Growing up in a transnational social field
Experiences of family separation and reunification of
the Filipino 1.5 generation in Italy

A growing body of literature on transnational parenthood has
highlighted the emotional hardships faced by migrant mothers and by
their children left behind. These studies have emphasized the
significance of the emotional qualities of kinship relations, and offered
important insights into the effects of the normative discourse on
parent-child relationships in the course of transnational migration.
However, some recent studies have expressed concern with the
decontextualized tendency of this approach, and have called for more
nuanced analysis to capture the complexity, diversity, and
ambivalence of the dynamics of transnational families. Drawing on
ethnographic research on the Filipino 1.5 generation, who were left
behind in a rural area of the Philippines by their migrant parents, and
who subsequently immigrated to Italy at a school-going age, this
presentation aims to contribute to this endeavor. By interpreting the
narratives of Filipino migrants’ children in terms of normative
discourses on parent-child and family relationships, and the
processual, flexible, and ambiguous aspects of kinship prevalent in the
rural Philippines, it argues that the children’s experiences of
separation from and reunification with parents are related to the
contradictory nature of their family and kinship ideologies as well as
their distinctive class and social experiences.