where motherhood and mothering are negotiated to expand financial support while being physically separated in periods. Since mothers normatively are expected to be the familial carer, this new negotiation of mothering occasionally subjects migrant mothers to stigma and guilt, something that is related to a deviation of the 'ideal version of motherhood'. This bachelor thesis investigates how ideals of motherhood and mothering look in the Nicaraguan context, and relates this to perceptions of seasonal migrant mothers in rural communities in north-western Nicaragua. The thesis is based on an ethnographic field study conducted in Nicaragua over the course of ten weeks, January to March 2014, with theoretical framework of naturalized motherhood, ideal versions of motherhood and transnational motherhood applied.

Keywords: Nicaragua, migration, transnational motherhood, norms, ideals of motherhood and mothering

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

AMIFANIC – Asociacion de Mujeres para las Integracion de la Familia en Nicaragua

CEPAD – Consejo de Iglesias Evangélicas Pro-Alianza Denominacional (Council of Protestant Churches of Nicaragua)

CENIDH – Centro Nicaragüense de Derechos Humanos (Nicaraguan Centre for Human Rights)

IOM – International Organization for Migration

MIFAMILIA – (Nicaraguan) Ministry of the Family

NGO – non-governmental organization

OIM – Organización Internacional para los Migraciones

Sida – Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

SJM – Servicio Jesuita para Migrantes (The Jesuite Service for Migrants)

UCA – Universidad Centroamericana (University of Central America)

1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction

There are 232 million international migrants worldwide, people who for economic, social and cultural reasons have partaken in international migration to improve the lives of themselves and/or their families. Transnational migration studies have encompassed different focuses, regarding e.g. reasons for migration, national and personal effects of remittances, and consequences of partaking in a migration process. Male and female migration differs when it comes to reasons, outcomes and vulnerability, despite that women make out just over half of all international migrants worldwide (UN ESA 2013).

Female migrants are often mothers seeking to improve the lives of their children, and in terms of this take on a new identity as *transnational mothers*, i.e. mothers who are transnationally separated from their children and consequently mother from afar. Due to female labour migration often being informal, children are mainly remaining in the home country with an ‘other-mother’ as caregiver during the migration process. This often poses issues of stigma and guilt towards the migrant mothers, as mothers normatively are perceived as the family carer, and in a migration processes consequently are deviating from the norm of ‘good’ mothering (Moorehouse and Cunningham 2012).

In Nicaragua, transnational migrants are estimated to around twelve per cent of the population, but with high degrees being informal migrants, the exact volumes are difficult to predict (OIM 2012). Female migrants comprise around half of the migration numbers in Nicaragua, mainly partaking in seasonal labour migration to neighbouring Costa Rica informally in shorter and repeated periods. Reasons for this are related to high unemployment rates, lacking opportunities for decent and/or formal work and in some cases men’s violence against women (ibid).

Family values in Nicaragua are traditionally anchored, with mothers as main caregivers of children, something that is evident in both lacking welfare services where women are expected to perform unpaid care work as a substitute for state-provided care, as well as patriarchal structures that emphasize ‘good’ mothering as present caring (Martínez Franzoni and Voorend 2011).

This thesis revolves around the relationship of ideals of motherhood and mothering and transnational migration, where ideal motherhood will be established and investigated how this relates to experiences of seasonal migrant mothers. The thesis is based on an ethnographic field study that was conducted over the course of ten weeks in north-

western Nicaragua from January to March 2014. The data collection consisted of semi-structured interviews with 13 migrant mothers who all had experienced transnational motherhood, and also with key informant organizations working with migration in Nicaragua. The interviews all compassed themes of migration and motherhood in Nicaragua. The interviews followed a snowball sampling approach, and used organizations as gatekeepers to access the field. The method for analysis is narrative.

1.2. Significance and aim

The purpose of this thesis is to establish how ideals of motherhood and mothering in Nicaragua are affected by transnational migration, and thus investigate how migrant mothers are affected in their motherhood and mothering when partaking in transnational migration. My choice to investigate the relationship between ideal motherhood and transnational motherhood came from previous studies encompassing transnational motherhood from contexts all over the world, where long-term transnational migration have been studied from a wide range of angles. What I discovered was that despite the country's high levels of international migration, studies emphasizing perspectives from Nicaraguan transnational mothers themselves seemed to be limited. This is interesting, as this thesis encompasses new perspectives of transnational motherhood, where focus is on short-term and repeated migration processes to neighbouring country Costa Rica, creating new perspectives for transnational motherhood.

When spending ten weeks in Nicaragua over the course of the field study I conducted, it became clear that my subject was relevant. Whomever I spoke to knew or knew of someone who had migrated. Many spoke of the women that suffered when they left their children, and others felt bad for the children left behind by their mothers. Who were the women that migrated, what were their reasons? How does the Nicaraguan family look in terms of responsibility sharing, what ideals of motherhood and mothering exist and how do migration processes affect migrant mothers with regard to these?

This ethnographic field study aims at establishing ideals of motherhood and mothering from the perspectives of Nicaraguan migrant mothers, and investigate how a migration process affects these ideals. The main question that came to mind regarding these issues was: it possible to both mother and migrate?

1.3. Research questions

In accordance with the listed aim of the research above, the research questions for this thesis are as follows:

- *How can ideals of motherhood and mothering be understood in a Nicaraguan context?*
- *How do these ideals relate to experiences of Nicaraguan migrant mothers?*

1.4. Definitions and terminology

The following concepts will be used throughout the thesis.

As this thesis aims at understanding perceptions of motherhood and mothering in relation to a migration process from the perspectives of the women who themselves are partaking in the migration process, I wish to refer to the informants by their own terminology in reference to their motherhood. Despite their experiences of transnational mothering, the women in this study had partaken in repeated *seasonal* migration processes (some as well within Nicaragua), and consequently have different experiences than the more commonly studied cases of long-term transnational migration – and mothering. As will be elaborated below, organizations in the Nicaraguan migration discourse, and more importantly the women themselves instead referred to themselves as ‘*madres migrantes*’, i.e. migrant mothers, as to demonstrate the continuous process of multiple migration experiences, as well as their choice to be a migrating mother to improve their lives. When referring to my informants, I will thus use the terminology ‘*migrant mothers*’, to stay in contact with the field. However, when referring to the theoretical framework similarities in previous research, I will refer to the concept of ‘*transnational motherhood*’, in order to be coherent with the established terminology.

The concepts of norms and ideals will be used when establishing how migration and motherhood are perceived and interact when combined. I have applied Erving Goffman’s (1963) framework to define both norms and ideals, as these as well interact. Social perceptions of ‘normality’, i.e. features that a majority of a society entails, forms *norms* and in turn normative features, where “[s]ociety establishes the means of categorizing persons and the complement of attributes felt to be ordinary and natural for members of each of these categories” (Goffman 1963: 11). Norms are consequently created out of social majority, where people are categorized from a ‘social identity’, where ones’ attributes in a social context and in a social interaction are defined, based on anticipations, and formed into normative expectations and demands that decides, i.e. ideals, if a person is conformed to norm

or not (ibid: 12). For the thesis, the use of ‘norm’ mainly relates the high concentration of seasonal migrants in the studied areas, and to how this affects the perceived ‘ideals of motherhood and mothering’, ideals that will be investigated and elaborated in the chapter of results and analysis.

When I refer to ‘motherhood’ in this thesis, I mean being a mother, without placing an emphasis on *how* this motherhood looks. I rather take a critical stance towards the process of naturalizing motherhood to female sexuality, where women are expected to want to be mothers, and that this motherhood looks and feels equal regardless of social status or cultural context (Smart 1996). ‘Mothering’ is in short the nurturing of a child. However, as this also encompasses different meaning depending on context, I wish to not emphasise any definition of what mothering includes. Instead, to define both motherhood and mothering, I have chosen the view of Elisabeth Bortolaia Silva (1996), where she explains the concept of both motherhood and mothering as being institutions portrayed as ‘natural’, but in need of re-definition in order to be of contextual relevance by those who define themselves as mothers, and by those who mother (Silva 1996: 33). In this thesis, I will consequently use the answers my informants gave me about responsibilities and ideals of motherhood and mothering as guidelines in order to reach concluding points about migration and motherhood.

1.5. Previous research

Previous research on Nicaraguan transnational motherhood has encompassed focuses differing from the emphasis of this thesis. These include medical anthropologist Kristin Elizabeth Yarris’ newly published study on emotional distress among grandmothers caring for children of migrant mothers (Yarris 2014). Also, anthropologist Kate R. Goldade’s narrative on her own ethical dilemmas doing research on migrant motherhood for her dissertation on undocumented Nicaraguan migrants reproductive health care in Costa Rica (Goldade 2006). However, as neither of these are in direct dialogue with my thesis of Nicaraguan migrant mothers’ perceptions of ideals of motherhood and mothering in relation to their transnational migration, I have included perspectives encompassing themes of both ideal motherhood and transnational migration relevant for this ethnography. These include feminist research on ideals of motherhood, as well as gendered approaches to migration and transnational motherhood.

Sociologist Carol Smart’s work *Deconstructing motherhood* (1996) was the starting point of this ethnography, as she highlights the negative effects of patriarchal naturalization of motherhood. Smart emphasizes the negative effects of female sexuality

being in direct relation to motherhood, thus reducing women's role in society to being mothers. As mothers, women are then defined by their compatibility to the 'ideal version of motherhood', dictated by discursive and legal mechanisms of societal norms, thus defining their 'goodness' of motherhood (Smart 1996: 44-45).

In line with this, sociologist Elisabeth Bortolaia Silva also focuses on motherhood as an institution historically, culturally and socially constructed. Her research, *The transformation of mothering* (1996), that I have drawn conclusions on for my thesis encompasses motherhood as being an elevated institution of care, while also being subjected to ideals of caring and degradation in labour market desirability (Silva 1996: 10-15).

Anthropologist Henrietta L. Moore has focused on motherhood within a cross-cultural framework, emphasising differences within mothering over time, as well as in within different cultural context. In *Mothering and social responsibilities in a cross-cultural perspective* (1996), her research entails mothers' normative role as carers and familial changes when women partake in waged work, aspects that I have drawn conclusions upon in this thesis (Moore 1996: 58-69).

Social studies researchers Juliana Martínez Franzoni and Koen Voorend's study *Who cares in Nicaragua? A care regime in an exclusionary social policy context* (2011), on the Nicaraguan welfare regime has been useful to combine the focuses of this study, i.e. motherhood and migration. The limited Nicaraguan social policies are compared in between two different time periods, where the both Sandinista and the neo-liberal regime, despite their differences in ideology, depended highly on the unpaid care work generally performed by women. The emphasised provider for social protection is mainly the family and/or community, while the existing state-provided social support programmes are marked as 'exclusionary'. This means that the small share of Nicaraguan population that has social protection besides family networks, are a privileged one (Martínez Franzoni and Voorend 2011: 995-999). Further, the emphasised care sharing responsibilities that in Western literature often relates to the heteronormative model of carer-breadwinner is argued not be relevant in the Nicaraguan case, as many women do partake in paid work, and also being a country with high rates of lone-mother households (Martínez Franzoni and Voorend 2011: 996).

Concerning transnational motherhood, research from a number of scholars has been adopted to gain knowledge of the concept, as well as specific aspects included in the phenomenon for my theoretical framework. Transnational motherhood is referred to as mothers that partake in transnational labour migration, and thus reconstruct their mothering to

encompass other ways of caring than the normatively valued present caring of children and household (Contreras and Griffith 2012). Remittances sent back home are often seen as a key factor in this ‘negotiation of mothering’, where migrant mothers become an active financial provider, something generally more valued by society. While being physically separated from their children, care arrangements for the children at home are usually organized with an ‘other-mother’, most commonly grandmothers or aunts. The other-mothers that assumes responsibilities of child caring are almost exclusively women, regardless if there is a father still in the home context or not (Schmalzbauer 2004: 1320). The previous research on transnational motherhood used in the thesis mainly includes studies from Latin America, to be as close to the Nicaraguan context as possible.

Cultural anthropologists Ricardo Contreras and David Griffith’s work of *Managing migration, managing motherhood: The moral economy of gendered migration* (2012) encompasses the moral economic perspective to gendered migration, and analyses the ‘paradoxes of partitioned parenthood’ for Mexican transnational mothers involved in a guest working programme in the United States. Their conclusion of morality as an important factor to reasons for migration, as well as their emphasis on parental paradoxes involved for transnational mothers has been useful in analysing normative gender roles and effects of separated mothering (Contreras and Griffith 2012).

The research *Searching for wages and mothering from afar: The case of Honduran transnational families* (2004) by sociologist Leah Schmalzbauer, entails feminist perspectives to challenges to motherhood and mothering for transnational families. These include care arrangements – and sharing of children, ‘other-mothering’, and tensions within transnational families (Schmalzbauer 2004).

Melanie Nicholson’s work on Latin American transnational migrant women focuses on experiences of long-term transnational mothers. In her research *Without their children: Rethinking motherhood among transnational migrant women* (2006), mainly encompassing care and mothering from afar, I have drawn conclusions on her inclusion of perspectives of mothering “[...] that differs from the ideal of exclusive motherhood considered normative from a white, middle-class perspective” (Nicholson 2006: 14). This is significant for my thesis regarding the aim of investigating ideals of mothering, in line with experiences from Nicaraguan migrant mothers.

Anthropologist Heather L. Millman provides an overview of transnational motherhood, including ‘good’ mothering; ‘negotiation of mothering’; and child care arrangements in *Mothering from afar: conceptualizing transnational motherhood*. Her main

focus is the paradoxical nature of transnational motherhood, e.g. expansion of motherhood identity to ‘good’ mothering from afar (2013).

Psychologist and sociologist Lesley Moorehouse and economic sociologist Peter Cunningham’s work “*We are purified with fire*”: *The complexification of motherhood in the context of migration* encompasses transnational motherhood, motherhood identity and stigmatization in Zimbabwean migrant mothers working in South Africa. I have used their study as background information of transnational motherhood, but primarily as an inspiration for my methodology chapter, where I have used their framework of mapping changes and/or developments of motherhood identity within the time frame of pre-, during-, and post-migration (Moorehouse and Cunningham 2012: 495).

2. Background

Nicaragua has a population of around six million people, and is Central America’s poorest country with 42,5 per cent of the population living under the national poverty line (UN Data 2009). Nicaragua is since the election in 2006 ruled by the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN), a leftist party with president Daniel Ortega as their leader (Kampwirth 2008).

Unemployment rates are high and informal and vulnerable work is common. One of the primary sources of national income comes from migrant remittances, and Nicaragua consequently has high rates of labour migration, estimated to twelve per cent of the population. However, as migration often is informal, the exact volume is difficult to measure (Martínez Franzoni and Voorend 2011: 996; IOM 2011; OIM 2012). The primary destination country for Nicaraguan labour migrants is neighbouring Costa Rica, where work is mainly seasonal and often informal. Female migrants make out around half of the seasonal migration flows to Costa Rica, where the main occupation is in coffee plantations and domestic services (IOM 2011). Reasons for international migration are identified as being due to high unemployment and lack of decent work opportunities in Nicaragua. Further, men’s violence against women is described as reason for female migration, as well as climate change and natural disasters, something that Nicaragua is vulnerable to (OIM 2012). Labour migration to Costa Rica is mainly seasonal, repetitive and informal. International Organization for Migration (IOM) figures from 2010 estimates that Nicaraguan migrants make out two thirds of the Costa Rican foreign population.

The Nicaraguan welfare regime is marked as an ‘informal’ one, where state-provided welfare arrangements are both limited and highly dependent on family and

community networks of care. The few state-provided programmes existing are targeted to the poor, but as poverty levels are high, not nearly all are covered by these mechanisms (Martínez Franzoni and Voorend 2011: 999). Care arrangement within families and communities are instead mainly dependent on unpaid female work both in urban and rural contexts, as is often the case in developing countries, but that in Nicaragua differs in that the majority of women are working while assuming an disproportionate share of the unpaid work. Further, the Western welfare model of a male breadwinner and female carer are unfitting for the Nicaraguan context, as around 40 per cent of Nicaraguan households are managed by a woman, as well as 36 per cent of households being of extend family character both rurally and urbanely (Martínez Franzoni and Voorend 2011: 996-999, 1007).

With female migrants being of high quantities especially to Costa Rica, mothers partaking in transnational seasonal migration are of significant value as this combines both aspects of the background accounted for above. The unpaid care work performed by women for family and community referred to by Leah Schmalzbauer (2004) as ‘motherwork’ is something that also appears to be assumed by Nicaraguan welfare policies. When mothers migrate, caring responsibilities are almost exclusively taken over by another woman, an ‘other-mother’ (Schmalzbauer 2004: 1320). This is implied to have effect on both the remaining family structure, as well as the migrant mothers psyche (IOM 2011), clearly relating to the subject of this thesis.

3. Methodology and data collection

This ethnography is based on a field study conducted in north-western Nicaragua over nine weeks from January to March 2014, using qualitative methods for data collection, sampling and analysis.

3.1. Semi-structured interviews

All interviews conducted during the field study followed a semi-structured approach, i.e. interviews where specific themes were established in an interview guide, but conducted with loosely constructed and generally open questions during the interview occasion (Bryman 2012: 470-471). Qualitative methods of interviewing emphasize the informants and their perspectives, something that makes way for adapting the interview after the specific informant. This could be done in terms of e.g. continuing on specifically interesting subjects picked up during the interviews, or discussing other themes not included in the interview guide. The semi-structured interviewing is therefore flexible in responding to the direction led

by the informants, something that is useful in gaining more in-depth and nuanced answers from the participants (ibid).

While conducting the interviews, the established interview guide helped me maintain focus in terms of making sure that I would gain responses in all covered themes, while I was still able to lead the interview in different directions depending on the informant. Also, the flexibility of the semi-structured interview technique made the interview more personal, by allowing each of the informants' stories to be told in their own time and in different ways. I believe that this improved the quality of the collected data, as more in-depth information could be gathered.

3.2. Sampling

The snowball approach to sampling includes using already established contacts, to gain connection with further informants within the relevant part of the field (Bryman 2012: 424). These involved both key informants working with migration to gain knowledge of the Nicaraguan migration discourse, as well as field gatekeeper organizations, that helped me access the field and locate the migrant mothers that participated in the interviews. These will be accounted for in 3.3 'Key informants', as well as in appendix 8.3.2.

The sample for the migrant mother interviews consisted of mothers currently living with their families, but that had partaken in seasonal migration processes without their children, and thus at some point experienced transnational motherhood. My choice to sample the women after they had returned to their homes, was based on an assumption that their perception of the migration experience and its relation to motherhood was more positioned when they had returned to their home context, and were consequently experiencing familial and societal opinions of their migration pre-, during- and post-migration. Issues associated with this approach may however have affected the data in that the women could have forgotten some of their experiences and feelings while they were away from their families, as well as their pre-migration perceptions. This needs to be considered especially since some of the women had partaken in migration processes several years back.

All interviews with migrant mothers were conducted with the help of Nicaraguan organization Consejo de Iglesias Evangélicas Pro-Alianza Denominacional (CEPAD), and their local offices in San José de los Remates and Matagalpa, both cities in the north-western part of Nicaragua where CEPAD's 'integral family development' programme is operating. The programme aims at strengthening women and youth in the rural communities. Many of the women participating in the programme are migrant mothers, who gain support

for their families when having returned to Nicaragua, or while they are away, but CEPAD does not work specifically with migrant women.

The women partaking in the interviews were in general part of the integral family programme, and were in San José de los Remates sampled in relation to a programme evaluation at the CEPAD office. Five interviews were then conducted in the office building of CEPAD, with women who all came from neighbouring, rural communities to San José de los Remates. The second set of interviews was conducted in two rural mountain communities close to Matagalpa, also with the help of CEPAD. Both the staff of CEPAD and the sampled informants themselves had names of other women that in turn granted me more names and directions of other migrating mothers. Eight interviews were then conducted in the homes of the women in three different rural communities.

The reason for conducting the interviews in these areas depended on the location of CEPAD's offices, as well as their knowledge of the high levels of migration in the communities they work with.

The snowball approach proved useful in terms of finding informants for both the interviews with migrant mothers as well as the key informant interviews, since many of the Nicaraguan organizations many times worked together or had contacts in other organizations. It could however be seen as limiting, since the sampled informants have to be chosen by others, particularly the key informants and the interviews conducted in San José de los Remates. However, since the migrant mothers interviewed for the thesis are part of the studied phenomenon and not working with it, it would have been difficult to find informants without field gatekeepers helping me originally snowballing for further informants.

3.3. Key informants

Six interviews were conducted with five organizations relevant for establishing general patterns of migration in Nicaragua, with special emphasis on the situation of female migrants, including reasons for migration and potential negative and positive outcomes related to a migration process. The informants all held high-ranking positions in their respective organizations, and thus had important knowledge regarding the Nicaraguan context of transnational motherhood in their respective fields of focus. Following key informant organizations are participant in the thesis: Consejo de Iglesias Evangélicas Pro-Alianza Denominacional (CEPAD); Centro Nicaragüense de Derechos Humanos (CENIDH); Nicasmigrantes; Familiares de migrantes Managua; and Servicio Jesuita para Migrantes

(SJM). See appendix 8.3.2. for further information of the work of the participant organizations.

Two delegates from CEPAD participated in the interviews, whereas the other organizations each have one participant member in the study. The interviews were done from February to March 2014 in Managua, Matagalpa and San José de los Remates, and were recorded with consent. All organizations had offices located in an urban environment, but all worked with rural contexts as well.

3.4. Interviews with migrant mothers

A total of 13 interviews were conducted with Nicaraguan migrant mothers over three days, and nearby two cities where CEPAD works. All women had partaken in seasonal labour migration without their children, to Costa Rica, and had at the time of the interview either temporarily or permanent returned to their homes.

The themes of the interviews revolved around familial – and motherly responsibilities and ideals, and their experiences and perceptions of their migration processes. I tried to establish an understanding of the migrant mothers' subjective view of their motherhood, their perceptions of what constitutes a 'good' mother, and what they thought was the best thing about being a mother. Regarding migration, general circumstances around their experiences were inquired, such as the reasons for migration and who was involved in the decision to migrate; type of work performed while being in Costa Rica; how the community in Nicaragua and Costa Rica reacted to their migration; and if they felt that the outcome of migration corresponded to the reasons for partaking in their migration.

The themes of motherhood and migration were connected using the similar structure of Moorehouse and Cunningham's study on transnational motherhood in Zimbabwe/South Africa, where the interviews were structured around the time frame of pre-, during-, and post-migration experiences, and the interview guide was consequently established via this framework (Moorehouse and Cunningham 2012: 495). Besides the time frame, I combined three shares of views that relate to migrant motherhood; their own views of the relation between motherhood and migration, as well as opinions from their families and communities. This was done in order for the women to reflect regarding possible change of responsibilities and their view of motherhood according to their perceptions of their migration, as well as reflecting on the views of others, in this case their families and communities. By comparing the informants' views, I tried to further develop a wider

understanding of their experiences of transnational motherhood, in line with my research question regarding the relation of ideals of motherhood and migration.

The interviews lasted between 15-55 minutes, and were, with the exception of one, tape-recorded. All interviews were consented to in a written form.

3.5. Narrative analysis

The method of analysis for the thesis is a narrative approach, as the analysed material consists of personal stories of life events and how these are accounted for over a longer span of time, in this case pre -, during – and post-migration perceptions. Narrative analysis aims at making sense of both the communicated stories, and of the connection between them (Bryman 2012: 582-585). This directly corresponds to the aim of my study, where shifting ideals and responsibility of mothering and motherhood connected to migration are in focus. The focus of narrative analysis lay with the informants, since their stories are essential in order to grasp how they perceive their experiences over time. I intend to use the narrative analysis to recognize patterns of ideals of motherhood and mothering among migrant mothers, and connect these perceptions. The identified ideals will then be connected to views from the key informants, thus representing a more general understanding of opinions, in order to interpret a more in-depth view of ideals of motherhood and mothering in the Nicaraguan context.

Using a narrative approach allows a clear focus on the informants' subjective perceptions of the stories of their life, involving continuity over time and various episodes that interconnect the effects of motherhood and mothering when being a migrant mother. Having done an ethnographic study, it is the perceptions of the informants' that are essential, something that the narrative analysis approach allows for (ibid).

3.6. Researcher role and bias

It is important to acknowledge my position as a researcher, and the bias that I have had while conducting this study. Being a white, educated woman who grew up in Sweden, as well as being in my early twenties and not having children, separates me from my informants.

My different background is something that I felt was interesting to the informants as well, something that is both positive and negative. I felt that they had a genuine interest in sharing their stories with me, meanwhile it is important that I acknowledge my privileged position, as even a few of the women expressed how excited and happy they were to have a foreigner come and visit them. It was therefore important to me to acknowledge this in the interview situation by demonstrating that I was interested in their views and knowledge on being a migrant mothers, that I wished to learn about their experiences since I did not have

any similar ones. In that, I also gained important new insights, essential for the results of this thesis. The conclusions made are my interpretations of the informants' subjective understanding of their own world, and I aim to give voice to them and to show that I have deepened my understanding of their position as migrant mothers.

3.7. Ethical considerations

The participant migrant mothers are all anonymous, and neither their names nor the name of their communities will be revealed. When presented with quotes in the results/analysis section below, fictive names will be used. The informants were informed of the rights of confidentiality, anonymity and the option not to answer and/or terminate the interview, and the interviews were consented to be part of this thesis in a written form. This as well presented that the interview would be part of my bachelor thesis, and also where and how the thesis would be published. During some occasions of interviewing, family members and/or friends of the informants were present, something that have compromised the anonymity as well as their possible responses, where some of the information could be sensitive to display. In relation to this, I need to acknowledge the possible trauma the interview situation triggered for the informants, where difficult memories and/or uncomfortable situations arose.

The key informants were also asked if they wished to be anonymous but all declined, and will thus be presented with name and organizations when appearing in the thesis, to help the reader position them and their organizations in the social context.

3.8. Source criticism

The main sample group of migrant mothers generally spoke openly about their experiences of migration, and to how they perceived their own motherhood. However, it is not possible to guarantee neither that they answered truthfully, nor that they possibly felt that I was looking for a specific answer to the questions.

The biases of the organizations partaking in the sampling process should also be evaluated. However, CEPAD do not work specifically with the themes that this study focuses on, something that is positive in minimizing a biased influence. I did not distinguish any interest of including their own agenda from CEPAD, but that they merely supported the study with participants and interest. It was thus not an issue for me as a researcher to keep my openness and autonomy for the sake of the study, but could rely on the organization assisting as gatekeepers to the field.

For all interviews, I made sure to give the informants a clear background of the study as well as to my own background. This was in order to explain the specific intentions of

the interviews, so the informants knew what the information they gave me would result in. This, as well as the ensured ethical structure of the interview, i.e. on the voluntary base that it conducted on, the anonymity and the right to terminate, I hope to have eliminated some concerns of reliability (Bryman 2012: 226, 390).

3.9. Limitations

A common trait among qualitative studies is limited possibility of generalizability, as samples often are smaller than in quantitative studies, as well as the difficulties in replicating social settings and specific circumstances for assuring an external reliability and validity. Instead, qualitative studies often draw conclusions on moderatum generalizability, where recognizable patterns of the study can be validated and contextualized in a larger setting (Bryman 2012:390, 406). As the scope of the thesis is norms and ideals of motherhood and how this relates to migration in Nicaragua, but with my relatively small sample group, it is not feasible for me to claim a result representative for neither Nicaragua, nor for all migrant mothers in general. The study is thus instead aimed at giving voice to the participating women's own subjective perception on their experiences as migrating mothers, and how they perceive their development as mothers due to the migration. This is something that I in regard to this specific ethnography value equally to being generalizable to a greater sample.

Another limitation of the study is the urban-rural discrepancy of the sample, i.e. that some of the key informants come from an urban context, while the migrant mother interviews were conducted with women from rural areas. This was done due to practical reasons, e.g. CEPAD's location in rural areas, whereas the main part of the key informants resided in the capital of Managua. Since the main sample group of migrant mothers came from the same rural environment, the results will mainly relate to rural areas.

All interviews were conducted in Spanish with the help of translators (three different due to the difference in locations for the interviews), this since my Spanish was not sufficient to hold the interviews myself. My interview guide was translated into Spanish prior to the interviews, and I was thus able to ask the majority of the questions myself, but since it is essential to grasp nuances and key words of the informants' answers in order to fully understand the responses, the translator provided support with direct translation of the answers during the interviews. While reading the transcripts, I have however discovered some inaccuracies in the English translations, due to the translators' limitations in English. When presented by quotes in the results and analysis section below, these as well as grammatical

errors have been corrected. This is related to the issues regarding the use of translator, i.e. what becomes lost in the translation.

4. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework is inspired by feminist approaches to research, something that will be demonstrated below. Both 4.1. ‘Ideals of motherhood and mothering’, and 4.2.

‘Transnational motherhood’ is interpreted as to fit the relevance of finding the correlation between the two main features of this study: motherhood and migration.

4.1. Ideals of motherhood and mothering

Motherhood and mothering have been glorified, leading to a conception where motherhood is regarded as natural to the point of acknowledging motherhood as an institution in direct contact with female sexuality, i.e. since motherhood is natural, being a woman is equalized to motherhood (Silva 1996: 10; Smart 1996: 37-39). In relation to this, Henrietta L. Moore (1996) explains motherhood and mothering as something normatively assumed as a desire of all women, who are also expected to be the natural carer of the family. This implies that motherhood and mothering also look identical, regardless of social, cultural and economic context. Moore instead argues that motherhood and mothering differ within as well as between these specific circumstances (Moore 1996: 58). Elizabeth Bortolaia Silva (1996) explains “[...] the woman alone devotedly, unselfishly and wisely gives herself to the task of reproducing new generations. Regardless of her own personal needs, socio-economic conditions or husband/partner, the mother must always subject to the ideal” (Silva 1996: 10). When motherhood is perceived as natural, women not conforming to the norm (both of motherhood, and/or the “right” mothering) are subject to guilt for not fulfilling the ‘ideal version of motherhood’, an ideal explained by Carol Smart as dictating the ‘goodness’ of motherhood and mothering by legal and discursive mechanisms in society (Smart 1996: 44-45).

In the case of Nicaragua, this is for instance done through the lacking state provided social welfare, where women instead are performing a majority of unpaid care – and domestic work, and are expected to do so due to the institutionalized care framework depending on this unpaid female work. This is reflected in policies adopted by the Ministry of the Family (MIFAMILIA), reflecting normative values regarding familial division of responsibility as well, where a traditional definition of the role of family and women is

adopted (Martínez Franzoni and Voorend 2011: 1005-1007). Meanwhile, urban women are increasingly entering the labour market, while still assuming a larger share of the unpaid care work domestically. Comparatively, rural women are estimated to devote more time to domestic – and care work than urban women, something that does however seem to be related to the fewer basic services available in rural areas (Espinosa 2009 in Martínez Franzoni and Voorend 2011: 1007).

However, the Nicaraguan family generally does not correspond to a nuclear family model of a male provider and a female carer, instead around 40 per cent of the households are managed by women (in direct or extended family) without a male spouse or partner. This is observed both rurally and urbanely, and along with the high levels of female migration, Nicaragua is inconsistent with the heteronormative, traditional vision of the family that the Western welfare model originates from. Nicaraguan women are thus more rightly described to act as both carers and providers, regardless of their marital status and/or type of labour (e.g. remittances earned by migration). The legal and discursive mechanisms that are at play in the Nicaraguan welfare model taken on by MIFAMILIA (Martínez Franzoni and Voorend 2012: 996), are consequently “[...] describing women’s role in the family in a very limited fashion, based on conservative traditions [is] not necessarily relevant to some women’s lives” (Feeney 1997 in Martínez Franzoni and Voorend 2011: 1007).

The glorification of domesticized women acts in accordance both with social norms and legislation regarding familial divisions of responsibility in both private and public sector, reflecting the mentioned assumption of mothers as carers and fathers as breadwinners in heterosexual relationships. This concerns the ideals of motherhood, and while women are disregarded as workers in both labour market desirability and questioned whether it is possible to fully care for children while having an employment in the public sector, thus faced with a lose-lose situation where families deviating from a nuclear family norm possibly are subject to guilt and shame (Moore 1996: 58-59). Meanwhile, Silva observes a ‘degradation of mothering’, where women are increasingly losing power of their mothering due to patriarchal dictation of ideals. This means that the ‘natural’ motherhood is something women are subjected to and controlled via by patriarchy. This relates to both the equalization of female sexuality and motherhood, and also applies to a view where motherhood is devalued as an active part of capitalistic economy, to a rather passive and unvalued contributor as carer of the family. Silva thus claims that mothering is constructed to fit societal needs of women, e.g. in unpaid care work, something relatable to the Nicaraguan state-led welfare discourse and policies (Silva 1996: 10-15, 30-34; Martínez Franzoni and Voorend 2011: 996). Silva

concludes that a patriarchal construction of motherhood leads to that women neither get to dictate their own context appropriate mothering, nor are they valued by the ‘natural’ given identity as mothers. Consequently, this is a state where women will always be subjected the status of men (Silva 1996: 10-15, 30-34).

In retrospect, with equalizing womanhood to motherhood, and in relation to this form ideals compatible to ‘goodness’ of mothering, being labelled as a “bad” mother due to not conforming to norm and/or social expectations of responsibilities, consequently crumbles part of ones by nature given identity (Smart 1996: 37, 44-45).

To investigate the interaction of motherhood and migration, further theoretical framework explaining the process of transnational motherhood is essential. As has been explained above, the Nicaraguan family generally do not look according to Western nuclear standards with a clear carer and breadwinner of the family. Also, “[t]ransnationalism pushes analysis further by showing that not only is the nuclear family structure out of reach, but increasingly so too is the nationally based family” (Schmalzbauer 2004: 1320). Consequently, motherhood and mothering from a gendered, transnational migration perspective will be accounted for below.

4.2. Transnational motherhood

International migration has traditionally been described with a macro perspective, emphasising push – and pull factors, i.e. features that incentivize a migration process, such as poverty and unemployment. Even after the rise of more contemporary theoretical framework of the ‘new economics of migration’, as well as the ‘social capital theory’, that focuses on individual, families and communities’ collectivizing for a maximization of the profits gained by migration (Massey et.al. 2008: 21-22, 42-43), further features of migration must be accounted for. With a focus on investigating ideals of motherhood and whether or not a migration process correlates to these ideals, a gendered approach to transnational migration is essential, none the less in order to be able to understand the phenomenon of ‘transnational motherhood’ for the Nicaraguan migrant mothers partaking in this study.

The following theoretical approach will consequently contain a gendered approach to reasons and outcomes of transnational migration, as well as the different features to transnational motherhood, e.g. a ‘moral economy’, ‘partitioned parenthood’, and ‘negotiation of identity’ (Contreras and Griffith 2012; Millman 2013), all aspects relevant in order to investigate the research problem for this thesis.

Migrating mothers that partake in transnational labour migration are faced with wide spectra of difficulties besides that of being a transnational migrant, this due to the personal, sociocultural and normative expectations intertwined in their motherhood, i.e. the idealization of motherhood referred to above by Carol Smart (1996). To migrate transnationally without their families and children for work while normatively being expected to be the present caregiver are many times challenging for migrant mothers both for personal and social relations. Meanwhile levels of female migration are rising, “[...] transnationalism has also become an increasingly contradictory process. As borders remain permeable for certain individuals to perform certain types of transnational work, the difficulties in bringing children or other family members illustrate their increasing impenetrability” (Millman 2013: 73). Consequently, where families rely on the remittances sent back for survival, migrant mothers are often faced with the painful decision of either risking their children’s lives with informal border crossing or leaving them behind in their homes with another care taker (Contreras and Griffith 2012: 51).

Gendered migration theories emphasises the assumption that gender is a social structure effecting migration, rather than a variable that should be incorporated in it. For transnational motherhood, an inclusion of moral aspects to labour migration is useful in order to understand gendered migration. The ‘moral economy theory’ focuses on morality, e.g. well-being and education possibilities as incentives for migration, thus in line with the migration motivations for many transnational mothers. The moral economic perspective emphasises domestic work, mainly performed by unpaid women, as economically important nationally in regard to their moral value, i.e. the wish to improve the quality of life for themselves and their children. According to the moral economic perspective, these aspects are morally more valuable than their economic value as workers. This perspective consequently approaches migration as an achievement of great societal importance, equalizing the gains in economic – and gender equality to mere financial gains in capital and material wealth. In sum, using a moral economy approach to gendered migration looks to both individual as well as national gains of a migration, equalizing labour productivity as well as individual empowerment as profitable results (Contreras and Griffith 2012: 52-53).

Ricardo Contreras and David Griffith’s (2012) ‘paradoxes of partitioned parenthood’ explains challenges that transnational mothers face, where migrant motherhood becomes partitioned in time of absence from their children, physical space and social structures in terms of e.g. emotional hardships and new care arrangements. These include having to leave ones family to

provide for it, in order to be good mothers while during separation from their children and having left their usual (within family and society) care responsibilities in the hands of someone else (Contreras and Griffith 2012: 57-62). For transnational mothers in general, care arrangements are set up with an ‘other-mother’, most often grandmothers, aunts or older daughters. This concept is described by Leah Schmalzbauer (2004) as a type of mothering crucial in enabling transnational motherhood, as it provides care when the birth mother is necessitated to migrate. In relation to this, the other-mothering could lead to a ‘negotiation of motherhood identity’, where transnational mothers due to the paradoxes of partitioned parenthood often suffer in not fulfilling their own expectations of mothering duties (Schmalzbauer 2004: 1320-1323). “Being a “good” mother thus entails a negotiation between ideal and circumstance” (Millman 2013: 78), and consequently adapting to culturally and socially constructed norms of motherhood and mothering, while conceptualizing new forms of mothering from a distance, with e.g. remittances and economic provision as another system of care. The negotiation of care and identity is often rooted in a sense of pride for the migrant mothers, as the underlying decision to migrate in many cases is rooted in the benefit of their children (Millman 2013: 77-80). When to a larger extent becoming family providers, and also mothering from afar, transnational mothers are challenging traditional gender roles. However, while generally using female other-mothers to care for their children at home, as well as often having traditionally female dominated jobs abroad, gender roles are while being contested in many ways still reaffirmed (Contreras and Griffith 2012: 59-62). Even after a negotiation of motherhood identity, as well as doing economic care work for familial survival, restraints on both migrant mothers and the family back home is relevant to include in the analysis (Schmalzbauer 2004: 1325-1329).

How are ideals of motherhood connected to becoming a transnational mother, and how are the features included the theoretical framework perceived among the rural Nicaraguan migrant mothers participant in the thesis? Results and analysis of those are accounted for below.

5. Results and analysis

The chapter of results and analysis will demonstrate the findings of the ethnography, where established ideals of motherhood and mothering will be accounted for, as well as their relation to occurring migration processes. By starting with circumstances around migration, followed by describing the opinions regarding responsibilities and ideals of motherhood, a foundation

of the sphere of attitudes regarding female migration is accounted for, using both an aspect of time (pre-, during- and post-migration), as well as three shares of views of the relation among migration and motherhood; personal, familial and societal. To summarize key aspects of each of the theories accounted for, a schedule in appendix 8.1. has been created to provide an overview. The categories will be further elaborated and analysed below, where the relation between ideals of motherhood and mothering and normative migration will be the main aspect of investigation; is it possible to both mother and migrate?

5.1. Circumstances around migration

You always want to be with your children, but sometimes it is better to be somewhere else so that they don't have to suffer. It is better to be away for a while and not see them, but providing for them.

Interview with Gladys.

Gladys is a 29 year-old single mother of two that has been in Costa Rica five or six times, in periods from eight to twelve months. She describes a necessity to make the choice of seasonal separation from her children in order to avoid her family suffering. Gladys' story encompasses an aim of improving the life of her children more long-term, a view that many of the informants shared.

The women participating in the study had all partaken in seasonal labour migration to neighbouring country Costa Rica, at least once without their children, and consequently had experienced transnational motherhood where they mothered from a distance. The periods of transnational mothering lasted from two months up to a year, where many of the women had multiple experiences of migration.

The reasons for migrating were generally describes as “the economy” or “the necessity”, but all encompassed a will to improve the life of their children. Some had specific reasons with economic motive, such as paying for their children's education or health care or being able to buy or repair their houses. These reasons generally led back to the lacking work opportunities in Nicaragua, leading to their own poverty that in turn led to the decision to migrate.

32 year-old Brenda is a mother of two daughters. She has been in Costa Rica working three times with her husband, the most recent time also accompanied with their youngest daughter. Brenda describes her feelings of being separated from her children during her first time in Costa Rica:

[I was] heartbroken. I never left them before, so I felt very bad to be far away from them. It is so far away, and even though we speak on the phone it is not the same, I cannot touch them, I cannot love them the same.

Interview with Brenda.

Brenda's statement includes grief of being apart from her children, as well as a frustration of not being able to care for them in the way they all are used to. Heather L. Millman (2013) framework of the 'negotiation of mothering' explains transnational motherhood as a mediation of ideal and circumstance. This involves a challenge where migrant mothers must negotiate between their goals of providing financially for their children while being separated from them. As 'good' mothering normatively is to be the physically present carer, while migrant mothering involves periods of separation, a mediation of practice and ideal often is frustrating for the women partaking in transnational migration (Millman 2013: 78). This paradox is stressed also in Ricardo Contreras and David Griffith's 'moral economic perspective' where morality of migration is included as essential parts on both positive and negative terms; women gaining possibilities of providing their families financially, however on transnational basis due to lacking labour opportunities in home context (Contreras and Griffith 2012: 63).

32 year-old mother of two Olivia was in Costa Rica in 2011 in search for a job. The reason described is as well related to the economic opportunities in Costa Rica and the lack of work where she is in Nicaragua, something that in her case required her to migrate together with her husband. She explains both a frustration over the situation in Nicaragua, as well as the setting she faces as an informal migrant in Costa Rica:

The Costa Rican people say that we are bad people, but the reality is that we have to leave.

There are no jobs and we have to support our family. There are some of the people that go there to do bad things, but most of us go do so because we want a job, an opportunity.

Interview with Olivia.

Olivia's story entails some of Nicaragua's primary structural issues, the high unemployment and poverty rates, where 42,5 per cent of the population are below the national poverty line (UN Data 2009).

Out of the 13 migrant mothers that participated in the study, only one had gone to Costa Rica formally, whereas the others migrated informally. As passport and visas are expensive and hard to obtain for short and frequent labour periods, this was something that they explained was unsuitable for their economic shortage. Some of the women did however clarify that they aimed to get passports and visas in the future, in order to stay longer in Costa Rica and bring their children, and/or migrate to other countries, such as the United States. However, there was concern associated with being an informal migrant for the women. This included the dangerous travel when crossing the Costa Rican border illegally, the limited social contact while being in Costa Rica, and the fear of being departed both at the border or during the period of work, something that a few women have experienced.

Darling is 24 years old and a mother of two. She describes her only migration experience seven years earlier as one she never wishes to repeat, and tells me about the discussion with her husband prior to their migration, and why they decided to migrate:

You are faced with a necessity. I did not want to go because we [her husband and herself] did not have visas, but then my husband said “we are going”, he told me that you have to risk everything for your children.

Interview with Darling.

In Darling’s case, she was shot at by the police at the Costa Rican border, and was later robbed in Nicaraguan capital Managua while returning to her home after three months working abroad. She describes her experience in Costa Rica as unfulfilling to her original goal of being able to bring home money for her, at the time, sick daughter. Her description of deciding to migrate does consequently not only correspond to the difficulties of informality, but also of parental responsibility for ones children. For Darling’s husband, it seems as if his vision of parental responsibility in this case involves self-sacrifice, regardless circumstances and Darling’s unwillingness to migrate. As argued by Elisabeth Bortolaia Silva (1996), woman are rarely in charge of their mothering, but instead must subject to ideals formed by patriarchal norms (Silva 1996: 10). Consequently, for Darling to maintain her husband’s vision of her as a ‘good’ mother, she had to partake in a migration process.

While being in Costa Rica, the women worked in domestic care, service, e.g. restaurants or cafés, or agriculture. The women working in agriculture mainly did so in picking coffee, where many adjusted their migration periods to the Costa Rican coffee season, as wages there are higher and has more work than in Nicaragua. Other related their migration seasons to their children’s school years, when money was needed for school supplies.

However, some of the women displayed a sense of resignation when explaining their reasons of leaving Nicaragua to work. They explained that even if the option of staying in Nicaragua was insufficient with the needs of their families, the time in Costa Rica was difficult, for reasons such as those Olivia stated above.

34 year-old Laura is a mother of two and had at the time of the interview returned to Nicaragua from Costa Rica only a few days earlier. Laura explains:

It is the necessity, if we stay here... We don't do anything. We had to migrate for them [the children] to continue studying, that's the reason.

Interview with Laura.

The economic and necessary reasons for migration generally incorporated the informants' children, where migration entailed the wish to improve their lives. As Contreras and Griffith argue, transnational mothers often have moral reasons for migration that encompasses reproducing their own goods, i.e. their capability to work, for the good of their children (Contreras and Griffith 2012: 52-53). This is something that is related to Laura's incentive. Her migration seem to be her way to maintain her 'goodness' of mothering, and her motherly responsibilities include being self-sacrificing to fill the needs of her children. Consequently, the portrayal of responsibilities in Nicaraguan mothers is important in order to understand ideals of motherhood and mothering, and how these relate to migrating mothers.

The following section will describe views of motherly responsibilities, and how these appear in relation to a migration process, as well as changes over the course of experiencing transnational motherhood.

5.2. Responsibilities and ideals of motherhood and mothering

My opinion is that the best thing is to be observant of your children's need, to be careful with them, to care for them and not mistreat them. Put them in school so they get a good education, because a boy without education is nobody.

Interview with Heydi.

Heydi is 28 years old and has three children. She and her husband takes turn in migrating to Costa Rica with Heydi's parents, thus sharing responsibilities of both caring for children and financial gain. Heydi's quote above states her vision of her responsibility as a mother, encompassing care and being observant of your children's needs. Her strong emphasis on education as essential as part of motherly responsibilities reflects on her reason for migration,

as this is related to her children's school year and the need to buy school supplies. The level of education for her children also seems to mirror her as a mother, i.e. that she is seen as a 'good' mother by the society if her children are well behaved and go to school. Carol Smart's 'naturalization of motherhood', i.e. that womanhood has been equalized to motherhood, is relevant here (Smart 1996: 37, 44-45). This means that if Heydi's children are seen as 'good', she as well is seen as 'good', thus only being valued by society by her motherhood.

Responsibilities of motherhood and mothering were in general described as that the women had the main responsibility for domestic work of children and household. This seemed to be the case regardless of the migrant mothers' work status pre-migration, as well as leaving caring responsibilities of children to other women during migration. This confirms Martinez-Franzoni and Voorend's statement that a division of carer-breadwinner within a family, usually used within Western contexts, is not relevant for Nicaragua (Martinez-Franzoni and Voorend 2011: 996). The motherly obligations were described as being similar pre – and post-migration, where the main feature of both their motherhood and mothering was to care for the children. This entailed providing for the well-being of their children in e.g. health and food, but also included teaching the children good manners, language and providing them with an education. The responsibilities did not appear to have shifted from the stage of pre-migration in comparison to post-migration responsibilities, more than when examples were given of the women who have had more children and/or older children with new needs to take into consideration.

Two of the informants used the same sentence to express their responsibilities as mothers, saying that good mothering entailed "to always be here with them" (Interview with Gladys; Interview with Erica). Interesting features for analysis are thereby how the responsibilities of motherhood, and mainly mothering, seem to change *during* the migration process, where the migrant mothers in fact have been physically distant from their children in periods of time. Contreras and Griffith (2012) refer to this as one of the 'paradoxes of transnational motherhood', where the need to care for ones children compromises the normative and personal vision of 'good' mothering. This result in a tension within motherhood for the migrant mothers, where the necessity to provide financially clashes with the ideal and wishes to be physically present in their children's lives (Contreras and Griffith 2012: 62).

Examples where the informants reflect on how they perceive their relationship with their children and families during their time abroad, as well as how they need to adapt to

a new way of mothering explains restraints on the migrant mothers, and what effects a migration process have on the families that are part of the study.

Coming back to Brenda, the mother of two that has migrated to Costa Rica continuously over the past three years. She says that she has less of her regular responsibility as a mother while she is in Costa Rica, and that her obligations look different during her migration periods. While in Costa Rica, her responsibility is to send money for the girls' caring (including food and schooling), while Brenda's sister looks after her daughters. She gives an example of the delegated responsibilities of her children to her sister, and describes their reaction:

I always pay the girl [Brenda's sister] to take care of them, but it is not the same thing, they [the daughters] suffer, they only want their mother to take care of them

Interview with Brenda.

Brenda describes a dilemma of responsibilities, where the obligations she usually has as a mother changes to something necessary for the family's survival during her migration periods, but that places distress on the family. Another woman fills her motherly responsibilities, but both her and her daughters still feel unhappy with the arrangement, implying that it is not enough with a mother proxy to fill the responsibilities of motherhood. What Brenda describes is in line with Millman's theoretical framework on 'negotiation of motherhood identity', where Brenda due to her physical separation from her daughters is unable to care for them the same way she and her children are used to. Here, even though mothering has been expanded to providing financial care in terms of remittances, neither Brenda nor her daughters are content with the arrangement (Millman 2013: 77-80). Even though normative visions of mothering emphasises women as carer of children, a Western vision of exclusive mother-child relationship does not reflect on the situation in many Latin American countries, Nicaragua being one of them. Instead, mothering often encompasses sharing of responsibilities within families, especially regarding the high number of lone-mother households, where women to a higher extent rely on family networks that not necessarily consist of child caring responsibilities between biological mothers and fathers (Martinez-Franzoni and Voorend 2011: 996). Despite this, what Brenda is experiencing is an extreme form of mothering, dictated by poverty and her migration

processes paradoxically aiming at ensuring present and future well-being for her children (Nicholson 2006:14).

37 year-old Maria-Luisa, a mother of five, share experiences similar to those of Brenda. She has been in Costa Rica three times in periods of four to five months, on all occasions together with her husband, and the previous period with her at the time two youngest children. Like Brenda, she describes that her responsibilities while being away is to send remittances to her children that were cared for by their grandmother, serving as an 'other-mother' (Schmalzbauer 2004: 1320-1321, 1323). This was the case for all my informants, where they agreed on both the responsibilities of mothers included caring for the children, as well as sharing the pattern of leaving that responsibility to another woman. This corresponds to both the framework of Schmalzbauer's, as well as to Contreras and Griffith, where an 'other-mother' is used, which reaffirms normative gender roles with a female carer (Schmalzbauer 2004: 1320-1321, 1323-1324; Contreras and Griffith 2012: 59-62). For Maria-Luisa, it was hard leaving her children and house, even though she knew that they were doing well with her mother.

The economy makes it necessary for us to go, but the love never changes. You go with hope of finding them [the children] and the house well, but the love never changes.

Interview with Maria-Luisa.

What both Maria-Luisa and Brenda told me reflects an awareness of the need to migrate and the understanding that they have left their children with an other-mother, and thereby taking the necessary responsibilities in order to care for their children remaining in Nicaragua. These two features appear to correspond to their logic, that they are doing what is best and necessary for their families. However, both Brenda and Maria-Luisa are struggling with their decision while being away, and experience grief and worry for not being with their children.

Coming back to the naturalization of motherhood, as referred to by Smart, this leads to motherhood and mothering being elevated as the main (if not only) contributing factors to society for women (Smart 1996: 37, 45-45). Mothers are consequently valued as carers and not economic providers, something that may affect migrant mothers negatively in their 'goodness' of mothering, as their negotiated caring is not coherent to that of normative vision of 'natural' motherhood (Moore 1996: 58, 68).

Further differences in responsibility when comparing the time during-migration with the informants' pre- and post-migration status are the increased financial provision, i.e. the remittances that they sent while being in Costa Rica. The moral economic perspective emphasises the difficulties of transnational motherhood, where the economic benefits are made on the grounds of physical separation among families. This also encompasses a negotiation of mothering, as it expands caring to being a provider financially, and thus mothering in a new way from a distance (Contreras and Griffith 2012: 52-53; Millman 2013: 78-80). However, what happens with this negotiated identity as breadwinners from a distance, if for instance the wages are not enough to send home? Previously mentioned Brenda gives an example of this:

When you go there [to Costa Rica] you only earn money for food, only to eat, hardly anything to send here [Nicaragua]. I have to borrow from friends to send back money.

Interview with Brenda.

In many ways, the ideals of motherhood and mothering seemed to correspond to those responsibilities that the informants explained they had as mothers. Thus, an ideal mother cared for her children, provided them with education and stayed with them through life. Assuming that a negotiation of mothering have been made when being separated from ones children, and the 'goodness' of ones motherhood is reflected in the financial gains that is provided to the children. How does this then affect mothers that do not live up to neither the normative ideals of physically present mothering, nor the realization of being a breadwinner? Revisiting Smart's as well as Silva's argument, even if women negotiate their identity as mothers to conform to 'goodness' and expected responsibilities, the naturalization of motherhood to equal everywhere regardless of social context or circumstance, "failure" will irrespectively dissolve any type of attempts when mothering is normatively decided by patriarchal standards. Consequently, motherhood is not only 'natural', but also degraded to ideals and visions of 'goodness' of mothering by patriarchy (Smart 1996: 37, 44-45; Silva 1996: 10). This presents an ever-losing situation, especially for migrant mothers. If migrant mothers do not care by normative standards, they fail their motherly responsibilities, and face possible stigmatization. Further, if they negotiate mothering to being the financial carer for their children, but is not able to fulfil their expectations, they face double stigma of both deviating from 'ideal version of motherhood', and also failing in their negotiated mothering.

Isabel is a 39 year-old single mother of three. She has prior to her four migration periods in Costa Rica struggled to provide fully for her family, and has needed to ask for alms at the church while her daughter struggled with long-term illness in her stomach. She takes pride in her migrations, emphasising that she never endured in desperate actions such as prostitution, but decided to migrate to Costa Rica for the sake of her children.

I said to myself, if God has given me two hands, two feet and a head to think with, I am going to work, I am going to see how I keep these children well and growing. /.../ When one is alone, you have to be both the mother and the father.

Interview with Isabel.

Isabel's statement reflects on the separation of responsibilities in families with both mothers and fathers providing, i.e. since her children do not have a father to provide financially, Isabel needs to act as both the carer and provider. This is something that Isabel is proud of, and her quote reflects a type of determination that I trace as taking control over her life, something that also will help her children. The normative responsibilities of motherhood and fatherhood have been more visibly mixed for Isabel as a single mother, than for some of my other informants, something that leads to her mothering duties to be making full use of her resources to provide for her children.

For Isabel's reasons for migration, the moral economic perspective presents an interesting argument regarding motherly responsibilities, gender norms and migration: "[w]hile the moral economic concept invokes notions of propriety – or the idea that people have “proper” roles in economic systems – we are not suggesting here that these women are necessarily repositories of a community's morality” (Contreras and Griffith 2012: 57). But what affects the community's morality regarding migrant mothers, i.e. what decides what ‘good’ and ‘bad’ mothering is? Next section will further explore the connection of ideals of motherhood and mothering with the high levels of migration in the sampled communities.

5.3. Norms of migration

The community is not surprised anymore, because most of us are leaving there [to Costa Rica]. I wish there was work here and that I did not have to travel far, but I cannot stay because the pay here is too low.

Interview with Brenda.

The communities where my informants reside have high levels of seasonal migration; where up to 90 per cent of some of the communities' population migrates seasonally (Interview with Joel Rodriguez, CEPAD Delegate, San José de los Remates, 2014.02.21). It is thus not an understatement when Brenda in the above quote explains the community's reaction to her migration as a non-surprising one, where a majority are leaving in periods. This was a recurrent pattern in the migrant mother interviews, where many referred to acquaintances and family migrating, making the decision to partake in a migration process themselves easier.

Yesenica is 30 years old, and a mother of three. She lives with her parents, siblings and nieces and nephews, in total eleven people in the same household. Her parents have ten children, where a majority are or have been working in Costa Rica seasonally, periods when Yesenica's parents have been caring for both her and her siblings' children. She explains that the decision to migrate was a personal one, taken within the family. According to Yesenica, the community is not involved with the decision to migrate; "[h]ere we choose what we want to do, no one has to know who comes or goes" (Interview with Yesenica).

What Yesenica refers to seems to be a communal disinterest in her and other's migration processes, something indicating that migration as a phenomenon in the studied communities has been normalized to the point of migration being the normative standards for families. This was generally the case for my informants, and almost all referred to migration as being "very normal".

Besides the apparent norm of migration in the communities, many of the informants did however seem to endure doubts or apprehension to migrate. These were related to the risks involved and mainly due to that of having to be away from their children for a period of time. Brenda continues:

There are always people saying: "lets go, it's going to be fine". And then we go with these people, even though we know that we are going to suffer. /.../ Many times there are not any jobs, and they can treat you badly because you do not have papers. They say you are thieves, someone destroying their country. With a passport it is easier, but we do not have money for it.
Interview with Brenda.

Brenda's story is relatable to both traditional migration theories, where her poverty and unemployment is a 'push-factor', as well as that acquaintances are part in her making the decision to migrate time after time, and are consequently assumed to minimize risks (Massey et.al. 2008: 21-22, 42-43). There is however hesitation in this decision, where she says that it is difficult finding work, as well as bad treatment due to her informality. Despite the fact that

two thirds of Costa Rica's foreign population consists of Nicaraguan migrants (IOM 2011), and that the sampled communities have exceptionally high migration rates to Costa Rica, labour opportunities are uncertain and do not pay sufficiently.

Juliana Martínez Franzoni and Koen Voorend (2011) label Nicaragua's welfare regime as an 'informal' one, where the state is inadequate in providing social support programmes, as well as relying heavily on familial care arrangements, i.e. women's unpaid care work. Consequently, the family and community networks bear most of the responsibility to care for issues related to poverty. The existing state programmes are designed to target the poor, "[...] but given that the poor comprises the majority of the population, coverage is in fact rather limited" (Martínez Franzoni and Voorend 2011: 999). Key informant Martha Cranshaw from organization Nicasmigrante, also acknowledges this, and explains that the migration norm is part of these structural problems from the Nicaraguan state. Her opinion is that the government is unable, and unwilling, to improve the conditions within the country, as well as for the people that partake in migration processes.

The first is the right to migrate in regulated conditions with protection from the nation state. It is not about stopping people so they do not go, nor obstruct them to go, it is about that if they do go we have to protect these people's rights, and that they have all necessary information to go. It is to understand that a population that migrates in regulatory conditions has better opportunities out of the country, and that the Nicaraguan state is obliged to protect their rights. The other is the right not to migrate. We are concerned, we resent the situation in which the shortcomings of Nicaragua, that is to say the absence of decent employment conditions and decent salaries, is the trigger factor of migration. People are leaving the country because they do not find opportunities /.../

Interview with Martha Cranshaw, NicasMigrantes. Managua, 2014.02.07.

The Nicaraguan government's inability to provide both adequate protection within the country, as well as outside of national borders, seem to be part of driving people to migrate, while relying on the around 1 million US Dollars in remittances gained yearly from migrants (IOM 2011). Around half of the Nicaraguan migrants are female, and are often more vulnerable to lack of decent work opportunities in receiving countries, while also risking stigmatization due to deviating from normative care responsibilities (Smart 1996: 44-45). Meanwhile, transnational families rely on the wages gained during migration processes, as stated by the informants in this thesis, and is seen as an absolute necessity for familial survival (Schmalzbauer 2004: 1320, 1324-1326).

The moral economic perspective to Brenda's and Laura's migration processes would emphasize the moral value of their attempts to improve their lives economically in order for their families' survival (Contreras and Griffith 2012: 52-53). However, in this case not even having become a transnational family is enough for providing just the smallest economic care work due to informal – and poor labour conditions in the receiving country (Schmalzbauer 2004: 1325-1327). Are the high levels of migration consequently correspondent to the results for individual families?

Returning to Yesenica, when asked how she felt about being distanced from her children, she clearly displayed the dilemma of negotiating her role as a mother, and a sense of sadness when explaining her thoughts on being apart from her children: “It feels wrong when I am not with them [the children], but the situation forces us to go” (Interview with Yesenica).

Different opinions of migration have been displayed regarding motherhood and mothering in relation to a migration process, despite the apparent migration norm that pervades in the sampled communities. There are however variables that are yet to be discussed, where further emphasis must incorporate the children and mothers that are part of the continuous migration processes. Is it possible to both mother and migrate?

5.4. To mother or to migrate?

To be a good mother is to be with your children throughout their life. Yes, I have travelled to Costa Rica, but I have left them [the children] with my sister, she takes good care of them, and when I am there I keep an eye on them, I call them, I come to be with them. You know that the situation for a mother is very hard sometimes /.../ but I have not neglected them.

Interview with Reina.

Reina is 33 years old a mother of three. She has been in Costa Rica working four times, taking turns with her sister so that one of them is always in their home with their children. For Reina, it seemed important to ensure that her migration did not result in her neglecting the children back in Nicaragua, and that her ‘negotiation of mothering’ included leaving care to an ‘other-mother’ she trusted to be able to provide for them financially. She also stated that she found her migration processes to Costa Rica successful, where she gained money and was treated well, but that the only thing missing was her family.

As the informants reside in communities with exceptionally high migration levels, it is essential to include both positive and negative opinions of communal reaction to migrant motherhood. As stated before, transnational mothers face an extreme situation of

sharing care for their children, and are despite the normality of migration subject to possible shaming for not conforming to the ideals of motherhood. Norms and ideals are formed through societal perception of normality, enabling a vision of ‘goodness’ (see Goffman 1963 and Smart 1996). In this case, neither a Western approach to carer-breadwinner is relevant, nor the alternative of having a transnationally based family is definite as being conformant to norm (Martinez-Franzoni and Voorend 2011: 996; Schmalzbauer 2004: 1320). For my informants and their communities, ideals of motherhood and mothering appear to have enabled a shift of emphasising migration over traditional mothering. This is due to moral aspects as providing for family and children in terms of actual survival, rather than staying in Nicaragua with perpetual poverty and inability to provide even the basics (Contreras and Griffith 2012:56-57). However, this enables expectations on motherhood to be even more unequally socially constructed and oriented in a lose-lose format, as not partaking in a migration process is as conformant to norm as it usually is to deviate from physically present mothering. Carol Smart emphasises this as being due to patriarchal demands of naturalizing motherhood, where an identity as a ‘good’ mother is difficult to form individually based on personal context, but is constructed normatively by society (Smart 1996: 37, 44-45). This means that the migrant mothers in this thesis all are subject to idealization of their motherhood, something that could result in stigma when deviating from this norm.

What needs to be established in the following section is consequently; if ideals have been reversed to ‘good’ mothering being equalized to migrant mothering, what happens if these responsibilities are not fulfilled during the migration process?

Laura is 34 years old and has two children. She and her husband migrate to Costa Rica regularly, but her husband most often stays longer than the two months that Laura normally stays there, working in the coffee fields. She explains the reasons for this, as well as not working while she is in Nicaragua, as her motherhood:

I am sure there is work in the city, but I am a mother for them, and I cannot leave them to work.

When my husband is here [in Nicaragua] he works, he looks for jobs in other places, but I cannot because I have to take care of them [the children].

Interview with Laura

For Laura, her mothering seems to have been partly negotiated. She mothers from afar continuously and is during these periods contributing to the family’s financial survival. However, when being back in Nicaragua, she explains that she cannot work *because* she is a

mother. Here it seems that ideals shift when being back in the home context, where neither Laura's husband nor her community approve of her working. In Nicaragua, Laura is a mother who is to follow normative ideals of presence and caring, but when her husband and/or their community need her to provide financially, she can negotiate her mothering to do what is best for the family. This is paradoxical, and a clear example of when patriarchal constructions of motherhood and mothering demands women to subject to these ideals, regardless of their own personal needs (Silva 1996:10).

Other informants shared stories where other family members were frustrated and/or disappointed in the migrant mothers' new way of mothering. Feelings from the informants' children displayed both during – and post-migration processes are essential in order to a larger extent understand if motherhood and migration are fully compatible.

Previously mentioned 39 year-old Isabel is a single mother of three. She has been in Costa Rica four times for work, and has in between her seasonal migrations been working in Nicaraguan capital Managua. Isabel's migration processes have led to an improved status for her in the community, where she has been able to repair her house and feels that she is now more able to provide for her children. She perceives that her children are appreciative for the sacrifices she has made, but that they demonstrate a sense of distance in their interaction with her when she is in Nicaragua:

My children do not call me "mom", they call me by my name and my mother "mom". When I ask them "why do you not call me 'mom', I am your mother", they say "I know you are my mother, but I did not grow up with you, I did not grow up with you because you were away working to take care of us, that is why I call my grandmother "mom"". Then I tell them that I am their real mother, but they keep saying that she is the one they grew up with.

Interview with Isabel.

For Isabel's children, her periods of longer separations seem to be in line with one of Contreras and Griffith's 'paradoxes of partitioned parenthood', where a migration process includes both satisfactory and frustrating effects for her and her children. While Isabel and her children's lives are improved materially due to her migration, both she and the children are experiencing frustration due to her negotiating of caring. Their grandmother and 'other-mother' has provided them with present mothering and caring, while Isabel has had new responsibilities of economic care. The migration experience has resulted in a separation between productive and reproductive labour, where mothers normatively perform the reproductive care in terms of presence and daily care, and migrant mothers instead are part of

a transnational productive labour market. Since the reproductive care is present and experienced in direct relation to the carer, i.e. their grandmother, she is the one valued higher as a mother by the children. While her children are aware of the material benefits from Isabel's migration and her motherhood negotiation, they have still de-legitimized her way of mothering them (Contreras and Griffith 2012: 57-59).

Despite the normality of migration, the decision to migrate consequently seemed to show the two sides of an impossible dilemma for the informants; where the one side is the need to support your family, while the other is that the necessity to migrate often involves being away from your children and home to be able to support them. When asking the informants how the outcomes of their migration processes related to the reasons, expectations and goals pre-migration, the answers were somewhat sprawling. In general, as mentioned above, the informants wished that there were work opportunities in Nicaragua so they could stay with their children. A few wished to never go back to Costa Rica, while some shared that they were generally content with migrating, since this enabled e.g. their children's education or house repairs.

Heydi, a 28 year-old mother of three, displays a clear example of Contreras and Griffith's paradoxes of partitioned parenthood. As she motivated her migration with needing to finance her children's school year, her description to why she and her husband had to return from Costa Rica is incongruous:

It is better now that we stay, because the children do not want to go to school when I am not here... That is why we do not go right now, because they do not go to their classes. /.../ I am the one who brings them to school, and picks them up every day.

Interview with Heydi.

Even though she has difficulties finding work in Nicaragua during the dry season, she has decided not to migrate for now, due to the effects on her children. For Heydi, who also explained that part of her motherly responsibilities was to make sure that her children got educated, she needed to regain control over her mothering. In the best interest of her children's education, she decided to return to Nicaragua (Contreras and Griffith 2012:59). When working as a nanny in a Costa Rican family, Heydi's husband told her that it was better for her to go back to Nicaragua to care for their own children. When she returned, the community advised her not to go back, as they felt sorry for her children who did not have their parents at home to care for them. In line with Silva's framework, women must always subject to the ideals of motherhood,

regardless of their personal needs or social-economic conditions (Silva 1996:10). The opinions from her husband and community that reaffirmed ideals of mothers as the present carer, and advised her to stay in Nicaragua with their children, something delegitimized her mothering from afar on both a familial and communal basis.

A noteworthy connection among those women who did not want to go back to Costa Rica, was that a few had experienced some level of societal shaming in relation to them being separated from their children. When 24 year-old Darling went to Costa Rica to gain money for her daughter's medical care, she was disappointed in her community's reaction:

They [the community] said I did not love my daughter when I left her. /.../ I felt that the people did not support me when I needed it the most.

Interview with Darling.

In accordance with Moore's framework of working mothers being disregarded in both lacking status in the labour market, while in a migration process being a present carer (Moore 1996: 58-59), the reaction that Darling met is not surprising. Transnational mothers have been documented to face stigma and guilt for abandoning ideals of motherhood and mothering when partaking in a migration process (see e.g. Moorehouse and Cunningham 2012; Contreras and Griffith 2012). This shows that even if ideals to some extent have been reversed from emphasising migration over normative motherhood, or rather that migrant motherhood has been the norm, there are exceptions coherent to stories from key informants and previous research.

37 year-old Maria Luisa however give an example that possibly explains the working mechanisms of both motherly responsibilities and migration norms. When asked how the community reacted to her migration after returning to Nicaragua, she explains: "they [the community] only ask me why I won't go again" (Interview with Maria-Luisa). As well as providing another example of that migration seems naturalized in the studied communities, Maria-Luisa displays another interesting feature of the norm of migration. Here, the community appears to value migrating more than mothering, or perhaps that ideals have shifted in the direction of migration being highly valued as ideal motherhood.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

The perceptions of migrant motherhood and mothering seems to a large extent to depend on the outcome of migration, i.e. if it was financially successful, and thus how ‘good’ the informants’ mothering from afar was. This relates to the research question of ideals of motherhood that has been investigated. For my informants, ‘good’ and ideal motherhood and mothering seem to correspond to that of responsibilities, where both a deviation from normative ideals of motherhood, as well as less successful migration processes, could affect whether they partook in another migration or not.

While the experiences of the informants showed signs of being influenced by a migration norm, it is important to acknowledge that the informants always partook in a migration process as *mothers*. They did so on the terms of providing another type of care, expanded their vision of ideal mothering while being separated, and “negotiated back” their normative mothering role post-migration. Their motherhood was what mattered in the migration process, as they were expected to sacrifice everything for the sake of their children. Reasons for returning to Nicaragua or not returning to Costa Rica always related somehow to their children. Similar to this, their migration failures or mothering failures also seemed to relate to them being ‘bad’ mothers.

However, what is essential is that the relationship between motherhood and migration is a continuous one for my informants. Whether being affected by norms of either ‘good’ mothering or migration, they all migrated with the well-being of their children in mind. The informants negotiated their mothering to provide financial support while being separated from them; and for those who continued migrating all did so for the necessity of keeping their children well. In their own way, all my informants managed to both mother and migrate. There was heartache and complications involved, but they all partook in migration processes for the good of their families. The ones labelling the informants as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ mothers were often someone else, e.g. their partners or communities, something in line with the argued patriarchal norms determining mothers as subordinate to idealized versions of motherhood and norms of mothering. However, some of the informants also labelled themselves as ‘bad’ mothers, something that I interpret as internalised idealization,

where the woman could link negative experiences from her migration processes as indicators of perceptions of how well she performs as a mother. The woman in charge of her own mothering is not only a threat to the family, but also a threat to the base of the Nicaraguan welfare regime, or lack thereof. If the migrant mothers were fully in charge of establishing 'good' mothering appropriate to their personal, cultural and socio-economic context; if the Nicaraguan government would obtain measures for either labour opportunities in Nicaragua or safer formal migration; if mothers were equal to fathers, there would be no doubt that it is possible both to mother and to migrate.

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8. Appendices

8.1. Overview of results and analysis

Category	Reasons	Expectations/Goals	Perceptions/Outcomes
Circumstances around migration	Economic necessity; unemployment; need of fulfilling basic needs.	Fill basic needs; provide school supplies for children; repair/buy house; be able to travel.	Provide basic needs; buy school supplies for children; make some repairs/pay off small part of house loan/debt.
	Generally informal migration; migration within Nicaragua in between labour periods to Costa Rica; one informant had passport and visa.	Migrate 2-12 months to work and send money back to family.	Need to continue migrating/partner need to continue; bad experiences at border/in Costa Rica; need to return due to familial difficulties in Nicaragua.
	Pre-migration	During-migration	Post-migration
Responsibilities of motherhood and mothering	Domestic work: care for children, household, education of children (send to school, manners).	Economic care work; remittances. Call, make sure children are cared for by other-mother in home.	Domestic work, some more with new/older children.
	For some paid domestic in larger cities/agricultural work.	Agricultural work (mainly in coffee), domestic work, service work.	
	Personal	Familial	Societal
Ideals of motherhood and mothering	To care for children in terms of nurturing, cooking/cleaning; education (school, manners). "To always be here with children".	'Other-mothering' (grandmothers, aunts + some grandparents together); care for children domestically and nurturing.	To care for children in terms of nurturing, cooking/cleaning; education (school, manners).
	Best about motherhood? "To be a mother".	Correspondent to responsibilities.	Correspondent to responsibilities.
Norms of migration	Migration necessary because of economy; to provide for children; to make the future of their children better.	If married mothers: Went together with husband. If single mothers: went alone. Decision taken by couple/husband/alone.	<u>Key informants:</u> Stigmatized due to normative motherhood role. Nicaraguan welfare policies depend on unpaid domestic work by women.
	Negotiation of motherhood identity: Physically present carer → Performer of economic care work.	Dangerous to informally cross border; should not leave children; sad and worrying while away.	<u>Communities:</u> Some shaming for leaving children; generally migration natural part of community and normatively accepted.
		Necessity to earn money for children, the household. Good decision in order to care for family.	Necessity to earn money for children, the household.
To mother or to migrate?	Difficult to leave children, knows it is for their sake → No other options. Some brought younger/a few children to Costa Rica while working.	Partners/sisters/grandparents takes turn in migrating (enables migration); Partners taking decision to migrate for informants; families should be together.	Normalized process to migrate; decision taken within family (personal); no one cares → "why don't you travel again?"

	Not the same with an other-mother for children; children missed their mother and vice versa; not able to care for children after migration.	Children did not attend school during migration; change in relationship even though appreciative of mother's sacrifices; other-mother still cares for child.	Some stigma due to normative care work performed by women; "poor children that have to be without their parents".
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8.2. Interview guide: Interviews with migrant mothers

1. Introduction: Presentation and general information

My name is Rebecca Sjöstrand, I am 23 years old and I am from Sweden in northern Europe. I study sociology at a university in the south of Sweden, and I am in Nicaragua to do a field study on migrating mothers, as yourself, and how your experiences have affected you.

This interview will be used as information for a paper called a thesis I will write for my university. I will talk to mothers that have migrated alone to see how the migration has affected them.

The reason I want to speak with you is because I am very interested in your experiences, to be able to understand what it means to be a migrant mother here in Nicaragua. Since I am from Sweden, and do not have any children, I am here to learn from you, and your experiences for me and others to try to understand how it is to migrate alone and how this has affected you.

I am very grateful that you are willing to talk to me and share your experiences. If you are willing to let me use your answers when I write my thesis I would very much appreciate it. It is very important that you know that you will be anonymous, I will not use your real name, and this conversation is confidential, we will not tell anyone how you answered these questions. If you do not want to answer some of my questions or do not want continue with the interview, you have every right to do so. You can also contact me later if you have changed your mind about participating. For my university I need to state that you are informed of these rights; anonymity, the information of confidentiality, the right to terminate the interview and the right to after the interview retract your answers. Is it okay that you sign this contract for me?

This is a conversation between you and me, and I am here to learn from you. However, my Spanish is not perfect, so that is why [name of translator] will help me with the things I do not understand, he will translate between us. Do you have any questions? Is it okay that I record this interview?

- Name, age, current living situation (town, family living with you)
- How many children do you have? How many of them are living with you? How old are they?

2. Pre-migration

Motherhood:

- How would you describe the responsibilities in a Nicaraguan family? Mother/Father.

- How would you describe the division of responsibilities in your family? (Children, home, bringing in money). What were your responsibilities as a mother before your migration?
- How would you describe the society's vision of a good mother?
- What do you think is the best thing about being a mother?

Circumstances around migration:

- What were the reasons for your migration?
- What were your expectations of the migration?
- How did you decide to migrate? Who was part of the decision for you to partake in a migration process?!!
- What kind of work did you do before your migration?
- Where did you migrate to?
- For how long did you migrate? (Each period, number of periods.) Did you know how extensive the periods of time would be when you migrated?
- How did your family/people you live with react to the decision of migration?
- How did you feel that the society reacted to your decision to migrate?

3. During migration experience

- What responsibilities did you have to your family/as a mother during your migration?
- How did you feel that your relationships shifted during your migration?
- How did you stay in contact with your family while working abroad?
(Communications, frequency)
- How did you feel about being distant from your family?
- How did you feel that the environment abroad reacted to your migration?
- How did the migration experience during your stay abroad feel in relation to your reasons/expectations pre-migration?
- How did you feel during your periods working abroad?

4. Post-migration

- What responsibilities do you currently feel that you have as a mother?
- How are these responsibilities different from before you migrated?
- How do you feel that the outcome of migration corresponds to the reasons and expectations you had before migrating?
- What do you feel has been the best and worst part about your migration experience?
- Do you feel that you changed as a mother due to your experience?
- How do you feel that the environment has reacted to your migration after your experiences?

5. Closing questions

- Is there anything you would like to add?
- Do you have questions for me?

8.3. The informants

8.3.1. Migrant mothers

Erica, 24 years, mother of two. Has gone to Costa Rica once with her husband when their first child was one year old, with the goal of buying the house they now live in. During her time in Costa Rica she worked in domestic work. Her son lived with her mother during her and her husband's migration period.

Yesenica, 30 years old, single mother of two children. Has been in Costa Rica working twice, doing domestic work in a hotel. Lives with her children, parents, siblings, nieces and nephews, a total of eleven people in the household. Her parents took care of her children during her migration periods, as well as many of their other grandchildren, as a majority of their ten children are in Costa Rica working.

Darling, 24 years. Lives with her husband and their two daughters. She has migrated once, with her husband, seven years prior to our interview, working as a coffee picker. Darling never wishes to migrate again due to an incident at the border, while her husband still migrates to Costa Rica seasonally. Her, at the time, only child resided with her mother in law.

Reina, 33 years old, three children. Lives with husband, her sister, and their children. Has been in Costa Rica four times with her husband, while she and her sister take turns in migrating and caring for the children at home. Her work in Costa Rica was domestic.

Heydi, 28 years old and a mother of three. Lives with her husband and her parents, which she and her husband takes turn with in migrating to Costa Rica. Heydi has migrated several times, most often in periods of four months, working with child care in a family.

Gladys, 29 years, single mother of two. Has been in Costa Rica five or six times in periods from eight months up to a year, working domestically and with picking coffee. Her children accompanied her once during her migration, otherwise they have stayed with her mother.

Isabel, 39 years, single mother of three. Has migrated to Costa Rica four times, and has during her times in Nicaragua been working away from her family in Managua as well, in both places doing domestic work. Isabel is content with being a migrant mother, and hopes to be able to gain a passport and visa for a longer working period in the United States in the future. Her mother has cared for her children during her working periods abroad and in Managua.

Brenda, 32 years old, mother of two children. Her husband was at the time of the interview in Costa Rica working, and Brenda herself has been abroad three times in periods of two to six months, working in the coffee fields. The previous time, her youngest daughter came with them, as neither of them could stand being apart. Her older daughter was taken care of by Brenda's sister.

Jonara, 35 years old, mother of three. She lives her sister and their children, and has gone to Costa Rica multiple times, doing domestic work. She describes her migration as necessary, but bad for her as a mother.

Maria Luisa, 37 years. Lives with her husband and their five children, although her husband at the time of the interview was in Costa Rica working. Maria Luisa has migrated together with her husband three times in periods of four to five months, once with their, at the time, two

youngest children. While being in Costa Rica, Maria Luisa worked in the coffee fields. The other children resided with her mother during her time in Costa Rica. Maria Luisa is the only one of my informants that had gone to Costa Rica formally.

Emely, 16 years old, mother of one child. Lives with her husband and his family, while her child still resided with her mother that had cared for him during Emely's migration period of four months, where she worked in the coffee fields.

Laura, 34 years and a mother of two. Had at the time of the interview gotten back from her fourth labour period in Costa Rica the week earlier, and her husband was still there working. She migrated in relation to coffee season, together with her husband that usually stayed longer, as she needed to relieve her mother caring for her children back home.

Olivia, 32 years old, lives with her husband and their two children. Her husband has been in Costa Rica frequently, and Olivia went with him for two months in 2011, while their children resided with relatives in the community. Olivia had difficulties finding a job in Costa Rica, but worked a shorter period in agricultural work, picking coffee and tomatoes.

8.3.2. Key informants

Representatives from following the Nicaraguan organizations participated in the thesis as key informants, with regard to their knowledge on the migration discourse, migrant rights and female migration.

Council of Protestant Churches Nicaragua (Consejo de Iglesias Evangélicas Pro-Alianza Denominacional, CEPAD) is a Christian organization, working with long-term community strengthening projects, sustainability and self-sufficiency in e.g. family support, food security and pastoral leadership in various communities, both rurally and urbanely in Nicaragua. The CEPAD programme that many of the migrant mothers participant in the thesis was part of is called the 'integral family development programme' (CEPAD 2014).

Centro Nicaragüense de Derechos Humanos (CENIDH) is the largest Nicaraguan human rights organization, formed during the post-revolution transition in 1990. They work with political advocacy for human rights violations both within Nicaragua and in between Central – and South America, and recognize informal migrants as part of a social discrimination.

Nicasmigrante work with human rights protection for migrants, advocacy for regulation of formal migration and for social improvements for the right not to migrate, e.g. the possibility of finding adequate employment.

Familiares de migrantes Managua work with family of migrants, with support for families of migrants that stay in Nicaragua during their migration periods.

Servicio Jesuita para Migrantes (Jesuit service for migrants, SJM) that are working in both field and research together with Universidad Centroamericana (*University of Central America UCA*) for the improvement and defence of human rights for migrants in their country of origin and destination.