Portrayals of Romanian migrants in ethnic media from Italy

Roxana Bratu[1]

Abstract

Based on a qualitative content analysis of a small corpus of newspaper articles, the paper aims to identify the representations of Romanian migrants in the Romanian media from Italy by exploring the portrayals of the main characters and the narratives used to support these portrayals. Arguing that there are important differences between the narrative styles employed for depicting different types of characters, I seek to discuss the implications these differences may have on the conveyed message.[2]

Keywords
Ethnic media, Romanian migrants, narrative, content analysis, discourse analysis

Introduction

Ethnic media is usually defined in contrast to mainstream media. In general, the host country media promotes a negative image of migrants associated with criminality, integration problems and clandestinity. Immigration is presented not only as a social problem and a threat to national security, but also as a threat to the values and norms of the host society. As a consequence, migrants are often portrayed as being the Others, the strangers who are different from the society that host them (Chan, 2013; Van Dijk, 2000).

As a reaction to the predominantly negative and stereotyping image of migrants found in mainstream media, the ethnic media can provide an alternative discourse (Van Dijk, 2000). This kind of media offers migrants the possibility of self-(re)presentation in

---

[1] Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, University of Bucharest, Romania, roxana.bratu@sas.unibuc.ro

the new country and provides a space for negotiating their position within the society of settlement. By developing their own media, migrant communities gain a voice within the host society.

Also, because this media takes a stand towards the various public statements and policy decisions concerning the migrant community, it represents a point of collision between various competing or divergent discourses about migration. Therefore, the engagement in the debate about the (negative) image of migrants at destination is a salient feature of ethnic journalism. Through the characters and narratives brought to the audience's attention, these publications can provide a version of self-presentation that can be conceived as an effort of "saving face" (Goffman, 1967) in the context of migration.

The Romanian language publications from the destination countries have received little attention. Previous studies on the topic of the media representations of Romanian migrants have focused either on the national mainstream media of the country of origin (Beciu, 2012; Marinescu, 2010) or that of the various host countries (Madroane, 2012; Pletea, 2010). All these studies pointed to the negative stereotyping of the Romanian migrants, by presenting them in relation to criminality, abuse of the benefits system, bad work conditions and poor housing.

What this paper will try to do is to analyze the way Romanian migrants are portrayed in their own media in Italy. Looking at what kind of characters, narratives and migration experiences are brought to the public's attention, I seek to examine the images of Romanian migrants that these publications construct and provide for their audience. Therefore, the paper aims to answer the following questions: How are Romanian migrants from Italy portrayed in Romanian media from Italy? What are the main types of characters? What are the main *script structures or* narratives used to support the portrayals of these characters? How is migration embedded in these stories? What kind of experiences associated with migration and the condition of being a migrant are presented?

Ethnic media

The media addressed to migrants is commonly known as ethnic, diaspora or immigrant media. Although these terms are generally used as equivalent categories, there are some subtle differences between them. Ethnic media is the broadest concept, referring to "media that are produced by and for (a) immigrants, (b) racial, ethnic, and linguistic minorities, as well as (c) indigenous populations living across different countries" (Matsaganis, Katz, & Ball-Rokeach, 2010, p. 10).

Diasporic media and immigrant media are included in ethnic media. Diasporic media refers to media addressed to particular ethnic communities that constitute diasporas. Matsaganis, Katz & Ball-Rokeach (2010) underline that not any migrant community is a diaspora. In their opinion, diasporas share some characteristics such as: a common history of a traumatic event, the homeland as the center of the common consciousness and a process of consolidation that takes a long period of time (p. 11).

Other authors argue for a broader meaning of the notion of diaspora as comprising transnational labour migrant communities (Georgiou, 2005).

The term *immigrant media* is less frequently used. According to Matsaganis et al. (2010) the term is restrictive and it has "an expiration date", since its targeted audience is limited to newly arrived immigrants. I would also add that it implies a host country perspective through the use of the word immigrant instead of just migrant.

Considering the objections raised against the terms diasporic and immigrant media, I prefer to use the term ethnic media throughout the paper.

Framing news as stories

According to Ryan (2007), although the definition of narrative should focus on the concept of story, there is a difference between narrative and story. More precisely, the narrative is "the discourse that conveys a story" (Ryan, 2007, p. 26). Therefore, narrative is the general category that subsumes many genres and types of content comprising a story. The journalistic discourse can be viewed as an example of such content.

As emphasized by Pan and Kosicki (1993) conceiving news articles as stories constitutes a framing device. One structural dimension of news discourse is the use of a script structure that allows journalists to present the content into a coherent and a familiar package. The authors argue that news are framed as stories because on the one hand, they are "stories in the literal sense of describing events" (p.60) and on the other hand, the use of shared cognitive schemas helps to establish a connection with the audience. Stories are such a schema that ensures coherence and renders the content comprehensible. They are an accessible package for delivering a subject, enabling the audience to relate to what is being narrated. The news are presented in a coherent and comprehensible manner via narratives. The use of script structures or narrative schemas facilitates a certain understanding of events and characters' actions in a given context and in relation to their goals and motives.

As stories, news discourses draw upon recognizable script structures. For Pan and Kosicki (1993) a script refers to "an established and stable sequence of activities and components of an event that have been internalized as a structured mental representation of the event" (1993, p. 60) and complies with the structural rules of narratives or the so-called *story grammars.* The study of *story grammars* which has an old tradition that goes back to Propp's analysis of Russian folktales (Propp, 1968, 2010), provides a theoretical frame for understanding the internal structure of a story as schemas prototypes (Black & Wilensky, 1979; De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2011; Van Dijk, 1980).

According to Pan and Kosicki (1993) a "generic" news script consists of the answers to five main questions: what, when, where, why and how, and a narrative schema comprising a beginning, a climax, and an end. It is also characterized by an "intrinsic push of our attention to drama, action, characters, and human emotions" (1993, p. 60). From this point of view, the journalist resembles a fiction writer. As a

consequence, news "often appear to be excessively fragmented, personalized and dramatized" (p. 60).

Characters at the center of stories

As pointed by Herman (2007), stories prototypically focus on a protagonist' experience presented in particular situations and events: "stories are accounts of what happened to particular people – and of what it was like for them to experience what happened – in particular circumstances and with specific consequences" (Herman, 2007, p. 3). Hence, the portrayal of characters is essential in building a story. According to Margolin (2007), information about the identity of a character provided in text usually answers questions such as "what is the given individual like, what distinguishes it from all other coexisting individuals and what kind of an individual is it" (Margolin, 2007, p. 72). All these questions can be answered by looking at the "referring expressions" used to introduce the character such as designators (type or social category) and descriptors (traits of character). Contextual information and biographical details are also yield precious information about the characters. They help understand how an individual end up in a particular situation or event. Individual's actions are another important source of information for the portrayal of characters, since they allow the reader to make inferences about the character's mental and moral features (Margolin, 2007).

Methodology

The method. This study is based on a qualitative content analysis situated at the intersection with discourse and frame analysis. The aim of any content analysis is to make inferences about the message by identifying patterns in communication (Babbie, 2010; Bryman, 2004; Weber, 1990). The particularity of the qualitative methods of content analysis consists of a focus on the latent content, an interpretative approach, an emphasis on the contextual production of meaning and the emergence of categories out of data (Bryman, 2004).

Selected publications. Since the appearance of the first Romanian newspaper in 2003, the Romanian-written press in Italy has expanded significantly. During my desk research I identified several Romanian-written publications, alongside many other forms of online communication addressed to migrants, such as forums and blogs.

For my analysis I selected two newspapers adressed to Romanian migrants in Italy. The first one, The Romanian Gazette (ro. Gazeta Românească) advertises itself as being the ethnic newspaper with the highest circulation in Italy and with a wide distribution throughout Italy. It has a weekly appearance in printed format and daily online postings. The second one, The Emigrant (ro. Emigrantul) is a publication only available online which has an irregular frequency of posting articles. Both publications are written in Romanian and have a multiple focus: the Romanian migrants in Italy, other Romanians abroad, the home country and the country of settlement.

Although the definition proposed by Matsaganis et al. (2010) states that ethnic media are *produced by and for* ethnic groups, the actual producers can be big media

organizations, while only the editorial team is made up of ethnic journalists. The Romanian Gazette is owned by a larger Italian media organization, while the editorial team is made up of Romanian journalists. The Emigrant claims to be an independent publication, supported by a migrant NGO.

The selected content. I monitored the online content of the two publications for one year from April 2013 to March 2014. I chose this particular period of time for reasons of comparability. The Emigrant was inactive from April to August 2014. The main criteria of selection was the topic of the articles. I selected only the articles referring to Romanian labour migrants in Italy. News reports concerning political, social and economic events from Romania and Italy, Romanian migrants living in other countries or topics such as health, beauty and technology were excluded from the beginning.

The present analysis is based on a small subsample of news articles presenting individual migrants as main characters of the news stories or reports from the total of the initially selected articles that included also editorials or *opinion* articles about the Romanian migration and articles concerning Romanian cultural events in Italy.

Data analysis

The analytical framework of this study is influnced by a discourse-analytical approach to media and seeks to reveal the latent content of the texts that goes beyond the quantification process (van Dijk, 1991; van Dijk, 2000). One major stake in the study of news as discourse is to uncover the "implications" of a text. More specifically, the notion of "implications" refers to "entailments, presuppositions and weaker forms, such as suggestion and association"(van Dijk, 1991, p. 114). According to van Dijk (1991) "much of the information of a text is not explicitly expressed, but left implicit. Words, clauses, and other textual expressions may imply concepts or propositions which may be inferred on the basis of background knowledge. This feature of discourse and communication has important ideological dimensions"(1991, pp. 113–114). Both what is said and what is not said is relevant to the rhetorical construction of an event or a character since it can imply or suggest a certain interpretation of what is being accounted rooted in ideological belief systems.

My aim is to explore the portrayals of Romanian migrants and the narratives used to support these portrayals in the selected news articles. Furthermore, I seek to discuss the implications these portrayals and narratives may have on the conveyed message.

Analysis schema. My analysis followed an inductive approach. Doing a preliminary reading of several articles I noticed some differences in terms of lexical choices (e.g. designators and descriptors), the presence of biographical details or personal background and the presence or absence of quotes. I also noticed some narrative patterns that converged with the portrayals of the different types of characters. Therefore, I focused my analysis on:

The narrative or script structure of the article: the main storyline, the embeddedness of migration in the story and the relationship between the individual and the context. As noted by van Gorp (2007) news reports encompass reasoning

mechanisms underlining the relationship between the individual and the wider context (Van Gorp, 2007). In additon, the way the experiences and the actions of the protagonist are framed completes the portrayal and encourages a certain interpretation regarding his or her character for example in relation to his or her motivations.

The portrayal of migrants: the lexical choices in terms of designators and descriptors, the presence of biographical details or personal background.

I also looked at the **presence or absence of quotes,** since quotes offer individual migrants the possibility to talk about their own experience in their own words, thus playing an important role in the empowerment of migrants.

The main types of characters

In my analysis I identified **three main types of characters** portrayed in the two publications based on their narrative role: positive characters, negative characters and victims. Regarding **the variability of portrayals in the two publications,** I have not found any striking differences concerning the types of characters portrayed or the manner of portraying them. Nevertheless, I noticed the less frequent use of nationality in the title and a larger body of negative acounts in the Romanian Gazette in comparison with The Emigrant. The larger body of negative reports in the case of the first newspaper can be explained by the influence of the national mainstream media agenda, especially since this publication is part of an Italian media organization.

In order to illustrate the various portrayals of migrants and narratives used to support these portrayals I will analyze one article for each type of characters identified. In this manner, the reader can asses the validity of the interpretation. Each of these articles reveal frequently employed scripts in the two publications that we can assume that are particular to a certain extent to the experience of Romanian migrants in Italy.

Positive characters

These are migrants portrayed in a favourable manner by explicit references to character traits and by the positive assessment of their actions and motivations. Their portrayal is supported by elaborate script structures oriented towards a strong individualization of the main character. Also, the presence of biographical details and other background information helps to portray them as familiar characters to the audience.

The positive characters are either successful or ordinary migrants, the latter being presented mainly in exceptional circumstances (eg. deeds of heroism or having art hobbies) and to a lesser extent in concrete life settings or in relation with migration experinces.

Successful characters

This category is comprised of migrants who experienced an upward mobility as a result of their affirmation in various fields: entrepreneurship (opening a small business: a Romanian grocery store, a restaurant, discos, a pizzeria, a clothing store, or a

construction company), politics (e.g. obtaining a councillor position in an Italian townhall), art (music) or sports.

They are presented as examples of individual accomplishment, but they also fall within the debate about integration at the destination. Illustrating success stories, they contain a *moral evaluation* (Entman, 1993), bringing to the fore values such as hard work, professional excellence, courage or risk taking (especially in the case of entrepreneurship). As favorable naratives, they provide an alternative discourse of migration in contrast to the negative stereotyping image of migrants.

Entrepreneurs in Italy

Romanian migrants who managed to develop their entrepreneurial projects are prominent figures among the characters presented.

Example 1. ***Dora: a Romanian woman without fear of the crisis*** [1] – The article appeared on February the 4th 2014 in The Emigrant and tells the story of a Romanian migrant woman, former care worker, who opened a clothing store in Colleferro, a small town in Italy.

Designators. Starting from the title, the protagonist is designated by her first name and by reference to her nationality. The use of the first name throughout the article serves to portray the protagonist in a personalized manner, as a character who is familiar to the audience.

Descriptors. The protagonist is described primarily in connection with her actions that reveal personality features: *without fear of crisis, with her own forces, with hard work.* Therefore, her success appears as a result of her individual character traits and not due to contextual opportunities, for example.

Biographical details or personal background. From the beginning biographical information about the protagonist is provided. The detailed information about her origin reinforcing her belonging to the Romanian nationality, is notable: *"Born and raised in Constanta and married in Gorj" having a mother from Gorj and a Moldavian father, as she likes to say.* Her personal background is completed by mentioning her previous occupation before migrating to Italy: *Folk handicraftsman, an arras and handicraft artist, Dora made a living in Romania from the folk art she was selling even outside the country*.

Migration. The author appeals to the common experience of migration to position Dora as a typical migrant: *Dora left to Italy eight years ago. [...] She reaches Colleferro fallowing her husband, Vişinel Bstean, who works in construction, as a crane operator or as a driver. Her first work experiences are bitter as most of the Romanians: unpaid work, humiliations, and hard times.* Thus, a picture of a typical experience of migration is sketched. As a woman, Dora follows in the footsteps of her husband who, as many Romanian men in Italy, works in the construction sector. The period following the arrival is described as a difficult one. Next, without being given any details regarding

---

how these difficulties were experienced or overcome, the reader finds out that upward mobility is possible: *From working as a "badante" (care worker) to becoming a store owner is just a step.*

Script structure. The story consists of the journalist's account supported by several quotes.

The plot. The emergence of the idea of opening a shop during her meetings with other care workers constitutes the triggering factor of the narrated action (the store opening): *It all started during her Thursdays and Sundays meetings with her friends, when working as a "badante" and from a personal need, to no longer buy every week work pants for her husband.*

Obstacles. In achieving her entrepreneurial plan, Dora faces some obstacles: the withdrawal of her friends - according to the initial plan the business should have been one amongst friends, the process of convincing her husband to invest their family savings into her business idea: *After a long persuasion work with her husband ... who accepted*, and *minor bureaucratic problems* related to the store opening.

The happy ending: The obstacles are overcome through hard work: *from idea to implementation it took 8500 Euros and a month and a half of work.* Her risk-taking action is rewarded by the implementation of the business plan (goal achievement) and a sense of personal fulfillment: *For Dora it does not matter now. The important thing is that starting now she can do what she wanted.*

Politicians

This category comprises migrants who are members of parties addressing Romanians in Italy, Romanian national branch parties at destination or Italian parties. Although not numerous, Romanian politicians in Italy receive extensive coverage. As EU citizen, the Romanian residents in Italy have the right to vote and to be elected at local elections. At the last local elections in Italy, in May 2013, more than 50 Romanians have submitted their candidatures for town councillors (according to a Hotnews article)[3] and some of them used the ethnic media to promote their candidatures.

Those who have a political career in Italy are presented less in relation to the sequence of migration and more in relation to their Romanian nationality. Most often, they are presented as representatives of the Romanian migrant community at destination, although some are members of Italian parties, not Romanian ones. Their success is presented as an extented success of the Romanian community at the destination.

---

[3] Article available at http://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-diaspora-14796250-romanii-alegerile-locale-din-italia-peste-50-candidati-cel-mai-tanar-are-19-ani.htm

Example 2. *Adrian Chifu, the first Romanian town councillor in Italy: "I will run for the position of Mayor!"* [2] the article appeared on February the 14th 2014 in The Romanian Gazette.

Designators. In the title the protagonist is designated by his first and last name, by reference to his nationality and his position of town counselor. Throughout the article he is designated by multiple mentions of both his first and last name.

Descriptors. His portrayal consists of a shorter and more formal description. The article does not contain explicit references to the protagonist's character traits. The protagonist is defined by his political achievement: *The first Romanian to obtain a communal councilor position in Italy* and his political ambition: *Adrian Chifu wants to be the first Romanian who runs for Mayor in an Italian town.*

Biographical details or personal background: In the introduction, the author summarizes the politician's background: *Adrian Chifu, 37 years old, born in Piatra Neamt, Italian citizen since 2012, was elected in June 2009 for the position of local counselor in Verbania.* Thus, very few background details are provided: his age (37 years old), the origin town (Piatra Neamt), his Italian citizenship and year of his election as town councillor.

Migration. No information regarding his migration to Italy or his previous occupation is provided.

Script structure. The story consists of the short introduction made by the journalist. The rest of the article is an actual interview comprised of questions and answers. The only other interventions made by the author are the subheadings of the selected quotes. Nevertheless, the way the questions are formulated and their sequence frames the protagonist's portrayal (motives, desires, opinions). In this case it is an open-ended narrative fragment.

Ordinary characters

In a qualitative content analysis of the Romanian national press discourse, Beciu (2012) concluded that "the diasporic world is a world of violence, with highly polarized characters, who are either absolutely bad or absolutely good" (2012, p. 61). The predominance of dichotomic characters is also a feature of the analyzed publications. Only a few articles present ordinary migrants in relation to life events or experiences specific to migration: for example the care workers' New Year party, going on holiday in Romania or preparing gifts for the relatives at home. These types of texts, although not numerous, provide a nuanced picture of the migration experiences, allowing ambivalent interpretations. And even if they portray ordinary migrants having typical experices, they

became newsworthy by being reported in dramatic and personalised manner. And for this purpose the use of narrative or script structure is very useful.

Example 3. *Georgeta, "badante" in Piemonte: "My life is here, I am better off in Italy"* [3] (the article appeared on February the 2nd 2014 in The Romanian Gazette).

Designators. In the title the protagonist is designated by her first name, her occupation and the host town. Throughout the article **s**he is designated by her first and second name and by a single reference to her nationality**.**

Descriptors. Georgeta is described briefly in the introduction of the article as being a 54 years old Romanian woman, from a small town in Romania (Slănic-Prahova). The article does not contain explicit references to the protagonist's character traits. The reader is left to establish what kind of person Georgeta is, based on what is narrated, the journalist's interventions and the collage of quotes.

From the introduction made by the author of the article we find out that she is different from most of the care workers *who perform a work which they do just because they cannot find anything else in Italy* and *who complain about the difficulties of this job.* In contrast, the protagonist is very pleased with her current employer. By stating this, the article begins by disclosing the ending, which is a typical feature of the journalistic discourse.

Biographical details or personal background. Very few details from Georgeta's background are provided**.** It is mentioned the year of her departure to Italy and the triggering factor of the first episode of migration: financial problems (debts to banks) and the desire to support her children throughout college: *She came to Italy in April 2006 because she had bank debts and she wanted to see her kids go to college.* These details provide a frame for the character's motives. By mentioning her desire to *see her kids go to college* the journalist portrays her as a good mother driven by her desire to support her children.

Script structure. The story consists of a collage of cropped quotes, arranged and introduced by the journalist acting as the narrator. To a certain extent, the article illustrates a confession story since the protagonist shares her experiences related to a life event.

The plot. The initial equilibrium is disturbed by the arrival of her husband in Italy: *Everything seemed perfect until my husband came and then the situation changed for the worse.* Due to the pressure exerted by her husband, Georgeta returned to Romania: *Georgeta did not enjoy the support of her husband who kept telling her that "all the women who come to work in Italy and are single become tramps".*

Obstacles. During her return in Romania, she experiences some marital divergences and confronts herself with the inability to adjust to her old lifestyle.

The resolution of the conflict. For the protagonist the solution was to leave her husband and return to Italy: "*I left again for Italy after only four months. I could not find my place, I could not stay all day and do nothing. My departure meant the separation, because it was against his will. That's life, what can you do!*".

The (happy) ending. Harmony is restored by returning to Italy and finding a new job. Currently, Georgeta has a very good relationship with her employers: *But Georgeta Dinu loves her job and the family she is working for*. Finding a good job is attributed to luck. The role of luck is emphasized by both the narrator (*It seems that luck was on her side*) and the protagonist (*I'm so glad I got here [...] we were both lucky – she and the person under her care*).

Heroes of chance

This type of characters refers to migrants who are the authors of acts of heroism. In the typical scenario, an ordinary migrant finds himself in an exceptional situation or a life threatening event (e.g. a car accident, a natural disaster) and acts on altruistic motives to save another person in danger.

Example 4. *The Romanian Hero from the A4 Highway* – The article appeared on September the 4th 2013 in The Emigrant and presents the story of a Romanian truck driver who saved the life of an Italian little girl during a car accident [4].

Designators. In the title the protagonist is designated by the noun *hero* and by reference to his nationality. Throughout the article he is designated by his first and second name, by multiple references to his nationality and to his occupation, that of truck driver. Moreover, he is named *a fellow countryman, one of our own,* underlying his belonging to the Romanian migrant community in Italy.

Descriptors. Ion is described briefly in the introduction of the article as being a 29 years old Romanian man, from a small town in Romania (Tulcea). The article contains explicit references to the protagonist's character traits and positive assessment of his actions (*a brave Romanian, the enigmatic hero, the savior*) and an appraisal of his actions (*a simple gesture but a great help and a great risk, the gesture that was as natural as it was disinterested, coming from his heart of father and human being or his extraordinary deed*). Thus, we are encouraged to characterize the protagonist as being brave, altruistic and also a family man or a good father (*from his heart of father*), since his action seems to be related to his quality of being a father.'

Biographical details or personal background: Some background details are provided**:** his age (29 years old), marital status (married), the number of children (one child), the town of origin (Tulcea) and the host town (Taglio di Po – Rovigo).

Migration. Although no information regarding his migration to Italy is provided, the author emphasizes that he is one of the many Romanians living in Italy, whom the Romanian community can be proud of.

Script structure. The story consists of the journalist's account. The only quote provided is that of a secondary character, the father of the rescued girl. In the introduction, the author summarizes the accounted event: *A fellow countryman from Tulcea (*a Romanian small town*), Ion Purice, a truck driver living in Taglio di Po (Rovigo) became a hero overnight.* Through this introductory statement, the author underlines the exceptional and unexpected nature of the event (he *became a hero <u>overnight</u>*).

The Plot. The driver witnesses a little girl being thrown out of a car during a car accident.

Action: The protagonist acts to save the little girl by driving the truck across the highway to protect the endangered girl and afterwards he *"flees" the scene of his extraordinary deed.* The father of the rescued girl makes a public call to find out the identity of the "hero": *"I do not know who the driver was: he was young and thin. He disappeared after he helped me save my daughter, but I'd like to meet him and shake his hand because he helped me".* In response, some truck drives begun a quest to find the protagonist.

The ending: The identity of the hero is revealed and he receives public acknowledgment, at least in the present article: *We can only congratulate this brave Romanian ourselves, whom each of us should be proud of!*

Negative characters

They are predominantly male perpetrators of violent crimes. Concerning their portrayal, what stands out is the lack of biographical information or information about the broader context. Thus, the offender has no other motive than the obvious one: most of the times money. Contextual details enabling structural causal interpretations are not provided, not even in the case of minor offenses. Chibnall (2010) links the lack of contextual information to the specific of the journalistic discourse which aims to simplify the subject and to present a "black and white story" (Chibnall, 2010 *apud* Chan). As pointed by Chan (2013), reducing the complexity of events or characters has the effect of reinforcing the stereotypes of immigrants as criminals. In addition, Van Dijk (2000) draws attention to

the fact that the ubiquity of nationality is that it can be read as an explanation of the accounts (Van Dijk, 2000).

As scripts, the articles are mainly reports of solved crimes, therefore illustrating stories of justice: what the perpetrator did and how he was cought.

Example 5. *Murder in Calabria: the priest's body was found with a broken skull in front of the church /A 26 years' old Romanian was arrested* [5] (the article appeared on March the 5th 2014 in The Romanian Gazette).

Designators. In the title the alleged perpetrator is designated by reference to his nationality and his age. Throughout the article he is designated by multiple mentions (5) of his nationality. His first and last names are also provided.

Descriptors. The article does not contain explicit references to the protagonist's character traits. The reader is left to make judgments on his character based on the accounted facts: he was hosted by the priest, he stole from the church charity box, he was caught by the priest, and he blackmailed the priest threatening to make public his homosexual orientation. Based on the information we are provided, he seems to have no motives other than money for his actions.

Biographical details or personal background. The only biographical details are his age and the host town (we find out that he is a Cassano allo Ionio resident).

Migration. No information regarding his migration to Italy is provided.

Script structure. The story consists of the journalist's account and no quotes are provided. As a journalistic genre, the article is a news report rather than a news story.

The plot. In the introduction, the author summarizes the accounted event, the murder of a priest: *A 69 years 'old priest of Sibari, Province of Cosenza, Don Lazzaro Longobardi was killed on the evening of March 2 with crowbar blows to the head.* In this account, unlike other similar accounts, the victim's name and other biographical details are mentioned: *Don Lazzaro Longobardi was the parish priest of San Raffaele di Lattughelle church for 27 years, and for 20 years in charge of the parish of San Giuseppe, where he was found dead. He was well known and greatly loved in the community.* Usually the victim does not receive much attention, but in this case it does, since the priest is a public figure of the community.

Action. The police follow the main lead, interrogates the main suspect and arrests him.

The ending. The murder case seems to be solved, since the main suspect has been arrested.

The victims

They are either women victims of sexual exploitation, domestic violence or homicide - in which case the abusers are usually Romanian men, or workers exploited by Italian employers or victims of work accidents. They are grey characters, caught somewhere between the positive and negative characters: they do not have the qualities of the former, nor do they comitt the acts of the latter.

Example 6. ***The body of a Romanian worker, disposed of at a dump in Italy*** [6]– The article appeared on July the 14th 2013 in The Emigrant and presents the story of a Romanian worker who's murder caused by an work accident was concealed by his employers.

Designators. In the title the protagonist is designated by the noun "worker", stating his status and occupation, and by reference to his nationality. Throughout the article he is designated by his first and second name and by multiple references to his nationality.

Descriptors. The article does not contain any references to the protagonist's character traits or actions. Thus, he appears to be a man without an identity.

Biographical details or personal background. Very few background details about the character are provided: his age (45 years old), his marital status (married), the number of children (two) and the location of the construction site where he was working (Torino area). The mention of his family who has been searching for him during the years of his disappearance brings drama into the story and helps portray him in a personalized manner in spite of the lack of additional personal information.

Migration. No information regarding his migration to Italy is provided. Nevertheless, the article can be read as a story drawing attention to the risks of migration, since working on the black market and immigration are strongly related.

Script structure. The story consists of the journalist's account and no quotes are provided.

The Plot. A Romanian worker who worked without legal forms on a construction site near Torino fell from a scaffold and died. His employers concealed his death by disposing of the body in order to avoid legal problems.

The event is summarized as follows: *Shocking case in Italy. The body of a Romanian worker was disposed of at the dump by his employers. It happened in 2009, but only now investigators were able to discover the identity of the man, using DNA tests.*

The ending: Four years after the discovery of the body, the victim is identified and *the Italian employers are prosecuted for murder and disposing of the corpse.*

Conclusions and discussion

The paper aimed at examining how Romanian migrants are portrayed in ethnic media from Italy, by analyzing a small corpus of articles selected from two publications. The analysis points to some major differences in portraying migrants in terms of narrative or script structures used to support these portrayals, the embeddedness of migration in the story, the choice of descriptors and designators and the presence of quotes, varying according to the types of characters identified. Based on their narrative role, I identified three main types of characters portrayed in the analysed articles: positive characters, negative characters and victims.

Mainly, the portrayal of migrants is supported by very **different narrative or script structures** (Pan & Kosicki, 1993). These differences are partially derived from the journalistic genre (e.g. feature stories or news reports) and corresponding writing styles. Obviously, the selection of characters who are suitable for a feature story coverage, and therefore to receive more coverage in terms of length of the article and more public attention is not arbitrary. It also reveals a particular kind of newsworthiness and moral distance. In the case of positive characters, I noticed the use of elaborate script structures oriented towards human emotions, a strong individualization of the main character sustained by the presence of biographical details and a personal engagement of the journalist with the story. All these invite the audience to identify themselves with the portrayed character. In contrast, the portrayals of negative characters are supported by less elaborate script structures. This is reflected by the shorter length of the article, the absence of biographical details or other background or contextual information.

Regarding the relationship between the individual and the context captured in these stories, there is an emphasis on individual explanations in portraying both the negative and the successful characters. In other words, both achivements and reprehensible deeds are explained by an individual's character traits. Contextual information that allows explanations based on structural social forces is provided especially in the case of victims and to a lesser extent in the case of ordinary migrants.

The presence or absence of quotes complements the degree of script elaboration. The use of extensive quotes in the case of positive characters, in contrast with the lack of qoutes in the case of negative characters, highlights a distancing from the last.

The embeddedness of migration in the storyline also varies according to the types of characters identified. In the case of negative characters, there is a lack of references to migration experiences or to the migrant status. In a way, because negative accounts are not presented as being related to migration, the audience is encouraged to see criminals as outsiders of the migrant community. In the portrayal of victims,

references to the migrant status are used to underline the risks of being a migrant (work accidents due to the lack of safety equipment or working on the black market).

The migration episode is drawn upon to construct the portrayal of positive characters, with one notable exception, that of politicians. Surprisingly, their migrant background is not exploited in their coverage. In the case of success stories, migration is presented as an obstacle that has been overcome ("At the beginning it was difficult") and as a facilitating force in achieving personal and professional development, as migration is associated with an upward trajectory. However, there are not many details provided about how the hardships of migration were experienced or overcome. Thus, the migration experience is presented as self-explanatory. One explanation is that the construction of migration as a common experience serves the construction of the audience. In this sense, I noticed the use of the collective "we" (we, the Romanians in Italy) by both the journalist and the characters quoted as an instance of addresing the imagined receiver of the message.

On the whole, the variability of the experiences associated with migration is limited and the migration experience is not fully debated. Nonetheless, the articles presenting ordinary characters are more revealing on the subject.

The choice of designators and descriptors highlights different manners of portraying migrants. I suggested that the **designation** of migrants serves to portray the protagonists as familiar or unfamiliar characters. It is notable the use of the first name to designate the protagonist when presenting positive characters. Since it constitutes a personal formula of designation, it has the effect of individualizing the protagonist. In contrast, in the portraying of negative characters are used predominantly nouns indicating the nationality or the gender: a Romanian man or a Romanian woman, the man or the woman. These designators are impersonal formulas that reduce identity of the protagonist to his or her nationality and gender.

The Romanian nationality of all the characters is emphasized in both the title and the body of the text. Thus, the Romanian nationality is ubiquitous and constructed as relevant in all cases. Indeed, the mention of nationality is not surprising, since the analyzed newpapers are publications addressing Romanian migrants and writing about Romanians in Italy and the selection of the characters is made mainly based on their nationality. But the use of nationality as the most frequent designator when alternative terms are at hand raises some questions regarding the conveyed message. The readers tend to retain the information that is repeatedly emphasized. Since nationality is one of the few biographical details provided in articles presenting negative characters, designating criminals by reference to their nationality can have an unwanted effect, inconsistent with the presumed role of ethnic media. In the context of the absence of other biographical or background information, the perpetrator's actions can be interpreted as being closly linked to his nationality.

Concerning the **descriptors** used to portray the characters, what stands out is the lack of biographical details and references to character traits in portraying negative characters. Combined with the lack of contextual information, these schematic portrayls render the negative characters as individuals without an indentity or a face. In contrast,

positive characters possess valued human qualities, stressed by explicit references to character traits, but also by the positive assessment of their actions and motivations.

To conclude, this brief enquiry on how the portrayal of Romanian migrants is constructed in news articles has examined what kind of charaters are brought to the audience's attention and what implications their portrayals may have on the conveyed message.

REFERENCES

Babbie, E. (2010). *Practica cercetării sociale*. Iasi: Polirom.

Beciu, C. (2012). Diaspora si experiența transnațională.Practici de mediatizare în presa românească. *Revista Română de Sociologie*, 23(1-2), 49–66.

Black, J. B., & Wilensky, R. (1979). An Evaluation of Story Grammars. *Cognitive Science*, 3(3), 213–229.

Bryman, A. (2004). *Social Research Methods* (2nd ed., p. 592). New York: Oxford University Press.

Chan, W. (2013). *News media representations of immigrants in the Canadian criminal justice system*. Metropolis British Columbia.

De Fina, A., & Georgakopoulou, A. (2011). *Analyzing Narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 43(4), 51–58.

Georgiou, M. (2005). Diasporic Media Across Europe: Multicultural Societies and the Universalism–Particularism Continuum. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 31(3), 481–498.

Goffman, E. (1967). *Interaction Ritual: Essays in Face to Face Behavior* (p. 270). Chicago: Aldine Transaction.

Herman, D. (2007). Introduction. In *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative* (pp. 3–21). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Madroane, I. D. (2012). Romanian Migrants in the British Press: a Post-EU Accession Analysis. *Revista Română de Comunicare Şi Relații Publice*, 103–122.

Margolin, U. (2007). Character. In *The Cambridge companion to narrative* (pp. 66–80). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Marinescu, V. (2010). Communication and migrants in Europe. The case of Romanian migrants images in Romanian media. *Jurnalism Și Comunicare*, (4), 15–26.

Matsaganis, M. D., Katz, V. S., & Ball-Rokeach, S. J. (2010). *Understanding Ethnic Media: Producers, Consumers, and Societies* (p. 314). SAGE Publications.

Pan, Z., & Kosicki, G. (1993). Framing analysis: An approach to news discourse. *Political Communication*.

Pletea, I. G. (2010). La presse de la diaspora roumaine en Angleterre et en France. Analyse de contenu "Ziarul românesc." *Revista Romana de Jurnalism Si Comunicare - Romanian Journal of Journalism and Communication*, (3), 25–31.

Propp, V. (2010). *Morphology of the Folktale: Second Edition* (p. 184). The University of Texas Press.

Ryan, M.-L. (2007). Toward a definition of narrative. In D. Herman (Ed.), *The Cambridge companion to narrative* (pp. 22–28). Cambridge University Press.

Van Dijk, T. A. (1980). Story comprehension: An introduction. *Poetics*.

Van Dijk, T. A. (1991). Media contents The interdisciplinary study of news as discourse. In *A Handbook of Qualitive Methodologies for Mass Communication Research* (pp. 108–120). Routledge.

Van Dijk, T. A. (2000). New(s) discourse racism: analytical approach. In S. Cottle (Ed.), *Ethnic Minorities and the Media* (pp. 33–49). Open University Press.

Van Gorp, B. (2007). The constructionist approach to framing: Bringing culture back in. *Journal of Communication*, 57(1), 60–78.

Weber, R. P. (1990). *Basic Content Analysis. Journal of the American Statistical Association* (Vol. 82, p. 96).

N E W S P A P E R   A R T I C L E S

[1] ***Dora: a Romanian woman without fear of the crisis*** available at
http://www.emigrantul.it/dora-o-romanca-fara-frica-de-criza/

[2] ***Adrian Chifu, the first Romanian town councillor in Italy: "I will run for the position of Mayor!"*** available at
http://www.gazetaromaneasca.com/component/content/article/36-comunitate/7503-adrian-chifu-primul-consilier-roman-in-italia-qcandidez-la-postul-de-primarq.html

[3] ***Georgeta, "badante" in Piemonte: "My life is here, I am better off in Italy"*** available at
http://www.gazetaromaneasca.com/component/content/article/36-

comunitate/7488-georgeta-badante-in-piemonte-qviaa-mea-e-aici-mi-e-bine-in-italiaq.html

[4] *The Romanian Hero from the A4 Highway* available at http://www.emigrantul.it/eroul-de-pe-autostrada-a4/

[5] *Murder in Calabria: the priest's body was found with a broken skull in front of the church /A 26 years' old Romanian was arrested* available at http://www.gazetaromaneasca.com/observator/35-actualitate/7588-crim-in-calabria-corpul-preotului-a-fost-gsit-in-faa-bisericii-cu-craniul-sfrimat-roman-de-26-de-ani-arestat.html

[6] *The body of a Romanian worker, disposed of at a dump in Italy* available at http://www.emigrantul.it/cadavrul-unui-muncitor-roman-aruncat-la-gunoi-in-italia/

An English translation of the articles:

[1] *Dora: a Romanian woman without fear of the crisis* available at https://www.dropbox.com/s/s3ktaidaxl4qmuw/Dora%20a%20Romanian%20woman%20without%20fear%20of%20the%20crisis.pdf?dl=0

[2] *Adrian Chifu, the first Romanian town councillor in Italy: "I will run for the position of Mayor!"* available at https://www.dropbox.com/s/wb5jndiiutuvr5t/Adrian%20Chifu%20the%20first%20councillor.pdf?dl=0

[3] *Georgeta, "badante" in Piemonte: "My life is here, I am better off in Italy"* available at https://www.dropbox.com/s/e4ohbibd2v712sf/Georgeta%2Cbadante%20in%20Piemonte%20My%20life%20is%20here%2C%20I%20am%20better%20off%20in%20Italy.pdf?dl=0

[4] *The Romanian Hero from the A4 Highway* available at https://www.dropbox.com/s/xq836v4zyxrke52/The%20Romanian%20Hero%20from%20the%20A4%20Highway.pdf?dl=0

[5] *Murder in Calabria: the priest's body was found with a broken skull in front of the church /A 26 years' old Romanian was arrested* available at https://www.dropbox.com/s/sdpof7ydpwj37ej/Murder%20in%20Calabria.pdf?dl=0

[6] *The body of a Romanian worker, disposed of at a dump in Italy* available at https://www.dropbox.com/s/wjya0ks8z8u886g/The%20body%20of%20a%20Romanian%20worker.pdf?dl=0

Roxana Bratu is currently a PhD candidate in Sociology at University of Bucharest, Romania. Her main research interests include happiness and migration studies, with focus on qualitative methods.