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UCL Migration Research Unit
UCL Department of Geography
University College London
26 Bedford Way
London WC1H 0AP

www.geog.ucl.ac.uk/mru

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Returning to Romania: How Does Integration and Transnationalism Affect Intentions of Return Migration?

Rose Hammond



Migration Research Unit





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Rose Hammond

Candidate Number: HKLV0

Department of Geography

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Supervised by Anne White

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University College London

ABSTRACT

This dissertation asks how integration and transnationalism affect intentions of return migration. It explores the ties and attachments individuals create with their host country and the simultaneous links and connections they sustain with their country of origin – integration and transnationalism respectively. The dissertation seeks to explain how these processes interact with the plans and desires individuals have to return migrate. The findings are based on qualitative research with 15 Romanian migrants living in the UK. The themes of the home, homesickness, and return preparedness are explored. The research indicates overall that the relationship between integration, transnationalism, and return migration is non-homogenous and complex, with intentions of return being simultaneously strengthened and weakened by integration and transnationalism in multiple and differing ways within one group of individuals. Return migration is conceptualised based on migrants' experiences and perceived opportunities in both sending and receiving country. Considerations of return migration are therefore complex and personal, spanning national borders, reaffirming the importance of situating the study of migration phenomenon in a transnational framework.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. Return Migration

Typically understood as the act of individuals returning to their country of origin; return migration is not a new phenomenon. However, it is only in recent years that the topic has received the full attention of both academics and policy makers alike. Return migration is frequently cited as a “triple-win scenario” (Sinatti 2015: 275), whereby sending countries, receiving countries and migrants themselves can benefit. Yet, in comparison with outward migration, return remains understudied (Tezcan 2018).

Perhaps because return migration is hard to measure; very few countries record the arrival of their own nationals. ‘Return’ is also difficult to define. Whilst the majority of existing research focuses on individuals voluntarily returning, return can appear in many forms. More recently, return migration research has developed to include involuntary return, the return of asylum seekers, refugees and forced migrants and students, and there now exists a body of literature that focuses on second-generation migrants, ‘returning’ to their parents’ homeland. Return migration is therefore much more complex than a straightforward act of ‘going home’ (Bartram et al 2014).

Return migration research typically falls into two categories: the study of return intentions or the study of actual return behaviour. Whilst the latter tends to focus on the post-return experience of migrants and the impact of return on countries of origin, a study of return intentions focuses instead on the desires, aspirations and plans that individuals have around possible return in the future. Studying intentions offers valuable insight into what factors affects processes of return, in turn reflecting the

desires and realities of migration (Carling and Petterson 2014: 5). Intentions are not indicative of actual behaviour; there are of course “many migrants who intend to, but do not return to their country, whilst others may return despite the fact they did not plan to do so” (Vlase 2013: 742). But intentions and actions are often influenced by the same factors.

1.2. The Study

For a long time, it was assumed that migration was a mostly permanent and one-way phenomenon. Migrants were expected to assimilate into host societies, cutting ties with their countries of origin in the process (Sussman 2010). Where migrants were successful abroad, return was unlikely. However, following the ‘transnational turn’ in social science research in the 1990s, migration has been reconceptualised. Academics today acknowledge the sustained connections and ties that migrants maintain with their countries of origin, despite no longer living there. With cheap air travel and free communication technologies, international migrants are more connected than ever across national borders. Attention has shifted from early models of assimilation to the simultaneous connections and notions of belonging that migrants have with their country of residence *and* their country of origin. It is now accepted that migrants are able to successfully integrate within their country of residence, whilst maintaining strong transnational connections outside of it. It therefore remains imperative to study migration phenomenon within a transnational framework that encompasses the experiences and influences in the lives of migrants both abroad and at home.

The aim of this dissertation is to answer how integration and transnationalism affect intentions of return migration. The study asks in which ways the ties and adaptations people make whilst living in host societies, and the relationships and ties they maintain with their country of origin, interact, effect and strengthen or weaken their desire to return. In order to achieve this aim, this dissertation draws on findings and analysis from qualitative research with 15 first-generation Romanian migrants currently living in the UK, and their intentions around voluntarily returning to Romania.

1.3. Returning to Romania

The topic of return migration sits high on the European agenda. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 and the accessions of post-Soviet countries into the European Union in 2004 and 2007 have transformed the pattern of migration in Central and Eastern Europe (Lang et al 2016). Early migration, characterised by seasonal labour and ethnic migration to neighbouring countries, has evolved into the movement of millions of individuals in Europe utilising their freedom of movement (Potot 2010). Romania is highly representative of the broader situation in Central and Eastern Europe, experiencing what has been described as “an acute population crisis” (Hinks and Davis 2015: 1). Since the fall of the Iron Curtain, Romania has maintained a decreasing population, with approximately 2.5 million people lost in the last three decades (Andrica et al 2019). This can be largely attributed to patterns of international migration to Western Europe, where main destination countries are Italy and Spain, with significant numbers also living in Germany, the UK and France (Rentea 2015). The majority of those leaving Romania are young, labour-active members of the population. Romania is witnessing labour shortages with an estimated, 20% of the working age population now abroad (Eurostat 2020).

Subsequently, encouraging the return of Romanian nationals has become an “important priority for the government” (Journal General de Europe). The government have raised the minimum wage (Frunză et al 2009), and established entrepreneurship schemes such as the ‘Romania Home - Diaspora Start Up’ which provides grants to fund enterprises for Romanians who have migrated - on the condition they start them in Romania (EAEA 2018). Despite this, return migration to Romania has remained low. Recent surveys estimate that whilst approximately 26% of Romanian households had at least one family member living abroad, only 4.5% of households had at least one member that had returned (Gherghina and Plopeanu 2020). This indicates the decision to return is likely influenced by more than financial incentive alone.

1.4. Value of Research

Understanding what motivates return migration is clearly of interest to Romania. The return of Eastern European migrants from the West has the potential to reverse the labour shortages that the area is witnessing. Additionally, the topic of return is also significant within the UK, where the research in this dissertation is based. Romania is now the second highest non-British nationality, with approximately 400,000 residents living in the UK (ONS 2020). Romanian migrants therefore comprise a significant part of the British labour force to potentially lose to return.

There are existing studies before mine that explore the role of integration and transnationalism on intentions of return to Romania. Gherghina and Plopeanu recently looked at the effect of home country ties and socio-cultural integration on intentions of return for Romanians abroad. However, their findings were based on large-scale surveys. The authors concluded that their research could not “explore deeper the

causal relationships” and suggested qualitative analysis would further “unveil how their motivation for return is formed” (Gherghina and Plopeanu 2020: 19). To the best of my knowledge this is the first qualitative study that simultaneously looks at the effect of both integration and transnationalism on intentions of return migration of Romanian nationals living in the UK. It is hoped that where this dissertation can provide value is through a qualitative exploration that asks *in which ways* integration and transnationalism affect intentions of return migration for an understudied group of individuals.

1.5. Structure of Dissertation

The dissertation is structured as followed. Chapter 2 includes a review of the current academic literature on the theorisation of return migration as well as the topics of integration and transnationalism and how the two have been related to return migration in existing research. Chapter 3 outlines the methodology of the research. The following three chapters comprise of the findings and discussion of the project. Chapter 4 discusses how integration and transnationalism result in a transformation of the location of ‘the home’. The chapter discusses how this transformation relates to intentions of return in different ways for different individuals. Chapter 5 focuses on the relationship between transnationalism and homesickness and how feelings of longing and distance can be simultaneously reinforced or remedied by transnationalism and how this in turn impacts intentions of return. Chapter 6 discusses the concept of return preparedness and how integration and transnationalism can both enhance and reduce feelings of being prepared and ready to return to Romania. And finally, Chapter 7 concludes the findings in the research project.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theorising Return Migration

In migration studies, three traditional frameworks exist to theorise patterns of migration. The 'Neoclassical Economic' approach views migration as the direct outcome of an individual assessment of the costs and benefits of moving, whereby people migrate in order to increase their productivity and maximise their earnings as much as possible (de Haas and Fokkema 2011). Return migration then, should only occur if these financial expectations are not met, or the benefits of migration are not achieved. Whilst economically successful migrants settle in the host country, the neo-classical approach views return as a sign of "failed migration" (Snel et al 2015: 8).

The 'New Economics of Labour Migration' (NELM) approach shifts the focus from the individual to the household where migration is understood to be a temporary livelihood strategy to increase household income (de Haas and Fokkema 2011). NELM therefore presents return migration as the logical outcome of a successful trip abroad (Li et al 2018). In contrast to the neoclassical economic approach, NELM views return migration as 'successful migration', where migrants and their households achieve financial targets they had hoped for.

However, this success/failure paradigm of return migration has been criticised by academics who maintain it does not recognise behaviour as being anything more than financially motivated. Existing research suggests that migration decisions are more complex than a calculation of potential earnings (Salaff 2013). King (2000) argues that,

in contrast with outward migration, the decision to return is often more concerned with family ties than economic factors.

The structuralist approach to migration extended these early economic models by emphasising the importance of the wider contexts within which migration takes place. It is argued that migration decisions and actions are enacted within consideration of the political, economic and social conditions of not just the potential destination country but also the country of origin (Lang et al 2016). Return migration should therefore be framed within the wider institutions and structures in the host country and the opportunities migrants expect to find if they return to their country of origin (Cassarino 2004). The structuralist approach recognises that return is not just a result of success or failure in host country but intertwined in wider socio-cultural and economic contexts of both societies. It is necessary to consider the influence of both the host country and the country of origin when discussing intentions of return migration. Anniste and Tammaru maintain that migrant's decision to return can be attributed to "the balance between their degree of integration in the host country and their level of attachment to the country of origin" (2014: 377). This dissertation focuses on the attachments and ties created with the host country, and the attachments and ties maintained with the country of origin: integration and transnationalism respectively.

2.2 Integration

In the broadest sense, integration refers to the incorporation of an individual into the majority society (de Haas and Fokkema 2011). When discussing immigrant integration, academics frequently distinguish between structural and socio-cultural integration. Structural integration refers to interaction and inclusion with formal

institutions of society through employment, housing, education and citizenship rights for example (Anniste and Tammaru 2014: 380). Socio-cultural integration encompasses the behavioural and attitudinal adaptations that occur after migration; like learning the majority language, establishing friendships, social contacts and memberships. This includes a sense of belonging and personal identification with the host society (de Haas and Fokkema 2011). Whilst the two are different, structural and socio-cultural integration are related. Research shows that individuals who are structurally integrated tend to have more informal contact with residents in the host country (Snel et al 2015). For example, employment in the host society can increase social interaction in the workplace, creating friendships and a sense of belonging, promoting socio-cultural integration.

When researching integration in the UK, it is important to recognise that immigrant integration, once described as “controversial and hotly debated” (Castles et al 2002: 112), remains a highly politicised topic. For a long time, integration was seen as a one-way process, with migrants assumed to assimilate over time, becoming similar to the resident population and losing previous social and cultural norms along the way. However, despite this, it became clear that complete assimilation did not occur for the majority of migrants. In the UK, the Government turned instead to a model of multiculturalism which promoted the acceptance of diversity and difference, with different groups coexisting whilst retaining their own cultural identities (Ager and Strang 2008). Integration was reframed as a two-way process between both migrant and non-migrant populations; a “process of give and take” (Arowolo 2000: 62). But following the 2001 race riots in Northern England, and with David Cameron famously declaring “state multiculturalism has failed” (BBC News 2011), the UK Government

has blurred the boundaries between the acceptance of cultural difference, and an expectation that immigrants take on 'British Values' (Choquet 2017). This is reflected in the 'Life in the UK' test (Gov UK 2020), where those seeking nationality are tested on their English language competency as well as knowledge on British traditions and historical events.

It is clear that immigrant integration is a complex and multi-dimensional concept, simultaneously "a policy objective, a theoretical concept and also the lived experience of migrants" (Erdal 2013: 984). I refer to integration as the process through which migrants adapt and become included in their country of residence. There is no 'end-goal' or 'complete integration' but instead the evolving ties and connections individuals make with both formal institutions and their neighbours, friends and wider communities that enable them to feel they are members of the host society. Thus, 'successful integration' does not require individuals to lose their cultural or ethnic identity.

2.3 Integration and Return Migration

Overall, the existing literature on return migration agrees that integration in the host society and intentions of return migration are negatively related. Based on quantitative statistical research with ten migrant groups living in Norway, Carling and Pettersen (2014) argued that individuals who were the most integrated were the least likely to return. For Italian migrants living in Germany, it was concluded that the more social ties accumulated with the host society, the less likely migrants were to consider returning home (Haug 2008). Integration into the labour market is recognised as an important factor, with unemployed migrants more likely to return (Anniste and Tammaru 2014). The indication from existing research is that the longer migrants stay

in a country; the more ties and connections they create; the more integrated they become within the host society; the harder it becomes to leave (de Haas and Fokkema 2011). Studies in Germany and France show that intentions of return decrease over time (Dustmann 1996), whilst Bratsberg, Raaum and Sørliie found intentions of return are strongest during the first five years following migration (Bratsberg et al 2007 cited in Anniste and Tammaru 2014).

However, not all research supports a straightforward negative relationship between integration and intentions of return. Based on research with four migrant communities living in Spain and Italy, de Haas and Fokkema (2011) found that whilst strong sociocultural integration in the country of residence weakened return intentions, the migrants who were highly structurally integrated were actually more willing and inclined to return. Furthermore, student migrants are often strongly socially integrated with employment opportunities in the host society after graduation, and yet the majority of international students decide to return (Bijwaard and Wang 2016). In their research with Estonian migrants living in Finland, Anniste and Tammaru found that those who were more integrated were actually more likely to want to return. Return migration is not an easy decision, it costs money and requires social networks and support. The indication is that integration into the host society can also help to facilitate return. The authors concluded that “there is no obvious negative relationship between integration and return intention” (Anniste and Tammaru 2014: 378). The existing literature on return migration and integration indicates that the relationship is more complex than a simple linear relationship.

2.4 Transnationalism

First introduced by social anthropologists in the early 1990s (see Glick Schiller et al 1992), transnationalism developed out of acknowledgment that despite initial expectations, the majority of individuals did not cut ties with their country of origin following migration. Transnationalism as a broad concept, recognises that actions, activities, relationships, communications and exchanges occur across borders. A transnational approach to migration recognises that migrants engage in activities, make decisions and develop identities, based on their familial, economic, social, religious and political ties that exist across national borders (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007).

Transnationalism also refers to the process through which migrants create and sustain ties that connect their country of origin and their country of residence (Tsuda 2012). “Transmigrants” (Glick Schiller et al 1992: 1), engage in transnational behaviours that blur the boundaries of space and time. These individuals successfully build social fields that bridge multiple societies, facilitating the exchange of information, knowledge, ideas and goods, so that transnational social fields include people who have never migrated themselves but remain linked to others that have (Glick Schiller 2004). The phenomenon of transnationalism is not a novel concept, migrants have arguably always been transnational in behaviour and identity. But undoubtedly, as Vertovec (2004) argues, the introduction of modern transport and communication technologies plays a major role in transnational relationships. New technological advancements have enhanced the intensity, frequency and regularity of the transnational nature of migrants’ lives (Muzzucato 2008). It is now widely accepted

that transnationalism is an integral part of the lives of many migrants (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007).

In this dissertation, I use the word transnationalism to refer to the connections, links and relationships that migrants maintain with their country of origin. This includes both transnational behaviours, communications and actions that exist across borders, as well as transnational ways of identifying and belonging to a community outside of the country of residence. This distinguishes between transnational ways of *being* and transnational ways of *belonging* (Glick Schiller 2004). Whilst transnational ways of being refers to the actual practices and behaviours that people engage in across borders, transnational ways of belonging recognises the emotional and conscious connections individuals make to other locations and people (Wessendorf 2007).

2.5 Transnationalism and Return Migration

A positive relationship between transnationalism and return intentions is heavily inferred in the wider literature. The assumption is the more migrants engage in transnational activities; the more transnational their behaviour and identity; the more connected they are with their country of origin; the more likely they are to return (Snel et al 2015). For Mexican migrants living in the US, strong socio-economic ties with their homeland were positively related with return intentions (Tezcan 2019). Duval (2004) highlighted the importance of the home visit as a form of transnational exercise that linked to return migration amongst Commonwealth migrants living in Toronto. Migrants used the home visit as a method of maintaining social visibility in their home country and also as a method of gaining insight into the realities and changes in their place of origin. This knowledge played a direct role in the decision to return

permanently or not. By maintaining strong transnational relationships, migrants are able to access resources about the country of origin that facilitates their return (Fokkema 2011).

However, the literature also highlights how migrants use transnational practices and behaviours to create a sense of belonging in the host society which may actually weaken the desire the return. Ehrkamp's (2005) research with Turkish migrants in Germany showed how through the use of transnational practices such as watching Turkish television, or purchasing Turkish newspapers, migrants were able to feel like they were in Turkey without physically being there. Transnationalism exists as a "surrogate for travelling to Turkey" (Ehrkamp 2005: 356). Furthermore, research by Li, Sadowski-Smith and Yu (2018) highlighted that for highly skilled migrants employed at universities in the US, transnational practices were actually preferred over long-term return. The extent to which transnationalism triggers return still remains an open question (Tezcan 2018). The literature indicates that transnationalism and transnational activities can affect return intentions in complex and conflicting ways.

2.6 Integration and Transnationalism: Mutually Exclusive or Mutually Supportive?

When exploring integration and transnationalism together, it is important to note that for many years, studies of migrant transnationalism and integration "developed in parallel rather than in dialogue with each other" (Dahinden 2012: 120). The transnational turn in migration studies directly challenged earlier understandings of migrant integration built around models of assimilation (Teo 2011). Strong transnational ties were considered a "manifestation or cause of migrants inability or unwillingness to integrate" (de Haas and Fokkema 2011: 758), whereby sustained

links with countries of origin would impede successful integration into the country of residence (Hammond 2013).

However, empirical evidence has shown that the two are in fact compatible and do occur simultaneously. Economic integration was shown to be strongly related to economic transnational practices amongst Latin Americans living in the USA (Portes et al 2002). For Somali migrants living in the UK, transnational activism was utilised to promote social integration (Hammond 2013). Erdal and Oeppen reject the idea that integration and transnationalism are a zero-sum game but instead describe the relationship between the two as “a balancing act” (2013: 983). Migrants do not choose between integration and transnationalism, but instead successfully integrate into the host society whilst simultaneously maintaining transnational ties to their country of origin (Schunck 2014). This is not so surprising if integration and transnationalism are both recognised as social processes through which individuals react to a changing situation as a result of migration (Erdal and Oppenen 2013).

2.7 Research Questions

This dissertation therefore incorporates both integration and transnationalism into one sphere of analysis by asking how the connections and ties people create with their country of residence, and the relationships and ties they maintain with their country of origin interact and influence the decision to return home. This dissertation builds on the existing literature by providing a qualitative perspective that asks *in which ways* does integration and transnational interact, affect, or weaken and strengthen the desires and plans that individuals have to return to their country of origin.

The research project is therefore based around the following questions:

1. How does integration strengthen and/or weaken intentions of return migration?
2. How does transnationalism strengthen and/or weaken intentions of return migration?
3. Can transnational activities exist as a substitute return that is preferred to permanent return migration?
4. What affect does integration and transnationalism have on the concept of 'home' and therefore return migration?

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Method

This dissertation is based on qualitative data obtained through semi-structured interviews. Qualitative research aims to capture the perspective and personal accounts of research participants, in order to understand human experiences and the meanings attached to it (Silverman 2016). Interviews produce rich and plentiful data, allowing for the voice of interviewees to be heard (Rabionet 2009). Semi-structured interviews have the benefit of being flexible enough to allow interviewees to change the flow of conversation and reveal new themes, whilst allowing the researcher to ensure the interviews remain relevant and comparable. Semi-structured interviews tend to be more conversational and informal than other research methods (Longhurst 2016), encouraging a more natural environment where interviewees feel comfortable to speak openly (Lo Iacono et al 2016).

3.2 Data Collection and Analysis

The data in this study was collected through 15 interviews conducted from late June to late August 2020. Due to the UK Government guidelines on social distancing during the Covid-19 outbreak, all interviews were conducted online through video via Skype, Zoom or Facebook Messenger. I found that conducting research online allowed for much more flexibility when organising and conducting the interviews as neither interviewees or myself needed to travel to meet, and the interviews could be conducted within the comfort of our own homes. Another benefit of conducting research online was that it allowed me to extend the boundaries of my research from London to the whole of the UK. This allowed me to gain a more representative sample

of interviewees. There are of course limitations to online research; not everyone has access to the internet or computers with video calling enabled and people may not feel as comfortable using online video software. Participant recruitment is therefore limited with internet research to those who are willing and able to use it (Beck 2005).

All the interviews were guided by the same set of questions (see Appendix 4), however all interviewees raised different themes and ideas and so each interview was unique. With consent from interviewees, the interview audio was recorded. This allows for accuracy during later analysis and allows the researcher to fully focus during the interviews (Longhurst 2016). I made notes at the end of each interview as new themes emerged. I then transcribed and coded the interviews using NVivo. I coded initially based on the research questions and then using the interview notes after all interviews, I recoded using common themes that had emerged.

3.3 The Interviewees

The only prerequisite for participation in the study was that interviewees had to be born in Romania and currently living in the UK following migration. I initially recruited through personal connections, contacting the first 5 interviewees this way. These initial contacts were able to refer me to others who may be interested in participating, through snowball sampling. The last entry point for contacting interviewees was through social media sites. I reached out to people in Facebook groups and on Twitter and Instagram pages. Due to the sampling method I chose, and the fact that I do not speak Romanian, all interviewees spoke good English, and all were educated to at least University level. This is relevant to note, because language proficiency and education have been shown to encourage processes of integration. Three interviews

were married or in a relationship with a partner from Romania they had migrated with to the UK. Three other interviewees were in relationships with individuals they had met in the UK, but none of their partners were British.

Table 1: Interviewee Sample

NAME*	AGE	GENDER	OCCUPATION	TIME IN UK
Alina	37	Female	Accountant	5 years
Emilia	29	Female	Civil Servant	9 years
Diana	21	Female	Student	2 years
Martin	25	Male	Student	5 years
Natalia	21	Female	Student	2 years
Daniel	33	Male	Librarian	5 years
Laura	35	Female	Teacher	10 years
Eva	28	Female	Civil Engineer	7 years
Sofia	33	Female	Nurse	12 years
Maria	42	Female	Doctor	7 years
Nina	40	Female	Translator	7 years
Sara	33	Female	Unemployed	4 years
Tomas	26	Male	Banker	5 years
Corina	25	Female	Student	2 years
Ana	22	Female	Student	3 years

*all names have been changed for anonymity

3.4 Ethics

Research conducted online has the same ethical implications as face-to-face research. All participants were initially provided with an information sheet (Appendix 2) that outlined the purpose and process of the study. The information sheet informed participants that their participation was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time, without providing reason. By signing a consent form (Appendix 3), participants agreed to the interview audio being recorded and used within this dissertation. Two important ethical considerations for researchers are confidentiality and anonymity (Longhurst 2016). To ensure this, all audio recordings were stored on a password protected laptop that only I could access and once transcribed, the audio files were deleted. All names in the project have been changed in order to maintain the anonymity of interviewees.

3.5 Positionality

When conducting research, it is necessary to consider the position of the researcher in relation to that of the research participants (Iosifides 2018). A researcher has to consider how elements of their own identity (race, class, gender etc.) may influence the research process, interpretation and outcome of the study. It's argued that researchers need "an ability to be open, authentic, honest, deeply interested in the experience of one's research participants and committed to accurately and adequately representing their experience". (Dwyer and Buckle 2009: 59). I tried to remain as transparent as possible to participants, so that they were aware of my motives for study, and role as a researcher at all times. I hope it created a more collaborative environment which helped to break down any power barriers that may naturally emerge between an interviewer and interviewee.

4 INTEGRATION, TRANSNATIONALISM AND 'THE HOME'

Return migration is often discussed as an act of 'homecoming', implying that the country of origin is fixed as the natural home (Vathi 2016). This is problematic, because it is often the case that migrants feel at home in a country that is different from where they were born (Hatfield 2010). Academics argue that 'the home' can be more than a geographically fixed place bound by national borders. The home has come to be understood instead as a *space*, "a set of feelings, social relations... an idea of an imaginary" (Wu and Wilkes 2017: 125). Ndlovu writes that 'home' is an "emotionally loaded word" (2009: 118). Home is a feeling of belonging, attachment and safety, born out of "acts of imagining, creating, unmaking, changing, losing and moving homes" (Al-Ali and Koser 2002: 6). This chapter discusses how integration and transnationalism affect interviewees conceptualisation and location of 'home' and how this impacts their future migration decisions and intentions of return to Romania.

4.1 Home in the UK

Thirteen interviewees described feeling that the UK had become a home to them. When asked how this feeling came to be, interviewees spoke of new friendships, relationships, buying houses, becoming employed and overall positive interactions and experiences within the host society. I argue that for interviewees, a sense of home in the UK is established through processes of integration - the ways that they have adapted to life in the UK and the ties they have created. Maria, who moved to the UK with her husband seven years ago, summarised why it feels like home:

“We have made a life. We have made a group of friends, we have a house, good jobs. A group of work colleagues. We feel home. We feel like this, and I, part of the British culture and part of the British attitude.”

Maria’s quote highlights the role of both structural integration (buying a house and becoming employed), and of sociocultural integration (having friends and adapting to the norms of life in the UK) in building a sense of home. Feeling at home in the UK does not occur effortlessly; one interviewee described it as “hard work”. Home instead develops out of processes of adaptation and through establishing connections, ties and a feeling of belonging. It is often cited in the literature that length of residence after migration is an important predictor of attachment to host country (Lynnebakke 2020). My research also indicated that belonging and attachment to the UK becomes stronger over time, as mentioned by Sofia:

“In Liverpool, the Scouse community, as friendly as it is, it takes a while to understand them in many different ways... I felt very welcome, but not really included. It took me about ten years to understand people culturally.”

Integration, both structurally and socially, creates ties and attachments, which I argue, results in a feeling of being at home in the UK for the majority of interviewees. These ties are hard to break and for interviewees that feel they have built a home in the UK, the thought of leaving becomes difficult to consider. Sofia continues:

“The longer you stay here, you know you have relationships and stuff, it’s quite hard to imagine just cutting off from that. It’s like cutting of a limb, and then just going back to starting fresh. Yeah, that thought was very scary.”

I found that attachments and feelings of home in the UK directly influence future migration decisions. Those who described feeling most at home in the UK were the interviewees who had the least desire to leave. All interviewees who currently plan on staying in the UK agreed their positive experience had contributed to this decision. This was summarised by Emilia who moved to the UK to study 9 years ago:

“[The UK] has given me so many things that my own country hasn’t given me. I appreciate this country; all these opportunities and I respect and love this country for this reason. By taking up my citizenship for me was a sense of like trying to give back something to the country that has given so much to me... My positive experience definitely contributed to that. If I had not enjoyed my time here, probably I would have considered moving to another country.”

I argue that overall, being integrated in the UK can weaken intentions of return migration to Romania, by strengthening the desire that individuals have to stay. Integration makes it hard to return because processes of adaption and establishing connections create a feeling that interviewees are at home in the host society. Attachment and belonging with the UK makes it difficult for interviewees to consider leaving and ‘returning home’ if they feel they are already there.

4.2 Home in Romania

Establishing a sense of being at home in the UK does not mean that attachment to Romania is lost. Thirteen interviewees stated that Romania still felt like home for them, despite not living there presently. I argue that a feeling of home in Romania is able to be maintained through transnationalism. The overall indication from interviewees was that Romania was home because it represented a place of birth and origin as one interviewee, Sara described:

“I think there is a sense of roots... there is a sense of warmth in coming home. And whenever I land [in Romania], I feel it in my body, that I’m where I came from.”

There was a notion of identity and belonging associated with Romania from interviewees. One interview described it as “something that no one can take away from me”. Another described it as “something that cannot die”. I argue that this is evidence of *transnationalism of belonging* whereby interviewees retain an imaginative connection that sustains a feeling of home in Romania. Maria described that she felt “connected emotionally” to Romania, contributing to her decision to teach her son about her life there: “because you know, it’s part of us”. Additionally, all interviewees were *transnational in being*. All maintain regular contact with friends or family in Romania, all visit at least once a year and all interviewees remain interested in the political and social climate. Tomas, who moved to the UK to study seven years ago, described remaining connected to Romania through sports:

“I’m a football fan so I still watch my football team back home every game. That’s still my connection to home as well. So, whilst away, I still keep in touch with my Romanian roots.”

Lastly, family still being in Romania was frequently cited as a strong indicator for Romania still feeling like home. Nina noted: “every time I go back to my family and see them, you know that feels like home”. I argue that process of transnationalism, through both everyday practices and a sense of transnational identity allows for the maintenance of a feeling of Romania as home.

A sense of being at home in Romania maintained through transnationalism influences future migration decisions and intentions of return. Existing research argues that “migrants who are emotionally attached to ‘homeland’ are more inclined to return” (Gherghina and Plopeanu 2020: 4). Natalia has plans to return to Romania when she graduates from university. She spoke of feeling at home in the UK but also that her friendships in Romania are what feels the most like home and the thing she values highest. These relationships draw her back to Romania because of “ties that are harder to break”. Furthermore, a sense of attachment and the maintenance of Romania as home means that for all but one interviewee, return to Romania continues to be a possibility in the future. Even the interviewees with no current plans of returning frequently responded with phrases such as “never say never”. One interviewee described having the option to return to Romania as “a safety net” if things didn’t work out in the UK. Tomas hasn’t dismissed return completely:

“It is home. At the end of the day, its home. It is familiar. Even though I’ve outgrown it a bit, I’m not saying no. Because there is a certain type of feeling you get when the plane lands.”

I argue that a feeling of home and attachment to Romania is able to be maintained through everyday transnational practices, as well as a sense of transnational identity and belonging which can in turn strengthens desires to return, even if it is perhaps in an imagined future.

4.3 Multiple Homes

In agreement with the wider literature, I found that integration and transnationalism are indeed concurrent. What results from these simultaneous processes of integration and transnational behaviours and imaginations, is a sense for the majority of interviews that they now have multiple homes. As Vertovec (2009) maintains, migrants are able to create identities and attachments that allow them to be both ‘here and there’. All of the interviewees simultaneously referred to both the UK and Romania as ‘home’ in conversation. Emilia was aware of these multiple references:

“It’s funny to say because always when I’m flying I say to my parents: ‘I’m coming home and I’m taking this and this’, and then when I’m getting ready to fly back, I’m always saying without realising: ‘oh when I get home.’”

Diana, who is currently at university in London, echoed this:

“There is my home [Romania], it’s where I come from and where my family is. It’s still my home, but London is my home because I made it a home for myself. Not because it was given to me as a home.”

Diana’s comment clearly summarises the simultaneous interaction of integration and transnationalism in reconceptualising the location of home. Through maintaining a transnational relationship with her family and by maintaining a transnational identity, Romania is maintained as a home. But through processes of integration in the UK, she is able to create and forge new feelings of belonging for herself. The concept of home can therefore simultaneously occupy multiple spaces (Wu and Wilkes 2017).

The interviews who felt most at home in both countries often spoke of wanting to live simultaneously in Romania and the UK throughout the year. Diana continues:

“I kinda plan on having my own home there [in Romania], like buying a house and stuff, but just to have a place to call my home when I’m there, like my home in Romania and my home in London...This is actually why I was saying about this 80% of my work in London and 20% in Romania.”

Three other interviewees mentioned this as a possibility for the future. Having multiple attachments and feelings of belonging in both countries can lead to a desire to live in and experience both places. It may be the case that temporary, non-permanent periods of return are preferred to permanent return.

4.4 Living In-Between

Interestingly, two of the interviewees described feeling that neither the UK nor Romania felt like home. Laura who has lived in the UK for the last ten years, described this feeling as 'living in-between':

"I talk to other Romanians, and they feel like me, they feel like Romania is no longer their home country, but they also don't feel at home here, so they are like in between, a weird feeling."

Laura still has friends in Romania, but she describes herself as not being close with her family there. She indicated that not feeling at home in Romania or the UK was due to the fact that she felt she didn't feel included by either society. A feeling of 'in-between' was also expressed by one other interviewee, Daniel:

"I guess I have been feeling a bit more at ease in the last few years connecting with some groups of people and finding my own place... but then there is like things happening, like Brexit, or, you know those sorts of things. Major events kind of shifting and kind of forcing you to reflect. I never felt at home here completely but at the same time I can't say I feel at home in Romania anymore. It's always like living in between to a certain extent."

This feeling of being 'in-between' as described by Laura and Daniel highlights the importance of social connections in fostering a feeling of home. For Daniel, by making connections with people in London through hobbies and interests, the UK began to

feel like home. But this attachment is vulnerable to being reversed. Brexit was frequently mentioned by the interviewees as an indication that they were perhaps not welcome from certain members of the British community and something that played into the decision about whether they would leave the UK:

“Before the Brexit thing I was very sure I was going to stay here, get the citizenship, right now I don’t know... Brexit, that is still a big what if, I do have that settled status, so I know I’ll be here. But will I be welcome? I don’t know.”

Concepts of belonging and feeling at home are therefore vulnerable to experiences of prejudice. This supports findings in the wider literature that report minority groups can feel they don’t belong to their country of residence if they face discrimination and exclusion (Kunuroglu et al 2018). The feeling of being ‘in-between’ homes also impacts future migration decisions. Both Daniel and Laura mentioned that they were considering leaving the UK, not to return to Romania, but to a different country altogether.

4.5 The Relationship Between ‘The Home’ and Return Migration

Wu and Wilkes argue that the act of migration is “fundamentally a home-searching process” (2017: 125). How then is return migration conceptualised if, as I have argued, the location of the home is transformed through processes of integration and transnationalism? Returning to Romania becomes much more complex than a ‘homecoming’ as notions of belonging and attachment come to exist across national borders. The decision to return is not influenced by attachment or ties to Romania

alone, but based on the multiple ties and attachments with both countries and communities. As much as going back to Romania is a decision to return home, it is also a decision to leave home.

In agreement with Al-Ali and Koser (2002), concepts of the home tend to vary even within one specific group of migrants. I argue that these different feelings of belonging directly influence the decision-making process around whether to stay or leave the UK and whether or not to return to Romania. For the majority of interviewees, leaving the UK and moving back to Romania involves leaving a home they have created, but because Romania is maintained as home through transnationalism, it always remains a possibility. Therefore, processes of homemaking in the UK and in Romania, created and maintained through integration and transnationalism, directly influence intentions of return migration whereby those who feel the most at home in the UK have the strongest desires to stay and those who do not feel at home in Romania have the weakest desires to return. And those who do not feel at home in either country also consider leaving the UK - but not to return to Romania. Therefore, integration and transnationalism can simultaneously strengthen and weaken intentions of return migration through a transformation of the location of the home.

5 TRANSNATIONALISM AND HOMESICKNESS

Homesickness has long been attributed as a factor that encourages the return of migrants (see Gmelch 1980). A longing to reunite with family, friends and the memory of familiar foods, sights and places can encourage return. Existing research corroborates a positive relationship between homesickness and return migration. For example, in a study with 320 Mexican migrants who returned from the US, feelings of homesickness were cited as the most important factor for encouraging return (Hazán 2014: 33). This chapter discusses how interviewees experience homesickness towards Romania and how this interacts with intentions of return migration.

5.1 Transnationalism Enhancing Homesickness

For those interviewees with strong intentions of returning to Romania, homesickness was cited as an important influence. Corina described missing her family whilst living in the UK and that her decision to return after she finishes university stems from needing “to be physically near them”. Being closer to family members was frequently described as a motivator for considering return. Maria discussed the difficulties of being away from family during difficult times:

“I think you feel homesick more when things go wrong for people at home.... My grandmother passed away in December, so I had a time when I thought: ‘is it really worth it?’, you know the fact that we had moved away. ‘Has it been really worth it?’, because I wasn’t there for that time.”

Having a strong transnational connection with family in Romania can make it difficult to live apart from them. Several interviewees spoke of feelings of guilt from being away from ageing parents or missing out during special times of the year. Alina mentioned “you kind of feel it around Christmas... around Easter”. Additionally, Manzo and Devine-Wright (2014) argue that attachments to certain places can extend to more than just people and physical places, but also include nature and the environment. Missing the weather and the geography of Romania was mentioned by several interviewees including Natalia:

N: “It was definitely missing the countryside, and the mountains and the seaside and the weather and stuff like that. It’s like 35 degrees right now.”

RH: “And do you see pictures of your friends on social media going to these places?”

N: “Always yeah! Whenever people post pictures, I just cry, like I hate them ... I flew to Romania one time in the summertime and I just came to this beach and I just stayed there for a night and then I flew back [to London] because it was just insane that all my friends managed to get together and I wasn’t there.”

Natalia’s experience highlights how transnational practices like communicating with her friends on social media can enhance feelings of absence and a longing to be in Romania, so much so that she flew there for one night to be with her friends. This was echoed by Eva: “I would see them [family] at home doing all these things together with

my sister, yeah it was a little bit sad.” Visual communication technology means that interviewees are able to actually ‘see’ what people in Romania are doing, heightening a feeling of missing out. It is often observed in research that frequent communication with family and friends in another country can enhance feelings of longing with scholars arguing that “as a result of transnational practices, the gap between ‘here’ and ‘there’ widens” (Bell 2016: 85). In agreement, I argue that for some interviewees, transnationalism enhances feelings of homesickness and longing to reunite with Romania, strengthening intentions of return migration.

5.2 Transnationalism as a Remedy for Homesickness

However, whilst feelings of homesickness were mentioned by interviewees, very few described prolonged feelings of longing and a need to physically return to Romania to counteract feelings of nostalgia. Whilst transnationalism can enhance homesickness, I argue that it is also the case that transnationalism has come to exist as a remedy for these feelings. Through transnational practices, interviewees felt that they were able to successfully maintain meaningful relationships with those in Romania and retain a cultural identity in the UK despite physical distance. This is firstly achieved through the use of modern communication technologies, resulting in the maintenance of strong transnational relationships. As Emilia explained:

“I have a very, very close relationship with my parents... I sometimes speak to my mum three or four times a day. Or I Facetime them every evening, so I have a very close relationship with my parents. It’s not easy to be away but I guess technology makes it easier, the whole experience.”

An acknowledgment of the role that technology plays in allowing interviewees to maintain strong relationships was unanimous. It has been argued that technology establishes “a virtual dimension that mimics the offline” (Sakar 2019: 235). All interviewees agreed that the use of modern communication technology makes the decision to live away an easier one, as Diana described:

“I think it would be harder to not have phones and just write a letter once a month, going back every five years or so. I think it would make me feel like I was really disconnected from them. So, having all this technology and being able to speak to them whenever I want, brings some balance in this kind of discomfort.”

Following research with Italian migrants living in Australia, Baldassar argued that the use of communication technology can “render people virtually co-present” (2008: 255), bridging the distance that separates them. My findings are in agreement. As one interview described: “I feel like I’m still part of their life, regularly”. Interviewees are able to speak to their family and friends in Romania as frequently as they like, whenever they like, for free. Roberts and Dunbar (2011) argue that frequent communication is key for maintaining relationships. Two of the interviewees described feeling that their relationship with family members had actually improved as a result of transnational practice and the use of technology:

“That whole Facetime, kind of brought us a bit together. To the point where my mum is sending me annoying pictures every day! But the relationship has definitely improved... I love my parents and we FaceTime every few days.”

Vertovec (2004) described communication technology as the “social glue” for transnational relationships. I argue that the use of fast, cheap and high-quality transnational communication allows for the “death of distance” (Cairncross 2001: 2), a bridging of the gap between ‘here’ and ‘there’ which would otherwise result in a feeling of homesickness and perhaps a desire to return.

In addition to the use of technology and communication with those in Romania, interviewees also use transnational practices such as continuing Romanian traditions and eating Romanian food. Laura spoke of how she missed certain traditional practices from Romania:

“I don’t know if you know about the March tradition? Where the man gives the women the little broach? ... On March 1st, men always, give women this broach that is a symbol of Spring and it has all kind of motives, like flowers and bugs and stuff. And I thought: ‘I really miss that tradition’. Because my Dad used to give me a broach... So, I came up with the idea to create, to organise a workshop. I organised this workshop. Many women came, it was really fun.”

Laura agreed that recreating this tradition in the UK made her feel closer to Romania. She noted that whilst everyone had enjoyed the workshop: “I have done it I think more for myself than for them”. Other interviewees spoke of attending Romanian churches in England for Easter celebrations and four of the interviewees made reference to visiting ‘Little Romania’ in London. I argue that for interviewees, continuing traditional practices from Romania allow for a feeling of familiarity in the UK, further minimising feelings of homesickness, and a longing to return.

Furthermore, several interviews mentioned food as something they associated with and missed from Romania, such as Sofia: “there would be great benefits to going back to Romania, the amazing nature, the amazing food”. All interviewees continue to consume traditional Romanian food in the UK. Romanian foods are easily accessible from Eastern European supermarkets and restaurants as one interviewee described: “everything I fancy from Romania, they have it”. Nina described being able to order take-away Romanian food “whenever I crave something”. For interviewees, continuing to cook and prepare these foods allows for feelings of longing and missing to be satisfied as Maria describes:

“I do miss the food a bit. But we cook our own way. We try to replicate as much of that as possible. If we want you know, specific Romanian food, I’ll try and find whatever ingredients we need. There are plenty of Eastern European shops, they bring products exactly from Romania... I can fill up the gaps with what I can cook.”

Maria’s response highlights how notions of nostalgia towards Romania can occur, but by replicating those practices in the UK, feelings of longing are minimised. Sakar writes that “homeland food is a marker of transnational identity as well as a vehicle for transcultural memory” (2019: 232). Continuing to prepare and eat Romanian food in the UK allows some interviewees to feel closer to their family still living in Romania, as summarised by Eva:

“One moment I was homesick. I couldn’t go home for Easter... so, I genuinely cooked all the things my mum would cook.... I sort of tired to recreate that here... I’m doing this because it’s a family thing and we are quite close to my family and it’s a nice thing to do. But yeah, definitely makes it closer to home. I feel like closer to family.”

I argue that interviewees are able use every-day transnational practices such as communicating across borders with family and friends, continuing traditions, and consuming traditional foods so that feelings of homesickness are reduced. Interviewees are able to maintain strong relationships and recreate familiar phenomena in the UK, so that they do not feel they need to physically be in Romania to experience them. I argue that in this sense, transnationalism can reduce intentions of return migration by becoming a remedy for homesickness and a substitute for physical return.

5.3 The Relationship Between Transnationalism, Homesickness and Return Migration

It is inferred in the wider literature that feelings of homesickness will encourage a desire to reunite with previous cultural and social norms, as well as family members in an attempt to reduce the negative side effects of distance. This is definitely the case for some of the interviewees. Those with plans to return in the future cite feelings of reuniting with friends, family, the environment and the culture as strong motivators for going back to Romania. By maintaining strong links and relationships with Romania, transnationalism enhances feelings of homesickness. And it is also the case that for those who are homesick, every day transnational practices can heighten these

feelings, by allowing them to 'see' those things they miss, enhancing the effects of distance.

However, I argue that for the majority of interviewees in this study, feelings of homesickness do not occupy everyday thoughts. Feelings of distance and longing are able to be remedied through everyday practices such as the use of technology to communicate across borders and the continuation of traditional cultural practices like religious behaviours and consuming Romanian food. Hannerz wrote that "territories cannot really contain cultures" (1996: 8). Transnationalism can be utilised as a technique that bridges the gap between Romania and the UK so that the distance between the two are felt less. This in turn reduces feelings of separation and homesickness. Interviewees who had minimal intentions of return agreed that the use of these transnational practices made it easier to live at a distance from Romania and family and friends. Transnationalism comes to exist as a form of substitute return, whereby interviewees are able to recreate the life they previously had in Romania across international borders. Overall, the interviewees experiences with homesickness is an example of how transnationalism can simultaneously weaken and strengthen intentions of return migration for different individuals in the study.

6 INTEGRATION, TRANSNATIONALISM AND RETURN PREPAREDNESS

Jean-Pierre Cassarino first introduced the concept of 'return preparedness' in attempt to expand on the early theorisation of return migration. Return preparedness refers to a combination of migrants' willingness to decide to return but also their "readiness to do so" (Cassarino 2008: 17). For Cassarino, return preparedness is a prerequisite of voluntary return, and return migration should be seen as proof of readiness. Return preparedness requires the mobilisation of intangible and tangible resources so that migrants feel prepared to successfully return (van Meeteren et al 2015). Being ready to return is therefore not solely dependent on the experience in the host country, but also on the acquisition of information about countries of origin and the perception of opportunities there. "To be successfully achieved, return preparation requires time, resources and willingness on the part of the migrant" (Cassarino 2004: 271). This chapter discusses how integration and transnationalism affect return preparedness for interviewees.

6.1 Transnationalism and Accessing Information

Cassarino argues that return preparedness stems from "the gathering of sufficient resources and information about post-modern conditions at home" (2004: 271). Motivations for outward migration to the UK were often cited as frustration with institutional systems in Romania, issues around political and systematic corruption, or not being able to access desired education or job opportunities. Therefore, for some of the interviewees, feeling ready to return to Romania is unlikely as long as the situation is unchanged. This was explained by Laura:

“I remember when I considered it [return]. It was a few years ago and the government changed... he was the intelligent type kind of like Obama style. And he made this really nice law, to put everything on computers, because they still work with papers. I was shocked and a lot of my friends we thought: ‘oh my god, finally, things are turning and they’re going somewhere’.

I argue that interviewees use transnationalism as a method of accessing information about the reality of life in Romania in order to determine whether they feel ready to return. When asked how they remain up to date with the situation in Romania, interviewees reported that they spoke with family and friends and used online forums and social media sites to discuss with individuals still living there. Corina responded that “with social media these days, I know everything. I see all the changes on the news and on my laptop”. All interviewees still accessed Romanian news sites for information, even those who had the weakest intentions to return remained interested in the political and social climate. Some interviewees indicated that certain news sites and information from the Romanian Government cannot always be trusted, so that the home visit to Romania is necessary for the true realities to be seen. For some interviewees, this results in a feeling of positive change as Natalia described:

“My street would be different each year starting from 2007 when we entered the EU. At first it was like cobble stone, then we had actual pavement. And then there were stray dogs, and then one year we didn’t. So, the change I felt. I see the changes and I’m confident in coming back and being part of this... most of the people I know are planning on coming back at some point because they see the things improving and are keen on being actively part of the change.”

Transnational practices such as staying in touch with family members and visiting Romania for short trips allows interviewees to mobilise information and access the reality of whether life in Romania is changing. For some interviewees this encourages a feeling of being ready to return; seeing positive change directly influences the decision and intention around whether they feel they are prepared to return. However, for others, the opposite occurs. Laura spoke of a time she visited Romania:

“I took a taxi last time from the airport... so, this guy in the taxi asks me where I’m coming from. And he says: ‘oh why are you living in the UK, in Romania you can easily earn 1000 Euro, even more’. And I said: ‘oh really, I haven’t been here for a while’. You know with my friends I only talk about random stuff like ‘are you going on holiday?’, not about wages. So then later on, in the evening we had a friends group meeting and one girl said she has an office job and I said: ‘how much do you earn?’ and she said like £300 and she works really hard and that was supposed to be a good office job and I thought what was that taxi guy talking about because the reality is not that.”

For some interviewees, remaining connected to Romania, through visiting and communicating with those still living there, can create a feeling that not enough change has occurred and a readiness to return is reduced. As Cassarino (2004) argues, migrants who are prepared have had time to evaluate the realities of return and consider the changes which have occurred in the country of origin. Through the use of transnational practices, interviewees assess the reality of life in Romania in order to establish whether return is possible. For some this can enhance return preparedness and for others it can enhance a feeling that no change has occurred. This in turn influences their intentions of return migration correspondingly.

6.2 Integration and Re-integration

Cassarino (2004) argues that return preparedness is influenced by individual's perception of the post-return conditions and potential opportunities in the country of origin. A significant element of the return migration experience is re-integration where "the old or traditional way of life must now be relearned". (Arowolo 2002: 70). I found that for all interviewees, integration into the UK creates a feeling of apprehension around being able to successfully re-join Romanian society. Firstly, on a professional and structural level, interviewees spoke about the challenge of transferring the careers they have established in the UK and the skills they have gained through integration, into a different system. Eva spoke about the challenge of continuing her career in Romania:

“It’s a really difficult to be honest. I learned here, but I do civil engineering and you learn everything in English. So, its really difficult to talk to other people there who work in civil engineering about technical stuff because you know the terms in English. So obviously there are some barriers.”

Maria described returning to a different medical system in Romania and concluded that “if I had to go back, I would struggle”. Structural integration into institutional systems in the UK means that interviewees feel it would be difficult to re-integrate in Romania and transfer their existing knowledge into systems that they are no longer used to.

Secondly, interviewees described anticipating difficulties in readjusting to the social and cultural life in Romania since adapting to a different society and building a life for themselves abroad. Sofia described feeling out of place in Romanian society:

“It would be like going to a foreign country going back to Romania. But at least here [in the UK] you can be a foreigner easily. There [in Romania] you are a very strange kind of foreigner that has been out of the game for about 12 years. And my Romanian has got worse.”

Diana spoke about how she felt that she would still be able to fit in in Romania if she returned, but that she might not be able to connect with her friends in the same way: “I don’t know if sometimes I feel like I’m not really on the same page as the people I used to hang out with before moving to London”. All interviewees agreed that migrating

abroad and adapting to a new culture and society had changed them on a personal level. This was summarised by Tomas:

“When you are surrounded by those communist blocks, you can’t see the horizon... I’ve opened up so much, I don’t even recognise myself, mentality wise.”

All interviewees agreed that their time in the UK had changed them on a personal level by showing them new opportunities and a different way of living. Anna described that her time abroad had changed “what you expect in life”. I argue that integration into the UK results in a feeling that interviewees would struggle to re-integrate in Romania. This results in a feeling of unpreparedness to return.

Furthermore, I found that a feeling of being unready to return is enhanced by a stigma attached to those who decide to migrate and live and study abroad from those who choose to stay in Romania. All interviewees were aware of a perception towards them if they were to choose to return. For some interviewees, this perception of those who travel abroad affects the decision-making process when interviewees consider returning to Romania. This was described by Martin, who is currently considering returning to Romania after living in the UK:

M: “This comes up every year. It comes up in the news, it comes up in your local discussions in Romania. You can sit in a Romanian café and you hear about this. People in Romania bad mouth people who are abroad. That is a very sensitive topic that always comes up.”

RH: “Do you think that is something that would affect your decision to return?”

M: “Yeah, I don’t think I have that traditional Romanian mindset that people would expect of me. So, when I interact with them, I interact from the perspective of an English person, and maybe they don’t like that.”

Similar findings were recorded in a study with Moroccan migrants living in France who experienced stigma from family members and the wider community. It was concluded that stigma “influences the decision to return permanently to the country of origin” (Dos Santos 2013: 25). Those who have lived in the UK the longest are the interviewees that most strongly described feeling they would be unable to successfully return. It is therefore possible that the more integrated interviewees become, the less likely they will feel ready to return. Whilst interviewees may be willing to return in the future, the majority feel they are currently unready to do so. This is resonant of the ‘myth of return’ - the dream of return that could happen in the future but is continuously postponed from happening (Kunuroglu et al 2018).

6.3 The Relationship Between Integration, Transnationalism and Return

Preparedness

According to Cassarino, the act of return migration is evidence of a migrant's willingness and also their readiness to return. My research is agreement. Those interviewees who intend to return to Romania are the ones that feel they are ready to do so. Hunter wrote that "transnationalism should empower prospective returnees" (2015: 485), enabling them to be better informed about the situation in the country of origin. Remaining connected to Romania through the use of transnational practice allows interviewees to assess the realities of life in Romania in order to establish whether they feel they could successfully return. The interviewees that feel ready to return are the ones who speak most positively of the changes they see occurring in the country and a feeling of excitement to contribute further. However, these feelings are not unanimous. I argue that transnationalism can simultaneously weaken feelings of readiness to return. For this group of interviewees, remaining connected to Romania through transnational practices still allows them to mobilise information but instead results in a feeling that positive change has not occurred.

This feeling of being unprepared to return is further enhanced by processes of integration in the UK. Integration interacts with the interviewee's perception of opportunities and post-return experiences in Romania. The majority of the interviewees who do not have immediate plans to return, have not completely dismissed the idea of returning to Romania in the future. I argue that whilst these interviewees may be willing to return, they are not ready to do so. Interviewees who are not ready to return feel they are not able to recreate the life that they have in the UK on a structural and institutional level, but also that through adapting and learning

about new norms in the UK, they feel they have changed on a personal and social level so that they would struggle to relate to those still living in Romania. This is further enhanced by a stigma towards those who choose to leave. I argue that in this regard, integration in the UK directly weakens intentions of return migration by enhancing a feeling of unpreparedness to return.

7 CONCLUSION

The aim of this dissertation was to ask how integration and transnationalism affect intentions of return migration. To answer this, I have focussed on how this occurs in three different ways. Firstly, integration in the UK and transnational practices with Romania transform the traditional notion of the home. For interviewees, Romania is no longer the only place with which they feel structurally, socially and emotionally attached and located. New jobs, houses, friends and connections with the UK means that the way return migration is discussed becomes more complex than a simple decision to 'return home', because most interviewees feel that they are already there. This establishment of multiple homes and multiple attachments through processes of integration and transnationalism simultaneously strengthen and weaken intentions of return migration for different individuals at different times in their life course, as connections to both countries evolve.

Secondly, I have discussed how transnationalism can both enhance and diminish feelings of homesickness, simultaneously strengthening and weakening intentions of permanent return. For some interviewees, homesickness and a desire to reunite with family, friends, and familiar sights, tastes and culture is a strong factor in their desire to return to Romania. This is enhanced by transnational practices that allow for interviewees to remain strongly connected but also gain insight into what they feel they are missing. However, for the majority of interviewees, I found that prolonged feelings of homesickness were not present and didn't result in a feeling that return was necessary. I have argued that this stems from everyday transnational practices such as communicating through modern technology and continuing traditional cultural and

food practices in the UK, that bridge the gap between interviewees and life in Romania so that transnationalism can exist as a substitute for permanent return.

And lastly, in agreement with the literature on return preparedness, I found that whilst interviewees may be open to the idea and willing to return to Romania, due to the social and political climate in the country, the majority feel they are not ready to do so. I have argued that interviewees use transnationalism as a method of assessing the realities of life in Romania and mobilising information through communication and the home visit in order to establish whether they feel ready to return. For some, this can enhance a feeling of readiness and intention to return, and for others it can encourage the feeling that they are not ready to do so. These notions of unpreparedness are enhanced by integration into the UK and the resulting feeling that interviewees would struggle to re-integrate to life in Romania. I have argued that this occurs on both a professional and structural level but also on a social and personal level that makes interviewees feel they would not be able to recreate the lives they have built for themselves abroad. This in turn, weakens intentions of return migration.

Whilst these three findings are different in ways, they are connected by the overall finding of this dissertation: that integration and transnationalism affect intentions of return migration in multiple, complex and conflicting ways, both within a group of individuals with similar migration histories, and within the life course of those individuals themselves. There is not a simple positive or negative relationship between integration, transnationalism and return, but instead the consideration of returning to Romania becomes a decision based on changing feelings of attachment, homesickness and preparedness to return that are affected by processes of integration and transnationalism in differing ways.

To further enhance an understanding of how integration and transnationalism affect intentions of return migration, it seems likely that a longitudinal study that follows the ongoing decision process around return would be beneficial. This study has only been able to capture a moment in the migration journey of interviewees and it seems likely that over time, their desires and plans will change. The role of time is an area worthy of further research. As is the role of religious transnational practices. Romania is an orthodox country and whilst it wasn't a theme that occurred in my research, it seems likely that the role of religion would interact with processes of both integration and transnationalism.

Finally, the results of this study are based on just 15 individuals who have migrated to the UK from Romania, and so it is important to acknowledge the limitation in extrapolating the findings to all migrants across the globe. The findings, however, do reiterate that if academics want to fully understand return and if policy makers wish to encourage the return of individuals in attempt to solve depopulation, it remains imperative to consider migration phenomenon in one sphere of analysis that encompasses the transnational nature of migrant's lives and the simultaneous influence of both countries of residence and countries of origin.

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APPENDIX 1: Initial Dissertation Proposal

MSc Global Migration – Initial Dissertation Proposal

Working Title:

The Impact of Integration and Transnationalism on Intentions of Return Migration: Romanians Living in London

Aims and Objectives

Since 1990, the population in Romania has continued to decrease, with approximately five million Romanians living abroad today (Otovescu and Otovescu 2019), resulting in labour force shortages (Frunză et al 2009). Due to the large Romanian diaspora, in 2017, the country founded the Ministry for Romanians Abroad (MRP) with the aim of protecting the rights and freedoms of those Romanians who had emigrated (Burean 2011). In a letter on behalf of the MRP, the current minister for Romanians abroad, Natalia-Elena Intotero, claimed that “each Romanian who chooses to live, study or work abroad represents a loss for Romania” (Journal General de Europe), and that encouraging return is a “important priority for the government”. The government has recently been actively encouraging Romanian nationals to permanently return through methods such as, raising the minimum wage (Frunză et al 2009) and creating entrepreneurship schemes like the ‘Romania Home - Diaspora Start Up’ which provides grants to Romanians who have migrated, to fund enterprises on the condition they start-up in Romania (EAEA 2018). In the same letter, Minister Intotero recognised the complex role the MRP plays in both representing Romanians abroad, and encouraging return migration simultaneously: “on one hand we want to help our Romanians better integrate in the societies where they live, learn and work, while maintaining a strong bond with their heritage and on the other hand, we want them to be better informed and support them if they decide to return to Romania” (Journal General de Europe). It is therefore an important time to consider the motivations and influences on return migration intentions of Romanians living abroad.

The **aim** of this dissertation is to therefore consider the impact of integration and transnationalism on intentions of return migration for Romanian migrants living in London. In order to achieve this aim, the dissertation has the following **objectives**:

- To engage critically with current academic theory of motives for return migration
- Collect qualitative data through semi-structured interviews with Romanian nationals who are currently living in London
- Analyse the impact of integration and transnationalism on participants intentions to migrant home
- Combine data from the interviews with existing literature in order to contribute to the wider narrative on return migration intentions

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Research Questions

1. Are transnational practices and/or levels of integration positively or negatively correlated with intention to return?
2. Does socio-cultural integration have differing effects on return intentions than economic integration?
3. Does the possibility of future return encourage integration/transnational behaviour?
4. Can transnational practice exist as a substitute or 'imagined return' that is preferred to permanent return?
5. What influence does bifocality and dual identities have on the concept of 'home' and therefore return migration?

Literature Overview

This dissertation will draw primarily on academic literature from three themes: theories of return migration (including economic theory, structural theory), integration (including assimilation), and transnationalism (including social network theory).

Most of the large-scale international migration, including migration to Europe since 1945, has been accompanied by return migration (King 1978). Return migration refers to the movement of migrants to their country of origin after a significant period of time abroad (Dustman and Weiss 2007). Return intentions are often dismissed in the migration narrative, as they are not indicative of actual behaviour (Carling and Petterson 2014). But there has been renewed interest in understanding return intentions from academics and policy makers alike, as temporary migration plays an increasingly important role in the discussion of international development (Fokkema 2011). Traditional neo-classic economic theories that view migration as a cost-benefit decision would assume return migration as a symptom of “failed migration” (Li et al 2018: 245), where migrants were not able to achieve productive success. Whilst the new economic approach to labour migration views return as the logical end to a successful trip abroad (Li et al 2018). However, recent empirical evidence has highlighted that the reality of migrant’s lives is significantly more complex than traditional economic theories would suggest. Most migration academics now recognise return migration not as the *end* of migration, but part of the wider migration cycle (Li et al 2018).

Therefore, this dissertation will draw on the work of Carlin and Petterson and their development of the “integration-transnational matrix” (Carling and Petterson 2014: 13). According to this analytical framework, migrants’ intentions for return are influenced by two factors: their ties to the country of residence and their ties to the country of origin: integration and transnationalism respectively. Integration and transnationalism are now widely understood not as separate phenomena, but as two connected and overlapping influencers on the lives of migrants (Carling and Erland 2014). However, integration, transnationalism and intentions of return migration are all

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theoretically complex concepts within their own right and to understand how they overlap, it is important to first consider them as separate concepts (Carling and Petterson 2014).

There are multiple ways of observing and measuring integration. Economic integration refers to the socio-economic position of migrants within society, primarily in terms of employment (Fokkema 2011), whilst socio-cultural integration refers to the social contact migrants make with the country of residence and the “endorsement of societies prevailing moral standards and values” (Fokkema 2011: 367). Traditional theories of migrant integration suggest that the longer migrants stay, the more ties they have to a host society and the more difficult it becomes to return (de Haas and Fokkema 2011).

Transnationalism describes migrants’ maintenance of connections and ties with their country of origin whilst living abroad. There are different categories of transnationalism; transmigration, transnational practices and transnational identities (White 2013). The wider migration narrative highlights the integral role that transnational practices and identities play on migrant’s lives and their intentions for return. It has been argued that migration cannot be fully analysed and understood without consideration of transnational influences. Fokkema (2011) claims that the maintenance of strong connections with their country of origin would allow for the transfer of information and resources required to prepare and facilitate return for migrants, making it more likely to occur. Alternatively, transnational practices, such as return visits, can act as a way for migrants to gain a sense of the conditions in the country of origin, which may dispel a desire to return (Carling and Petterson 2014).

This dissertation will also question the impact of transnational identities on the notion of the ‘home’ and its implication for return migration. According to Ley and Kobayashi, and other academics who have studied return migration, the concept of returning home can become problematic in the changing climate of dual citizenship and the blurring of national borders (Ley and Kobayashi 2005). Levitt and Glick Schiller maintain that “migrants are embedded in multi-layered, multi-sited transnational social fields” (2004: 1003) and to truly understand their activities and experiences, their lives must be studied within these contexts.

Methodology

The dissertation will be based on qualitative data sourced from semi-structured interviews. Interviews are a useful method through which to capture the voice and narrative of participants (Rabionet 2009). Additionally, the semi-structured form will allow me to focus on the relevant topics, whilst simultaneously allowing the participants to change the flow of conversation if they wish to do so. A completely unrestricted interview runs the risk of going off topic (Rabionet 2009) which whilst interesting, would not elicit the information required to answer my research questions. I will record the interviews and transcribe and code them for retrospective analysis.

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There will be at least 20 interviews with members of the public who were born in Romania and are currently living in London, following voluntary migration. I have verbal confirmation from five participants already and will use chain/referral sampling as a method of contacting additional participants.

Timetable

Early April to Mid-May	Begin literature review Confirm methodology Arrange contacts for interviews Meeting with supervisor
5 th May	Oral presentation
Early June	Finalise literature review Write up methodology Finalise interview schedule
Mid-June to Mid-July	Undertake primary research Transcribe interviews
Late July to Mid-August	Analyse and write up dissertation
Late August to 1 st September	Edit and Submit final dissertation

Potential Outcomes and Value of Research

I anticipate that the outcome of this dissertation will highlight the complexity of return migration and reiterate the need for academics to study migration as a phenomenon situated in larger socio-cultural, transnational contexts. Theorising migration will be more complex than traditional economic and assimilation-based theories have presumed. Return migration is a phenomenon that influences both countries of origin, countries of destination, integration policies, return policies and immigration policies generally. Examining the influence that transnationalism and integration have on return migration can offer insight to help guide future research and has implications for wider contexts (Carling and Erland 2014). The dissertation aims to develop the understanding of what influences migrants desire to return to their home country. It is hoped that the dissertation can contribute to the bigger discussion of transnationalism integration, return migration, with research amongst the Romanian diaspora.

Preferred Supervisor

Anne White.

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APPENDIX 1: Initial Dissertation Proposal

Otovescu, C. and Otovescu, A. (2019) The Depopulation of Romania – Is it an Irreversible Process? *Revista De Cercetare Si Interventie Sociala*, 65, pp. 370-388.

Rabionet, S. E. (2009) How I Learned to Design and Conduct Semi-structured Interviews: An Ongoing and Continuous Journey, *The Weekly Qualitative Report*, 2(35), pp. 203-206.

White, A. (2013) Double Return Migration: Failed Returns to Poland Leading to Settlement Abroad and New Transnational Strategies, *International Migration*, 52(6), pp. 72-84.

APPENDIX 2: Participant Information Sheet

UCL Department of Geography
26 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AP
Tel: +44 (0)20 7679 5526
Please feel free to contact me on:



UCL

Participant Information Sheet

This sheet provides you with information about the research project that you have been invited to take part in.

Researcher: I am studying for a master's at UCL in Global Migration. This is a student research project for my dissertation.

Project Title: Returning to Romania? How does integration and transnationalism affect intentions of return migration?

What is the project about?

I want to learn about the plans that people may or may not have to return to Romania whilst living in the UK to understand which factors might affect these plans. To do this, I am specifically looking at transnationalism - the ties that people keep with Romania even though they do not live there (things like reading the news or Facetiming with family for example) and integration – the ties that people create with the UK and how they adapt when they move here (learning English or working in London for example). I am hoping to understand how these two sets of ties and connections individuals have with both Romania and the UK, interact and how they may impact the decision people make to return home.

What would you need to do?

The project is completely voluntary, you do not need to participate. But if you choose to take part in this study, you will be asked to participate in an interview with myself. Due to current social distancing requirements, all interviews will be conducted either online via Skype etc. or over the phone. I will use the interviews to inform my discussion in the dissertation. I hope for the interviews to be relaxed and conversation-like. We would talk about any plans you have to return to Romania and discuss the different factors that may influence this decision. I hope to learn from you and your experiences.

What will happen with the data?

With your consent, the interview audio will be recorded and stored on a password protected laptop that only I have access to. I will then type out the interviews and delete the audio file. Your identity will be anonymised in the final project.

Are there any risks?

When talking about your life history and future decisions, there is a possibility that things may occur which can be upsetting. Please know that you have the right to stop your participation in the study at any point, just by letting me know, without having to give any reason.

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Local Data Protection Privacy Notice:

Personal data is the information that relates to you and identifies you. The type of personal data that will be collected in the project will be:

- Name and contact details (deleted after the interview is conducted).
- Information about your experiences, opinions, etc., expressed in the interview you provide on the voice recording. However, the recording will be deleted, and the interview transcript will be anonymised so that your name will not appear in your interview.

Further information on how UCL uses participant information can be found in our 'general' privacy notice: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/legal-services/privacy/ucl-general-research-participant-privacy-notice>.

Thank you for reading this information sheet!

Any further Questions? Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor Anne White: anne.white@ucl.ac.uk if you need any more information about the project. Thank you!

APPENDIX 3: Participant Consent Form

UCL Department of Geography
26 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AP
Tel: +44 (0)20 7679 552
Please feel free to contact me on:



Consent Form

Thank you for your interest in taking part in this study! Before you take part in research, the researcher must explain the purpose of the project to you. Please only complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet about the research project. If you have any questions about the project, please contact me before completing this form.

Project Title: Returning to Romania? How does integration and transnationalism affect intentions of return migration?

What is the project about? This is a student project that explores the role and impact of integration and transnationalism on individuals' intentions to return to Romania.

Do I have to take part? No, participation is completely voluntary.

Can I withdraw at any time? Yes, you can withdraw at any time without giving reason.

What do I have to do? You would participate in telephone/skype interviews that I will record.

Will my participation in the study be confidential? Yes. I plan to record the interview audio, but this will be for my own analysis and the audio will not be included in the dissertation although it may be quoted in text. Your identity will be anonymised, and no personal information will be included in the final project.

Participant Statement

I (full name)

- have read the Information Sheet and the information above and know what the project involves. I have been given the opportunity to ask further questions.
- have received enough information about the study to make an informed decision about my participation.
- understand that my participation is voluntary, and I can withdraw my participation immediately at any stage by notifying the researcher.
- understand that my interview audio will be recorded for accuracy and I consent to this data being used in academic writing in anonymised form.
- understand my personal information will remain confidential.

Signed:

Date:

APPENDIX 4: Interview Guide

Interview Guide

1 – Introduce the interview – explain the process

2 – Background

- Where did you live in Romania? (village/city)
- When did you decide to come to the UK, and why?
- Did you know anyone when you arrived?
- How long did you first plan to stay?

3 – Integration

- How did you find the process of moving here?
- Did you experience any obstacles?
- Has this changed over time?
- Do you feel that the UK has become a home?
- In what ways do you think you have made it a home?
- Do you think you would miss the UK if you did decide to leave?
- Would it be an easy process leaving the UK?
- Do you have Romanian friends in the UK?

4 – Transnationalism

- Do you still feel connected to Romania?
- Does Romania still feel like home to you? Why?
- Do you still have family/friends in Romania?
- Are you close to them?
- How do you remain in contact?
- Is it important to you to maintain a strong connection with home?
- Do you ever get homesick?
- How often do you return to Romania?
- Does returning allow you to feel connected to home?
- Are there any cultural/traditional things you miss about home?
- Do you enjoy visiting Romania?

5 – Return

- Do you have plans to return to Romania?
- Is it a possibility for the future?
- When you think about return, what do you think encourages you to consider it?
- Do you think it would be an easy process if you did decide to move home?
- What would make it hard to stay/leave?
- Do you feel like your family expect you to return home?
- When you think about returning do you feel that it's a decision about going back to Romania or a decision about leaving the UK?

APPENDIX 5: Interview Excerpt

Interview Excerpt from interview with Maria

R: Interviewer

M: Interviewee

M: We came in 2013 in January, and actually when we decided to move from Romania, I looked to find a job wherever I would go. English was probably a stronger language for me than French. We didn't think that we were going to move really across continents because of you know family, and not really wanting to move that far. So initially we moved to Ireland, it was only because it was easier for me to find a job. But soon we realised that there weren't many job possibilities for my husband. Because he was a police officer in Romania and was finding it difficult to re-jig himself because joining the police in Ireland was a lot more complicated, citizenship. but here he is a police officer again. So, after a couple of years in Ireland, we made the transition to the UK because we knew there were gonna be a lot more possibilities for a job. In a more 4 million people country there isn't enough jobs to go around. So, we moved to the UK in 2013. And I started working in March, so it took me a couple of months to do all the paperwork.

R: and how have you found the process of transitioning to live here?

M: erm, it has actually. I mean, it's a bit, I suppose at the beginning, it's a bit of a culture shock, starting to understand you know how people think. And how things work. Its only, you know you have to be a bit proactive about it, no one's going to tell you how to apply for this and the other, or how to join a queue very nice. You have to pay attention and I think want to integrate. And I didn't find it difficult, but maybe because the transition from Ireland was helping. It wasn't such a different. The bigger transition was from Romania to Ireland. I found it easier to be honest. A lot of the things that you have to deal with in normal life, bills, administration, they are easier, a lot easier. It's one of the reasons why I was so annoyed and frustrated while we were in Romania because you have to see 3 people before they could tell you exactly what you needed to fill out. So, I didn't, the difficult part is having, having family in Romania still. It's difficult when you think about it. Even now with the pandemic and everything. It's just hard, if someone gets unwell or they need help, you're very far away. Although tis not that difficult to buy a plane difficult and go, it's just ab it more complicated now in the pandemic. And I think that's just the difficult, and not seeing, my son not seeing his grandparents that often. But that can happen if you live in the same country far away. In a sense, so yeah. Generally, I think its ok.

APPENDIX 5: Interview Excerpt

R: was your son born in Romania?

M: he was, yeah. He's 12. He was born in Romania; he was nearly 3 when we first moved.

R: and do you think over time you have come to think of the UK as your home?

M: Yeah. I think we already reached that point. Because I think we have made a life, we have made a group of friends. We have house, good jobs. A group of work colleagues. We feel home. We feel like this, and I, part of the British culture and part of the British attitude, I feel more relaxed with. Joining a queue that everyone follows, yeah! Its relaxing. I'm not dismissing the possibility altogether. Because I think if something really horrendous happens or we need to move back for family reasons, or, I keep that in my mind. I think that if I think about it, it might not happen. So, I might not need to do that. If I'm not pre-empting it in my head as a possibility, it might just dawn on me. But there is actively, we don't want to move back. Because the reasons for which we moved are still there. So erm, we can't see any major changes in the culture and the way the country is being run, that impacts on people's jobs and lives. And I didn't want my son to live in a place where he needed to go through all sorts of inequalities I would say. Although I am a doctor, my husband is a police officer, we could have bridged that gap for him I suppose, but we didn't want to in the society that was there. Corruption, and all the other things, we just didn't want to be part of the system. We just wanted to be moral people and do our jobs. And not link ourselves with dodgy people. And situations. So, the things that made us leave, and made me really annoyed are still there. Even if, I was talking to my friend of mine who lives in Ireland, Romania as well. And we were saying if Romania would become this shiny new beautiful county all remodelled, we might not even go then. Romania has that more Latin attitude. Everyone like, is so busy and hurries around and there is no such thing as an organised queue. Because everyone tries to be there first. It was just so stressful, for me as a personality. So being here, with people who are relaxed, and they take their time. Even if sometimes you are a bit frustrated because they are slow in the supermarket, you know they are nice, it's so relaxing!

R: and when you go back to Romania to visit, do you see that difference?

APPENDIX 5: Interview Excerpt

M: I see the difference yeah. And in the way people drive, on the road, they just hurry a lot more than we need to hurry here, I think. so yeah, we went to Italy last year and recognised a lot of the attitudes in the Italians, I felt they were like Romanians to be honest. And it's nice! they are full of energy when they are talking loudly, and you know they talk over each other and all this. But I think in the day to day. That would be stressful for me because I'm not that type of person. I would wait for you to stop speaking before I would. So, I think the British culture in that sense, it just fits with me.

R: so, after living here, do you feel you would struggle to go back and fit into life in Romania?

M: I would, I would yeah. And professionally I would struggle to go back as well. Thinking about, so I am a paediatrician and I did about a year and a half in practice in Romania before we moved, plus about a year and a bit of maternity leave, plus a bit of working. But probably about a year and a half. And thinking about what are the expectations of patients. I think I would struggle. Because I have, most of my professional life has been in England or Ireland. So, in a system that thinks differently, and patients that act differently, I think. And they expect, in Romania people expect a child with a fever to always get an antibiotic which I knew is wrong. And it would take me a long time to explain to people you don't need one. You know, day to day practice is different. There is a lot of private practice, and there's a lot of people need to contribute extra to their public insurance. We all pay health insurance here, the national health insurance. And we get free health care. Which is available in Romania, up to a certain level and then if you need anything above that you need to start paying for it, even in a state hospital. So, I struggle with that as well. Because there were some people that couldn't afford it. And it was difficult for me to acknowledge that I can't investigate or treat them properly just because they couldn't afford it. so, I think yeah, if I had to go back, I would struggle.

R: that is something that other people have definitely mentioned, that idea of finding it difficult to start again in Romania.

M: although we lived in that society, I grew up there. I was, in 2010, in my late 20s when I left. So, you know, I lived a whole, long time in Romanian society. And I would probably fit in eventually. But having seen a different place and having seen how things are done differently somewhere else, I would probably be so frustrated. Because I

APPENDIX 5: Interview Excerpt

have seen now, how things can be done better. I could probably become a big activist or something if I went back! Patient rights!

R: and are you aware of any stigma towards people who choose to leave Romania from those who decide to stay?

M: Yes. Yes, I think there is, yeah. There is a bit of a stigma. When we do go back, because we go back at least once a year. Obviously, we haven't this year, but we will hopefully try. I think there is, you know we meet friends and family and we are happy to see them, we don't see that, because there are our closest people. But there is a general stigma and I know that. And if I try to, I don't know, comment on a Facebook post of someone, you will always find someone who will say: 'oh why did you leave then'. And well I can spend three days telling you why I left! I don't mind that, I think it just comes from, I think it comes from frustration, and I don't mind that. I think yeah, I understand why people would say that. I don't know, I might have said the same if I was there.

R: it's funny. Because it's something that I wasn't aware of at all going into this research.

M: Yeah, it's interesting.

R: So how do you stay in touch with your family in Romania?

M: Like now with video calls and everything, I speak to my parents at least once a week, if not two, three times. They are now retired so again I speak to my brother, maybe not as often as that, maybe every two weeks. And other friends, not as much. But I suppose every now and then. It's just over telephone and video.

R: do you feel that the use of these video technologies, and being able to speak so easily, that makes a difference?

M: Yeah. I think if we thought about it, I don't know, ten, fifteen years ago. I wouldn't have imagined we reached this point where we can easily communicate like this. When I was in med school, I had this old Nokia phone, I didn't think that far ahead,

APPENDIX 5: Interview Excerpt

technology would advance so much that we can have this interview just now. Yeah, but it think it does help. It's one of the benefits, and you don't have to access it, you can access it with such a simple smart phone that most people have. Even if they can't afford anything more complex, most people, even in Romania, have a smart phone.

R: And do you think being able to communicate with your family so easily, makes it easier to bit apart from them.

M: yeah. Yeah. it does make it easier. Because I feel like I'm still part of their life, regularly. Although we don't do, necessarily activities together out. But we can be part of activities remotely, like this. So yeah, I think it does help. If I were too not be able to do that, I think yeah, I would have been a lot more difficult.

R: yeah, I think that it's such a big thing how much technology has changed things for people like that. Have you ever felt homesick since you've been away?

M: I think you feel homesick more when things go wrong for people at home. In a way that you want to be there and help, help more than you can from a distance. That's the only time when you feel homesick because you're thinking. My grandmother passed away in December, so I had a time when I thought: 'is it really worth it?', you know the fact that we had moved away. Has it been really worth it? because I wasn't there for that time and all of this. But I think it's only around those times that you feel like that. Just because you're thinking you're not very close to be able to do something for them. but not in general. In day to day, it never happens.

R: what about the food and traditions, do you miss these?

M: I mean, I do miss the food a bit. But we cook our own way. We try to replicate as much of that as possible. If we want you know, specific Romanian food, I'll try and find whatever ingredients we need. There are plenty of Eastern European shops nowadays that you can. they bring products exactly from Romania. So, you can make your own. I think going out to restaurants and things you will probably find food you won't be able to make. I think going one a year, you satisfy that need and then I can fill up the gaps with what I can cook.

APPENDIX 6: Research Diary

Research Diary

DATE	TASK/SUPERVISION	COMMENTS
15/04/20	Supervisor meeting	Initial dissertation idea still possible just move all interviews online
20/05/20	Contacting interviewees and arranging interviews	People seem initially still interested despite circumstances
23/05/20	Drafting participant information sheet and consent form	Emailed to Anne for feedback 25/05/20
26/05/30	Supervisor meeting. Received feedback on information sheet and consent form	Simplify language and add section on data protection act
01/06/20	Began to contact participants through mutual friends	May be better to widen research from London to the whole of the UK
08/06/20	Drafting material for class presentation	Challenge with how best to define and talk about integration as the literature is varied. Ask for feedback about the best way to do so
17/06/20	Redrafting introduction	Need to include more info and link to wider situation in CEE
22/06/20	Submitted online Risk Net Assessment	
30/06/20	Interview #1	Research stigma towards those who leave Romania mentioned
01/07/20	Interview #2	Need to add more questions on the home?
03/07/20	Submitted draft material for feedback	Literature review and plan of introduction
06/07/20	Interview #3	

APPENDIX 6: Research Diary

10/07/20	Interview #4 & 5	
10/07/20	Supervisor meeting to discuss feedback on draft material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intro needs to be more relevant to project • Need to mention integration and transnationalism in the intro- even if briefly • Perhaps move research questions to the literature review to link to wider aim/argument
14/07/20	Interview #6	
15/07/20	Interview #7	
16/07/20	Interview #8	
22/07/20	Interview #9	
05/08/20	Interview #10	
07/08/20	Interview #11	
09/08/20	Interview #12	
11/08/20	Interview #13 & 14	
11/08/20	Supervisor meeting to discuss ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deciding to focus on three themes – the home, substitute migration, preparedness • Makes up three chapters • Don't need to use very long quotes
14/08/20	Interview #15	
01/09/20	Supervisor meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask about where to include 'limitations and further research' section – don't end on a negative, link back to positive. • More info needed on interviewees background etc – maybe insert table? • Renamed chapter 2 to homesickness
01/09/20-15/09/20	Drafting and Final Editing	Had to rewrite introduction to make it more relevant – and cut down words overall