

Government, God and Family:
A Multi-Modal Analysis of Stories and Storytelling in an Online Social Movement

by

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the online recruitment and mobilization of followers in a social movement. In this study, I identify and analyze how certain narratives were produced, distributed and recirculated online by a social movement organization that depicted players in the movement in ways that engaged followers in actions of advocacy and support. Also, I examine how particular narratives were taken up, negotiated, amplified, and distributed by online supporters who eventually become co-tellers of the narrative and ultimately advocates on behalf of the social movement. By examining a selection of media statements, open letters, protest speeches, blogs, videos and pictures, I show how online practices might contribute to inspiring and mobilizing action or responses from a large number of followers. Data include selected excerpts from an online social movement that began in Norway in 2015 and later gathered momentum and strength outside of Norway and Europe. This multi-modal analysis of digital practices demonstrates how collaboratively produced narratives (e.g., of suffering, sorrow, persecution or resilience) emerge and gain traction in the digital space, the relationship between the temporal and spatial dimensions of narrative, and the role of collective memory in building a sense of community and shared identity. Demonstrating the dialogic and interactional dimensions of meaning-making processes, this case study informs how we might theorize and understand the role of identity and narrative in the emergence and amplification of social movements.

DEDICATION

To Stu, Natalie and Nate.

This dissertation is also dedicated to the loving memory of my parents, Georgeta and Neculai Stegărița.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vi
CHAPTER	
1. LITERATURE REVIEW	1
Research Questions	3
An Overview of Social Movement Theory	3
Social Movements and Computer-Mediated Communication	9
Processes of Social identification	12
Significance of the Study	17
Personal Reflexive Statement	18
2. CASE CONTEXT: OVERVIEW.....	19
Research Context: A Timeline of the Bodnariu Family Case	19
Romania: Historic Context and Facets of Romanian National Identity	26
Romanian Diaspora and Collective Identity	28
Europe and Child Protective Services	33
The Case of Norway and Barnevernet	38
3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	43
Data Collection	44
Sources of Data and Data Selection	46
Data Analysis	51
Narrative and Narrative Analysis	52
Narratives in Social Movements	54
Multi-modality and Stories in the Digital Space	55
Limitations of the Study	57

CHAPTER	page
4. "NOBODY LOVES OUR CHILDREN LIKE WE LOVE THEM:" COLLABORATIVELY NARRATING PERSONAL SUFFERING	59
"The Family is the Only Piece of Heaven Left on this Earth"	60
Summary	106
5. "YOU KNOW, US, ROMANIANS, WE WALKED THIS PATH BEFORE:" INVOKING COLLECTIVE MEMORY AS A STRATEGY OF UNIFICATION	108
"We Come from a Communist Regime, and We Know What That Means: Framing the Understanding of the Present Thru the Experiences of the Recent Past	110
"They All became Allah's Godchildren"	125
"In European Tradition, the Individual is Subservient to the State": Narrating Allegiance. Europe vs. America, a Revisited Relationship	133
Summary	139
6. NARRATING THE OTHER, DEBUNKING THE NORWAY MYTH: FROM INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE TO IMMORALITY	141
"Norway is a neo-communist regime. Period!": Norway, a Counter-narrative of Socio-political and Moral Failure	142
Summary	182
7. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS	184
Collaboratively Narrating Personal Loss	185
Study Implications	191
REFERENCES	192
APPENDIX	
A CODEBOOK SAMPLE 1	202
B CODEBOOK SAMPLE 2	204

APPENDIX

page

C IRB Exemption 206

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Family Portrait in Norwegian Attire	67
2. Family Portrait in Street Protest.....	67
3. Electronic Petition	72
4. Interview with Maria Iliescu	84
5. Video Christmas Card	89
6. Video Christmas Card at Min. 0':17"	90
7. Video Christmas Card at Min. 0':40"	91
8. "Let's Not Let Them Be Alone for Christmas #Bodnariu"	94
9. Global Support for Marius and Ruth Bodnariu Family	96
10. Global Support for Marius and Ruth Bodnariu Family - Grandparents	97
11. Global Support for Marius and Ruth Bodnariu Family - Friends	98
12. Reunited	105
13. "On the Barricades, for the Freedom of Bodnariu's Family 5 children!" ...	123
14. Protest in Washington, DC	137
15. "Norway, Return the Children to Bodnariu Family!"	149
16. "Norway, Stop Child Kidnapping"	151
17. "Barnevernet = Childhood Killer"	151
18. "Norway, Let the Children Back to Their Family"	152
19. "Norway, Do Not Separate Bodnariu Family"	151
20. "Norway, Do Not Separate Them"	153
21. "Reunite the Bodnariu Family"	154
22. Protest – Bucharest, Dec. 19, 2015	155
23. Protest Cluj- Napoca, Romania - Jan 9, 2016	164
24. Protest - Ottawa, Canada – March 3. 2016	165

Figure	page
25. Global Protest Pro-Bodnariu, April 16, 2016 - First Frame	168
26. Global Protest Pro-Bodnariu, April 16, 2016 – Second Frame	169
27. Global Protest Pro-Bodnariu, Vienna, Austria, April 16, 2016	175
28. Global Protest Pro-Bodnariu, Brisbane, Australia, April 16, 2016	175
29. Global Protest Pro-Bodnariu, New York, USA, April 16, 2016	176
30. Global Protest Pro-Bodnariu, London, England, April 16, 2016	176
31. Global Protest Pro-Bodnariu, Bucharest, Romania, April 16, 2016	177
32. Official Global Protest Statement	178
33. Norway – Word Cluster	180

CHAPTER 1

LITERATURE REVIEW

Within the last couple of decades, the Internet has been used as a venue for convenient shopping or entertainment, but also an effective vehicle for distributing messages created by community-based or political activists; for raising awareness about poverty, discrimination, human rights violations, education, environmental issues and global health; and for influencing the outcome of another nation's presidential elections.

Thanks to the immediacy, interactivity, accessibility and multilateral character of online/internet communication, the Internet and social media platforms have recently become spaces for campaigns aimed at raising awareness about social and political issues around the globe. In some cases, activism conducted in the digital space leads to an off-line, street presence, mostly in the form of protests, which in turn have the potential to generate social change. Such is the cases of the anti-government uprisings that occurred between 2010 and 2012 known as the "Arab Spring," in which social media played a critical role in information dissemination and resource mobilization, consequently leading to regime changes (Ahy, 2014; Davison, 2015; Jung, 2016; Esposti, 2017). Similarly, the recent "Black Lives Matter" movement aimed at raising awareness about contemporary racial discrimination in America uses the affordances of the digital space to create as a new public sphere dedicated to a continuous debate about race (Haddad, 2018; Edrington & Lee, 2018; Schuschke, & Tynes, 2016). Most recently, "Me Too," the grassroots movement against sexual harassment and violence developed into a global phenomenon, during which the digital space became an instrument to bring awareness about widespread issues of abuse of power in various professional settings, from the film industry to media and politics (Rodino-Colocino, 2018; Baker, 2018).

In a study of recruitment strategies in social movements, Polletta (1998) argues that by now researchers in sociology, history, psychology and legal theory agree that social movements achieve greater mobilization when, in addition to slogans and pleas, the organizers also tell stories. This study examines how stories produced, displayed, performed and circulated in digital spaces help to create the sense of empathy and collective identity needed to mobilize or inspire actions of advocacy and support. This study examines the ways in which certain narratives about parenting, Norwegian authorities, and the past were collaboratively created and distributed in and through online interaction in order to build and maintain increasing levels of community-based support.

This analysis of data is informed by theories of social movement structure and collective identity construction and theories of cyberactivism. A multi-modal qualitative analysis of selected excerpts from artifacts demonstrate how public statements posted and shared on the Internet (e.g., via social media and email correspondence) characterize the family, community and the adversary and invite engagement based on shared religious and civic values. In this study, I examine official and unofficial campaign documents (e.g., online petitions, press releases, videos) from the movements' official website, as well as Facebook posts (e.g., press releases, e-mail campaigns, video messages, pictures and daily updates) by the parents and their advocates to show how they contribute to the construction of a personal narrative of trauma and loss. I also examine user comments in response to postings on the family's/movements official Facebook page that include displays of empathy, solidarity and action and contribute to the amplification, re-telling and distribution of the personal narrative of trauma. The data selected for this study also include those artifacts (statements, protest speeches, open letters, blogs etc.) produced by the social movement organization that reference experiences of past

collective trauma (e.g., communism and Islamic invasions). The data excerpts examined also present depictions of “the other” (e.g., Norwegian child protective service, government, non-Christians etc.) by the social movement organization and users’ responses that contribute to the co-construction of the narrative of institutional abuse and immorality crafted to label the adversary.

Research questions

This study is guided by the following questions:

1. What kinds of stories did the organizers of the Pro-Bodnariu movement create? Which stories received the most visibility, support and participation in early stages of the movement?
2. How did online supporters of the movement respond to these stories? What aspects of these stories seemed to resonate with the online users/viewers?
3. In what ways did these stories change throughout the course of the movement? How did the audience’s response and participation influence the content and form of certain stories?

An overview of social movement theory

This proposed study aims to examine the collective actions geared toward information dissemination, advocacy and mobilization conducted on behalf of the Bodnariu family, in an effort to secure the return of their five children removed from the family home by the Norwegian child protective services agency Barnavernet. This “distinctive way of pursuing public politics” (Tilly 2004, p.7) as a collective, united body fighting the injustices perpetrated by an antagonistic “Other” enacted by the Romanian-Americans for the Reunification of Bodnariu family and its affiliates is consistent with Tilly’s definition of a social movement. The Pro-Bodnariu initiatives are also compliant with della Porta & Diani’s (2006) description of social movements

as actions of groups who share a well-defined collective identity engaged in “conflicting relations with clearly defined opponents” (p.20), and who are connected by vast grassroots, informal networks.

In order to facilitate the understanding of the dynamics of collective action, the following section will first provide a broad overview of fundamental concepts and arguments located at the core of social movement theory, especially as they pertain to the most current approaches professed by new social movement scholarship. After a brief introduction to social movement theory, this section will focus on the exploration of the various takes on the concept of collective identity, perceived by new social movement theory as a critical component in understanding the ways in which adherents are inspired, mobilized and engaged in collective action.

According to a framework proposed by Tilly (2004), social movements are built on the synergy of three components: a) “a sustained, organized public effort making collective claims on target authorities” (let us call it a *campaign*)” (p. 3); b) the use of various forms of political action “performances” such as pamphleteering, rallies, protests, petitions, and media statements released by “special purpose” coalitions or associations (*repertoire*); and c) “concerted public representations of WUNC (wordiness, unity, numbers, and commitment)” (p.4) (*WUNC display*) on the part of the movement’s leadership and their followers. In my study I will be of the pro-Bodnariu movement I will use these all three categories as a heuristic for data mining and organization.

In addition to the characteristics defined and described by Tilly, scholars have also identified four distinct stages of social movements, starting with the “social ferment” (Blumer, 1995), re-named by more recent studies as emergence, to coalescence, bureaucratization and ultimately decline. I will be referring to these four stages identified in my social movement theory as a road map and analytical tool for

the examination of the pro-Bodnariu movement in order to illustrate its chronology and development and outcomes as a process and a “deliberate voluntary effort to organize individuals to act in concert and thereby achieve a strong group influence to make or block changes” (Flynn 2011, p. 26).

The emergence stage, characterized by some form of individual discontent, potentially generates small scale grievances, such as complaints to local media. If at this stage of dissent there is some form of organization, the goal of the “agitators” (social movement organization) is to raise awareness of the contentious issues and develop a larger sense of dissatisfaction. When expressions of discontent surpass the individual level and collective action informed by clear objectives begins to occur, a social movement enters its coalescence stage, driven by the emergence of leadership and the formal showcase of power. As participation grows and actions require advanced organization, social movements attain a level of “formalization” (Blumer, 1995), characterized by the coalition-based strategies implemented by professional (paid or volunteer) staff or individuals with specialized knowledge and access to decision-makers and the political elite (della Porta & Diani, 2006; Christiansen, 2009). Christiansen highlights the critical importance of the formalization stage, arguing that the success of social movements is contingent upon the strength of these bureaucratic organization to carry on demands on behalf of the group. A social movement reaches a final stage when the demands of the group have been either successfully met, or when it reaches failure either by repression by the authorities, co-optation of the leadership by the opposite side or self-disintegration. As my study will follow the chronological development of the Pro-Bodnariu movement, examining and describing each of the formal stages identified below will enable my understanding of its progression and characteristics, as they pertain to each phase of the collective actions.

Social movement theory argues that social movements operate through “the use and manipulation of frames of information” (Flynn 2011, p. 90). The concept of framing and its use in collective actions implies that movement participants are actively involved in the “production and maintenance of meaning for constituents, antagonists, and bystanders or observers” (Benford & Snow 2000, p. 613). Introduced by Goffman (1974), the concept of frame represents a “schemata of interpretation” that allows individuals “to locate, perceive, identify, and label” (p. 21) occurrences and events in a meaningful way, as they serve to organize action. Collective action frames, as defined and described by Benford and Snow (2000) are “action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of social movement organizations” (p.614). During the last two decades, scholars (Wilson, 1973; Benford & Snow, 2000) focused on addressing the two features of collective action frames identified as the a) “core framing tasks” used to detect and articulate the problem (“diagnostic framing”, propose a remedy (“prognostic framing”) and call of action (“motivational framing”); and b) the discursive, strategic and contested processes that support, motivate and drive mobilization and action proposed by the former. In their discussion of framing processes and social movements, Benford and Snow (1992) identified the presence of broad, generic “master frames” such as rights frames, choice frames or environmental justice frames. As argued by Gamson et al. (1982) and confirmed by further studies (Čapek 1993; Best 1987; Jasper & Poulsen 1995), “the injustice frame” represents the most ubiquitous core diagnostic frame used by social movements seeking to remedy certain political, social or economic problems. As part of the problem identification function, the diagnostic framing seeks to cast blame and assign responsibility, while establishing boundaries between the protagonists and the antagonists of the social movement, a process labeled by Gamson (1995) as

“adversarial framing.” While many social movements share a master frame as part of the problem identification, the second task of prognostic framing sets them apart, as strategies of organization and action may differ from case to case. According to Benford (1993) and Gamson (1995), the third and last core framing task known as the “motivational framing” of the issues presents the justification and rationale for action by using a “vocabulary of motives.” In his study on the US nuclear disarmament movement, for instance, Benford (1993) demonstrated that the identified socially constructed vocabularies of “severity,” “urgency,” “efficacy,” and “duty” provided participants with compelling arguments to engage in supporting action. While confirming that participants’ involvement in a social movement greatly depends on the social construction of reality and of a rationale to adhere to its remedy articulated by a vocabulary of motives, Benford also expressed his surprise at the scattered attention this topic received in scholarship.

A second dimension of the collective action frames identified by scholarship (Gamson 1992; Snow & Benford 1992; Čapek 1993; Johnston 1995) pertains to the three overlapping practices involved in the frame development defined as discursive, strategic and contested. Snow and Benford (2000) argue that the discursive processes, whether speech acts or written text that emerge in the construction, development and maintenance of a social movement include two components, namely frame articulation and frame amplification. While the first is concerned with sense-making and providing “connection and alignments of events and experiences so that they hang together in a relatively unified and compelling fashion” (p. 623), the latter encompasses “punctuated and accented” issues, usually illustrated by movement slogans. The strategic processes have been defined as the practical, goal-oriented actions directed toward achieving recruitment, mobilization, resources, etc., while the contested processes represent either “counter-framing” by the adversaries

or media or internal disputes within the social movement organizations, defined by Goffman (1974) and Benford (1993) as "frame disputes." As part of the frame amplification process, Benford and Snow (2000) stress the importance of not resuming reach-out efforts to the movement's "somewhat powerless" (Paulsen and Glumm, 1995) beneficiaries, but to seek external supporters or conscience constituents, as identified by the theory of resource mobilization theory proposed by McCarthy and Zald (1977). In a study of resource mobilization in the case of a coalition of social movement organizations' effort to reform private psychiatric hospitals in Texas, Paulsen and Glum (1995) demonstrate the importance of bridging beneficiary and conscience constituents by amplifying the commonalities between the two groups. In the case of the advocacy for the rights of the disabled analyzed by Paulsen and Glum, for example, the link between the beneficiaries and conscience constituents were established through a frame alignment between the two groups, by breaking down the stereotypical image of the mentally ill individuals, and their depiction as neighbors and peers. In other words, conscience constituents contributed to breaking the "culture of silence" (Freire, 1970) surrounding mental illness, and their actions gave a voice to disabled individuals.

This form of empowerment referenced by Paulsen and Glumm (1995) is enhances a group's ability to exercise agency, which in turn enables certain strategic choices in pursuit of its advocacy related goals. As Jasper (2002) argues, "if agency means anything, it would seem to involve choices" (p. 2). The concept of agency, defined by Vitanova, Miller, Goa and Deters (2014) as "people's capacity to act purposively and reflectively as they engage in relationships with other human beings, "(p.4) becomes a measure of the organization's self-worth and pride, which in turn can influence others to re-think their own positions and consequent actions. In the particular case of the Bodnariu movement, I will examine the way in which discursive

practices in the digital space facilitated community empowerment, determined future actions and contributed to the group's perception of self and others.

In their work on agency and voice in four separate social movements, Dugan and Reger (2006) determined that agency is influenced on one hand by the "external context and opportunities," such a crisis situation and "internal processes," or the understanding by the group members that they are "vital to the community and members provide needed skill" (p. 476). As Dugan and Reger (2006) conclude, the successful outcome of a social movement is greatly dependent on the way in which the groups exercise a strong and sustained sense of agency, empowerment, focus and purpose. This theoretical approach which effectively establishes a correlation between agency and the successful outcome of a social movement has direct applications in the case of the Pro-Bodnariu campaign, dominated by a discourse of righteousness and empowerment which enabled a small group to evolve into a strong and representative challenger of the Norwegian government's policies.

Social movements and computer-mediated communication

As demonstrated by recent research and scholarship, the use of the Internet and social media also became a critical tool used by social movement organizations to disseminate information, raise awareness, conduct recruitment, empower its participants and ultimately organize and coordinate action (McCaughey & Avers, 2003; Vegh 2003; Ayers, 2003; Gurak & Logie, 2003; Garrido & Halavais, 2003; Kissau, 2012; Sandoval-Almazan & Gil-Garcia, 2014). In the volume dedicated to the various emerging features and practices related to online political activism, labeled by the authors as "cyberactivism," McCaughey and Avers (2003) argue that modern technologies can indeed become "agents of progressive social change" (p. 2), and reflect on the specific ways in which the Internet influences framing, mobilization and organization of collective action. In a retrospective of the evolution and role of the

Internet and various its digital platforms in shaping the relationship between the various actors involved and their adversaries, Sandoval-Almazan and Gil-Garcia (2014) agree that information technologies have “the potential to strengthen social movements and ultimately transform society” (p. 365). From the pioneering use of e-mail to communicate their grievances around the world by the Zapatista movement in Mexico in 1994, to the online organization of a massive protest against the World Trade Organization in 1999 during the “Battle of Seattle,” and later the spread of anti-government actions in Syria, Egypt, Tunisia and Iran known as the “Arab Spring,” social activists have been relying on computer mediated technology to gain global support in pursuit of democracy and social justice.

The affordances of the Internet vastly surpass in effectiveness of television, radio or printed media. In time, recruitment and organization evolved from the static format of newsletters, bulletin boards and websites to the use of interactive social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube thus enabling a new dynamic of social movements (Ayers, 1999) which allow innovative forms of community building and collective action. In his classification of online forms of activism, Vegh (2004) explains that in order to achieve their traditional goals, activists use either Internet-enhanced or Internet-based strategies. In the same study, Vegh (2004) identifies several areas of Internet activism representing progressing stages that lead to collective action. According to Vegh’s typology, also recognizable in the pro-Bodnariu movement, the first step, defined as the awareness and activism area, consists in the creation of “information-distribution networks” (p. 73) that use websites and e-mail distribution lists to raise public awareness about the respective grievances. As the goal of online advocacy is carrying out action, the second step concerns organization and mobilization. In this particular category, Vegh points out to three ways of using the Internet to mobilize participants. One of the approaches uses the

digital space to call for offline action, by sending e-mails or posting announcements on a website about a protest or demonstration. In a second scenario, the Internet enables calls for an action usually carried out offline, but that can be accomplished more effectively online, such as calls to reach out to a certain decision-maker through e-mail.

In their discussion of cyberactivism, McCaughey and Avers (2003) attribute the reliance of social movement organization on the Internet to several of its particularities, including its immediacy, interactivity, accessibility and multilateral character that affords real-time action, sharing and participation by an unlimited number of actors. With a click of a mouse, online communities can expand and build "instant ethos" (Gurak and Logie, 2003) as in the digital space, "exigencies come together quickly and can snowball in a matter of days or even hours" (p.30). In a detailed comparison of between traditional forms of activism and the two subsequent stages of cyberactivism, labeled chronologically as 1.0 and 2.0, Sandoval-Almazan and Gil-Garcia (2014) elaborate on the characteristics identified by Avers (2003), demonstrating the progression of social movements from local to global thanks to the Internet enabled permanent recruitment and the constant, instant, continuously updated flow of data. Sandoval-Almazan and Gil-Garcia (2014) argue that while in the case of traditional social movements, the interaction between the participants tends to end on the street, after protests and demonstrations, cyberactivism 2.0 enables an uninterrupted engagement, irrespective of time or space restrictions.

Examining the specific means employed by the various groups to stake their claims, Tilly (1986) coined the term "repertoire of contention." With the development of Internet based platforms and their increased use in virtual activism and advocacy related activities, the concept has been extended to a "repertoire of electronic contention" (Costanza-Chock, 2003, p. 1) to define "the total collection of online

tactics deployed within the digital space by various groups” (Rolfe, 2005. p. 66). A host of multi-media tools, including text-based content such as newsletters, chat rooms, forums, open comments to news or articles or petitions, complemented by audio or visual images potentially serve as mechanisms for information dissemination, bonding with and engaging support from like-minded groups and individuals, fundraising and mobilization. Websites serving as command posts for various organizations are also repositories of protest-related electronic downloadable and printable materials. The availability and accessibility of electronic materials contribute in turn to reducing communication and coordination expenses, which in turn create increased participation (Bonchek, 1995).

Informed by theories of social movement structure and collective identity construction and theories of cyberactivism, this proposed research project investigates the ways in which a campaign gained attention and traction and visibility over time to eventually morph into a social movement. By creating an effective campaign based on an extensive repertoire and a discourse of unity and collective action, complemented by a versatile use of technology and digital spaces, the organizers of the social movement attracted and engaged a fast-growing network of supporters, who then became active participants in the social movement itself.

Processes of social identification

When a social movement organization manages to gather protesters from 71 cities in 30 countries across 10 time zones in 12 hours of continuous and unprecedented demonstrations against the practices of the Norwegian Child Protective Services (Barnevernet), as in the case of the Pro-Bodnariu international “day of action,” a reasonable assumption could be that the participants have been driven to action by strong shared beliefs, a sense of belonging to a common cause and to the group promoting it. As argued by social movement scholars (Melucci,

1989, 1988; Taylor & Whittier, 1992; Snow, 2001; Hunt and Benford, 2004), common understandings of reality and actions related to these perceptions are part of the group's collective identity. Described by Melucci (1996) as "an interactive and shared definition produced by several individuals (or groups at a more complex level)," collective identity is "concerned with the orientations of action and field of opportunities and constraints in which the action takes place" (p.44). In other words, individuals are prone to engage in social relationships that are informed by shared values, principles and beliefs which negotiated collectively at a sociocultural level create a sense of cohesion, empowerment and agency leading to a commitment to collective actions on behalf of a certain cause or ideal.

Widely explored by various areas of social sciences, collective identity represents a key concept examined by scholars representing new social movement theory (Pizzarno 1978; Cohen 1985; Melucci 1985, 1989; Touraine; 1985). According to the proponents of new social movement theory, collective identity represents the distinguishing element between traditional class-based and new social movements, a view challenged by other scholars (Rupp & Taylor 1990; Taylor & Whittier 1992) who contend that processes of identity construction have been historically crucial in all forms of collective action. The various definitions of collective identity used by the new social movement scholars have been informed by Alberto Melucci's (1980, 1988, 1989, 1995, 1996) theory based on the examination of emergent European new social movements (feminist, environmental, etc.) in which the concept of class consciousness that accounted for participation in traditional collective action was no longer relevant. In fact, according to Hunt and Benford (2004), "in a sense, class consciousness came to be replaced by collective identity as the factor accountable for the actors' engagement and participation in social movements" (p.437). The case of the Bodnariu movement, the unified efforts of the

coalition of Romanian Evangelical churches, religious media outlets, legal and political actors, human rights activists and average participants prove Hunt and Benford's theory, demonstrating that action based on solidarity between like-minded individuals can lead to a successful outcome based on collective identity markers other than class, such as religion or political orientation.

The "notoriously abstract" (Flesher-Fominaya, 2010) concept of collective identity responds to questions regarding both the ways in which individuals adhere and commit to a social movement, as well as the means by which movements establish commitment and cohesion among their participants. According to Melucci (1995), collective identity involves three dimensions. The first component is represented by a cognitive framework encompassing the goals, instruments and actions defined and articulated through a shared "language" materialized by a respective set of "rituals, practices and cultural artifacts" (p. 44). The second dimension, the relational component, consists in the network of relationships between the participants, who cooperate, negotiate, and undertake decisions through various forms of organization and communicative channels. Lastly, Melucci argues that "a certain amount of emotional investment" (p.44) which allows individuals to develop a sense of belonging is a "required" defining component of collective identity, as "passions and feelings, love and hate, faith and fear are all part of a body acting collectively, particularly in areas of social life like social movements that are less institutionalized" (p. 45). The latter dimension is particularly prevalent in the case of the Bodnariu family, in which the bottom-up collective action is built on the highly emotionally charged narrative, invoking family values and integrity, and soliciting support in correcting wrongdoing. Setting side by side Melucci's theory of collective identity and Tilly's (2004) social movement theory one can find a striking similarity. Melucci's collective identity's cognitive framework corresponds to Tilly's

ideological structure ("campaign") according to which social movement organizations stake their claims. Similarly, Melucci's collective identity relational component is reflected in Tilly's "forms of political action" (coalitions, associations, rallies, meetings, petitions), all forms of and engagement and participation fundamentally based on networking and bonds. The final component of collective identity defined by Melucci as emotional investment is mirrored by Tilly's "WUNC", or the display of "worthiness," "unity," "numbers" and "commitment," all requiring affective involvement by the social actors engaged in collective action. Considering that the theoretical framework of collective identity proposed by Melucci and the social movement theory developed by Tilly are nearly superimposing, it seems logical to argue that collective consciousness represents the backbone of social movements, and that the three dimensions identified by both scholars will serve as a sound guide for data mining and analysis in the Pro-Bodnariu case.

Whether defined as a "process" (Melucci, 1995) or a "product" (Snow, 2001) of collectively organized actions, collective identity must undergo construction, perceived as one of the most important tasks of any social movement (Gamson, 1991). According to Melucci (1995), collective identity is not a given or a "thing" (p.50), but rather a dynamic "process of 'constructing' an action system" (p. 44), based on the understanding and negotiation of shared meanings. In a study of contemporary lesbian feminist movement in the United States, Taylor and Whittier (1992) propose a widely-referenced framework for analyzing the construction of collective identities in social movements. Based on Touraine (1985) and Melucci's (1989) approach to the social movement of the "we" engaged in challenging dominant groups, Taylor and Whittier (1992) propose three concepts as analytical tools for understanding the construction of collective identity. First, the notion of boundaries, defined as the "social, psychological and physical structures that

establish differences between a challenging group and a dominant group" (p. 111) represent a central element in the construction of collective identity, as they highlight the group's communalities, as well as their differences from the opposite "other". Taylor and Whittier (1992) argue that in order for subordinate groups to construct and project a positive identity, they are required to distance themselves from the standards and structures of the dominant society and create "new self-affirming" values. In the case of the referenced study, the differentiation from the mainstream society lead to the creation of separate institutions, (e.g., women's health-centers, rape crisis centers, spirituality groups etc.) and development of a culture lead by women's values. Elaborating on the concept of boundaries, Snow (2011) also suggests that the essence of collective identity can be found in the shared sense of "one-ness" or "we-ness" rendered by a common set of "real or imagined shared attributes and experiences" between the adherents of a movement, and their opposition to the "others."

While boundaries establish membership, the second step in collective identity construction represents the establishment of an interpretative framework, or the group's consciousness. This step constitutes the formalization of the respective shared experiences and values, conveyed through its repertoire (Tilly, 2004) of statements, speeches, petitions etc. Finally, the way in which social movement participants articulate their resistance and demand change, identified by Taylor and Whittier as "negotiation" stand as the third building block in the construction of collective identity. A closer assessment of the negotiation component points to several forms of interaction between social movement participants the dominant society, described as either private, conducted at the group, and public, displayed before the outside audience. In a different categorization, collective negotiations challenge and undermine the status quo both in an open, explicit manner and in a

symbolic, implicit way. The concepts outlined above will provide the guiding theoretical lens in the examination of process of collective identity construction, namely the way in which the Bodnariu movement created and applied boundaries, developed group consciousness and conducted negotiation on behalf of the affected family and community.

Significance of the study

In this examination of the digital component of the Pro-Bodnariu campaign carried out over several virtual spaces, I aim to demonstrate how the strategic use of storytelling as instrument of recruitment and mobilization allowed news to spread, strengthened resistance, and enabled the grassroots efforts to morph into a global social movement.

Data for this case study include artefacts produced and distributed online by a social movement organized on behalf of and in solidarity with a Norwegian-Romanian family living in Norway.

Known as the Bodnariu case, the public controversy unfolded and captured public attention in Norway, Romania, The United States and beyond from November 2015 to June 2016. The movement produced narratives about the removal of five Norwegian-Romanian children from their family and raised questions about whether the Norwegian government and legal authorities had the right to intervene in the family's affairs. The parents were practicing members of the Pentecostal Church and were accused by Child Protective Services of caregiver abuse and religious indoctrination. The event that catalyzed the removal of the children is said to have been the parental use of corporal punishment as a disciplinary measure (a practice considered illegal in Norway).

As a large portion of the actions related to the Pro-Bodnariu movement have been conducted in the digital space, I will lastly explore scholarship on social

movements that is concerned with the role of computer-mediated communication on the Internet and social media in organizing activism and social movement related activities.

Personal reflexive statement

As a Romanian–American with a significantly lengthy career of teaching Romanian language and culture in a US higher education institution, I have always maintained a close relationship with like-minded scholars from the homeland and abroad, as well as with the various factions of the Romanian diaspora in my current home-state, on both community and personal levels. I initially found out about the Bodnariu case from family members who were seeking my engagement to bring awareness about the situation, and recruit participants for a protest. As a Romanian and a parent, I sympathized with Ruth and Marius Bodnariu, but my involvement in this case was limited to that of an observer. While I neither participated in any actions of protest or solidarity online or in person, nor engaged in any of conversations that took place on social media, I followed the development of the case on a daily basis and observed the interactions between other users on the Facebook page in response to the various posts.

While informed by my background, upbringing and education I utterly respect and abide by family values and traditions, and I completely empathize with the efforts to return the children to their family, I found many contradictions in the way in which the religious conservative faction of the Romanian community (both at home and in the diaspora) depict others (e.g., such as the Norwegian society or liberals) as rigid and unaccommodating of religious freedom, while simultaneously displaying intolerance of other opinions, lifestyles and sensibilities. I must therefore acknowledge that some aspects of this analysis may be subjective to my understanding of the concepts of family, love and equality.

CHAPTER 2

CASE CONTEXT: OVERVIEW

In order to situate and contextualize my study, in this chapter I will provide an overview of the timeline of the Bodnariu case, and of the undertakings associated with its development. I also provide a selected review of key events in Romanian history (especially those that explain collective memories of trauma and community experiences of resilience) with a focus on those that have contributed to a sense of national identity among those of Romanian descent. Because this movement was spearheaded by the Romanian-American Evangelical community and supported by various global Romanian diasporic groups, I include a brief section about the factors and dynamics of Romanian migration and diaspora. This section provides context needed for understanding the significance of the Bodnariu movement as an unprecedented display of mobilization and solidarity of Romanians at home and in the diaspora. As the analysis in Chapters 4-6 will demonstrate, the digital outreach that initially started in the Romanian community eventually expanded to include a larger non-Romanian following, who also contributed to the growth of the movement.

Research Context: A timeline of the Bodnariu family case

In the following section, I describe the details of the Bodnariu family case, the emergence of the online strategies for distributing information and updates about the case to the public, and the evolution of those strategies over a period of seven months. My description of events is chronological and shaped by information made available to the public via the official website (Bodnariufamily.org), by Facebook ("Norway, return the children to Bodnariu family") and by media interviews with the parents conducted by various Romanian, as well as international news outlets (e.g.,

BBC). This background information also covers the ways in which the framing of the movement contributed to an organized online activism in support of the family.

First, I will provide some biographical details about the family. Marius Bodnariu and Ruth met in Romania, where Ruth, a Norwegian nurse, volunteered for a religious organization helping homeless children. Fifteen years ago, the Romanian-Norwegian couple moved into a small farming and fishing community in the municipality of Naustdal, in Western Norway, and they have been raising their five children there ever since. Marius holds a master's degree in Computer Systems Engineering and Applied Informatics from the Polytechnic University of Bucharest, and at the time of the incident was employed as the IT lead at the school district in Redal, Naustdal Hall. Ruth worked as a registered nurse in the pediatric ward of the Norde Central Hospital. Both sides of the family are Pentecostal, a form of Evangelical Protestantism that emerged in the United States in the early 20th century and eventually spread worldwide, including to Romania. Marius's parents and married sisters reside in different areas in the United States and are members of Romanian Pentecostal churches in their respective locations. Marius's brother Daniel, who serves as Pastor at the Philadelphia Pentecostal Church in Bucharest, was one of the movement's initiators.

The Bodnariu family's conflict with the Norwegian legal authorities and government began on November 16th, 2016, when Eliana (9 years old) and Naomi (7 years old), the two older daughters did not return from school as expected. Instead, while she was waiting for the school bus, Ruth received the visit of police and child protective services employees, who removed her sons Matthew (5 years old) and John (2 years old) from the family home. The state workers also informed the mother that, following a phone call they received from the girls' school principal, expressing concerns about the religious upbringing of the children, Barnevernet has

taken over the custody of their two daughters. The same day, the mother was taken to the police station for questioning. Simultaneously, while at work, Marius Bodnariu was escorted to the police station for investigation. The parents were questioned separately without legal counsel or knowledge of the allegations, and released after several hours, with promises of follow-up, while the children were themselves subjected to interviews. During the interviews conducted by social services employees, the children mentioned their religious upbringing and responded to allegedly leading questions by providing examples of situations in which the parents occasionally spanked them. Because Norwegian legislature prohibits any form of violence against children, the following day child protective services returned to the Bodnariu home and removed the four months old nursing Ezeikiel. Barnevernet scheduled an immediate hearing during which the Bodnarius were accused of physically abusing their children. Without any prior warnings or investigation, the children were immediately placed into three different foster homes, 3.5 hours away from each other. Despite the lack of evidence of physical and mental abuse from an extensive medical examination of the children, Barnevernet maintained its original decision based on the testimonies that had been elicited (even though allegedly coerced and manipulated). Visitation rules were also put in place, forbidding the parents to see the girls and allowing them to see the baby twice a week for two hours. Marius Bodnariu was not permitted to visit the boys, who were only allowed to see their mother twice a week. On November 19th, the parents were able to negotiate the placement of the baby into a home closer to their residence. They were also able for the first time since the beginning of their ordeal to obtain copies of official documents in which they were accused of caregiver violence, radical Christianity and religious indoctrination of their children. The complaint addressed to Barnevernet alleged that as a result of the strict Christian upbringing centered on the

belief that God punishes sinners, the Bodnariu children have been subjected to living in constant fear which would eventually impair their emotional development. In accordance with the Norwegian confidentiality law, the Bodnarius were forbidden from making public any official records. Split between visiting their children in different foster homes and the investigation, Marius and Ruth Bodnariu asked their family members in Romania and the United States to raise public awareness about their case.

On November 18th, two days after the removal of the children from the family home, Romanian neo-protestant online media outlet NewsNet Crestin published a plea for prayer on behalf of Marius and Ruth signed by Pastor Daniel Bodnariu, the brother from Bucharest whom the couple contacted for support. Simultaneously, Marius's sisters living in the United States mobilized their respective churches in Chicago. During the next few days, an executive team lead by Pastor Christian Ionescu of the Elim Romanian Pentecostal Church in Chicago initiated various forms of support and advocacy from calls to prayer sent across the Romanian neo-protestant communities in the United States to the establishment of a far-reaching virtual platform composed of a website (Bodnariufamily.org) and social media accounts in Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Eventually, a much larger leading force emerged under the name of "Romanian-Americans for Reunification of the Bodnariu Family," self-described as "a group of community and religious leaders, businessmen, and civic leaders acting on behalf of their communities, including national organizations (Union of Romanian Pentecostal Churches of U.S.A. and Canada, Romanian Baptist Association of U.S.A. and Canada, Assemblies of God International – Romanian Department, Church of God International – Romanian Territorial Office) and media outlets (Credo Television International - Chicago, Genesis Mission Magazine- Chicago, Romanian Television Network – RTN, Chicago,

Romanian Times Newspaper, Portland, OR and the Romanian Tribune Newspaper, Chicago).”

One of the group’s Facebook post from November 16, 2016 included, under the heading, “Christian family persecuted,” the link to a petition published on the Bodnariu family website. The goal of the petition was to gather 50,000 signatures, but the final count registered 64,182 entries. The plea to sign the petition carries the signature of Pastor Cristian Ionescu, “the delegated spokesperson for Romanian-Americans for reunification of Bodnariu family,” who later called the emerging movement “a spiritual battle first and foremost, but not only spiritual” against the “sinister, abusive and demonic organization” of Barnevernet.

On November 23, specialists within Barnevernet conducted a second interview with the older Bodnariu children in order to determine if the case will go to court; two days later, an official press release on behalf of the family announced that a hearing has been scheduled for November 27. On November 30th, the family’s representatives informed the Facebook followers that the court rejected the family’s appeal. On December 2nd, Romanian-Americans for the Reunification of the Bodnariu Family released an action plan which included the implementation of a massive e-mail campaign to human rights and religious organizations, on one hand, and to Norwegian embassies, consulates, and officials worldwide, on the other hand.

A series of diplomatic interventions by the Romanian Government on behalf of the family started shortly after, when on December 4th, a press release by the Romanian Senate announced that Senator Titus Corlăţean presented the Bodnariu case in front of the Committee for Equality and Non-Discrimination of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. The first street protest took place on December 15th, 2015, in front of the Norwegian Embassy in Bucharest. On the same day, Pastor Cristian Ionescu announced that Barnevernet has scheduled a

follow-up investigation of the parents for February; in the meantime, the children remained in foster care and were referred for adoption. On December 17th, two Romanian senators joined Ruth and Marius Bodnariu in the first televised interview hosted by the Romanian TV station Antena 3, a channel that provided extensive coverage of the case throughout its entire duration. Antena 3 is the fourth most watched national TV channel in Romania, known for eye-catching headlines, effervescent talk-shows and sensationalism. The case eventually received coverage from numerous mainstream and religious media outlets in Romania and abroad. The Pro-Bodnariu movement reached an increasingly prominent level of global engagement around Christmas, when supporters of the cause were asked to write to an emotional letter to the Romanian President urging him to support the return of the children; the participants were instructed to conclude with the slogan "Let's not leave them by themselves on Christmas."

From Dec. 2015 to May 2016, thousands of protesters carrying banners with messages such as "Norway, stop child kidnapping," "Norway, do not separate the Bodnariu family," "Norway, return the stole children," "Children belong to the family," or "Barnevernet - childhood killer" gathered on weekly basis in front of Norwegian Embassies and Consulates worldwide. Protesters of all ages lined the streets of cities across the globe, from Bucharest to New Delhi, from Sankt Petersburg to Washington, DC, Milan, Madrid, Hague, Frankfurt, and Athens. On April 16, 2016, over 63,000 people took part in a global protest in 71 cities, with attendance ranging from 4 participants in Nassau, Bahamas, to almost 10,000 people in Oradea, Romania.

After multiple diplomatic interventions, including visits by Romanian dignitaries to Norway, the delivery of a petition with 50,000 signatures to the Norwegian Embassy in Washington DC, the baby was returned to his parents on April

9th, while his brothers and sisters remained in foster care. As the Bodnariu case gained increased international visibility and acquired the support of human rights groups, worldwide religious organizations, and prominent political figures, an unprecedented wave of criticism began to threaten Norway's global reputation. In addition to the multiple grass-roots petitions submitted to the Norwegian authorities by the representatives of the family and independent supporters, a letter signed by 100 attorneys from the United States, Canada, Romania, Germany, South Africa, China, Mexico, Belgium, and Korea and addressed to the Norwegian Prime-Minister Erna Solberg on May 13th called for the immediate and permanent release of the Bodnariu children to their parents, citing violations of the Norway's Child Welfare Act and of the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child. On June 2nd, 2016, the members of the Committee for Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development in the Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe approved to draft a report on Bodnariu's case; the report had been requested by three Romanian senators and supported by representatives from fourteen countries. The goal of the report was to examine if Childcare Social Services (Barnevernet) complied with the human rights standards set forth by the Council of Europe and to make legislative recommendation to the Norwegian authorities.

Finally, after eight months of legal actions, an explosive media campaign, diplomatic engagements and public protests, several days of hearings held in June 2016 ended in a rare decision by the County Social Welfare Board, a non-tribunal, government-appointed entity in charge of solving child welfare related issues: the Bodnariu children were to be released to their parents. Because the Norwegian Government barely commented if at all about this case throughout the course of the seven months of international campaigning, it is difficult to determine what was the tipping point in favor of the Bodnariu family. But whether the Norwegian Government

returned the Bodnariu children as the result of the grievances formulated by Romanian politicians in international organizations dedicated to upholding human rights such as the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe or the ongoing and growing presence in the streets of protesters, the decision in favor of the parents represented a departure from the norm.

Shortly after their reunification, the Bodnariu family visited Marius's native land, and announced their decision to permanently leave Norway and settle in Romania. After a short time-away from the headlines, the reunited Bodnariu family began a gratitude tour of various Pentecostal churches in Romania and appeared in several radio and television interviews. They also spoke at various protests organized by the Pro-Family Coalition, a conservation outlet whose most recent actions included a petition to amend Romania's Constitution to define marriage as a heterosexual union. Recently, Marius and Ruth announced the birth of their sixth child. The Facebook page "Norway, return the children to Bodnariu family" continues to sporadically extend holiday greetings, reflections of their Norwegian experience, especially during anniversaries of certain milestones, and updates on their public appearance. Occasionally, Facebook posts include information about similar cases in Norway, and express solidarity with the respective families.

Although not without precedent, the collective action of protest against Barnevernet and the Norwegian government surpasses in terms of organization and outcome all actions involving the Romanian community at home or abroad.

Romania: Historic context and facets of Romanian national identity

Religious values (which include a certain way of understating parenting) represent only one facet of Romanian national identity, in which Christianity plays an important role. Another facet of Romanianness is oftentimes conveyed in a narrative of historic trauma, in which Romanians depict themselves as survivors of various

forms of persecution and abuse by political regimes (e. g, communism). The goal of this section is to provide a better understanding of the narrative of collective trauma referenced in the Pro-Bodnariu movement by organizers and amplified by users (analyzed in chapter 5).

Indisputably and by all accounts, Romania is a country of intersections, contradictions, and paradoxes. The furthest Eastern former colony of the Roman Empire, situated at the intersection of three bygone superpowers (The Austro-Hungarian Empire, The Russian Empire, and the Ottoman Empire) and their political and cultural influences, Romania is also located at the crossroads of Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and Islam, and is the only country in Eastern and Central Europe with a Romance language. As combatants during both World Wars, Romanians suffered further economic, socio-politic, intellectual and emotional traumas in the aftermath of the Yalta agreement in 1945 between Stalin, Roosevelt, and Churchill which placed Romania under the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union. As a consequence, Romania went through two successive long and cruel dictatorships that ended in a bloody popular uprising in December 1989. But Romania's transition to democracy and neo-liberalism began under the leadership of a neo-communist government. So, from the beginning of the twentieth century alone, Romanians have been subjected to fascism, communism, a post-communist economic and moral collapse, and ongoing corruption at all levels of society, circumstances which in turn lead to several waves of migration. These historical realities serve as the base for several distinct myths about what constitutes Romanianness.

As Romanian historian Lucian Boia (2001) contends, "the life of any community is organized around certain mythical constellations" (p. 5), which in turn constitute the base for identity claims and narratives of belonging or exclusion. Boia's statement is strongly supported by the findings of several inquiries into

articulations of Romanian identity. Trandafoiu (2013), for instance, explains Romanianness as “a complex of both superiority and inferiority” (p. 19). These two feelings represent the pillars of Romanianness, each supported by several deeply embedded myths in the “appendix of nationalist discourse” (Trandafoiu, 2013).

Importantly, as part of their superiority, Romanians are animated by the myth of the “Western duty” (Trandafoiu, 2013). Romanians proudly perceive themselves as “defenders of Christendom” because they protected the Western Europe against the Ottoman invasions, and as important players in the victory against the Axis powers in WWII. Stories of the bravery of the national heroes such as Vlad the Impaler strengthen the belief in Romania’s critical role in stopping Islam from conquering Christian Europe. Stories of the Romanian army’s heroism of the fight against the German forces in WWII, coupled with the perception of the American abandonment of Romania into the hands of the Soviet Union at the end of the war, represent a justification for the claim to “outright European membership” (Trandafoiu, 2013, p. 30), perceived as a long awaited and much deserved vindication.

Romanian diaspora and collective identity

A great deal of the actions concerning the Bodnariu family case have been spearheaded by the Romanian-American Neo-Protestant community, and ultimately resulted in the transnational reach of Romanians in the homeland and globally. Most recently, the influence of diasporic communities and organizations has been increasingly visible in the homeland not only in terms of financial contributions, but also in the form of a religious revival coordinated by US based neo-protestant factions. With resources from abroad, the Pentecostal Church, for instance, registered in Romania an increase of its members by fifty percent, becoming “the

most dynamic religious movement of the post-communist Romania” (Fosztó & Kiss, 2012, p. 55).

The Romanian diasporic landscape has been growing and evolving for the past two centuries. In order to acquire an understanding of the strikingly dense Romanian migration in the last five decades, one must refer to the context of the country’s recent communist past (Diminescu & Lăzăroiu, 2002). Because from the end of WWII to the fall of Nicolae Ceaușescu’s totalitarian regime, statistics about migration to the West and accounts of the lives and experiences of Romanian living abroad surfaced mostly in the form of oral history and the underground literature of exile, conveying an accurate depiction of the period could present some difficulty. In communist Romania, a country with closely guarded borders and travel restricted to the neighbors behind the Iron Curtain, the state maintained a tight grip on immigration and travel. The government rarely granted approvals for official permanent departures, generally after long waiting periods and subsequent harassment by the secret political police known by Romanians as Securitate. By the early 80’, the communist government-imposed austerity measures aimed at the repayment of the staggering external debt Romania acquired as a consequence of the earlier aggressive push for a rapid industrialization of an otherwise largely agrarian country. Such actions caused debilitating shortages on the internal markets which in turn lead to general, but forcibly contained discontent, which oftentimes lead to defections. In addition to systematic defections by intellectuals, some emigrants from communist Romania requested political asylum in the United States invoking the government’s disregards for cultural and human rights, especially as it pertained to religious freedom. At odds with the government and accused of attacking the leadership of the Orthodox church, several neo-protestants pastors were exiled to the United States in the late 70’s (Pope, 1992). From here, they continued to denounce the

violation of religious freedom in Romania, while becoming instrumental in the development of an increasingly large evangelical diasporic faction. As larger numbers of marginalized, oftentimes persecuted or occasionally simply opportunistic adepts of the Neo-Protestant denominations (many Baptist and Pentecostal) solicited asylum in the United States, the evangelical Romanian diasporic community increasingly gained financial, social and political capital, especially with similar organizations from the American conservative right, which in turn enhanced their ability to enable and support new departures from the homeland. The relationship between the Romanian Evangelical community in the United States and the conservative faction of the American political spectrum continues to this day, as illustrated by the case study at the center of this dissertation.

As most displacements from communist Romania bore the mark of either exile or dangerous defection, many arrangements for departure contained a component of discretion or even secrecy, which continued to affect a migrant's relationships both with the homeland and the host land. Once in the receiving country, migrants from Romania maintained just as discrete ties with the homeland, as phone communication was both costly and unsafe. Perceived as potential disrupters of the social order, family members left behind were closely monitored by the Romanian political secret police. Frequently, rightfully or fear-driven, high levels of distrust and suspicion carried over into the country of settlement, inviting caution in relationships with fellow Romanians living abroad, oftentimes suspected of secret collaboration with the communist government in the homeland.

It is therefore justified to claim that defections and asylum seeking by individuals fleeing political and religious persecutions in Romania to the United States and Western Europe during the totalitarian regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu between 1965 and 1989 created an exile diaspora for whom a relationship with the homeland

became strictly symbolic (Șerban–Oprescu & Șerban–Oprescu, 2012). Whether in the form of voluntary departures or forced exile, external mobility during the years between the end of WWII and the fall of communism generated, in Cohen's (1997) terms, a "victim diaspora" in the form of "imagined communities" (Anderson, 1982) of Romanians who had been uprooted and forced into isolation from their homeland. With severed tie from the country of origin but longing for its traditions, Romanians living abroad created an associative model in the form of ethnic gathering and folk festivals centered around the celebration of the homeland's cultural heritage, usually organized under the patronage of the Orthodox church (Trandafoiu, 2013).

The fall of communism in 1989 and the consequent economic downfall lead to massive migration. Romanian migration tripled in 2007, the year of the country's entry into the European Union. According to various sources, the estimated number of Romanians living outside the country in Europe alone is between 2.7 million (Stan & Erne, 2013) and 3.5 million (Otovescu, 2012), figures placing the Romanian diaspora as the second largest in Europe, behind Poland.

The most recent studies explore the role of the Internet and cyberspace (Velicu, 2010; Nedelcu, 2012; Diminescu, 2008; Diminescu & Loveluck, 2014) in the articulation, performance and negotiation of diasporic identity of the "connected migrant" (Diminescu, 2008). Thanks to both increased and strengthened collective diasporic bonds and advanced communication means afforded by technology, most recently migrant grassroots organizations began to play an important civic and political role in the "unique diasporic culture" (Trandafoiu, 2013, p. 193) of Romania.

In an examination of the Romanian diasporic presence in North America, Vieru (2006) argues that Romanians display only sporadic allegiance to collective values and tend to perform only "situational expressions of the ethno-cultural ethnicity" (p. 122) in sub-groups organized mostly around religious affiliations. Vieru

is critical of the “failure of the ethnic institutions to reproduce, reiterate, and nurture a cohesive collective memory” (p. 125), a shortcoming leading to the loss of cohesion of the Romanian community in Canada. But if Vieru’s assessment of the situation of Romanian-Canadian immigrants tends to be rather critical, the work of Gabriel Popescu (2005) on the role of the US based diaspora in granting Romania NATO membership presents a more favorable depiction. Although, as Popescu (2005) admits, only a fraction of the Romanian-Americans is actively engaged in the Romanian community, the existence of long-lasting ethnic media outlets, churches, and organizations such as CORA (the Congress of Romanian-Americans), the Union and League of Romanian Societies from America or Romanian-American Chamber of Commerce is indicative of a relatively well-organized diaspora. As part of the strategy to lobby Romania’s integration in NATO, its American diaspora devised a comprehensive argument based on the idea of ‘sameness’ of values, while attempting to dissipate Romania’s image as “the other” established during the Cold War when Romania belonged to the Soviet Block.

In her depiction of the online practices and identity politics of the diaspora Trandafoiu’s (2013) depicts the dynamics between the “old” and the “new” Romanian diasporas in the United States. While, in Trandafoiu’s view, the new migrants to Western Europe populate mainly the virtual space and rarely engage in actual political action, both waves share “the same concerns with national image, the relationship with the homeland, the life and identity as an immigrant, and the impossible return as their counterparts in Europe” (p. 173). Trandafoiu’s statement was well justified at the time when the book was published, as the large civic involvement of the North American diaspora in Romania’s presidential impeachment referendum of 2012 countered the low participation of diasporic actors in Western Europe and managed to change the entire course of the process initiated by the

Parliament, securing an additional two years of governance. By the presidential election of 2014, however, the Romanian diaspora in the European Union spoke with a much stronger voice not only in terms of their vote, but mostly in their successful effort to unmask in the social media the numerous attempts of the government, and their candidate respectively to sabotage the electoral process abroad.

The case at the center of my study showcased the growing of engagement Romanians in diaspora (in Europe and the Americas) in actions of “empathy and solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement” (Cohen, 1997, p. 515). The mobilization of support in the Bodnariu movement illustrates how actions of solidarity coordinated in the digital space can create and sustain the sense of global collective consciousness and identity.

This chapter provided contextual information about the protagonist (the Bodnariu family/Romanian/Christian community) as well as about the various incidents involving/and perceptions about the antagonist (Norwegian government). This overview was intended as a way of placing the analysis of the way in which narratives have been constructed and disseminated by the family/advocates and amplified by supporters of the Bodnariu family within a contextual frame. This will allow a better understanding of events, religious beliefs and accounts of personal and collective trauma.

Europe and Child Protective Services

This section provides an overview of the broad context in which the Bodnariu case is situated. While the Bodnariu case represents an example of one the many disputes involving the removal of children from their family homes in several countries in Europe, it is also the only situation in which this issue has been addressed publicly in the form of a collective movement.

In a comparative study of children's social services in European countries, Gilbert (2012) notes that because of the newly mandated reporting provision by doctors, nurses, social workers, teachers and other designated groups, within the last decade nine of the ten countries examined reported an increased percentage of out-of-home placements. According to various accounts published by European media outlets, from "The Nordic Page" in Norway (2012) to the "The Telegraph" (2013), "Business Insider" (2015) and "The Spectator" (2016) in England, a significant number of incidents involving out-of-home removals and subsequent placement of children outside the family residence by child welfare authorities occurs in immigrant households in which the understanding of childrearing practices may differ from that of the receiving country. In many such cases, different childrearing practices across and within certain contexts become more than a mere issue of cultural differences. Such a situation has been reported (Nelson, 2012) in the case of an immigrant family from India living in Norway, whose children have been placed in foster care because they have been sleeping with their parents and have been fed by hand rather than with utensils, both common practices in the country of origin. In cases such as this one, children are sometimes removed, resulting in immigrant families entering into mostly private legal custodial disputes with the respective child welfare organizations and/or the government of the respective country. In many other cases, accusations of abuse and the subsequent actions oftentimes occur as a result of disciplinary measures involving physical or emotional punishment by parents, who guided by various traditions, religions or cultural standards, knowingly or not, trespass norms established by the legal system.

An article published in 2006 in the British newspaper "The Spectator" claims that in England, for instance, the number of children seized by social services increased from 802 in 2008 to 2,018 in 2013, while according to the Ministry of

Children and Equality, in Norway the number of children removed from their family homes increased by over 70 per cent between 2008 and 2013, from 945 to 1609 (Fernando, 2016).

Although a report prepared in 2015 by the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe states that most countries do not have a statistical account of the ethnic, minority, religious, immigrant or socio-economic status of the children taken into custody and eventually placed into the foster care system, most cases presented by the media involve migrants from India, Russia, Lithuania, Turkey, Czech Republic and Romania living in Germany, England, Holland and Norway. At times because of language barriers, different cultural or religious practices, insufficient familiarity with the judiciary systems of their new home or limited access to un-bias legal representation, migrants find themselves in critical situations involving child protective services agencies.

As revealed by the media, in England, Germany, Norway, and other European countries child welfare agencies resorted to forcibly taking away children from their families often for unwarranted or unfounded claims, and for reasons related to childrearing cultures and parenting philosophies rather than actions that endanger the safety of the child such as abuse or neglect. In such cases, child welfare agencies would routinely separate families, control contact, or mandate foster care or adoptions.

Other accounts (e.g., Pendergast, 2016) argue that in order to allegedly protect their privacy and the safety of their children living in foster homes, parents have been instructed by government workers to refrain from any communication with the media, including social media. The story of the Latvian twins (Booker, 2013), for instance, has been widely covered in Latvia and Russia, but received

minimal exposure in the Western press. My online search into cases of children removal from 2002 to 2016 lead to only a handful of articles published in English, all alluding to the parents' fear of the government and consequent reservations and secrecy. But in the last couple of years, as computer-mediated communication and social media, in particular, have become a regular aspect of daily life, these new technologies have provided additional mechanisms by which whistle-blowers from children welfare services, human rights activists or even some parents might bring their stories to public view. Encouraged by the anonymity afforded by the new virtual world, opponents of the practices of children welfare agencies in Western Europe have created support groups, chat rooms and Facebook pages in which they are able to unveil the alleged abuses and violations of human rights that have been committed by representatives of child welfare agencies. But these pockets of dissent, while instrumental in sharing stories and expressing outrage against the respective governmental offices and solidarity with the victims, have only had isolated public visibility. An example of such an isolated civic action was a march against the Norwegian child welfare agency Barnevernet, organized by human rights lawyer and whistler-blower Marius Reikeras held in Oslo in 2015. Later that year, Reikeras's services were retained by the Bodnariu family and he became one of the prominent voices of their collective movement.

Oftentimes lacking a social network in the receiving country, intimidated by workers of child protective services and embarrassed by the social stigma carried by the removal of their children, migrant parents visited by child protective services workers often appealed for help to their immediate family in the homeland, who in turn engaged in retrieval actions via diplomatic channels. In 2012, for instance, the English-speaking Norwegian newspaper "The Nordic Page" reported the intervention of the Indian Prime Minister on behalf of the parents of a seized child. These mostly

behind-closed-doors diplomatic actions on behalf on the migrant parents were complemented by small public protests outside Western Europe, such as a demonstration outside the Dutch Embassy in Riga or the Norwegian Embassy in Moscow (Booker, 2013).

At times, the outcome of the generally long diplomatic efforts included the release of the immigrant children from foster homes into the care of relatives in the homeland while the parents face civil suits in the receiving country, and the return of the distressed parents to the country of origin while the children remain in undisclosed locations in the host land.

In several of the reported situations, the drastic measure of seizing children has been oftentimes implemented without parental knowledge and prior investigation, as reported by "Russia Today" in October 2014. As a result, according to press reports, the few families interviewed by the media described an adversarial relationship with the state, dominated by fear and incertitude. In view of these actions involving the removal of children from parental care, labeled by families and media as "legal kidnapping," child welfare agencies and the respective governments gained a sore reputation (Fernando, 2016). Allegations of abuse of power, incompetence, racism, discrimination, cultural insensitivity and human rights violations were mostly made public by media outlets in the migrants' homeland and occasionally in the receiving country. Media outlets labeled child welfare agencies as "ruthless" (Hurd, 2010), "weirdly dysfunctional" (Booker, 2013), and "baby snatchers" (Prendergast, 2016) and accused them of acting "like a mafia" (Ugur, 2015) and "wrecking normal families" (Hurd, 2010).

With regard to the role of the media in articulating the discourse of "child abuse," Hall, Sarangi, and Slembrouck (1997) suggest that what Aldridge (1994) calls the deliberate "vilification" of governmental agencies such as child protective

services by the media has been an intentional and strategic practice aimed at undermining certain political positions and supporting others. This stance argues that some of the recent inflammatory reporting of child removal cases by outfits such as "Russia Today," a state-controlled media outlet, has been guided by the intent to discredit Western European values, and to illustrate the demise of the liberal democracies (Pippidi-Mungiu, 2016).

The Case of Norway and Barnevernet

Among the countries in which media reported incidents involving the hasty removal of children by government authorities, Norway seems to occupy a leading place, a standing in a stark contradiction with the country's known progressive reputation. According to the annual report released by the Reputation Institute in 2016, Norway holds the 5th place among the most reputable countries in the world, with a slight downfall from the 2nd place in 2015. The Corruption Perceptions Index 2015 compiled by Transparency International, a global anti-corruption coalition places Norway in the top six countries in the world, while the report initiated by The World Justice Project Rule of Law ranked the country as second in the world in using indicators such as fundamental rights, open government, absence of corruption, order and security, regulatory enforcement and civil and criminal justice.

Norway's record has been only very rarely publicly challenged. In 2012, for instance, the only printed English newspaper "Nordic Page" reported a dispute between India and Norway over the seizing of two Indian children by the children welfare authorities. The same media outlet reports accusations of human rights abuses, cultural insensitivity, racism, intolerance, abuse of power and incompetence brought forth by Russian media on behalf of two Russian mothers who reported abuses by the Norwegian Child Protective Services.

Considered one of the Western countries with the highest living standards, Norway is a social-democratic welfare state providing a variety of governmental fully funded rights-based universal services for both parents and children, such as financial benefits including family and single parent allowances, free health, medical and dental care, paid maternity and paternity leave, and furlough to care for sick children (Kojan & Lonne, 2012). The Norwegian Social security system also fully or partially subsidizes public schools, kindergarten, child care, after school programs and activities for children (Kojan, 2011). According to Gilbert's (2012) categorization of children welfare systems, Norway follows a family service-oriented model in which parents are working in a partnership with the state to fulfill the families' needs (Pösö, Skivenes, & Hestbæk, 2014), and to provide youngsters with a "healthy childhood" (Križ, & Skivenes, 2014). In order to ensure the well-being of families, the Norwegian government tasked local public welfare authorities with handling child protection related matters within the bounds of international and national legislative norms (Pösö, Skivenes, & Hestbæk, 2014). In addition to adopting the principles outlined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Norway created its own legislative framework in the Child Welfare Act (1992), intended to "protect children from abuse and neglect, and to increase opportunities for children with poor living conditions" (Kojan, 2011, p. 445). In line with the best interests of the child principle as the paramount standard in its legislative framework, the Norwegian Child Welfare Services' ideology places parents as the main responsible party for raising children, with the complementary support of the authorities.

The work of the Norwegian child welfare system is being carried out by two organizations at local and country levels. At a local level, municipalities (*Barneverntjenesten*) benefit from a "high degree of political autonomy in the organization of the services and a high level of professional discretion in the

decision-making about the needs or behavior should be responded to" (Kojan, 2011, p.445). Social workers employed by municipalities conduct the front-line, daily operations of the organization, in ways that differ across the country. The County Social Welfare Board, also an independent administrative organization, is a court-like, executive body involved in decisions regarding recommendations for out-of-home placements made by the local authorities (Kojan, 2011). As demonstrated by the results of several recent studies (Križ & Skivenes, 2010; Kojan & Lonne, 2012; Križ, & Skivenes, 2014; Studsrød, Willumsen & Ellingsen, 2014), some of the approaches adopted by these organizations have had deeply problematic outcomes which, rather than providing the promised support, seemed to have inflicted harm to children and families.

As reported by media and confirmed by official figures, despite the emphasis on prevention and the provision of in-home services, the radical approach of removing children from their family homes and placing them in out-of-home care, represents one of the most controversial and challenged measures conducted by the Norwegian child welfare system. Although out-of-home placements are an obvious contradiction of the official recommendation to use the "the least intrusive form of intervention" (Pösö, Skivenes, & Hestbæk, 2014, p. 478), various sources demonstrate that the number of children removed from home and placed in residential child care facilities doubled in the recent years. Pösö, Skivenes, & Hestbæk (2014), for instance, argue that the number of children placed outside their parental home increased from 5.8% in 1994 to 9.3% in 2011. Research determined that out-of-home placements have had "overwhelmingly problematic and negative outcomes" (Pösö, Skivenes, & Hestbæk, 2014, p.482) for their subjects, ranging from a less healthy lifestyle, less education, persistent dependency on welfare service, to unemployment and suicide.

As Kojan (2011) explains, out-of-home placements are the result of either parents' related issues such as illness, drug abuse, violence, or criminality or child abuse and neglect (physical, mental, neglect and sexual abuse). According to Kojan's findings (2011), less than 4% of the cases are related to child abuse or neglect. However, families living in Norway also report children removal and out-of-home placements as a result of practices that have been allegedly misperceived and misinterpreted as abusive, caused largely by the different understandings of child rearing by parents and child welfare workers. These differences in understanding have been reported by both parties, especially in cases involving migrants to Norway, particularly from countries in which family issues, including raising children remain in the private sphere and outside the realm of governments' interventions. As Kojan & Lonne (2012) remarked, Norway has become a more ethnically and culturally diverse society in the last 20 years, due to the rise in immigration. According to the latest statistics of the Norwegian government, as of January 2017, immigrants account for 13.8 per cent of the total population. The growth of immigration, which seems to coincide with the surge of out-of-home placements, invited academic inquiries into the root-cause of the problem. In a study conducted in 2010, Križ and Skivenes identify communication problems between families and social workers which "act as a barrier for mutual understanding" (p. 9), and in turn lead to a problematic relationship characterized by a reciprocal lack of trust.

While parents complain of the child welfare system's lack of a culturally mindful approach and understanding of child rearing practices, social workers accuse parents of a failure to familiarize themselves and abide by the Norwegian laws. According to the Norwegian child-centric orientation, informed by modern childhood psychology, children have equal participation rights, and must be addressed as their own individuals, "not through their parents" (Pösö, Skivenes, & Hestbæk, 2014).

Children are perceived as “objects of investment” (p.483) for the future, and are to be raised, instructed and educated to become independent and productive adults. In that context, the government places an increased focus on the well-being of the children and holds families responsible for their parenting, based on standards set by the state. A controversial trend in the Norwegian political discourse goes as far as to advocate “replacing the biological principle with the psychological parent principle as the legal norm” (Pösö, Skivenes, & Hestbæk, 2014, p. 486). This stance explains the recent rise in the number of for-profit agencies specialized in residential child care, oftentimes accused by parents and anti-Barnevernet activists of conducting enterprises strictly driven by financial gain, supported by the authorities through the “kidnapping” of children.

These actions performed by the Norwegian child welfare services explain the negative public perceptions, ranging from fear and insecurity to resentment. In survey, Studsrød, Willumsen, and Ellingsen (2014) report that 40.6% of the parents interviewed described exclusively positive experiences, while 30.7% of the subjects conveyed solely negative interactions. Among the chief complaints voiced by parents who experienced interactions with child welfare services were lack of empathy and listening skills from social workers. Others accused social workers of discrimination, dishonesty, and lack of transparency. Feelings of “being accused, under suspicion, scrutinized and discredited by caseworkers lead to “humiliation, embarrassment and stigmatization” (Studsrød, Willumsen, & Ellingsen, 2014, p. 315), and to the labeling of the administrative measures as “brutal, bureaucratic or rigid” (Studsrød, Willumsen, & Ellingsen, 2014, p. 315).

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Research approach

This study of the role of storytelling in the process of recruitment and mobilization in online social movements is a multi-modal narrative analysis of selected artefacts that contribute to the collective articulation and distribution/re-distribution of the Bodnariu case.

This research project consists in a qualitative case study examining the discursive practices of a social movement which began in November 2015 and ended in June 2016. Quantitative indicators (e.g., likes, views, shares, petition signatures, number of participants to various forms of protest) provided either by Facebook or the social movement organization were used in the analysis to trace the community engagement as a result of using various recruitment strategies, textual and otherwise. The clearly defined temporal boundaries of this case, from the date of the removal of the children to the date of the children's return to the family allowed for a structured chronological analysis, as well as a contained and focused inquiry suitable for a small-scale research project.

Case study research has been widely conducted across disciplines, from social work, education, administration, sociology, global media studies, public relations, to healthcare, computer-mediated communication and applied linguistics. From the analysis of a campus response to an attack by a gunman (Assmussen & Creswell, 1995), to the emergence and decline of an anti-deportation campaign for Afghan asylum seekers in Belgium (Wilner-Reid, 2014), and the coverage of Iran's nuclear power program by the Western Journal *The Economist* (Rasti & Sahragard, 2012), case studies focus on specific events, activities, programs, individuals and groups. Because of this specific focus, case studies have been deemed by Merriam (2001) as

able to both provide new theories and directly cast influence on policy and future research. For instance, when it comes to activism and social movements conducted in the ever-changing digital space, case study research (Kahn and Wellner, 2004; Sandival-Amazan & Gil-Garcia, 2014) provides an understanding of how the use of multi-generational information technology, including social media platforms, contributed to the various outcomes of the respective collective actions. The case of the Zapatista movement, for example, generated a lot of research that touched on issues from indigenous identity (Jung, 2003; Saldaña-Portillo, 2002) to globalization (Olesen, 2004; Stahler-Sholk, 2007; Collier & Collier, 2005), neoliberalism (Stahler-Sholk, 2007) and cyberactivism (Garrido & Halavais, 2003; Sandival-Amazan & Gil-Garcia, 2014).

In his discussion regarding the use of the case study approach, Denscombe (2007) argues that this qualitative research design must have the value and potential for generalization, and that findings generated from it should be usable in a larger context. As this research project and the analysis will be based on social movement framework, its findings can find general applicability in similar cases of advocacy and collective action, especially those of cyberactivism. The findings presented here (of the Bodnariu case study) further our understanding of how narratives produced and distributed in the digital space (that are collectively constructed and shared) are instrumental in recruitment and mobilization of large audiences and in facilitating commitment to a certain cause.

Data collection

In preparation for my study, in December 2015 I began conducting the first level of sampling in which I identified the case of the pro-Bodnariu movement as a unique and meaningful unit of analysis for research. Its consistent and growing presence in the Romanian media and online social networks raised my initial interest.

As the case developed, in most instances in an unfavorable manner for the Bodnariu family, so did the number of supporters and the intensity of their engagement, leading to international media attention and coverage, especially in evangelical communities in the United States and Romania.

In order to gain a general understanding of the Bodnariu case, I joined the movement's Facebook page to observe what was being said and by whom but without participating in the conversations I observed. The Facebook page, created and administered by Pastor Daniel Bodnariu from Bucharest, Romania (Marius Bodnariu's brother) was initially entitled "Norway, return the children to Bodnariu family." After the return of the children the page was renamed "Norway, stop destroying families," as the organizers expressed their intention to further participate in actions of advocacy on behalf of other families with similar predicaments.

From this "observation post" (Sprandley, 1980) I engaged in "passive participation" (Sprandley, 1980, p. 59), reading posts by the family and their advocates as well as users' comments. I read these posts in real time in order to learn the rules and techniques of the community and to gain a sense of membership. Later, as part of the data collection, I also downloaded posts *en masse* (Kozinets, 2010, p. 98). I conducted and recorded participant observations. Additionally, in order to familiarize myself with the case, I collected and read a significant number of press releases, articles and blogs from Romanian and international sources. In addition, I watched YouTube videos of interviews with the Marius and Ruth Bodnariu in Romanian and English, debates broadcasted by Romanian, Romanian-American and Norwegian televisions, and footage from the various protests around the world. I also identified several personal blogs dedicated in their entirety or allocating ample space to the Bodnariu case, published in English, Romanian or both by various key actors in the leadership of the movement living in Romania or the United States. In

parallel with the preliminary archival data collection, I created memos and field notes, but did not elicit data (Kozinets, 2010) from the participants.

Sources of data and data selection

This study uses information already available in the digital space, written or spoken in English and Romanian. This approach is consistent with the concept of “Web sphere analysis” as a “framework for web studies that enables analysis of communicative actions and relations between web producers and users developmentally over time” (Foot & Schneider 2002, pg.158; Foot et al. 2003b). This study examines artefacts located on two digital platforms, the movement’s Facebook page (“Norway, return the children to Bodnariu family,” now “Norway, stop destroying families,”) and www.bodnariufamily.org, a website created and managed by “Romanian-Americans for the Reunification of Bodnariu family (self-described as “a group of community and religious leaders, businessmen, and civic leaders acting on behalf of their communities”). The website provides links to three interactive platforms (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram). Although accounts have been established in all three digital platforms, the organizers themselves selected Facebook as the virtual headquarters of the movement. A clarification provided by the family on November 2015 states that the Facebook page “serves as the one place that will update supporters as to developments.” As the movement gained traction and visibility, on Jan 6, 2016, Pastor Ionescu, the family’s spokesperson reiterated the organizers’ decision to use the website, Facebook and his personal blog as the only official platforms. In this post, Pastor Ionescu announced:

Pentru a evita asemenea confuzii și a proteja această cauză nobilă, orice acțiune sau protest care poartă numele sau se referă la familia Bodnariu va origina pe pagina de Facebook a familiei extinse Bodnariu, pe pagina de internet special lansată și pe blogul "Popas pentru suflet." [In order to avoid such confusions and to protect this noble cause, any action or protest that carries the name or refers to the Bodnariu family will originate from this

Facebook page of the extended family, on the specially created website and on the blog "Respite for the soul."] (my translation)

As all the blogs related to the case have been re-posted on the Facebook page, I did not analyze the blogsite "Popas pentru suflet," because it is not exclusive to the Bodnariu case.

For this study, I analyzed many of the movement's official statements publicly available on the "Home" and "About us" pages of the www.bodnariufamily.org website. Located on a static platform, these documents articulate the movement's perspective and grievances. Portions of these documents have been re-circulated within press statements, letters to the Norwegian authorities, e-mails and calls for action. The "Home" page incorporates a family picture, and a text describing the family and the movement's interpretation of the events. These artefacts, together with an electronic petition, a video card posted by the family on Facebook and messages from the parents posted on Facebook, demonstrate how the narrative of personal trauma is spread online the parents and their advocates (see Chapter 4).

The "About us" page, also examined in this study, includes the movement's mission statement, which contains a list of claims and grievances against the Norwegian authorities. This document has been re-circulated on several occasions as well, as part of official protest statements (e.g. on Feb.13, 2015 in San Francisco, CA, and on April 16, 2016 as a shared statement used all 71 locations worldwide). An analysis of this document is part of my examination of the narrative of otherness (see chapter 6).

I also analyze documents posted by the family and/or its advocates on the Facebook page, a dynamic and interactive platform. The data selection is based on several criteria. I selected certain Facebook posts because they represent the first instance in which a certain form of protest/genre is used (e.g., the open letter by

Romanian-American human rights attorney Peter Costea the first in a series of such documents signed by various civil and religious leaders/organizations and supporters). I also selected for analysis documents that showcased articulations of religious/political beliefs/nationalism (e.g., the open letter signed by Costea reads as a statement of Christian/Evangelical beliefs about parenting/the role of the state in childrearing, with excerpts dedicated to collective trauma; the protest speech delivered by Pastor Iuga is mostly about historic permanency, national pride and resilience). My selection of Facebook posts to be analyzed was also influenced by certain quantitative indicators (the number of shares, likes and comments by users,) which suggested instances of resonance with supporters. For instance, I included in the analysis a blog entitled "*Dragă Norvegie, te acuz of abuz*" / "Dear Norway, I'm accusing you of abuse," written by a Romanian Christian journalist because it represents the first instance when the number of likes surpassed 500. I also selected two digital stories (a video Christmas card posted on behalf/featuring the parents, and a digital story of support shared as part of the "Operation Global pictures") that generated large numbers of views (11,249 and 10,743) and were shared over 1000 times (1003/1651).

I also analyzed posts made outside the chronology if they included detailed displays of empathy (as opposed to "Will pray for you" or "God Bless you") and/or whether the post included a rendition of the initial story, additions and/or examples of personal experiences (e.g., in Romania, under communism or personal interactions with the Norwegian system and/or people).

The initial data pool included 333 posts by family and their representatives and several hundred from user comments. arranged in chronological order, in word documents as part of the data layout (Saldana, 2013). I eliminated from analysis posts containing information about protest logistics (the majority of posts in January

and February and on and April 16, 2016 – the day of the global protest) and posts that were redundant (e.g., several posts with same protest schedules and locations). I then conducted open coding and identified three major themes (“Bodnariu,” “Romania” and “Norway”) before creating several categories under each theme: “self” and “about Bodnariu” for the “Bodnariu” category, “communism” “religious values” and “other” for “Romania” category and “state” and “people” under the “Norway” category. These categories captured the content of most original posts (and comments made in response to those posts). Over time, I became increasingly interested in the relationship between the content of certain stories and the audience’s responses and contributions to the circulation of those stories. To try to capture what was going on in practice, I began to keep track of who was authoring what stories, different manifestations of similar stories, and change in storyworld content or format over time. I ended up dividing data coded as “authored by the social movement” into sub-categories of authorship. Some of those categories included “family inner circle” (immediate family members and executive team) and “family outer circle” (pastors, local organizers, outside council, Christian journalists). Although several documents (especially open letters of press statements) contained references to multiple authors, it was clear that everything produced by the social movement had a clear and coherent message.

I also coded for content of stories—keeping track of those stories that focused on aspects of shared experience and/or identity. When coding Costea’s letter, for instance, I noted the references to religious values, the memory of communism, Norway’s practices, and the superiority of Romanian parenting strategies. I then systematically coded the rest of my data in order to identify additional references to these same themes. The excerpts selected for analysis in this dissertation help to

demonstrate larger patterns in the data; they are examples of stories told often and by many.

Stories that were told often, co-constructed by more than one person, and focused on shared past experiences were a priority in my continued analysis. In the end, the particular excerpts selected for analysis represent the kinds of practices and stances adopted by either the family or its representatives—and, importantly, how such practices and stances were taken up and/or re-articulated by supporters. For instance, in the case of the first open letter written by Romanian – American human rights attorney Peter Costea addressed to the Norwegian Ambassador in Romania, I selected excerpts that referenced the collective trauma of the communist experience because such stories were not only repeated by many involved with the social movement, they were actively co-constructed by social movement activists and followers alike. Such stories also appear in other places including the online letter written and posted by a supporter (Romanian attorney Maria Bornea) that was then taken up and recirculated by others across a range of online platforms. As another example, I analyzed the interview given by supporter Maria Iliescu at a protest in Bucharest because it shows how processes of social identification and empathy with Ruth Bodnariu influenced the number of people who came to feel collective solidarity with the family.

During the data selection process, I encountered several challenges, mostly because of the overwhelming amount of Facebook posts. Because of cost related limitations of using NVIVO or other qualitative data analysis software, I purchased a simple, user friendly post- scraper tool (BINO) sold online by a designer from Tunisia. Using the newly acquired data mining software, I had the ability to identify and select Facebook posts based on the number of likes, keywords, chronology and other criteria seemed to be the ideal tool to streamline data. Unfortunately, only a

few days after I purchased BINO, in the light of the Cambridge Analytica scandal (and the allegations that Facebook allowed data mining and profile harvesting ultimately used to target voters in the US 2016 presidential elections,) the newly imposed privacy restrictions lead to the deactivation of BINO. Without being able to conduct any mining electronically, I redirected my data selection back to the manual, pen and paper method.

Data analysis

As part of the data analysis, I conducted a first round of manual in vivo coding and versus coding (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Some of the in vivo codes were eventually incorporated in the titles of the analysis chapters (e.g. "Nobody loves our children like we love them" in the title of chapter 4, and "You know, us, Romanians, we walked this path before" in the tile of chapter 5"). I used versus coding for documents such as the first open letter to the Norwegian Ambassador, in which the author positions the value and beliefs of the Norwegian society in opposition with those of the Romanian evangelicals. In this case, I created categories such as "good vs. evil," "family vs. state," "theism vs. atheism," "liberalism vs. conservatism," "freedom vs. oppression." A copy of pages from the codebook that illustrate the versus coding is included in the appendix. During this round of line-by-line coding I was mindful of both content and style, focusing on the use of lexical features (e.g., verbs, adjectives, personal pronouns), patterns of stylistic, rhetorical and narrative strategies (e.g., figurative language, connotative meanings, comparison and contrast etc.). While coding, I created analytical and methodological memos, which contained reflections about "possible networks (links, connections, overlaps, flows) among the codes, patterns, categories, themes, concepts, and assertions" (Saldana, 2013, p. 45).

I also transcribed and translated video files (e.g., a recording of Pastor Iuga's protest speech) and audio recordings (e.g., the Tepes Radio interview). The translation process came with a couple of challenges. First, translating posts that contained dense uses of the Romanian equivalent of what has been known in English as Christianese, the Evangelical language in which I lack proficiency, turned out to be quite a trying endeavor. To manage this challenge, I asked for the assistance of family members and friends who are members of the Romanian Evangelical community in Arizona. Second, I am aware that translations of certain Romanian idiomatic expressions provide less authentic nuances, despite my careful efforts to render accuracy. To ensure accuracy, I enlisted the help of Dr. Marie-Louise Paulesc, also a native speaker of Romanian, who provided back translations from English to Romanian. In chapters 4-6, when the excerpts used for analysis in this study were published in English, I used the original version of the text. For texts that were published in Romanian, I first included the original Romanian version, followed by my translation of the excerpt in English (in brackets). For lengthier excerpts, I included the original Romanian text in the left column of a table, side by side with my English translation. When the organizers provided bilingual text, I indicated that in the table.

Narrative and narrative analysis

First, in terms of the unit of analysis, I selected narratives/stories because of what they "are" and also because of what they "do." In this study I have used the term "narrative" and "story" interchangeably (c.f Reissman 2008). My selection of narratives as unit of analysis was informed by Polkinghorne's (1998) definition of narrative as "the primary form by which human experience is made meaningful" (p.1). Whether included in press statements, open letters and emails sent by the organizers/supporters to various authorities or digital stories created and distributed

by family, their advocates and supporters, narratives about the Bodnariu family/the community permeate the discursive landscape of the movement.

In her examination of the various functions of narratives, Reissman (2008) argues that individuals use narratives for different purposes, to “remember, argue, justify, persuade,” (p.8), and most importantly, in our case, to mobilize others and to accomplish certain goals. Narratives are “strategical, functional and purposeful” (Reissman, 2008, p. 8). They are also situated in a historic, social and cultural context (Chase, 2005). Stories help narrators remember the past and understand the present, argue and make claims, and persuade. In addition, I view narratives as problem problem-solving tools, mechanisms for the construction and performance of personal and collective identities (Ochs, 1997; Goffman, 1959), and a way to “mobilize others into action for progressive social change” (Reissman, 2008, p. 9).

This study draws on the dialogic approach to language use, narrative and self (Bakhtin, 1972; Wortham, 2001; Frank 2012; Shuman, 2012), based on the concept that stories respond to and embedded in other stories. My inquiry in the narratives produced and disseminated in a social movement is informed by the understanding that “meaning in the dialogic approach does not reside in the speaker’s narrative, but in the dialogue between speaker and listener(s), investigator and transcript, and text and reader” (Shetty, 2010, p. 201). In this analysis I will use the conceptual framework coined by Bakhtin (1972), focusing on instances of heteroglossia, intertextuality, polyphony to demonstrate how stories are assembled thru the resonance between multiple voices and texts.

As this study examines the co-construction of narratives over a period of time, the idea that “all narratives depict a temporal transition from one state of affairs to another (Ochs, 1997, p. 189) is particularly helpful in tracing the increased

intensity of the social movement. The analysis of the narratives produced by the family and their supporters is also informed by the idea that "narratives may concern past, present, future, hypothetical, habitual and other culturally relevant mode of reckoning time" (Ochs, 1997, p. 189).

Finally, as the Pro-Bodnariu movement was sparked an incident that involved opposing worldviews and moral stances, my analysis was also informed by the argument that "narrative orientations do not merely locate events in places; they can also morally differentiate among different characters in those places, and they can set up a range of possible morally imbued alignments among characters and between characters and places" Modan, G. & Shuman, A. (2010, p. 93).

Narratives in social movements

In the introduction of an edited book entitled "Stories of change: Narratives and social movements," Davis (2002) argues that "narrative is a vital form of movement discourse and a crucial analytical concept" (p.4). At the same time, he acknowledges that while scholars have been actively addressing issue of agency, context and language, they neglected the role of narrative in social movements. Contributions to the examination of narratives in social movements were published by Francesca Polleta (1998), who looked at stories and success and failure as a way for activists to make sense of the outcomes of movements. The same year, Polleta (1998) examined the emergence of a narrative of student sit-ins thru in campus newspapers, speeches and personal correspondence. In "Stories of change: Narratives and social movements" (Davis, 2002) the contributors argue that the analysis of narrative "illuminates core features of identity building and mean-making in social activism," (p. 40). The authors also claim that narrative analysis also provides a better understanding of the various stages of social movements, as well

as “internal dynamics and public persuasion” (p.4). Another approach to analyzing narratives in social movements comes from Benford (2002), who examined the relationship between the competing narratives inside and about social movement, rather than issues of constructions and dissemination. The few scholarly contributions mentioned earlier (Davis 2002; Polleta, 1998) examine the use of narrative in several social movements that emerged and developed in the United States of America. I also located a study (Nepstad, 2001) that addresses the way in which narrative were used in the U.S. – Central America Peace Movement to motivate and mobilize supporters. In her article Nepstad illustrated how the life story of Salvadoran martyr Archbishop Romero created and fostered bonds of trans-national solidarity and contributed the construction of trans-national collective identity. More recently, a study by Wånggren (2016) examines storytelling and social justice in the “Hollaback!” movement, an online international feminist movement against street harassment. In her study, Wånggren (2016) focused on the role of storytelling in the digital space to “build a grass-roots based feminist education” (p 412).

Multi-modality and stories in the digital space

These days, as we become more and more immersed into the digital space, we tell our stories and interact with other people’s stories online, whether these stories are told by family members, acquaintances, friends or other random inhabitants of the virtual word. We share stories about mundane issues, but also about the state of the world, from discrimination to human rights violations.

Because of the affordances of the digital space to produce and host a variety of modes (audio, video, text, image), some of the artefacts analyzed here are digital stories (designed to be multi-modal), so their examination would be incomplete if some aspects would be ignored.

In the case of storytelling that involves video image, the examination of non-verbal/textual attributes is equally important. In his article exploring the “life story” interview given by John Edwards in the aftermath of his newly discovered extramarital affair, Bamberg (2012) argues that narrative analysis should widen its scope from the assessment of linguistic choice alone to the detailed scrutiny of facial expressions, gestures and supra-segmentation (tone, stress, articulation etc.). He argues that narration, a “verbal act that is locally performed in situated interactional context”, cannot be reduced to just verbal messages, thus encouraging the use of “multimodal forms of analysis into identity research” (p. 120). Bamberg concludes that “answers in the form of identity narrations will never be simple or clear, especially when having to do some heavy-duty moral accounting” “problematic for holding claims for authenticity and truth” (p. 120).

In order to familiarize myself with multimodality I reviewed several empirical studies from different disciplines. A particularly useful example of a multimodal analysis is Hunt’s (2015) examination of the ways in which healthcare organizations in the UK use digital space and its multimodal affordances to depict diabetes patients and address their needs. In his analysis of the interplay between text and images, and the manner in which the relationship between them depicted illness and health, Hunt (2015) identified several linguistic and visual rhetorical strategies of representing the diabetic individual. He analyzed the ways in which language alone would have been less effective, underscoring “the salience of the web as a medium for multimodal health communication” (p.72). In his methodical, step-by-step approach, after comparing and contrasting several representations of diabetic patients on pages of pharmaceutical companies and support groups, and carefully examining images and text (e.g., gaze of the individuals photographed, the angle of

the picture, lexical features of the ads), Hunt was able to identify several strategies of depicting patients as independent, fully functioning and confident individuals, rather than victims of the disease. Similarly, also touching on the multimodal representation of health-related issues, Oyebode and Unuabonah (2013) conducted an analysis of HIV/AIDS posters in Nigeria. They analyzed the interplay between text and image in a printed, static environment, in which the addition of image to text is more effective than language alone, as the multimodal posters are “laden with actions, voices and persuasions” (p. 825) intended to raise awareness and provide care solutions. Although these studies examine instances of discourse from other disciplines, they provide useful models for my analysis because they demonstrate how the synergy of multiple modes of communication produces enhanced rhetorical devices intended to educate, empower and engage audiences.

My study of the narratives of the Pro-Bodnariu movement is located at the intersection of social movement and storytelling in the digital space, a lens that has been rarely used by researchers to examine the recruitment and mobilization of activists and followers. Informed by the “grammar of visual design” proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, 2001) and empirical studies conducted using this approach, in my study I will analyze instances of visual rhetoric used by the Pro-Bodnariu movement to present an image of its protagonists and engage actions of solidarity. For instance, I will analyze pictures and video (e.g., messages of support, scenes from protests, calls for action) in order to illustrate the various facets of narrative and identity construction.

Limitations of the study

During the seven months of its active existence, the Bodnariu case developed into a complex and sophisticated undertaking, involving both behind closed doors diplomatic and public efforts by Romanian politicians and religious community

leaders, supported by members of the global Romanian diasporic community, the media and a large network of private citizens who used the Internet and social media platforms for information dissemination, resource mobilization and activism on behalf of the family. As the case evolved overtime and gained visibility on both Romanian and diasporic television channels, hundreds of artifacts from media articles, blogs, discussion forums, webpages, etc. began to populate the global digital space. As the amount of information available about this case is staggering, this case study focuses on a selection of existing documents that contain references to personal and collective trauma. While data for this study also include statements by various key actors of the Bodnariu movement, these artifacts are selected from existing published digital (audio, video, text) documents, and not from interviews conducted by the researcher.

CHAPTER 4

“NOBODY LOVES OUR CHILDREN LIKE WE LOVE THEM”: COLLABORATIVELY NARRATING PERSONAL SUFFERING

In this chapter, I examine how narratives of personal loss and trauma are collaboratively produced, distributed and reconfigured over time and space in order to influence public opinion and social action. The narrative excerpts I examine (in support of the Bodnariu family and the pro-Bodnariu social movement) are from open letters, petitions, blogs, website pages, user posts, and video recordings. My analysis demonstrates how members of the family, supporters of the family and complete strangers participate in the effort to produce and distribute information and messages about the Bodnariu family’s recent loss of their children to the Norwegian government.

By examining a few representative excerpts, I show how the Pro-Bodnariu campaign and its supporters established and amplified an outreach effort aimed at the general public, centered around ideas that are presented as universally accepted and shared values (e.g., the importance of family, human rights, and social justice). I highlight instances where the pro-Bodnariu campaign uses digital practices to bolster and distribute a discourse of unity based on specific religious beliefs regarding these core values. The analysis demonstrates that one of the strategies used by the social movement organization to build understanding and consensus is to create a digital portrait of Romanian Christian exceptionalism where the values of the Bodnariu family are portrayed as emblematic of those of the larger Romanian Christian community.

In this chapter, I draw on notions of bonding social capital and bridging social capital (Putnam, 1993) to understand how individuals from the Romanian community who support the family’s values were instrumental in disseminating information and

mobilizing others to action by reaching out to members of their own virtual social networks. Data analysis shows that messages were taken up by homogenous groups with similar belief systems (e.g., Romanian Evangelicals, Romanian-American Evangelicals) and by groups with different but related values (e.g., American religious conservative groups).

“The family is the only piece of heaven left on this Earth”

When Marius Bodnariu (the father) emailed his brother in Romania to inform him that his children had been removed from his family home by the Norwegian government on November 16, 2015, he also shared the government’s request for confidentiality. He relayed the state workers’ argument that maintaining the incident within the private space could potentially influence a favorable resolution for the family. As the next day’s events progressed in an undesirable direction (with the removal of the baby and the placement of children in different foster homes), the initial teller asked his brother to elicit prayers from the community. Eventually, this storytelling by proxy surpassed the boundaries of the private in the digital public space when the immediate family created a Facebook page asking for prayers in support of the Bodnarius and their children. The English version of the first post (titled “Marius and Ruth story”) received words of encouragement, prayer, support as well as suggestions for action while showcasing the dismay and outrage of the readers, who liked the post 77 times and shared the story 65 times. One version of this document that was shared on Facebook in the emergence phase of the movement eventually became the official narrative and was used in future press releases and featured on the home page of the family’s website. I examine this text because it contains a central (often-referenced) dimension of the movement’s rhetoric and was frequently distributed by the organizers and re-circulated by supporters as part of the larger co-constructed story of the Bodnariu case.

For online users less familiar with the Bodnariu case, the home page of the family's website offers a revised, succinct version of the story first published on Facebook. As an entry point to the Bodnariu family's website and a gateway to the movement's platform, the narrative describes the family's situation and ongoing efforts of the Romanian and Romanian-American community. The lead paragraph of the "Home" page, flanked to the left by a family portrait labeled "Bodnariu family," introduces the two parties involved in the dispute.

On November 16, 2015, [NORWAY'S BARNEVERNET](#) in Naustdal changed the life of Bodnariu family and a worldwide unified Romanian community when they stepped into their house and abusively confiscated all five children born to Marius & Ruth Bodnariu. (original text in English)

Because the digital space provides an opportunity to create a hyperlink to a BBC story entitled "They took our four children... then the baby," viewers can easily access a page which provides a first-hand account of events. The article also provides information about other similar cases. These inter-related and intersecting texts provide examples of how a multi-layered, polyphonic narrative, as described by Bakhtin (1929) might be constituted. Here, the voice of the narrator (presumably, the organizers of the movement) is complemented by both the account of the parents and the perspective of the BBC reporter, who adds his own take on the case. By positioning the Barnervenet as the subject of the story, the narrator establishes the roles and power relations between the government and the family, one depicted as the perpetrator, and the other, as the victim. The specific name of the Norwegian child protective services agency Barnevernet is quickly replaced by "Norwegian authorities" for the rest of the account, suggesting allegations of the extended culpability and complicity of the entire system.

The introduction of the Bodnariu family is limited to one paragraph depicting the victims in simple terms:

You will find on this website why this family is very special to thousands of Romanians worldwide. Marius & Ruth touched many lives in a very positive life changing way before they met each other. Then, after they met and got to know each other's passion for helpless homeless children, Marius & Ruth fell in love, got married, and started a family of their own. Eleven years later, because of their profound way of living as Christian evangelicals in a predominantly atheist society, they have been labeled "radical Christians" and were accused of "indoctrinating" their children. (original text in English)

This paragraph describes the "special" nature of this particular family. An analysis of rhetorical strategy highlights the hybrid nature of the description—as something similar to an opening statement in a legal setting and a fairytale. The paragraph portrays the couple as "normal," compassionate and caring, with a shared passion for humanity and for helping the powerless and victimized. The outcome of the story, framed as a punishment of Christian morality by secular society, captures the conflict between religious conservatism and liberalism, a rift that ultimately stands at the core of this case. The concluding sentence of this paragraphs illustrates the collision between "two models of the family" and "different modes of reasoning" (Lakoff, 2016) as the "Strict Father model," corresponding to the conservative mindset, and the "Nurturant Parent model," reflective of the liberal worldview, one stressing obedience and discipline, the other social responsibility and individual rights.

A stand alone, unusually short and abrupt sentence introduces the government workers: "Barnevernet in Naustdal stepped in a matter that outraged us all." The following paragraph provides more details about the government's actions:

Marius & Ruth's parental, and their collective family's, rights were grossly violated via the unwarranted confiscation of the Bodnariu girls from school and the boys (including the youngest and still nursing 3-month old baby) from home, the arrest of the father, Marius, from work, the unsuccessful coercion of the mother, Ruth, by Norwegian authorities, interrogations of the parents (i.e. Marius & Ruth) without access to a lawyer and the interrogation

of Marius without permitting him access to an interpreter. (original text in English)

Although the names of the parents appear at the beginning of this description of actions taken by government authorities, they are not the subject of the sentence. Instead, the subject becomes the word "rights." This paragraph portrays the government as against parental rights (an issue at the core of the Pro-Bodnariu movement's argument for the return of the children). The vocabulary of violence ("violation", "confiscation," "arrest," "coercion," "interrogation," "without access") is used to describe the actions of the government authorities against the parents and stands in stark contrast to descriptions of the family members. According to this account, the family has been subjected to a form of punishment leading to unnecessary emotional trauma and social stigma. A concluding paragraph further characterizes the government's trespassing as unnecessary and unwarranted while vouching for the parent's honesty and civil obedience:

Despite Norwegian authorities grossly abusing their power in tearing apart this family, Marius & Ruth Bodnariu, as loving and concerned parents, have transparently and openly complied with all Norwegian authority investigations for the return of their children. Throughout this entire ordeal, Norwegian authorities have employed intimidation tactics and overly excessive zeal to interrogate the Bodnariu children with leading questions designed to inculcate the parents, secure incriminating evidence against the parents, and cover-up evidence supporting the parents in their defense against the irrational, extreme, and unsubstantiated allegations brought against them.

Norwegian authorities have outright admitted, and clarified, that they are unfamiliar with, and uncertain of, the nature and quality of parental care that Marius & Ruth have provided to their children. Yet, these same Norwegian authorities spitefully and malevolently insist on the revocation of Marius & Ruth's parental rights and vindictively continue in expediting proceedings for the reprehensible adoption of Marius & Ruth's children. (original text in English)

This passage describes the actions of the government, highlighting the imbalance of power between the two opposing parties. While the parents are depicted as honest and compliant (behaviors motivated by the love and concern for

the children), the authorities are portrayed as both unlawful and inhumane. Using a litany of adjectives and adverbs (e.g., “excessive,” “irrational,” “extreme,” “spitefully,” “malevolently,” “vindictively”), this paragraph depicts the authorities as displaying behaviors that are incompatible with protecting social welfare and security, which is the role of the ideal government. Instead, this text describes the government as an abuser, thus suggesting the Marius and Ruth have been victimized and marginalized.

A very detailed rendition of a similar story also appears in the mission statement page of the Bodnariu family’s website. Limitations of space prohibit me from systematically analyzing it here in its entirety, but I have selected a couple of representative excerpts to demonstrate how the family is depicted and how the narrator positions him/herself in the story.

Marius & Ruth Bodnariu (“Parents”), together with their Romanian-Norwegian children (“Children”), have lived in Norway for the past 10 years. Their Children (Eliana 9, Naomi 7, Matthew 5, John 2, and Ezekiel 3 months) are also Romanian citizens. Marius has a Master’s degree in Computer Systems Engineering & Applied Informatics from the Polytechnic University of Bucharest and works in the Redal, Naustdal Hall, as the IT lead responsible for the entire village School District; a school district covering 10 communities and 50 schools. Ruth is a Registered Nurse working in the Pediatric Ward of the Norde Central Hospital. (original text in English)

With the tone of a legal document, this factual description of the family includes demographic information (names, ages, roles, citizenship status, education, employment). Plain and unemotional, this paragraph highlights the intellectual capital of the parents, suggesting thru the nature of their employment that they are both trustworthy, responsible, and in the mother’s case, also caring and compassionate with strangers in need. The names and ages of children, used here for seemingly informational purposes, have been used consistently throughout the campaign, perhaps to identify and humanize them and to create an emotional

familiarity with supporters. The description of the family, identified by traits that make them human appears in stark contrast with the faceless establishment, perceived as an entity governed by "irrational" norms, void of compassion and common sense.

The next paragraph provides a summary of the key events that led to the situation that the movement is responding to:

On Monday, November 16, 2015, Norwegian child protection services ("Barnevernet") confiscated the 4 oldest Bodnariu children (and baby Ezekiel the following day) and immediately placed them in 3 separate foster homes, without any prior investigations or psychosocial and emotion assessments of the Children. The process of confiscating the Bodnariu children started when the Vevring School Principal ("Principal"), the middle school attended by Eliana and Naomi, called the Barnevernet and expressed her concerns regarding the girls' religious upbringing, her understanding that the girls are being disciplined at home, and that she considers the parents and grandmother to be radical Christians; an overriding concern that the principal's perception of the Parents' and grandmother's religious beliefs inhibit and handicap the girls' development.

Upon receiving this aforementioned call from the Principal, the Barnevernet filed a claim, alleging family violence, against the Parents without ever informing Marius & Ruth. On November 16, the Naustdal Barnevernet (the local district of the Barnevernet) initiated the confiscation of the Bodnariu Children and the arrest and interrogation of the Parents. The Barnevernet confiscated the girls from school and together, with local police, confiscated the two older boys from the family home. Ruth was arrested at the family home, Marius was arrested while at work, and both were separately escorted to the local police station for interrogation. The Parents were interrogated separately and Marius, not a Norwegian citizen, was not provided a lawyer or a translator throughout the entire duration of his interrogation. After a few hours of interrogation, the police discharged the Parents, along with baby Ezekiel, as the Police did not consider the Parents to be dangerous. In the discharge process, the police clarified that the Parents will be receiving follow-up communication that will explain what is taking place.

Authorities illegally arrested the Parents without informing the Parents of the allegations or evidence warranting such extreme aggressions. Furthermore, the Parents were coerced into complying without legal counsel with the assurance that their cooperation in this manner would result in a positive outcome for their family and them.

On November 17, contrary to the optimistic assurances provided in the Parents' interrogation, the Barnevernet, together with local police, also confiscated baby Ezekiel from the family home. (original text in English)

In this text, which full of administrative and legal jargon (e.g., "hearing," "testimony," "rules and regulations", the narrator depicts the state uses using a sophisticated, intimidating vocabulary, perhaps even unapproachable for certain readers. The text also alleges criminal activities ("threatening," "blackmail," "manipulating," "complicity," "flagrant violations," "extreme and abusive force") which on the one hand alert and dismay the reader, and on the other hand suggest the vigilance and legal expertise of the family's representatives. Another subset of nouns ("claim," "investigation," "process," "hearing," "rules," "rules and regulations," "testimony," "proceedings," "documents," "transcripts," "Norwegian legislation") suggests both the overwhelming complexity of state bureaucracy and the magnitude of the challenges faced by the family as a result of the allegations against them. Equally intimidating to the individual is the enumeration of the various institutions that are part of, affiliated with or subservient to the state apparatus ("child protective services," "foster homes," "Principal," "police station," "non-tribunal government organization"). The text also mentions "unsuccessful coercion," the parent's restrictions to secure legal counsel, and in the father's case, the denial of access to informed communication, suggesting the moral, emotional and intellectual turmoil caused by of the alleged actions of the authorities.

Shared on two separate digital platforms (the family website and Facebook page), "the story" of the Bodnariu family is frequently accompanied by two emblematic pictures. The first picture depicts the Bodnariu family dressed in Norwegian attire, posing in a wide-open country setting. The second image is a selfie that captures the family during a trip to Washington, DC. These images eventually appeared repeatedly across social media platforms, possibly to project and perform the social movement's group identity and to articulate claims on behalf of the family.



Figure 1. Family portrait in Norwegian attire



Figure 2. Family portrait in street protest signs

Taken in an idyllic, pastoral setting of lush green and a blossoming spring tree against a background of rolling hills, the family portrait depicts the Bodnariu family wearing Norwegian attire. With a broad smile, the visibly pregnant mother holds a baby up for the camera, while the father supports a child with his shoulder, holding his arm, protectively. The three older children, a boy and two girls stand tall, close to their parents and to each other. This visual insight into the Bodnariu family's life

before the removal of their children suggests harmony, warmth and involved parenting. By depicting a joyful past, it also amplifies the gravity of the present loss. As I will show, this particular strategy is used by the social movement organization on other occasions as well, possibly as a means to portray and amplify a collective sense of loss and grief.

The use of images from the family's past have been used in several instances during the course of the movement, perhaps in order to build a sense of trust and credibility. The images have been viewed often and by many. For instance, an image-based Facebook post from November 19, 2015 titled "Marius, Ruth and children before Barnevernet" generated an unprecedented 2,400 likes, 120 comments and 1,206 shares. The 15 pictures shared in this post captured memories from fishing trips, family vacations and outings, in which the smiling Bodnariu siblings, playful and silly, were accompanied by their parents. The images depict a large affectionate family, in a large farm house where parents, grand-parents and other family members appear to be actively involved with their children. The children are surrounded by toys and their loved ones. While many of the Facebook users recognized and shared the sense of loss experienced by the family conveyed by these images, a comment by LS conveys at least one way these images may have been interpreted/received by viewers:

LS: This is a beautiful and normal family trying to enjoy life together and raise their children with love. It is very disappointing to see how an organization that claims to protect children actually damaged a family like this.... Such disproportionate action only shows the lack of sound judgement, common sense and wrong interpretation of facts. It is really shameful! I hope there will be somebody in that country that will come in their senses soon. (original text in English)

Typical for the emergence stage of a social movement, the first Facebook posts (written by family members) make sense and raise awareness of the events. Initially shared with a small group of friends and acquaintances recruited via e-mail

by the members of the extended family, these posts eventually resonated with more and more viewers over time. Over the course of one day (from Nov. 19 to Nov 20, 2015), the number of likes grew from 77 to 327. This stage of the movement is also characterized by increases in the number of comments, as viewers posted messages of support and encouragement as they tried to understand a situation that seemed unreal. In time, as I will demonstrate, as the facts became clearer and actions were implemented, the number of comments stagnated or even decreased, being replaced instead by a growing number of shares.

One of the most prevalent forms of narrative co-construction that came out of this early “emergence” stage of the movement involved posts by viewers who offered emotional support and encouragement. Out of the many messages of support that were posted by viewers during the early days of the online movement, I have selected a couple of representative examples:

NM: Fiti tari Marius si Ruth.Domnul nu va v-a parasi cu nici un chip. Si nici pe copilasi. In mijlicul "cuptorului"El este cu voi. Va imbratisam cu dragoste! [Be strong, Marius and Ruth. God will not leave you no matter what. And neither will He leave the children. In the midst of the “oven” He is with you. Hugs and love!] (my translation)

VD: Domnul va v-a scoate biruitori. Copiii vostri vor veni acasă, adusi de Domnul! [God will bring you victory. God will bring your children back home!] (my translation)

EKA: Ma rog Domnului sa va ajute El are putere sa distruga planul celui rau. ...Dumnezeu sa va binecuvinteze! [I pray to God to help you...He has the power to destroy the Evil’s plan...God bless you!] (my translation)

These users engage a dialogue with the previous narratives produced by the family, addressing the parents directly and including themselves and their perspectives in the story. While these viewers acknowledge and validate the narrative of trauma and loss, the sense of defeat (“God will bring you victory”), they also provide an imagined end to the story, one in which the children will be returned to their parents. Highlighting the present and God’s unwavering and unquestionable

protection, these viewers project the certainty of a positive outcome (“God won’t leave you,” “God won’t leave the children,” “God will bring the children back”). These messages of support also indicate a strong emotional engagement of viewers, who expressed both their affection for and empathy with the parents, while launching passionate pleas to God for the release of the children, depicted as innocent victims of ungodly forces.

Written in Romanian, presumably by friends or acquaintances (“hugs and love” is indicative of certain familiarity), these first posts also showcase the viewers’ position with respect to the depiction of the family as compliant with Christian beliefs and way of life. In the example below, another viewer corroborates the image of the Bodnariu family:

SP: Frumoasa Familie si Binecuvintata, dar nu numai frumoasa, dar si pe placul Lui Dumnezeu, de aceea cred că numai în El trebuie să ne încredem, pt. că numai El, Dumnezeu este cel ce va da biruintă si izbîndă. [Beautiful and blessed family. Not only beautiful, but also to His liking. That’s why I believe that we must only trust in Him, because only He God is the one who will give you victory and triumph.] (my translation)

While some users offer their own support encouragements, others cite or paraphrase Biblical texts as a way of conveying encouragement:

OZ: "Domnul este bun; El este un loc de scapare in ziua necazului si cunoaste pe cei ce se incred in El! " Naum 1:7 [“The Lord is good to them that wait on him in the day of affliction; and he knows them that reverence him.” Naum 1:7] (my translation)

EC: Astazi citeam Psalmul 18 si ma gandeam la voi! Da, Tu aprinzi lumina mea. Domnul, Dumnezeul meu, îmi luminează întunericul meu.... mă izbăvește de vrăjmașii mei! Tu mă înalți mai presus de potrivnicii mei, mă scapi de omul asupritor. Domnul sa dea biruinta! [Today I was reading Psalm 18 and I was thinking about you! Yes, You, LORD, keep my lamp burning; my God turn my darkness into light. save me from my enemies. You exalt me above my foes, you rescue me from the violent man. May God give us victory!] (my translation)*

The intertextual use of Biblical references is a rhetorical strategy used by this community of religious practice to convey shared beliefs and to offer examples of overcoming obstacles thru faith as a way of providing encouragement and support.

Possibly as a result of concerted efforts by the immediate family and their supporters to raise awareness about the urgency and gravity of the Bodnariu's situation, the organization rapidly transitioned from information dissemination to action. Within a couple of days of the reported removal of the children, the family was surrounded by a leadership team, charged with various roles. The emergence of leadership and a formal showcase of power marks the rapid transition from the emergence to the coalescence phase of the movement. Three days after the children were removed from their home, a link to an electronic petition hosted by the website www.ipetitions.com appeared on Facebook, articulating the family's beliefs and alerting the public about their alleged violation. This petition represents the first time that the movement seemed to want to reach audiences outside the Romanian and Romanian-American communities. In January 2016, when the movement created the family website, a link to the electronic petition was integrated in the "Get involved" page. The electronic petition remained a living document throughout the duration of the movement and continues to this day to attract comments from various followers. On behalf of the Romanian-American group representing the Bodnariu family, Pastor Ionescu, the designated spokesperson, provided a brief account of the events, asking for signatures in support of the reunification of the children with their parents. With an initial goal of collecting 50,000 signatures, over time the petition amassed 64,684 names and 22,993 comments from virtual supporters worldwide. When in a post from January 7th, 2016, less than two months after the seizing of the children Pastor Ionescu announced the milestone of 50,000 signatures, the digital platform I-petitions called it "one of the top all-time successful" documents of its kind hosted by

the respective website. This was an indication not only of the popularity of the movement, but also an example of the use of cyberspace as a fast and inexpensive vehicle of information dissemination and mobilization. Linked from both the official website and Facebook page, this particular appeal focused on securing digital signatures, an action that required a minimal time investment from users. The petition was brief, to the point and general. Although we do not know for sure whether these characteristics may have contributed to its widespread support, we do know that the number of viewers exceeded by nearly 15,000 the established goal.

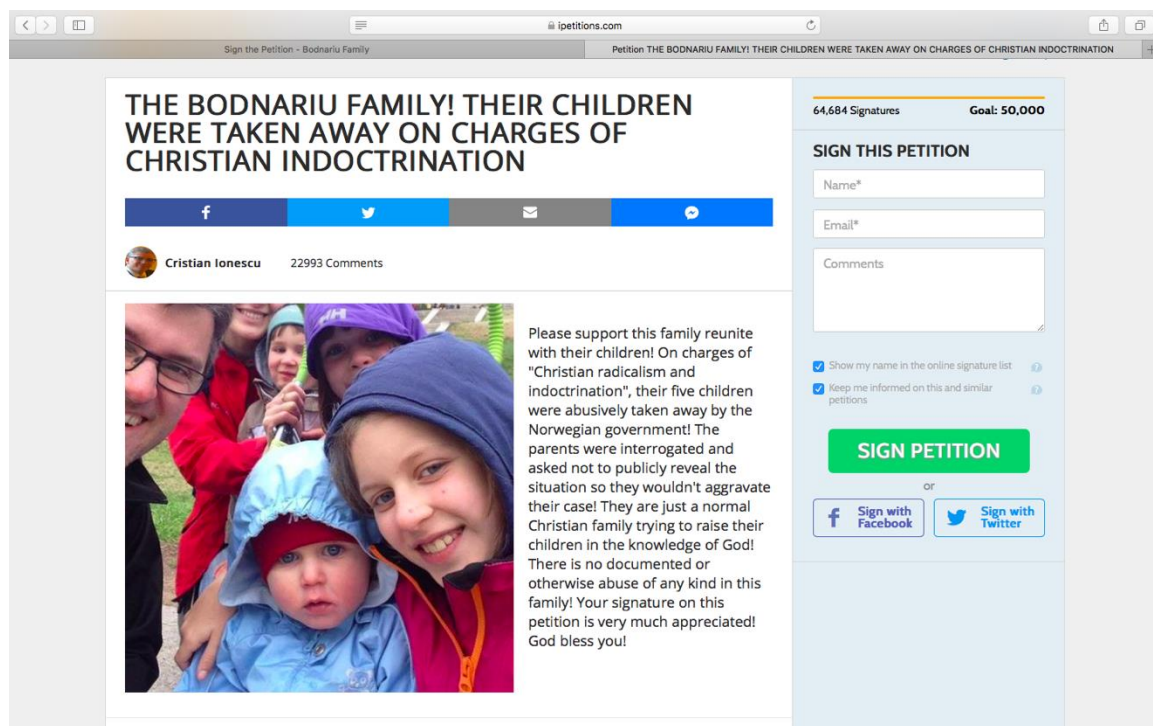


Figure 3. Electronic petition

Please support the Bodnariu family reunite with their children!

On charges of "Christian radicalism and indoctrination", their five children were abusively taken away by the Norwegian government! The parents were interrogated and asked not to publicly reveal the situation so they wouldn't aggravate their case! They are just a normal Christian family trying to raise their children in the knowledge of God! There is no documented or otherwise proof of abuse of any kind in this family! Your signature on this petition is very much appreciated!

We ALL THANK YOU! God bless you!

Pastor Cristian Ionescu
*Delegated Spokesperson for
Romanian-Americans for reunification of Bodnariu Family*

Social movement organizations typically create meaning for their constituents by identifying and labeling both protagonists and antagonists (Benford & Hunt, 1992). In this case, the organizers of the Pro-Bodnariu campaign depicted the family and the supporting community thru the lenses of religious values and ethnic belonging. Appealing to a sense of compassion that likely existed within the online international Christian community, the petition describes the family as “normal,” a label that would be further defined and elaborated throughout the movement. In most instances, this characterization contrasted with how the movement described those against the Pro-Bodnariu movement (the Norwegian authorities, Norway, and most Norwegians). Using the passive voice (e.g., “children were abusively taken,” “the parents were interrogated”), the petition highlights the vulnerability of both children and their parents, who were both ascribed a victim identity. In this text (written during the early stages of the movement), the possessive adjective “their” reaffirmed the belief, persistently articulated throughout the movement in many forms of its repertoire (e.g., posters, discourses, etc.), that “Children belong to the family.” In this framework, the family is represented as solely responsible for raising children and entitled to do so without any outside interference (and in accordance with the family’s values). Later in the movement, the pronoun “their” was changed to “our” (for instance, on posters during the various marches of protest) perhaps to convey that a stance of solidarity existed in the Romanian community. In Bucharest, for instance, during a protest organized in December 2015, a poster warned the audience: “Trezește-te, Romania! Ne fură copiii” (“Wake up, Romania! They are stealing our children”).

The petition serves to humanize the parents while providing supporters a way to relate to their story. The petition is accompanied by a second image—one that would eventually become one of the faces of the movement, used as a Facebook profile picture, and printed on the various materials of the campaign repertoire. The close-up image captures the Bodnarius and their four children, on the front lawn of the State Capital in Washington, DC. Considering the precision and well-calculated nature of all public actions by the organizers of the movement, the use of a candid selfie (in which Marius's face is outside the frame) is likely the result of a careful choice and possibly intended to depict the Bodnarius as a "normal" family. Flirting with the camera, the smiling parents and children are huddled together, the oldest daughter protectively holding her arm around her youngest brother. This picture appeals to common sense, as generally images of children with rosy cheeks, warm jackets, hats and hoodies index appropriate parental care, and discount potential suspicions of abuse. Furthermore, a family picture taken during a trip to Washington, DC. is not solely a reflection of a certain economic capital, but also of an interest in exposing the children to meaningful, educational experiences, which could be indicative of not just appropriate, but exceptional parenting.

The strategy of narrating a present state of loss and trauma by invoking past experiences and memories (of joy and happiness) is once again deployed in this digital document, in which the image of a happy Bodnariu family appears juxtaposed to a text describing their current distress. The use of image as well as the use of cognates ("family," "normal," "Christian," "radicalism") might also have helped to mediate comprehension for readers less proficient in English and contributed to the growth of a global audience. The repetition of the word "abusively" as a label for the actions of the government seems to counter unproven and undocumented allegations of "abuse" by the family. The use of the image of past happiness in conjunction with

the text of the petition strengthens the notion that the parents are the actual victims of institutional abuse, rather than child abusers, as depicted by the government.

Like most online petitions, this one requests viewers to “sign” and “share” the message in order to increase the number of supporters. As the recorded numbers of signatories indicate, nearly a half of the participants who engaged in this action also wrote messages of support. These additional contributions to the petition demonstrate how much the message seemed to resonate with supporters, who seemed compelled to express their compassion for the family and disagreement with the actions of the government. In some of the comments posted in response to the petition, contributors revealed facets of their identities and expressed their own beliefs. Those who commented represent a diverse, wide-ranging audience, as illustrated by the following posts. PL, one of the petition signatories proclaimed:

User: La familia es el fruto que continua la vida, no la destruyan/The family is the fruit that continues life do not destroy it/Familien er frukten av at livet ikke går ødelegge. (original text in Spanish, English and Norwegian)

while, EA, another supporter expressed awe and sadness:

User: Over Christian radicalism and indoctrination? I'm not religious myself, but is that any of Norway's business? No. Those children were healthy when they were snagged from their home. So sad. (original text in English)

From a multilingual user who argues the sanctity of family to a non-religious supporter who might question the legitimacy of the government’s actions, these early posts demonstrate the initial impact of the documents produced by the movement. While this brief online request for support refers to shared Christianity and the injustice against its followers as the sole, but otherwise sufficient motivator for this form of action, its message surpassed religious boundaries, as these messages confirm:

User: One does not have to be a Christian to find this action an outrageous abuse of power on the part of the government. (original text in English)

User: I'm an atheist but they have no reason to separate a family even if there would have been an indoctrination. They do impose their own doctrines in Norway even if not religious so where is the difference? (original text in English)

As information about the Bodnariu case began to circulate, supporters from outside Romania also expressed their support and vowed to pray for the family on both platforms, the ipetition and the Facebook page. These representative posts from Facebook confirm that news about the case reached English speaking audiences. These excerpts also indicate the role that emotions played in mobilizing interest in and support for the case among Christians outside Romania, who ultimately prayed alongside the family for the release of the children.

RK: Marius and Ruth, may the Almighty God make a way for you to get all of your children back home again safely. We shall be praying for you. (original text in English)

RR: I pray that every assignment against this family by the enemy be thwarted in the powerful name of Jesus! Be with them all. Strengthen and encourage them. Make them steadfast in their faith in your love for them Father. Bring justice in this situation. In Jesus name I pray!!!! (original text in English)

In addition to expressing their support for the family, posts like these also contributed the construction and amplification of the narrative of otherness, in many cases, authors of posts provided links to similar stories and incidents involving child protective services in Norway and elsewhere in Europe. In the excerpt below, for instance, a viewer offers a link to a video shared on YouTube that demonstrates that the Bodnariu case is one of many instances of institutional abuse against children and parents:

CD: In the UK there is also institutionalized abuse of children/families. In thousands of cases rationally unjustified, behind closed doors (the so called "secret courts"), children are being treated like merchandise and removed from their natural families...See More
YOUTUBE.COM
Exposure - Please Don't Take My Child (Forced Adoption Exposed) (original text in English)

By linking to their comment to another story of a similar abuses elsewhere in Europe, this supporter validates the family's narrative, and confirms that removing children is indeed a wider, common practice. This user highlights the inhumanity of the authorities (already described the family), as it describes the removal of children as a commerce of goods ("children are being treated like merchandise"). The co-construction of the narrative of state abuse includes the voice of a second user, who offers another example and a link to the respective story:

MZ: This reminds me so much of the Michalak case. Nothing helped. No charges were ever raised to the father or mother but still the boys remained in Norway's system. One is already offered to adoption. Makes me sick.
<http://www.praguepost.com/.../50096-norway-puts-michalak...> (original text in English)

Connecting the Bodnariu case with another similar story shared by the media, this user contributes to the depictions of the Norwegian government's disregard for due process ("no charges were ever raised") repeatedly highlighted by the family's narrative. This user also builds of the position of vulnerability and powerlessness of parents facing this kind of situations.

A third user amplifies the story of child removals, this time offering an example from France:

WG: this happens in France too. Lives are ruined for years because the authorities raid the homes of Christians who have home schooling, and/or Bible based services in the home....the children are abducted paced in foster care for years, while the frantic parents are spending their life savings trying to get them back, and to defend their reputations and restore their employment....liberty, equality and fraternity (what rubbish). (original text in English)

By stressing on the “abduction” of children from Christians families, the supporter builds on the Bodnariu narrative, in which the actions of the Norwegian authorities were described as Christian persecution. This comment also draws a parallel between the struggles of the French parents and those of the Bodnariu family, who according to the narrative produced by the movement’s organizers were humiliated, drained financially and socially demoted as a result of the accusations of abuse. This user concludes their comment by deconstructing the official narrative proclaimed by the state (in this case, the French Republic, a social democracy, like Norway).

After the legal appeal filed by the parents on November 30, 2015 for the return of the children was rejected by the Norwegian authorities, on December 6 the organizers announced the first action of protest in the form of an e-mail campaign. After the prayer and fasting campaign initiated immediately after the removal of the children, in this new form of transnational Internet-supported form of protest, participants were instructed to send emails to a large number of Norwegian officials (whose email addresses were included in the instructions) about the Bodnariu case. The post announcing this action-driven campaign was embraced by an increasingly large number of followers, who shared the post 906 times, added 293 comments and produced 530 likes. Although, according to a family member’s post, the initial goal of the Facebook page was to engage supporters in prayer and fasting, when the court decided against the family, the page included more and more posts that focused on what actions the public might take. This is another example of how the social movement organization transformed the deterritorialized, virtual space into both their cyber headquarters and an open courtroom in which the arguments could be presented digitally. Using features of the online platform to communicate particular

goals and priorities, the movement constructed narratives in which the viewing public was invited to join the defense team.

Composed by the organizers and shared on Facebook (to be copied and pasted into mass e-mails) the recurring narrative tells the story of the Bodnariu family and describes the circumstances under which their children were removed from their home. Starting with the removal, this narrative highlights the emotional consequences of that event while also characterizing it as a violation of human rights. The step-by-step bilingual instructions to copy and paste demonstrate the meta-awareness of those who create, post and share such narratives—and their desire to make the narrative accessible to those less comfortable with electronic communication. The message that is written to be shared and distributed widely reads:

I, _____, citizen of _____, am highly concerned by the malicious treatment of, and the encroachment by, the Barnevernet towards the BODNARIU family. We KINDLY ask you, the Norwegian governing authorities, to review and further look into the case of Marius and Ruth Bodnariu; an inexcusable and indefensible abduction and repartitioning of the Bodnariu children by the Norwegian Barnevernet. The Barnevernet forcibly removed placed into foster care the four oldest Bodnariu children (Eliana-9, Naomi-7, Matei-5, and Ioan-2) on November 16th and 3-month-old baby Ezekiel on November 17th. As a result of the Barnevernet's ruling on November 27th, Marius and Ruth are only allowed to meet with baby Ezekiel, under supervision, twice per week for limited period of two hours. Ruth alone is allowed to meet with Matei and Ioan, under supervision, once per week for a limited period of two hours. These meetings with the boys are made available no closer than a 4-hour drive from the Bodnariu home. Both Marius and Ruth are prohibited from seeing their daughters Eliana and Naomi. We implore you to look into this, the Bodnariu case, to see for yourselves how the Barnevernet lashed out without any evidence of wrong-doing and the abuses carried out upon Marius, Ruth, and their children. (original text in English)

While it might be difficult to ascertain the actual number of emails sent as a result of this campaign, it is still possible to argue that the Bodnariu story became a multivocal performance. Initially shared privately, then re-told by proxy by two appointed tellers (Pastors Bodnariu and Ionescu), and then amplified or retold by

multiple viewers/producers of emails and petitions, the narrative of loss and trauma appears often—and often accompanied by a narrative of institutional abuse.

In a much more detailed re-telling of the story than the initial electronic petition, narratives are produced and co-produced by members of the movement and outsiders alike, often illustrating a more personal attachment and familiarity with the family than the original ipetition, as the names of the children and their ages add an additional sense of reality and tangibility to the story. Perhaps to amplify the messages of the narrative, the vocabulary shifts to convey greater intensity (e.g., “malicious treatment,” “encroachment,” “inexcusable and indefensible abduction and repartitioning” appear), suggesting the tellers’ expertise and intellectual sophistication. Addressed to public officials holding powerful diplomatic and administrative positions, this email positions the now many tellers of the Bodnariu story as character witnesses, who vouch for the family’s reputation.

The email message describes and introduces the parents:

To be clear, Marius (an IT engineer) and Ruth (a nurse) are civilized, professionals, and loving Christian parents that have started, provided for, and raised a family in a caring, safe, and supportive home environment. The Bodnariu family, and their involvement in their community, has been beneficial and a gain for their village, Norway at large, and the future of the human race itself. Marius and Ruth’s wholistic, comprehensive, and loving parental care is pure, natural, and cannot be replaced by any institution or government. (original text in English)

This narrative includes a reformulation of a narrative that appeared earlier on the website, in the family’s mission statement, and draws attention to the professional credentials of the parents. While the basic information about the parents is still the same (Marius as an IT engineer, Ruth as a nurse), this version of the narrative is laden with qualifiers which contribute to the construction of a digital portrait of Christian exceptionalism. For instance, the portrait constructed here depicts the Bodnariu family as moral and righteous. By highlighting the couple’s high

intellectual achievement, experience with formal education, employment history, and professional competence in positions of high responsibility, this narrative is supportive of the family and the movement. The depiction of the family's positive influence goes as far as to describe them as global influencers, whose contribution to the collective wellbeing surpasses the boundaries of their community and even country. In response to the social movement organization's request for protest emails, some viewers confirmed their contribution to the campaign in short reports such as "JB: sent from the Philippines"; "PK: sent, from Australia" or JM: "Sent, from Indiana." Others also sent passionate prayers:

LAG: I sent the e-mail. May the Lord God Almighty bless the Bodnariu family, and work at their cause to get back their children very soon!!! The Lord can do the impossible!!! We trust in the Lord!!! Glory, honor, praises and many thanks only to Him, our God, who is taking care of our problems!!! The Lord Jesus Christ will never leave us nor forsake us!!! Amen and Amen!!! (original text in English)

Oftentimes, the comments provided by viewers served not only as validation of the earlier depictions provided by the organizers, but also as a restatement, a form of advocacy, or an attempt at persuasion. In the following example, a viewer's post refers to sections in the Bible that support the use of discipline by parents:

DP: Ruth and her husband has done exactly what God commanded godly parents to do in raising their children. Since they were small they have trained up their children in the way they should go (prov 22:6) they have showed them love and also they have disciplined like God commanded them to do proverbs 13:24 Proverbs 312 Proverbs 19:18 Proverbs 22:15 Proverbs 312 Proverbs 1915 and Hebrew Ch 12 is a good indication of bringing up and disciplining children. So Bodnariu family obey God rather than man and their laws. Or that they are now paying dearly. But without a doubt God already has their reward. Bodnariu family I hold you in the highest regard. (original text in English)

This series of excerpts illustrate how viewers and movement organizers worked collaboratively to depict the family as exceptional Christians. Describing the parents as abiding by Biblical parenting guidelines, the viewer references other texts that associate righteousness and godliness with particular parenting practices.

With increased visibility in the Romanian media, by December 2015 the Facebook page became a space where many viewers/producers of messages shared their support for Marius and Ruth, while participating in conversations centered on common religious or civic values. For instance, on Dec 4, 2015, an update from the family describing the emotional turmoil of their first visit with the baby (who was in a foster home) was liked 572 times and shared 158 times. Another example that illustrates increased support is call for prayer posted on Dec.7, liked by 628 viewers and shared by 205 people. In most cases, the occasional critical voices concerned usually with the Bodnariu's use of physical punishment to discipline their children were immediately silenced by supporters. In this type of engagement and advocacy, viewers used the narrative shared by the organizers to defend the family against sceptics or critics. The following exchange between viewers illustrates how the defender of the family compiled several narratives to provide an argument against accusations voiced by a critic:

JM: The parents physically abused their children. End of story. Not only that, but the girls aren't not going back home. All these so-called Christians are supporting a child abuser. For shame! (original text in English)

JL: JM What evidence do you have that they were physically abused?!?! Honestly!! BBC conducted an interview and toured their home and found a lot of toys, comfy beds, and warm food. Maybe if they found whipping rods, torture chairs, and clubs then I would say they were abused. There is no evidence to claim that these parents were abusive in any way, shape or form. The mom is a missionary that specializes in working with homeless and orphaned children. Telltale signs of an abusive person clearly. The father is a high-level engineer with years of education and a hard worker. Another person who is abusive and out of control. (original text in English)

This excerpt reveals two types of narratives—one that portrays the family as child abusers and one that challenges this characterization. In many ways, the two narratives presented in the excerpt mirror narratives that exist more generally in society and in the online space. It also shows the relationship—or conflict—that exists

between the two competing narratives—and how each sustains the other. One account seems to be informed by the official story articulated of the government, while the other account seems to reflect the stance and views of the family and community-based advocates working on behalf of the family. In pro-Bodnariu sections of the narrative, there are references to a story produced by the BBC that depicts the family home as clean, welcoming and equipped with toys. This story also incorporates other texts produced by the family’s advocates (e.g., the introductory paragraph of the website, which references Ruth’s past volunteering experience) that highlight Ruth’s sustained commitment to help the underprivileged. In this rendition of the narrative, Ruth’s past volunteering experience (11 years old) with homeless children in Romania, referenced repeatedly throughout the various instances of re-telling is being transformed into at present and ongoing activity, elevated and amplified to the rank of expertise. This excerpt also highlights a powerful display of emotions, in which the defender of the family wraps their anger in sarcasm and irony in order perhaps to indicate skepticism regarding the credibility of to invalidate the argument of the Facebook user who voiced their agreement with the actions of the government.

While in the many instances of interactions with supporters, various activists addressed audiences using endearing appellatives, as well as the collective, but also formal “you”, as an indication of reverence, in this example the level of informality, normally reserved for familiarity and intimacy suggests that antagonistic stances are not worth of respect. Enabled here by the use of personal pronouns in Romanian, the formality/informality, respect/contempt stance reflects a characteristic of what Lakoff (2016) calls “the metaphor of Moral strength.” According to Lakoff’s depiction of conservative morality, proponents of the view that evil and good are fighting in a

perpetual war consider that “one cannot respect the views one one’s adversary: evil does not deserve respect, it deserves to be attacked” (pg. 74).

Faced with increased virtual participation and a growing number of passionate supporters (e.g., from Dec 2, the day when the action plan was posted until Dec 5, the date of the email campaign the number of likes increased from 268 to 530 and the number of shares from 265 to 905), in preparation for the first street protest scheduled for December 19, 2015 in Bucharest, the organizers issued behavior guidelines. From dignified appearance to the request of silence and the interdiction to interact with bystanders, the guidelines also included the appointment of storytellers by the organizers. A video interview with a protest participant/appointed storyteller, for instance, reached a large audience (there were 3,675 views and 471 shares). Asked by the reporter about the reasons for her participation in the street protest, Maria Iliescu responds:



Figure 4. Interview with Maria Iliescu

Original text in Romanian	Text in English (my translation)
<p>Sunt foarte afectata pentru ca sunt mama, sunt bunica, sunt profesoara si mi-am ales aceasta profesie din vocatie si din dragoste pentru copii. Nu ne asteptam ca un sistem de protectie sa ia, va puteti imagina sa vina niste masini si sa ia copiii de la scoala fara sa spuna unde-i duc. Da? Va imaginati apoi tot asa niste masini ca pe nu stiu ce vremuri, ca in filmele cu Hitleristi, cu fascisti, nu stiu ...Sa vina acasa, sa ia baietii. Va dati seama, smulsi, pur si simplu? Cum, scena, va imaginati ca e de groaza? Copiii, baietii smulsi, mama ramasa lauză cu bebelusul de trei luni in brate, da, cu casa goala. Luati la politie ca si cum ar fi niste criminali, desi ei sunt intelectuali, el este ITst, are grija de toata instalatia de computer din oraselul acela, ea este asistanta medicala, deci nu sunt oarecine acolo...Oamenii astia s-au dus intr-un orasel linistit ca sa traiasca o viata linistita si nu au banuit ce o sa se intample. Deci a fost o mare surpriza, pentru ca nu te asteptai o tara civilizata ca Norvegia, nu te asteptai ca un sistem de protectie sa procedeze in felul acesta. Ma doare foarte mult pentru ca stiu ca Ruth este lauză si stiu din proprie experienta cat de vulnerabile sunt femeile lauză si predispuse la depresie. Eu nu stiu cum mai respira. Ma uitam alaltaieri la un alt post de televiziune, nici, nu mai stia nici sa vorbeasca romaneste si ea a lucrat aici cu copiii strazii. Nu mai stia. Pentru ca-ti omoara celulele, iti omoara neuronii. Va dati seama cum dorm omanii astia, daca dorm, va dati seama daca oamenii astia mananca? Va dati seama in ce situatie sunt? Va dati seama ce simt cand isi dau bebelusul inapoi dup ce l-au vazut doua ore? Va dati seama ce simt ei acum ca vine Craciunul? Li s-a permis sa faca cadouri. Cum v-ati simti dumneavoastra daca ati fi mama, sa va duceti sa faceti cadouri si sa nu stiti daca le puteti da sau</p>	<p>I'm very affected because I am a mother, a grandmother, a teacher, and the reason I chose this profession out of passion and because I love children. We never expected that a protection system would take children. Can you imagine that some cars would appear at the school, take these children away without telling anyone where they were taking them? Then imagine that, the same kind of cars, similar to those in movie about Hitlerism and Fascism would come to the house and take away the boys. Can you fathom this, simply kidnapped?! Can you imagine this scene, a horror scene, when the boys are being pulled away from their mother who is still postpartum, with her 3 months old baby, with an empty home? Then taken to the police like some kind of criminals, even though they are intellectuals. He is an IT person, in charge of the computer network for that small town. She is a Registered Nurse. They are not just anybody there. These people moved to a peaceful small town to live a peaceful life, and they never suspected what would happen. It was such a great surprise. Because you would never expect that a civilized country like Norway, you wouldn't never expect that a protective system would act in such manner. I hurt very much because I know that Ruth is still nursing, and I know from my own experience that nursing women are very vulnerable and prone to depression. I don't know how she can still breathe...The day before I was watching TV... She didn't even know how to speak Romanian anymore, even though she used to work here with homeless children. She didn't know anymore, because it (pain) kills your brain cells, it kills your neurons. Can you imagine how these people</p>

<p>nu. Este extrem de dureros. Pentru noi aceasta este prioritate. Nici noi sa stiti ca nu avem Craciun. Daca ei nu au Craciun cu copiii lor nici noi n-avem Craciun. Nici noi n-avem liniste, nici noi nu ne putem bucura de aceste sarbatori pana cand nu vom sti ca acesti oameni sunt impreuna cu copiii lor. Si vom plange de bucurie alaturi de ei cand isi vor avem copiii langa ei.</p>	<p>sleep, or even if they sleep? Can you imagine of these people even eat? Can you imagine the gravity of this situation? Can you imagine what they must feel when they return the back after having seen him for two hours? Can you imagine what they are felling now, around Christmas time? They were allowed to buy presents. How would you feel, as a mother, to buy presents and not know if you are allowed to personally give them, or to give the present and then...It is extremely painful! For us, this is a priority. Just so you know, we don't have Christmas either. If they don't have Christmas with their children, we don't have Christmas either! We don't have any peace, we cannot enjoy the holidays until we know that these people are reunited with their children. And we will cry with joy together with them (fighting back tears) when they are going to have their children by their side.</p>
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The author of the 6:16-minute video recorded story that was shared on the Facebook page and YouTube allocated 2:12 minutes to the setting, slowly moving the camera in front of the crowd of protesters. Hundreds of people (at least 600 according to organizers) gathered in front of the Norwegian Embassy in Bucharest and stood quietly with what appeared to be a sea of signs designed and distributed by the movement organization. The increased number of supporters from the initial 77 that liked the first Facebook post (on November 19) to the estimated 600 in the street on Dec. 19 indicate that messages posted by the family (and shared by viewers) in the digital space have likely contributed to the significant presence in the physical space. Pictures of the event show that, children stood behind police barriers but in front of adults of various ages. The image eventually became iconic; there are many photos on the website showing that subsequent protests were organized in a

similar way--with children positioned in front of the camera, perhaps to convey that the case of this family resonated with the whole community, from young to old.

As the video camera captures the solemn atmosphere, in which the voice of Pastor Bodnariu is barely audible in the background, the narrator begins re-telling the story of the family's suffering and loss. With careful, discreet make-up and freshly died hair, gold rimmed glasses and a white scarf draped around her neck, the narrator projects an image of distinction and elegance. This image is aligned with the movement's strategy of maintaining a conservative appearance and emphasizing the value of neatness, cleanness and good taste (or membership in a particular social class). The projection of an elegant physical appearance captured by video or pictures and shared in the digital space stands in contrast to the many accusations of backwardness and lack of civilization that have been made by critics of the family.

The narrator of the video excerpt, Maria Iliescu, begins her story by sharing her own emotional distress. Research demonstrates that securing an emotional investment from the audience is one of the fundamental goals of any social movement. In the case of the movement that evolved to support the efforts of the Bodnariu family, the use of emotional messages has been particularly prevalent. As a matter of fact, in a subsequent interview, Pastor Ionescu confessed that the emotional component of the Bodnariu story contributed to its high tellability, (Labov, 1972), which in turn helped the movement promote religious conservative values and goals.

Maria Iliescu's re-telling of the story helps to validate and legitimize the movement's goals and actions. In the case of this particular excerpt, her account demonstrates an understanding informed by experiences of motherhood and by her professional expertise as a retired teacher. Her use of the first person in the

introductory sentence emphasizes the fact that the narrator and the mother of the children share many identities and experiences.

One of the re-occurring themes of Iilescu's story is shock and disbelief. She repeatedly uses "you would never expect..." to describe things that happened that should not have happened or are surprising. In her re-telling of the events from the recent past, the narrator depicts the failure by the establishment to meet expectations as a violation of basic civility and human compassion which lead to the marginalization and victimization of this family.

The re-telling of the story in this excerpt goes beyond a mere timeline of events to articulating feelings and emotions, as the audience is invited to identify itself in real time with the parents and to channel their unimaginable grief. The repeated use of the rhetorical question "can you imagine," invites the audience to empathize with the parents in their emotional distress. This turmoil is described as severe enough to impair basic human functions, from the ability to eat, sleep and speak. This narrative frame of violation of basic human dignity and impairment of individual well-being aligns with the emphasis of other texts generated by the social movement—e.g., the narrative on the family's website.

Co-constructed by various tellers, as this example demonstrates, the narrative of trauma and loss of the Bodnariu family incorporates some of the temporal dimensions of most stories. But unlike other fully formed narratives (with a beginning, middle and end), the story of the Bodnariu family is under construction. This open-ended, goal-oriented story appealed to the supporters to provide thru their actions a "sense of an ending" (Ricoeur, 1983) that would enable the return of the children to their parents and the restoration of their joyful past life.

With Christmas fast approaching, after the well-attended protest in Bucharest

and Chisinau, in the Republic of Moldova, Marius and Ruth Bodnariu's case gained national visibility and support from various religious and civil organizations, including many Christian media outlets. Romanian Christian journalist Cristi Tepeş visited the couple in Norway, interviewed them and documented their emotional distress. While in Norway, he created a digital postcard, signed by Marius and Ruth and addressed to their Romanian, Norwegian and international supporters. The postcard was shared on Facebook on December 22, 2015. In less than one minute, the author of this video card uses image and sound to help the parents narrate their present self:



Figure 5. Video Christmas card – first frame

The amateur video begins with a close-up of five home-made, almost identical blue and red woolen stockings, slightly different in size, hanging on the mantel of a country fire-place decorated with a Christmas wreath.



Figure 6. Video Christmas card at min. 0':17"

After 2 seconds of silence, briefly punctured by a discreet sigh, the camera zooms out to capture the entire fireplace, and to further incorporate the rest of the wall, covered in light beige wood paneling, creating an atmosphere of an organic, peaceful living. The walls are adorned one side of the fireplace with a wreath of dry flowers in fall colors and an assorted copper and black metal artwork piece, while on the other side hangs a grouping of old, black and white, framed portraits of two couples, possibly maternal great-parents. Several plastic storage boxes are under an upholstered wooden bench underneath the family portraits. As the camera embraces the space, a soft guitar lullaby and the occasional crackling of the fire replace the silence. The camera zooms further to reveal in the foreground a large, empty armchair, positioned in front of a white, empty crib.

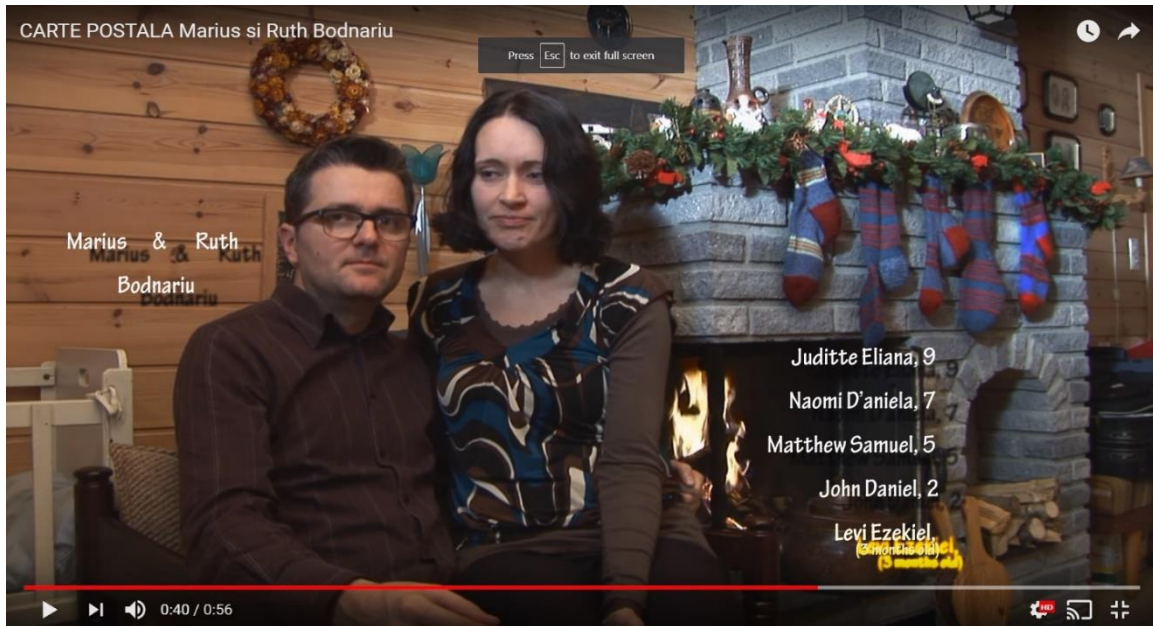


Figure 7. Video Christmas card at min. 0':40"

After a one second fade-in transition, swiftly moving from shadowy, nearly ethereal to a clear presence, the parents appear seated together in the armchair, while their names flank the space between the armchair and the empty crib. Ruth sits on her husband's lap, with one arm around his back, and the other supporting her leg. Marius wears a brown, button-up business casual shirt, Ruth wears a sleeveless shirt on top of a shirt covering her arms, in matching colors and no make-up. Before their appeal, with grim, withdrawn faces, they briefly turn toward each other. Marius's gaze is very brief, then turns toward the camera, while Ruth's lingers for a few seconds, giving him a discreet smile. During the message, Marius's gaze remains focused on the camera, while Ruth glances back and forth, attempting a smile. They both hold back tears, and nod. Marius fidgets with his fingers, moves both hands and toward the end makes a fist. Marius and Ruth take turns, asking the audience to "Pray for our family" in Romanian, Norwegian and English. As they deliver their message, the names and ages of the children begin rolling into the right lower corner of the screen. After a final nod, the names and ages of the children

appear in the right lower corner of the screen, the image begins to fade away, she removes her hand and rubs her leg. The image of the parents fades away, to be replaced by a dark background, on which the names of the parents, initially placed on the left side of the screen, slowly meet in the middle the names and ages of the children, moving toward to right, to create a centered grouping. Lastly, the text “o familie reunită” / “A reunited family” appears on top of their names, with a yellow text animation. The music stops at second 40, leaving 16 seconds of solemn silence.

Designed as a Christmas greeting card, a genre usually bearing well-wishes in the festive spirit of this important Christian celebration, this digital story projects the image of desolation and sadness of a deserted home, stripped of the usual presence of children.

The narrative weight of the story is carried mostly by the setting captured by the video camera and the non-verbal cues provided by the parents, from their facial expressions to the positioning and movement of the bodies. This is evidence of Bamberg’s (2012) claim that stories are told not just by verbal or written messages, but also by body language and other forms of communication. Between the choice of close-ups of the parents and focus on various objects around the room and the parent’s performance of grief, this video card illustrates an example of a co-constructed, multivocal narrative in which decisions about the way to tell the story belong to Marius and Ruth as much as they do to the author of the digital narrative.

The spatial dimension of the story, depicting a modest, yet seemingly comfortable household conveys the sense of wellbeing and warmth, as means to contradict the accusations by the authorities that the family home has been an unsafe environment. The homemade Christmas stockings indicate both the sense of loss caused by the absence of the children, but also respect for tradition and

rejection of commercial Christmas decorations, perceived by the like-minded members of the group as a departure from the real meaning of Christmas. The image of relative frugality conveyed by the setting hints to the family's financial conservatism, a trait encouraged and valued by the Evangelical doctrine and conduct. Connected with other pictures depicting the family shared in the digital space, such as those captured during visits abroad, this indication of frugality completes the image of the Bodnarius as responsible parents, interested in providing their children with a humble, yet full of opportunities upbringing. The video also portrays an unstaged, authentic home in which storage boxes have not been tucked away for the sake of the performance. Details captured by the moving camera contributed to an image of normalcy, in contrast to messages about the family perpetuated by the government or social service agencies acting on behalf of the government.

The image of a modest and humble family home is reinforced by the image of the parents, from their clothing to their behavior. Dressed simply, yet in color coordinated outfits, Marius and Ruth appear to be loyal to the image prescribed by the church, in which adorned bodies indicate vanity as a symbol of pride, one of the deadly sins. True to the no make-up spiritual discipline promoted by the church, Ruth wears her pain unaltered and unconcealed. This is another way of eliciting compassion, respect, support, and solidarity from the audience.

While showcasing the space of the family home as a place of both safety and loss, this digital story also uses interpersonal space as a way of conveying the intimacy, trust and reliance of each other that the Bodnarius projected for the entire duration of the case. But while close, they are also alone, as the story illustrates. The image of vulnerability created by the facial expressions and body language is further

strengthened by their request that the audience prays. As one indication of how much this video-recorded holiday card resonates with viewers, the YouTube channel recorded 11,249 views, was shared 1003 times and liked by 100 viewers.

In response to the postcard and perhaps as evidence of resonance and support, the following day a group of youth from the Community of Baptist Churches from Timișoara, Romania, created a digital narrative of solidarity in a post titled "Să nu-i lăsăm singuri de Crăciun #Bodnariu"/ "Let's not let them be alone for Christmas #Bodnariu." The collective narrative of solidarity featuring the image from the original postcard gathered 526 likes and was shared 141 times on the original post.



Figure 8. "/ "Let's not let them be alone for Christmas #Bodnariu"

Additionally, this banner has been subsequently re-posted and re-circulated during the following days for other digital initiatives. The same day, the banner created by the Baptist youth was used to accompany the re-posting of a blog initially published on newsnetcrestin.blogspot.com. Titled "Dragă Norvegie, te acuz of abuz"/" Dear Norway, I'm accusing you of abuse," this blog post was written in an epistolary form by a Romanian Christian journalist. This post addressed to a personified Norway represents the first direct, formal straightforward accusation of

institutional abuse on the website, and the first time the Bodnarius were labeled as victims.

Original text in Romanian	English text (my translation)
<p>Dragă Norvegia, să ți se pună pata pe o familie de români care-și crește copiii în duhul creștin, singurul, al Adevărului atît de mult, încît să-i rupi din matca lor, să-i dai printre străini, să le furi dreptul suprem la Mamă și la Tată! Iată adevăratul abuz!</p> <p>Dragă Norvegie, te acuz de abuz nu împotriva unei familii de români creștini, te acuz de abuz împotriva Creștinătății, te acuz de abuz împotriva Vieții și Adevărului, de acuz de abuz de prostie și ignoranță! Laicitatea ta e stupidă și fără sens. Grija ta pentru copii e lipsită de subiect, e o pseudogrijă, e ilară și subdimensionată.</p>	<p>Dear Norway, to set your mind on a Romanian family who raise their children in the Christian spirit, the only one, the spirit of Truth in such way that you break them away from their nest, you send them among strangers, and you steal their supreme right to have a Mother and a Father! This is the true abuse!</p> <p>Dear Norway, I accuse you not only of abuse against a family of Romanian Christians, I accuse you of abuse against Life and Truth, I'm accusing you of stupidity and ignorance! Your secularism is stupid and doesn't make any sense. Your concern for children eludes the subject, is a pseudo-care, hilarious and undersized.</p>

This explicit accusation captures a progression of emotions, in which the stages of grief go from shock to anger and blame. By building on and adding to testimonies produced previously (and by others), this post contributes to and strengthens the larger effort to tell stories about this family's pain and loss – and possibly also contribute to a rationale/need for action. This post by a supporter not affiliated with the social movement organization or its outer circle of regular contributors to the mobilization efforts seemed to have resonated with Facebook users, who assigned it the second largest number of likes (511) to that date, almost comparable to the number of likes that accompanied the launching of the email campaign.

By the year's end, the Pro-Bodnariu movement had gained increased visibility thru daily actions coordinated online. The actions ranged from e-mail and phone

bomb campaigns to the Norwegian authorities (framed as “caroling”) to a campaign of solidarity featuring pictures of supporters wearing printed t-shirts with the family’s portrait. The most significant number of recorded viewers to date was achieved on December 30, when the social movement organization posted a video in which various storytellers served as character witnesses, providing accounts of their past interaction with the couple and/or the family. This collectively produced narrative of support shows how multiple tellers engaged in digital practices (e.g., recording video, taking picture, sharing – presumably via email or other platforms) co-constructed the various episodes of the Bodnariu story by recalling the past, depicting the present and imagining the future. This video was entitled “Global support for Marius and Ruth Bodnariu family,” and was part of the larger “Operation global pictures” campaign that was deployed at various times during the movement.

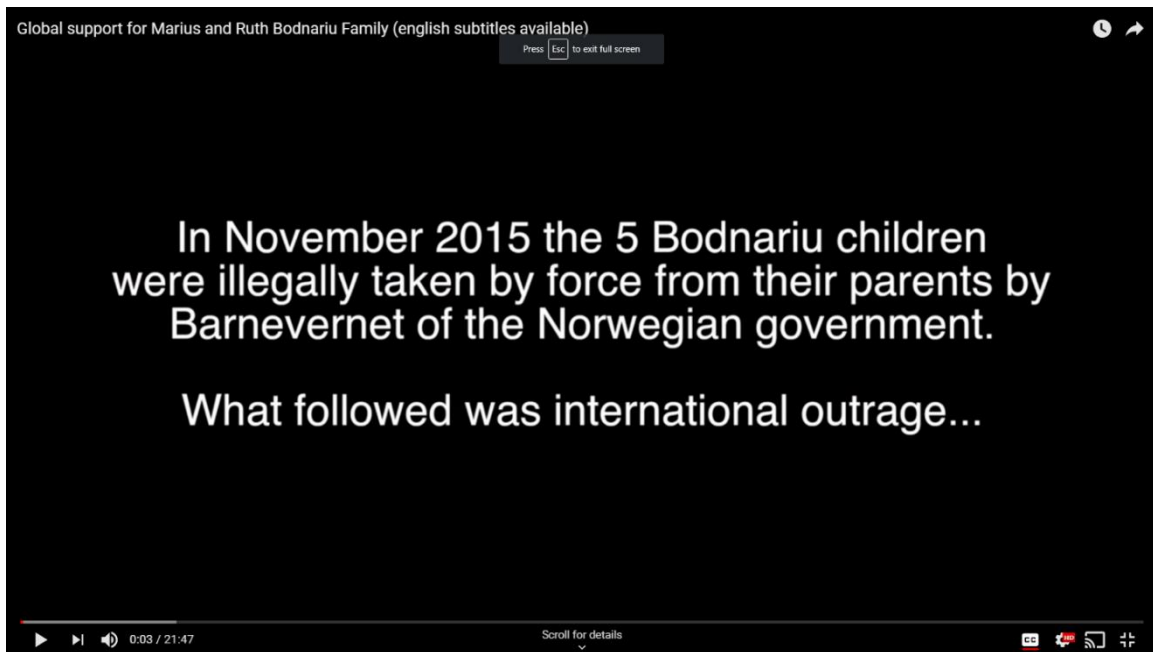


Figure 9. Global support for Marius and Ruth Bodnariu family – Operation global pictures

This lengthy (21:47 minutes) digital story, viewed by 10,743 users and shared by 1651 begins with a reminder of the “problematic event” (Bruner, 1986; Capps and Ochs, 1995), narrated on a black, somber background. Taking turns, the various narrators (the first storytellers, the children’s paternal grandparents, and other supporters) co-produce an account of emotional distress and loss as they recall past family celebrations around the holidays.



Figure 10. Global support for Marius and Ruth Bodnariu family – Operation global pictures – plea from the grandparents

Throughout the video, still photography alternates with video testimonies from family members from Romania and the United States, including the small Romanian-American cousins, who were coached by an adult to tell “what happened to your cousins”? The story captured here (retold by dozens of supporters) contains images of people carrying the familiar protest signs, hand-written notes, drawings produced by children depicting the family and their predicament, and video

testimonies from childhood friends. A couple from Canada, for instance, establishes Marius' credibility, depicting him as trustworthy, "selfless to the point of sacrifice," and loyal, claiming that "he always knows how to make somebody happy." The couple's depiction of the Bodnarius mirrors the image of humility and selflessness of the official narrative, depicting Ruth as "kind, patient, loving, compassionate." One narrator described her volunteer work with Romanian homeless children, while another narrator recalled a fairytale-like romance ("Marius and Ruth fell in love, got married and moved to Norway"). A second couple, from Bucharest, emphasized the family's high moral standards and integrity, re-telling Ruth's story of sacrifice for "unloved children." Collectively, the stories told in this video emphasize the family's truthfulness/credibility.



Figure 11. Global support for Marius and Ruth Bodnariu family – Operation global pictures – plea from family friends

Re-told from the perspective of people who have personally known the couple as well as strangers who have been moved and persuaded to support, this online video collage of stories confirms and reinforces the sense of unfairness and injustice, while

demonstrating how many supporters have been informed of the case and responded to it.

The impact of this video collage of stories on the audience can be estimated by the high number of viewers, many of whom shared their reactions concerning the depiction of the family and the unfairness of the actions against them. While one user seems to have been touched by what they translate as beauty (“beautiful people, beautiful children and beautiful families in this video! I am very grateful that so many people raised their voices. Let's hope for a miracle!”), another shares a different set of views:

PF: great to see the romanian community unite behind this family. Let's keep it up. Families should never be broken up like this, especially when there is no real proof of abuse. I realize there are cases of real abuse, but the number of cases where it is quite evident that the parents are nothing but decent people is staggering. Something is very fishy with Barnevernet. They need to stop this evil practice. Same thing goes to Swedish Social Services. I know, I know, you're in the perfect socialist paradise... now have a heart will you? (original text in English)

This user’s description of an unfair and unjust treatment of a family is echoed by comments from another user, who also seems to believe that the case has been mishandled:

KD: Many children have been saved from abusive parents due to this organization. If the parents are on drugs, alcoholized or even pedophiles, the barnevernet is made to protect the children. But in THIS case the barnevernet personnel should have been sterilized and exiled out from the country.- And i am a Norwegian citizen. (original text in English)

In addition to corroborating the sense of wrong-doing, this comment also shows that the messages of the Bodnariu movement had reached Norwegian citizens. This comment also showcases a display of anger, as one of the most productive emotions to be exploited in cases of collective action.

The video collage created with the help of supporters and shared officially on behalf of the organizers was responded to not only with comments, likes and shares,

but also with materials produced by individual viewers. For instance, a collage of re-circulated pictures of the parents and the children entitled “The SAD story of BODNARIU” produced by one of Marius’ former Sunday school classmate was viewed 8,873 times and shared 812 times on YouTube. On Facebook, the same video was liked 371 times, commented on 16 times and shared 365 times. In response to the video, viewers expressed their empathy and expressed the need for a positive resolution, mobilizing other to action:

TMD: Ce trist...Doamne, ai mila! ☹️ [TM: How sad...God, have mercy!] (my translation)

MW: Norway must be punished or they will continue their terror on many other families. The world must react firmly. (original text in English)

SG: we have to act together, Poles, Romanians, Czechs, Russians, Lithuanians. When you can see a Norwegian just spit on him or her! Dirty terrorists. (original text in English)

Another similar video published on Christmas Eve entitled “Bodnariu Family - I will rise up” published on Christmas Eve registered 3,895 views and 700 shares, in response to the author’s request to “feel free to teach it in churches, schools, homes, etc.” The same day, another viewer-produced video entitled “A message to Norway and the whole world – Best Christmas gift for Bodnariu family” was seen by as many as 33,933 people and shared by 1753.

Following a pattern of directly responding (at least once a month) to supporters, on January 1, 2016 Marius and Ruth issued a bilingual message of gratitude, posted by the organizers:

Original text in Romanian	Original text in English
Mesaj din partea lui Marius si Ruth Bodnariu:	Message from Marius and Ruth Bodnariu:

<p>Dragii nostrii, care va rugati, postiti, si ne sustineti spre reintregirea familiei noastre, dorim ca anul 2016 sa fie intr-adevar un an de jubileu in care captivii sa fie eliberati si sa se intoarca acasa. Domnul nu intarzie in implinirea fagaduintei Lui, cum cred unii; ci are o indelunga rabdare pentru voi, si doreste ca nici unul sa nu piara, ci toti sa vina la pocainta. 2 Petru 3:9 Ne rugam ca Domnul Isus sa va binecuvanteze si sa ne pregateasca pentru venirea Lui, care acum este si mai aproape. Prin harul Lui sa-I fim martori pana la marginile pamantului. Va multumim in numele Domnului nostru Isus Hristos!</p>	<p>To all those who are praying, fasting, and supporting us in the reunification of our family, we wish that 2016 will be a year of Jubilee in which captives are set free and are returned home. "The Lord does not delay His promise, as some understand delay, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9) We pray that the Lord Jesus bless you and to prepare us all for His coming, which now is closer. May we, through His grace, be His witnesses to the ends of the earth. We thank you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ!</p>
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This message from the parents is similar in content and tone to earlier public communications with supporters, conducted in a neutral, yet symbolic manner. Serving as a re-affirmation of their Christian identity, this message replicates the narrative of triumph and victory produced by the family and its advocates and supporters when the movement began to gain significant visibility. As they express their desire for the freedom of all those afflicted (involvement in this case has been framed as setting a precedent for all other families in this situation), the parents reference a Biblical text that illustrate God’s plan for victory for those deserving. This message is an example of intertextuality as a consistent trait of the narrative produced by the family and supporters, in which canonical religious texts (e.g., the Bible, religious hymns etc.) and some legal secular texts (e.g., The Universal Declaration of Human Rights) shape understanding for and of the group. Many of the responses to such text belong to the same religious register, showcasing the group’s linguistic repertoire, as in the examples below (some of which originally appear in Romanian and which I translated into English):

RV: We are praying to your kids to be protected as well. Every minute I am thinking for you.

LAL: God is Your defense, He will show the world!

HA: *Domnul sa va intareasca eu cred ca Domnul nostru lucreaza cum noi nu ne asteptam si copii se intorc in sanul familiei.* [May God strengthen you. I believe God works as we don't expect, and the children will return to the family.]

LG: *Avem un Dumnezeu puternic si Drept! Nu va pierdeti speranta Ruth si Marius! Ne rugam pentru voi si pentru copilasii vostri!!!* [Our God is mighty and fair! Don't lose hope, Ruth and Marius! We are praying for you and your children!!!]

EV: *Sunteti minunati! Mă rog Mai departe pentru voi. Fiti tari, Dumnezeu e la lucru...* [You are wonderful! I continue to pray for you. Be strong, God is working...]

In addition to words of support and encouragement, supporters also imagined a future in which, thru divine intervention, the children would be returned to their parents. This type of an imagined alternate future eventually became increasingly present as the movement gained visibility and its followers acquired growing confidence. Many of the messages of support conveyed emotional, ardent pleas, in form of prayers, such as in the excerpt below (an example of heteroglossia):

RS: Daniel 9:17-19. "Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, Lord, look with favor on your desolate sanctuary. Give ear, our God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. Lord, listen! Lord, forgive! Lord, hear and act! For your sake, O my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name." (original text in English)

The parents' message was subsequently mirrored and complemented by other accounts from family members, friends, community members and strangers. Such

accounts of injustice, unfairness, personal trauma or loss generated seemed to contribute to an increased collective resonance among viewers in the months to come. As reported by the social movement organization, between December 2016 to February 2016, street protests were held in 56 cities from 24 countries, gathering an estimated 70.000 participants. In this new phase of the movement in which committed supporters complemented their digital presence with a physical showcase of solidarity, the pro-Bodnariu movement moved into a new era. This action-based stage of the movement also involved a collaborative effort, in which local organizers mobilized participants, provided logistical information (all shared on Facebook as part of the "events" function), while supporters documented and described the protests. Perhaps in order to bolster morale, secure increased participation to upcoming protests and convince the undecided, the organizers asked supporters to share their recorded videos and pictures and followed each scheduled action with visual/audio accounts of the events, as well as a headcount. As the number of participants to protests reached as much as 10,000 people in the city of Oradea in Romania on Jan. 23, it appears that the narrative of defeat was no longer an acceptable end for the Bodnariu case. Instead, the narrative of victory and triumph sketched by the organizers and supporters during the first few months began to strengthen, especially after April 6, 2016, when in what the movement described as an admission of wrong-doing by the authorities, the baby was returned to the family. The section of comments by various viewers to the actions of protest reported and documented by the organizers and supporters shows the range of emotions shared in the digital space, from gratitude to respect and pride. Whenever I translated excerpts that were originally produced in Romanian into English, that is explicitly indicated. Some excerpts (e.g., those that come last here) were originally produced in English so no translation was necessary.

AJ: Thank You, God and thank you protesters for standing with the Bodnariu family against this EVIL!!!!!!!!!!!! We are watching and praying in Little Rock, Arkansas, U.S.A.!!!

CBC: Noi cei din Moldova si din Coreea de Sud va sustinem! Binecuvintari! Domnul e de partea noastra! [We, those from Moldova and South Coreea support you! Blessings! God is on our side!]

IL: Dumnezeu sa binecuvanteze fiecare suflet care a fost prezent in acel loc, si EL sa aduca Biruinta si sa distruga planurile barnevernetului si fiecare mama sa-si primasca copilul inapoi!!! [May God bless every soul who was present in that place, and may He bring victory and destroy Barnevernet's plans, and may every mother get her child back!]

PG: Nu am putut ajunge, dar suntem alaturi de familia Bodnariu. Ne rugam pentru ei. Felicitări organizatorilor. [We couldn't make it, but we are supporting the Bodnariu family. We pray for them. Congratulations to the organizers!]

Adriana Szymonik: Bravo pt ca va pasa si faceți ceva concret sa ajutați familia Bodnariu. Felicitări!!! [Bravo because you care, and you do something practical to help the Bodnariu family. Congratulations!]

CH: Bravo! Maximum respect for these true human beings!

TP: Congratulations, Romanians! I've never seen a more united people than Romanians. God brings us together, may He be praised!

AC: Congratulations, indeed for the events. But it isn't true that Romanians are united.

TP: Those who love God are united!

The global protest held on April 16, 2016 in 70 cities in 29 countries in represented the ultimate effort to end the case with a narrative of victory and

triumph. After an estimated 300.000 supporters protested in a span of 12 hours around the world, reactions from (especially American) Christian media outlets (radio stations, online newspapers), pastors (e.g., John Piper – prominent contemporary Evangelical theologian), politicians (Republican Senators Stockman of Texas and Franks from AZ) confirmed that the Bodnariu case has reached international attention. Reports by Norwegian whistleblowers, a letter of protest signed by 100 international lawyer and sent to the Norwegian authorities on May 14, followed by a report in the European Parliament on June 2 are only some of the follow-up actions that might have also contributed to the June 3 decision by the court to release the remaining 4 children to their parents.



Figure 12. Reunited

In one of the final posts by the organizers, a photograph of the reunited Bodnariu family once again freely enjoying the lush green outdoors together completes the story with the narrative of triumph and return to joy.

Summary

In this chapter I have described and analyzed how narratives of trauma and loss were initially articulated by the parents and their advocates, but then subsequently taken up by others inside and outside of the social movement. I have also shown how publicly-accessible narratives reached the public, and the growth of visibility and support that accompanied the collaboratively produced accounts. Finally, I examined how such narratives have been received by various audiences, who used the affordances of Facebook, an interactive digital space platform, to amplify and further distribute the story.

The analysis of texts provided here (e.g., electronic petition, "Our story" and "Our mission" sections of the family website, standard e-mail used in the mass e-mail campaign, video Christmas card, digital testimonies in the "Operation global pictures, messages of gratitude from the parents) illustrates how the narrative migrated from the private space (phone and personal e-mail) to the public digital environment, and eventually to the physical spaces where the actions of protest and support were organized. Using text, image and sound, the parents and their advocates (extended family members and friends) presented a number of representational accounts (Wortham, 2001) of their personal suffering caused by what has been interpreted abusive actions of the state against this family and others in their situation. This chapter demonstrates the narrative of a self \-negotiated "dual landscape" (Brunner, 1990) in which the depiction of events, circumstances and actions blends with illustrations of the emotional and mental state of the protagonists.

As demonstrated in this analysis, the emotionally charged narrative of self, shared by the parents and supported by the family members features an interplay between the narrative of present sorrow and pain and the narrative of past joy and

happiness. Illustrated with visual representations of family pictures from the past (e.g., pictures from family events, vacations etc.), the ongoing, open-ended narrative of present suffering engaged the public in co-constructing the future, respectively the ending of the story. The imagined future, yet to be determined, comprised alternate endings, which entailed either accepting the narrative of defeat of writing the narrative of victory and triumph and reinstate normality, equilibrium, and joy.

This chapter also illustrated some ways in which narratives of personal experience might be co-authored by multiple tellers, from speakers appointed by the family to random supporters and sympathizers, who contributed to co-creating a digital family portrait of Romanian Christian exceptionalism. In their stories, a multitude of co-tellers offered testimonies about the family's honesty, humility, generosity, compassion, civility, and most importantly, their dedication to and compliance with religious principles and norms, including those related to parenting and discipline. Initially written for a position of vulnerability, the narrative later eventually become a multi-vocal, polyphonic story of solidarity, hope and assertiveness. In some dimensions of this co-constructed narrative, at times the depiction of the parents transitioned from victimhood to heroism, as the Marius and Ruth Bodnariu were identified by some tellers as courageous champions of justice for others and leaders of a world-wide Christian awakening movement. Finally, by presenting a basic quantitative account of users' digital practices (e.g., likes, shares, comments) this analysis demonstrated the role of the public in helping to co-construct messages and how their participation and collaboration might contribute to amplifying, extending and distributing the original narrative and persuading others to support the movement.

CHAPTER 5

“YOU KNOW, US, ROMANIANS, WE WALKED THIS PATH BEFORE”: INVOKING COLLECTIVE MEMORY AS A STRATEGY OF UNIFICATION

In this chapter, I will analyze how a narrative of shared experience might be created, co-constructed, and used to build a sense of coherent identity in online spaces. I will examine how the most prevalent narrative of shared trauma is constructed by the organizers of the Pro-Bodnariu movement then taken up by others and further distributed and circulated by not only the family and the advocates but also by the viewers/audience (which can include those near and far, sometimes complete strangers who became supporters of the movement).

My analysis also demonstrates the power of a co-constructed, collaboratively produced narrative that resonates with large numbers of viewers, and how that resonance can be translated into action by the organizers of the pro-Bodnariu movement. By exploring how family members, the social movement organization and viewers of the movement (who might later become participants) produce, take up and reformulate selected narratives of traumatic experience, I show how pro-Bodnariu supporters use digital practices to convey a shared sense of identity and history, and how such a narrative helps to increase a sense of empathy and compassion in participants and audience members alike.

My selection of representative examples of digital practices found on pro-Bodnariu website and Facebook is guided by my larger interest in how narratives of experience are collaboratively produced, taken up, and amplified by viewers who become co-tellers. The analysis demonstrates the affordances of the digital space for circulating information and for enabling “problem solving through collaborative narration” (Ochs, 1999). My analysis of selected excerpts from open letters, blogs, website pages and user posts focuses on how members of the pro-Bodnariu

movement worked to secure the “participants' concerted public representations of worthiness, unity, numbers and commitment (WUNC)” (Tilly 2004, pg.53). By highlighting the existence of shared collective religious values and ethnic bonds, as well as shared historic experiences of trauma and suffering, the Pro-Bodnariu movement used various linguistic and semiotic resources in the online space to create a sense of solidarity, earnestness and commitment that ultimately lead to the global actions on behalf of the affected family.

The narratives examined here depict Romanians as informed and particularly alert critical thinkers (a trait acquired as a result of the relatively recent experiences of persecution and survival under the communist dictatorship). My analysis of the co-constructed nature of this narrative (of strength, courage and overcoming communism-induced trauma) includes an examination of how Romanian often depict themselves as victims of repeated and long-lasting aggressions (e.g., of the Ottoman Empire). Another particular dimension of the collaboratively produced narrative that warrants analysis is that which demonstrates the connection between rejecting contemporary European values and resisting what the movement and its followers describe as the political and moral decline of the Western European society.

“We come from a communist regime, and we know what that means:”

Framing the understanding of the present thru the experiences of the recent past

A close examination of the documents produced by the organizers of the Pro-Bodnariu movement reveals that a large component of the group’s rhetoric centers around establishing a similarity between the perceived abuses of the Norwegian authorities and those of the former totalitarian regime of Romania. References invoking the collective memory of communism appear consistently in most of the official statements issued by the social movement organization, many of the speeches delivered at various protest, as well as blogs and open letters written by several supporters and shared in the digital space. For instance, in a press release from February 1, 2016 announcing the upcoming protest in Houston, TX the organizers explain the actions of the Romanian community:

Millions of Romanians have left their homeland in the last several decades to escape political and religious persecution at the hands of the Communist regime. Many others left seeking a better life abroad. Thousands resettled in Norway as well where, as everywhere else in the world, they have maintained their deeply held religious beliefs and traditional values. (original text in English)

Similarly, in in a speech delivered at the protest held in San Francisco on Feb. 13, 2016, Pastor Avram from the Romanian Pentecostal Church Happy Valley in Phoenix, AZ declared: “We come from a communist regime, and we know what that means. And this is worse. I feel this is worse than communism.” Both texts depict Romanians as survivors of communism and its trauma. In the press release the authors refer specifically to issues of political and religious persecution and elaborate on the commitment by Romanians to their traditional spiritual and cultural values as a form of sustenance and resilience in exile. Describing Romanian exile as a process that occurred over the extensive length of the communist rule, this story also

references Norway as one of the many chosen receiving countries, thus indirectly connecting and incorporating the Bodnariu case into the narrative of resilience abroad. The excerpt from the Pastor's speech doesn't provide any details about the communist experience. Instead, he simply labels the collective experience as an invitation to trust in the ability of the community to recognize and assess various manifestations of injustice. In the last sentence the Pastor switching from the pronoun "we" to "I," and from the collective to the personal experience. Here the Pastor uses the verb "to feel" (rather than perhaps "to know," "to think," or to "believe") to expresses his assessment of "this" (the Bodnariu case) as informed by an emotional, rather than a cognitive framework. This suggests that for a survivor of trauma, the understanding and evaluation of certain practices (here the treatment of the Bodnariu family as "worse than communism") comes first and foremost from a place of emotion.

Another artefact that references the memory of communism as informing the groups' understanding of the present (and of the Bodnariu case) is the movement's mission statement. Located on the movement's/family's website www.bodnariufamily.org, this text (also posted in various versions several times on the Facebook page) includes an entire paragraph dedicated to the role of the communist experience in shaping the group's understanding of institutional abuse and tyranny. This website (created and maintained by Romanian-Americans for reunification of Bodnariu family, "a group of community and religious leaders, businessmen, and civic leaders acting on behalf of their communities") incorporates a selection of critically important, carefully selected documents. This includes a selection of family pictures, video and pictures from the various protests and news articles (52 in English and 32 in Romanian). Because the mission statement is in

English, it is likely designed to reach a large audience (of Romanians and non-Romanians) and/or an audience unfamiliar with detailed information about Romania's past. The mission statement is a lengthy and detailed document, which re-tells the event, labels the actions of the Norwegian government and explains the community's motivation to support the family. After providing a list of accusations, including abuse of power, lack of transparency, manipulation, coercion and other violations of personal freedom committed by the Norwegian authorities, the statement describes similar crimes committed by the former communist dictatorship in Romania. In the paragraph dedicated to the Romanian communist experience a parallel is drawn between events from the two eras:

Such methods and posturing remind us Romanians of the tactics employed by the former governing totalitarian communist regime in Romania. It is this recognition that sustains us in our accusing the Barnevernet, and implicitly the Kingdom of Norway in its complicity, of flagrant violation of family and human rights, of threats and intimidation against the Bodnariu family and their lawyers (some of which remain without license to practice), and of attempts to silence and restrict freedom of religious expression. (original text in English)

This excerpt from the one of the foundational documents produced by the organizers of the movement shows how references to past experiences with the communist regime inform current understandings of actions taken by Norwegian authorities against the family and the community. Written as an echo of the Romanian collective voice, this statement provides the seal of authenticity and trustworthiness afforded by the lived shared experience, which informs its grievances and contributes to its legitimacy. As this statement suggests, while certainly useful, the recognition of abusive behaviors could not be conducive to action unless paired with the necessary courage to expose the actions of the enemy, and to furthermore formally accuse.

These references to the collective memory of communism seems to resonate with audience members, some of whom reproduce, negotiate and amplify key dimensions of this narrative of past oppression. For instance, in a comment re-stating both the narrative of trauma and of a heightened awareness of injustice, a Facebook user asks a rhetorical question:

DCS: Why are there SO MANY similarities between Barnevernet and the Romanian communist regime we all remember ... I believe Romanians had their share of tyranny and that's what makes us sensitive to injustice. As a country we have worked our way out of oppressiveness and will continue to stand up for what's right. (original text in English)

Also invoking a collective voice and memory ("we all remember"), this supporter validates and re-affirms the stance of the organizers, while amplifying their story with a narrative of resilience and overcoming. Juxtaposing the past ("we have worked our way out of oppressiveness") with the future ("will continue to stand up for what's right"), this supporter suggests that the experience of the joint and strenuous effort to overcome collective trauma will lead to a commitment to defend those affected by injustice. While this comment seems to be addressed to an audience less familiar with Romanian history, it could also be interpreted as a call for mobilization and solidarity of co-nationals.

Oftentimes presented as open-letters to the Norwegian authorities and posted on the Facebook page, some of the documents from the movement's repertoire invoking traumatic collective historic experiences seem to equally address multiple audiences (both Romanian and non-Romanian) supporters. Thus, references to recollections of traumatic practices could also be interpreted as reminders for those who have been witnesses or victims of state-controlled abuse. For example, in an open letter addressed to the Norwegian Ambassador to Romania posted on Facebook on Dec 2, 2015 (and signed by Peter Costea, PhD, a Romanian-American human rights attorney and the President of Alliance of Romania's Families, a conservative

group advocating on behalf of “traditional families”), there are many references to Romania’s communist experience. In his advocacy role, Costea visited the Bodnariu family in Norway, appeared as a guest on Romanian television and mobilized supporters in Bucharest during the global protest on April 16, 2016. Costea also authored several (very lengthy and detailed) opinion pieces shared on the family’s Facebook page in which he passionately argued the movement’s stance from legal as well as religious perspectives. His essays/opinion pieces were among the selected critical documents shared by the movement on the official website as representative of the organizations’ platform.

In his letter to the Norwegian Ambassador (the first of several open-letters, authored by various religious organizations, political parties and independent supporters) Costea, invokes Romania’s recent history of collective trauma:

Please also consider that Romania only escaped totalitarianism about a generation ago. Some of us recall, with horror, similar practices of the communist state, in Romania, the Soviet Union, and elsewhere in the totalitarian world, including Nazi Germany. In Romania, the communist state interrogated impressionable children to secure incriminating evidence against their parents. Not rare were the instances where, as a result of such evidence, the communist state separated the parents from their children, raised them in state-run institutions and turned them into reliable agents of the political police and of the totalitarian state. The excessive zeal of Norway's Barnevernet reminds the whole of Romania of the inhumane practices of its totalitarian past. We can only hope that Norway will not drift in this direction. (original text in English)

In this excerpt, Costea provides a multi-layered account of the communist experience, in which what appears to be a merely descriptive text carries a subtext laced with messages not only for the Norwegian authorities, but also for Romanian and non-Romanian supporters. The first sentence carries multiple meanings and could be interpreted in several ways. On the one hand, calling for the Ambassador’s consideration of Romania’s relatively recent freedom from communism could suggest a warning to the Norwegian authorities against re-inflicting a trauma possibly still

fresh in the collective mind. On another hand, this sentence could also be seen as a caution about Romanians' heightened alertness of similar instances of excessive government control. For the Romanian supporters, this sentence could be interpreted as an attempt to engage collective memory, while for the non-Romanian reader, the courage implied by the successful escape from communism tyranny could index credibility and secure trust.

The overwhelming repetition in this text of the word "state" in several variations ("communist state," "state-run institutions," "totalitarian state"), together with the recurrent use of the adjective "totalitarian" ("totalitarian world," "totalitarian past") and/or the corresponding noun "totalitarianism," paint an image of abuse of institutional power. The author argues that such associations exist in the collective memories of Romanians and other oppressed people and that the memories are deeply traumatic. The euphemism "excessive zeal" associated with the actions of the Norwegian authorities, suggesting the author's inclination toward a diplomatic, or perhaps simply sarcastic approach (at least at the beginning of the case) toward the adversary, gains a strong accusatory undertone in the second part the sentence. In this excerpt, Costea reminds the Ambassador (and the Romanian audience) that the "totalitarian past" represents an integral part of the national collective memory, and not just the experience of a certain segment of the population, old enough to remember. The interesting juxtaposition of the initial "some of us" with a later "the whole of Romania" implies that regardless of the way by which the trauma of communism has been inflicted (directly or thru stories from victims), its accounts continue to impact the historical memory of an entire nation.

Evidence of such an impact on supporters can be found in an open letter entitled "*Scrisoare deschisă adresată Guvernului Norvegiei*" / "Open letter addressed

to the Norwegian Government,” written in Romanian by attorney Maria Bornea, who also identifies herself as a mother and grand-mother. The letter was shared on Facebook on February 3, 2016, after having been initially published on a Romanian juridical digital forum (www.juridice.ro), and shared on multiple religious blog spots (www.rodiagnusdei.wordpress.com, www.crestintotal.ro), as well as several personal religious blog sites (e.g. www.romaniaevangelica.wordpress.com). The multiple re-postings of this document indicate its resonance with the administrators/owners of various Evangelical digital platforms, who also then shared it with their respective audiences. Similar to Costea’s letter, this document includes references to Romania’s communist past and the narrative of trauma (located in the introductory paragraphs of the letter). Here, Bornea references the provisions of two canonical legal documents, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child. The post that contains the link to this letter on Facebook received 251 likes and was shared 119 times, while 17 viewers added their praises (noting the professionalism, objectivity and humanity demonstrated by the author in this letter). While it might be difficult to determine which parts of the message resonated the most with supporters, we can observe that references to the communist past have been embedded in the text as a way to introduce the Romanian mindset and collective identity. After describing how the Bodnariu case influenced her, her friends, colleagues and clients, the Romanian lawyer writes:

Original text in Romanian	Text in English (my translation)
România a fost 50 de ani într-un regim comunist totalitar și odios care a lăsat urme și de aceea suntem alergici la toate abuzurile, de orice natură, care aduc atingere drepturilor omului, dar mai ales ale copiilor, chiar dacă comuniștii nu s-au atins de copii. Nu i-au despărțit de părinți, decât atunci când părinții erau duși la închisoare, așa	For 50 years Romania was under a totalitarian and odious Communist regime that left marks, and that is why we are now allergic to all forms of abuse which affect human rights, especially children’s rights, although the communists never touched the children. The only separated them from their parents when the parents went to jail,

<p>cum a fost și tatăl meu, iar suferințele de atunci nu pot fi uitate niciodată. Din fericire, Norvegia a fost ferită de comunism și ar fi bine să nu experimenteze încălcări ale drepturilor omului, și mai ales ale copiilor, specifice comunismului.</p> <p>Nu recomand nici unui popor să mai repete experiențele totalitare prin care a trecut Europa de est, dar aici și acum, parcă, suntem în evul mediu într-o acțiune mai gravă decât a inchiziției, care se războia, totuși, doar cu oamenii mari, nu cu copii.</p>	<p>like in the case of my father, and the sufferings from those times will never be forgotten. Fortunately, Norway has been spared from communism, and it would be great if they would not experiment with human right violations, especially concerning those of children, specific to communism. I don't recommend that any country repeat the totalitarian experiences that Eastern Europe was subjected to, but it appears that here and now, we are living in the Middle Ages because of actions more serious than those of the Inquisition, who was battling, however, with adults, not children.</p>
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This narrative account of life in Romania in the past half of century refers to abuses by institutional powers (as did Peter Costea's earlier letter). The general identification of victims as "some of us" (also in the earlier letter) becomes more personal in this re-telling, as the author recalls her own sufferings as a result of her father's incarceration (presumably for political dissidence). The two accounts analyzed here demonstrate one way that the narrative of trauma is co-constructed over time and across (digital) space—and how that contributes to the information dissemination needed for advocacy and activism. Costea's narrative account also points to the ways that children were separated from their families, raised in institutions, and socialized into becoming agents of the secret police. In the version shared here, Bornea adds that "the communists didn't touch the children," unless the parents were deemed incapable of caring for them. Both accounts strengthen the argument that the abusive actions of the communist establishment produced emotional damage, making Romanians "allergic" to state interventions. Consistent in terms of vocabulary with the original/prior text (e.g., the phrases "totalitarian regime" and "totalitarian experiences" are repeated), this letter also introduces the word "odious," a lexical feature that has become an integral part of the post-

communist and anti-communist narrative. The comment provided by Facebook user IMP, for instance, contains this word, when the supporter claims that parents “*au fost arestați și duși la poliție, ca pe vremea odiosului regim communist din România*” / “They were arrested and taken to the police just like during the odious communist regime in Romania.” In this example, viewers/participants become supporters/advocates by juxtaposing the narrative of the events produced by the parents and distributed by their advocates with the memory/account of abusive police arrests during communist Romania.

In another account (provided by attorney Maria Barnea), the practices of the Norwegian authorities are compared to the communist regime and personal narratives of trauma are included. The personal narratives amplify the narrative of trauma already produced in earlier accounts. For instance, in the following comment, a Facebook viewer expressed outrage at the abuses described by the social movement organization while providing context for understanding the shared nature of such personal experiences:

DR: Hitler, Stalin and now countries like North Korea acted in the same pattern, no explanation, no right for defense, no official accusation, just plain abuse based on subjective accusation, a phone call which denounces the parents as being aggressive with their children, that reminds me of communism and my father being put to prison based on the same type of treatment, somebody said something... (original text in English)

Depicting the actions of the Norwegian government in ways that align with the abuses perpetrated by known past and present dictatorial regimes, this comment highlights the somewhat random and arbitrary processes by which allegations were upheld under communist rule. In this excerpt, the narrator mentions the “subjective allegations” of the phone call denouncing the Bodnariu parents (which re-circulates the narrative provided by Marius and Ruth about the report by the school Principal

that lead to the involvement of the child protective agency), but they also add to the story by invoking the memory of a similar traumatic family separation.

Another supporter reacted to the alleged lack of due process by accusing the Norwegian government of inflicting trauma on the parents and their children and compared these practices with those of communist regimes from the past:

EXB: It is so sad to see a family torn apart. These subjective petty accusations are no justification for taken children away from their natural parents which will be a painful trauma in their lives as well as their parents. How can families feel safe in a country that claims to respect human rights? It seems similar to what happens in communist countries. This demonstrates that there is an anti-family & anti-Christian ideology and policy in the present Norwegian government that its citizens need to eliminate to avoid tyranny. When native europeans are not reproducing themselves to replacement levels, here comes the despotic government agency to destroy large families like the Bodnariu. Families like this one need to be protected and paternal authority respected. (original text in English)

While voicing the argument that had been previously communicated by both the representatives of the family and other supporters, this Facebook user amplifies and extends the narrative of trauma by incorporating the idea of an intentional, pre-mediated plan to destroy traditional families. Another addition to this version of the account reproduces the theory put forward in other texts produced by organizers that Nordic states are pursuing a campaign of abduction and ethnic and religious re-programming of immigrant children to compensate for the falling birth rate of local citizens.

Another aspect of communism that is frequently referenced by both the organizer's rhetoric and comments by viewers is the notion of excessive governmental bureaucracy and the accompanying subservience of individuals and institutions to the state. In the aftermath of his visit to Norway in April 2016, Senator Titus Corlățean, one of the two Romanian politicians who vigorously advocated on behalf of the Bodnariu family, compared the practices he observed during his meeting with the authorities with those of party leaders in former

communist Romania. In a blog originally published on April 15, 2016 on the bilingual neo-protestant site "Agnus dei" entitled "Dezvaluiri – In Norvegia, un consilier departamental județean a dat ordin bisericii pentecostale sa desolidarizeze cu fam. Bodnariu" / "Exposure – In Norway, a Country Departmental Councilor ordered the Pentecostal Church to distance itself from the Bodnariu family," the Senator writes:

Original text in Romanian	Text in English (my translation)
<p>Și am aflat după aceea că un consilier departamental județean a pus frumos mâna pe telefon ca în perioada comunistă la noi, în perioada stalinistă. A pus mâna și i-au stat la dispoziție. [Li s-a spus:] faceți ceea ce trebuie să faceți pentru ca și acolo, bisericile astea care și acolo mai sunt cam 2% din norvegieni, care mai vin la biserică să se roage lui Dumnezeu, depind de bani, de bani foarte mulți de la stat. Atunci, se execută când li se dă ordine. Se execută exact ca în perioada de înainte de '89, ca la noi.</p>	<p>I later found out that a county departmental councilor nicely picked up the phone, just like during communism, in our country, during the Stalinist period. He picked up the phone, and they were all at his disposal [They were told:] do whatever you have to do, because churches over there, and the roughly 2% of Norwegians who still attend church depend on money, a lot of money from the state, Therefore, they comply when they receive orders. They comply just like in our country, before '89.</p>

In this excerpt, the narrator (Senator Corlățean) accuses the Norwegian authorities of abuse of power and compares the behavior of his hosts to the tyranny imposed by the communist regime "la noi" / "at home." The Senator is also critical of the subservience of the subordinates, especially that of the church, an obedience highlighted by the use of a military vocabulary ("to give orders" and the repetition of "they execute"), indicating the unquestionable power of the decision-makers. The Senator's observations about the Norwegian government workers were shared 95 times by viewers. In addition to 111 likes, viewers reacted to the post using the new emoji introduced by Facebook (11 wows, 10 sad faces and 5 angry faces).

Possibly in response to Corlatean's blogpost, several supporters posted comments that affirmed and elaborated on the Senator's criticism of government's alleged dysfunctionality. The examples below illustrate a few of the ways that users responded. In many cases, responses compared the practices of the Norwegian government with those of the communists (who were described as far more humane), in one case, and with the Nazi, in another:

DDC: *Este ne necrezut ca directorul de la Barnevernet nu are acces la dosare pe motive de confidentialitate. Atunci orice funtionar poate face ce il taie capul si mai ales daca este unul cu interese personale. Pai asa ceva nu era nici la comunisti.* [It's hard to believe that the Director of Barnevernet doesn't have access to files for confidentiality reasons. It means that any clerk can whatever the heck they want, especially if they have a personal stake in it. Such as thing didn't even happen with the communists.] (my translation)

JB: The Nazi heart & desire to control & manipulate can be expelled from the shores but never from the hearts of over-impowered & over-indulged self-righteous government officials. (original text in English)

Such responses contribute to and extend the narrative of traumatic-past-events-influencing-current-events. A frequently referenced memory describes the abuses of the *Securitate* (the Romanian political secret police) and how they were tasked with instilling fear among the population in order to curtail acts of resistance. Familiarity with abusive practices from the distant and recent past also appears to inform another user's comments:

CSR: *Un sistem totalitar care incalca drepturile elementare ale omului. Nu se poate sa iei copii de la parintzi in baza unei reclamtzii, fara a cerceta cazul. Mai rau ca la Securitate pe vremea lui Ceausescu?* [A totalitarian system who infringes on basic human rights. You cannot just take away children from their parents based on a complaint, without investigating the case. Worse than Securitate during Ceausescu?] (my translation)

In this comment, the actions taken by the Norwegian authorities in the Bodnariu case are portrayed as lacking process and/or as unlawful. The family representatives made similar accusations about the handling of the case. In the

movement's mission statement posted on the official website, the Norwegian Government is accused of "lack of any previous social investigation," "lack of any investigation evaluating the impact, of the forced separation from their parents and siblings and placement into 3 different foster care homes," and "lack of transparency."

The supporter's understanding and evaluation of these practices also appears to be informed by their lived experience in communist Romania, where the abuses of *Securitate* seem well-known and well-understood. While this supporter's comments indicate a general belief that the abuses committed by the Norwegian Government might even surpass those of the *Securitate*, another contributor draws a parallel between Norway, Nazi Germany, and communist Romania:

ICC: Statul Norwegian este un stat Nazist! Marius Bodnariu este incelestat cumplit sarmanul pentru ca BARNEVENET procedeaza ca si securisti si Nazisti!" [The Norwegian state is a Nazi state! Poor Marius Bodnariu is trapped, because Barnervenet acts just like Securitate and the Nazis!"] (my translation)

Here the narrator (who is Romanian but outside the family and the group of advocates) references memories of shared trauma produced by the violent practices of communist political police. Details about how the Nazi and communist regimes operated are included, as are details about the father being forbidden from seeing his children--possibly to bolster empathy for the father in viewers of the post. It is clear that such comments resonate with both Romanian and non-Romanian social media users. For instance, in the excerpt below, RS, a Facebook user with a Hungarian last name refers to the generalized experience of trauma inflicted on the entire population of the former Eastern European block, establishing a similarity between the practices of the Norwegian Child Protective Services and the communist political police. "Barnevernet keeps people in fear just like the communists did in

Eastern Europe,” writes RS, sharing in the co-constructed labeling of the traumatic practices of the Norwegian authorities.

Also referencing memories of a shared past, and especially on the sense of collective victories against oppression, Pastor Samy Tutac of the Baptist Church Betel from Timișoara, a city in Western Romania, goes as far as to place the movement’s actions to secure the return of the Bodnariu children on an equal footing with the anti-communist Romanian revolution from December 1989. In a blog published on newsnetcrestin.blogpost.com in December 2015, the anniversary month of the anti-communist revolution that started in Timișoara, Pastor Tutac invites his followers to replicate the history-changing actions, to once again “man the barricades,” and to demonstrate the same courage and determination as they did over a quarter of a century ago.

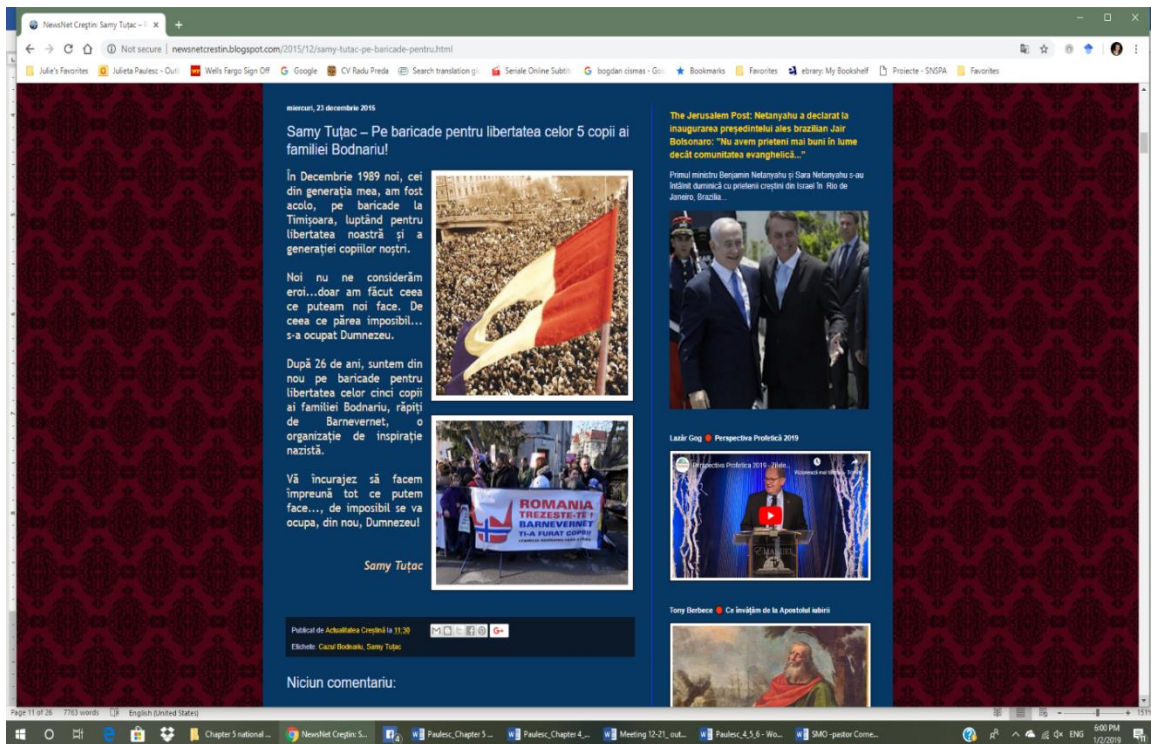


Figure 13. “On the barricades, for the freedom of Bodnariu’s family 5 children!”

Entitled "Pe baricade pentru libertatea celor 5 copii ai familiei Bodnariu!"/ "On the barricades, for the freedom of Bodnariu's family 5 children!" this passionate call to arms reads:

Original text in Romanian	Text in English (my translation)
<p>În Decembrie 1989 noi, cei din generația mea, am fost acolo, pe baricade la Timișoara, luptând pentru libertatea noastră și a generației copiilor noștri. Noi nu ne considerăm eroi...doar am făcut ceea ce puteam noi face. De ceea ce părea imposibil... s-a ocupat Dumnezeu. După 26 de ani, suntem din nou pe baricade pentru libertatea celor cinci copii ai familiei Bodnariu, răpiți de Barnevernet, o organizație de inspirație nazistă. Vă încurajez să facem împreună tot ce putem face..., de imposibil se va ocupa, din nou, Dumnezeu!</p>	<p>On December 1989, we, those of my generation, were there, on the barricades in Timisoara, fighting for our freedom and that of our children's generation. We don't consider ourselves heroes ... we only did what we could. God took care of what seemed the impossible. After 26 years, we are again on the barricades for the freedom of the 5 children of the Bodnariu family, kidnapped by Barnevernet, a Nazi inspired organization. I encourage you to do whatever we can together ... God will take care of the impossible once again!</p>

Comparing the release of the Bodnariu children to regaining national freedom from communism, the Pastor's message includes two side-by-side images, one from the protest against the establishment in December 1989 (that presumably led to the fall of the regime) and a second depicting demonstrators from a Pro-Bodnariu rally. The first image features an oversized Romanian flag with the communist insignia removed from its center, as a well-known and widely recognized symbol of the December revolution flying in front of a sea of demonstrators. In contrast, the latter image depicts a handful of protesters holding a sign in the Norwegian national colors that reads "Wake up, Romania! Barnevernet stole your children." The visual depiction of the two events as comparable quests for freedom is counter-balanced by a nationalistic message, in which the words "fight," "barricades," "freedom," "heroes," "future and "children" suggest a matter of vital and historic importance.

In response, some viewers describe feelings of patriotic duty. For example, a comment by Facebook user DN enthusiastically answers the call to action with the slogan of the 1989 anti-communist uprising: “*Azi in Timișoara, mâine-n toată țara!!!!!!*”/ “Today in Timișoara, tomorrow in the whole country!!!!!!” Also, a more contemplative, yet passionate supporter shared his conviction in the imminent divine destruction of Barnevernet, as yet another victory against forces of evil. The anonymous user, with the avatar name “*un cititor*”/ “a reader” proclaims his trust in God’s resolution, as they write:

Original text in Romanian	Text in English (my translation)
<p>Un cititor: Nimic nu-i la intimplare, si cred ca prin avalansa provocata in sprjinul familiilor Bodnariu, Nan si Radulescu, Dumnezeu va sfarama in bucati institutia BARNEVERNET. Istoria ne spune ca au mai fost in istorie monstri recenti gen Nazism, Stalinism, communism... si cum toate s-au sfaramat, asa va fi si cu BARNEVERNET.</p>	<p>A reader: Nothing is random, and I think that thru the avalanche provoked by the support of the Bodnariu, Nan and Radulescu families, God will crush into pieces the BARNEVERNET institution. History tell us that there were recently other monsters such as Nazism, Stalinism, communism, and BARNEVERNET will crumble, just like the other ones did.</p>

Referencing the demise of past totalitarian regimes an argument for his predictions, this supporter of the movement participates in the online construction and circulation of particular narratives of triumph to project the victorious ending of the Bodnariu narrative. This comment represents a re-voicing of the movement’s rhetoric of mobilization, in which the man-made “avalanche” of support thru prayer, fasting and action were to determine God’s decision to help write the narrative of victory and triumph.

“They all became Allah’s godchildren”

Another message that was distributed and amplified via digital practices was the narrative of resilience of Romanians (who are majority Christian) against the attacks attempted by various non-Christian perpetrators.

In a radio interview from Dec 9, 2015 broadcast by Cristian Radio station "The Gospel Voice," shared on the blog Christian blog "Agnus Dei" and the family's Facebook page, Christian journalist Cristi Tepeș, who visited the Bodnarius in Norway in Dec. 2015 asked the audience to recall past aggressions. He also asked the listeners to keep the past in mind when thinking about how to respond to current aggressions and/or experiences of trauma. Tepeș compared the actions of the Norwegian Government with those of the invading army of the Ottoman Empire.

Original text in Romanian	Text in English (my translation)
<p>Noi suntem indignați când ne amintim că în vremea lui Vlad Tepeș sau Ștefan cel Mare turcii luau și tribut de copii. Nu? Statul turc se considera proprietarul acestor copii și știți cum zice Eminescu "Ieniceri, copii de suflet ai lui Allah." Ei deveneau copii de suflet ai lui Allah. În cazul nostru, devin copii de suflet ai unui stat fără Dumnezeu.</p>	<p>We are outraged when we remember that during the time of Vlad the Impaler or Steven the Great the Turks used to also take children as tribute. Right? The Turkish state used to consider itself the owner of these children, and you know what Eminescu said, "Janissaries, Allah's godchildren." They all became Allah's godchildren. In our case, they become godchildren of a godless state.</p>

In this segment of the interview, Tepeș tapped into the narrative of Islamic aggression (a story familiar to most Romanians) to remind the audience that practices of seizing children as war prisoners goes back many generations. Tepeș reminds the audience that the Turks converted Romanian children to Islam and trained them to fight against Christianity by mentioning events from medieval Romania and highlighting the role of its heroic historic figures Vlad the Impaler and Steven the Great (two of the fiercest defenders of Christianity against Islam). Tepeș's comments also suggest that, in case of inaction by the community, the seized children might also become "soul children" of a secular, atheist state. In this excerpt, the name of the Bodnariu children are not mentioned, but the noun "children" appears more than once and serves as a constant reminder of the focus of this movement (which is a call for empathy and action on behalf of the vulnerable).

This narrative also an instance of intertextuality, as it incorporates references to another text (a poem by Mihai Eminescu that is part of Romanian literary canon).

The public comparison of the methods used by the Norwegian authorities with Ottoman aggression occurs throughout the movement's rhetoric (e.g., on Facebook), as this example demonstrates.

AS: Agresiune fara precedent la adresa Romaniei, numai turcii acum 500 de ani rapeau copii si ii faceau ieniceri. [An unprecedented aggression against Romania. Only the Turks kidnapped children 500 years ago to turn them into janissaries.] (my translation)

Similar to the official rhetoric of the movement, this comment describes the practice of seizing children by the Norwegian authorities and characterizes it as an act of violence on the entire nation. By describing this previous event as a medieval, savage, and predatory act that could not be expected to be committed in modern times, the user draws a connection between violence, the Turks, and Islam.

As the following example illustrates, the organizers also tried to appeal to feelings of shared national pride derived from an old and rich history of overcoming adversity. Pastor Viorel Iuga, the President of the Baptist Union of Romania and a prominent figure of the Pro-Bodnariu movement, rallies the base in a speech from a protest in the city of Oradea, on Jan 23. The transcript of the speech, along with several videos was first posted on the Christian blog rodiagnusdei.wordpress.com on Jan. 26 and subsequently re-posted on the family's Facebook page. In front of a large audience gathered in a public square (the organizers reported 10.000 participants), the Pastor Iuga proclaims:

Original text in Romanian	Text in English (my translation)
Sa stiti ca noi, romanii, este o vorba de-a mea care poate supara pe unii, pentru ca am trait momente pentru care m-au	Let it be known that we, Romanians, I have this saying that might upset some, because I lived moments when people

<p>intrebat oamenii, daca am vazut umbrela? Daca la noi este pizza? Stiti ce le spuneam? „Noi, romanii, ne-am dat jos din copac,” (cu ghilimele de rigoare) „dar, nu ieri. Alaltaieri.” Adica, avem o istorie. Nu suntem chiar ultimii oameni ai Europei. Mai pierdem intr-o partida de fotbal sau de vole sau de handbal, dar avem olimpici peste tot. Slavit sa fie Domnul</p>	<p>asked me if we've ever seen an umbrella? If we have pizza? Do you know what I used to tell them? "We, Romanians, we descended from a tree," (with the obligatory quotes) "but not yesterday. The day before." In other words, we have a history. We are not the last people of Europe. Praised be God!</p>
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In his speech addressing the protest participants (and the larger audience, thru the sharing of protest video on Facebook), the Pastor references Romanian historic permanency and continuity. The message highlights the inferiority of various forms of otherness—depicting them as naïve, ignorant, backward, even offensive. This excerpt is representative of series of similar responses to criticism that were posted online, mostly by other Romanians, of the group’s actions and rhetoric. Presented as a personal anecdotal account of supposed interactions with outsiders who hold the assumption that Romania lacks civilization, this enthymeme lacks both the premise and conclusion, allowing the audience to fill in the blanks in a logical, and therefore unquestionable manner. In other words, the understated premise that all nations with a history are civilized, and Romanians have a history, leads to the conclusion that Romanians are civilized. In other examples of how the social movement contributed to the discourse of persuasion, the omnipresent pronoun “we” allows speculations regarding potential forms of group allegiance and belonging (“we” Christians, parents, Pentecostals etc). In this speech, however, Iuga clearly defines the subject as “Romanians.” He also acknowledges and praises the ethic bond acquired as a result of a shared national history, irrespective of religious denomination, that is secured and maintained by divine protection. Next, Iuga elaborate on the necessity of persistence and determination, as historically demonstrated traits of Romanianness:

Original text in Romanian	Text in English (my translation)
<p>Stiti de ce nu vom renunta? Nu vom renunta pentru ca suntem convinsi ca putem castiga. Sa stiti, ca noi, am mai trecut romanii pe aicea. Am mai aflat noi din istorie ca si turcii ne-au vrut copiii. Ne-au vrut si altii copiii. Sa stiti ca si bunicii mei s-au luptat cu sistemul comunist care spunea sa-si invete copiii altfel. Si parintii mei s-au luptat cu un sistem care a vrut sa le fure copiii si sa-i aseze intr-o alta ideologie. Multumesc lui Dumnezeu ca au castigat bunicii. Multumesc lui Dumnezeu ca au castigat parintii. Si multumesc lui Dumnezeu ca am castigat eu si am copiii langa Dumnezeu. Nu sunt copii perfecti, dar il iubesc pe Dumnezeu si Il slujesc pe Dumnezeu. Si eu cred ca aici suntem multi care am castigat si vom castiga pentru ca-L avem pe Dumnezeu de partea noastra.</p>	<p>Do you know why we won't give up? We won't give up because we are convinced that we are going to win. You know, us, Romanians, we walked this path before. We happen to know from history that the Turks wanted our children, too. Others wanted our children, too. Just so you know, my grand-parents fought with the communist system who wanted to teach them differently. Also, my parents fought with a system who wanted to steal their children and place them in another ideology. Thank God that the grand-parents won. Thank God that the parents won. And thank God that I won, and I have my children near God. They are not perfect children, but they love God and serve God. I believe that we are many here who won and will win because God is on our side.</p>

Here, Iuga's narrative is uplifting, mobilizing, and aspirational, reminding fellow Romanians of the unwavering ambition and drive that lead previous generations of Romanians to repeated victories against various enemies. Be they Turks or "others," the perpetrators attacked the collective family, the "we" who, under God's protection, conquered and overcame different manifestations of evil generation after generation. In this excerpt, Iuga also takes pride in his own experiences as a parent who relied on his own religious upbringing to cultivate in his children a sense of belonging to a community with similar values and past. Iuga also portrays his family as representative of a larger collective history (of war, victory, empowerment, loss, defeat). The Pastor's encouragement as recounted here includes

a reminder that Romanians possesses the conviction and determination necessary not to “give up.”

In some cases, users also referred to past experiences of discrimination and responses to those experiences. Consider for instance a comment made by an obviously outraged user:

CE: STOP DISCRIMINATION!! AS I REMEMBER OUR GREAT-GREAT GRANDPARENTS FAUGHT AGAINST THIS! AS I REMEMBER, THE WHOLE PLANET FAUGHT AGAINST SUCH PRACTICES, AGAINSTS HITLER AND ANY PERSON OR REGIME THAT DISCRIMINATE PEOPLE BASED ON ETHNIC, RACE, RELIGION, SEX CHARACTERISTICS... (original text in English)

As Trandafoiu (2013) observes, the myth of Romanians as defenders of the West against the spread of Islam is an integral and ongoing component of the national narrative. While confirming the prevalence of this myth, my findings also show a shift in perspective. The excerpt below, selected from a lengthy speech delivered on February 14, 2016 in support of Marius and Ruth Bodnariu in the small Romanian town of Bran, illustrates such stance (and captures a consistent theme of the movement’s rhetoric). As reported by the organizers, this speech was delivered to approximately 220 attendees, including representatives of the local government and members of the Orthodox and Pentecostal Churches. This message was also posted along with pictures from the event album on the Facebook page the following day:

Original text in Romanian	Text in English (my translation)
Adica noi de secole stam aici la marginea Europei si facem zid de apărare pentru țările din Vest, să nu vină popoarele din Est să o cotopească și să distrugă valorile ei creștine, secole de-a rândul am dat copiii noștri tribute, ba la turci, ba la tătari, ba la alții și alții să ni-i ia robi, numai ca sa salvăm țara și Europa, ... am dat tribut copiii nostri. Și acum, în secolul ar 21-lea, vin nordicii	So, for centuries we have been sitting here at the margins of Europe to make a protective wall for the Western countries, so that the Eastern peoples would not invade it and destroy its Christian values, for centuries we gave our children as tribute, either to the Turks, or the Tatars, or to others and others to take them as slaves, so that we would save our country and Europe ...we gave our children as tribute. And

<p>să ni-i ia cu de-a sila! Nu le ajunge că i-am apărat de invaziile turcilor secole de-a rândul, acum vin sa ne ia copiii ...! Păi dacă vor copii, să și-i facă! Sau să se uite atent, că cei de care i-am apărat secole de-a rândul, au sosit în fine în țările lor, au invadat Europa cu multi copiii pe lângă ei, și în curând europenii nu se vor mai simți confortabili în propriile țările ...</p>	<p>now, in the 21st century, the Nordics are coming to take them by force! It isn't enough that we protected them from the Turkish invasion for centuries on end, now they are coming to take our children ...! Well, if they want children, they can make them! They better look carefully, because the ones that we protected them against for centuries on end, finally arrived in their countries, they invaded Europe with many children around them, and pretty soon the Europeans will no longer feel comfortable in their own countries ...</p>
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To amplify the extent of the aggression and create a sense of collective outrage against the perceived betrayal by the West, the list of perpetrators provided here is long (and is no longer limited to the Turks). The litany of attackers incorporates other non-Christian aggressors who inflicted pain and suffering throughout Romania's history, in addition to a larger category of un-named "others and others." The text suggests that guided by dedication to Christian values, including selflessness to the point of sacrifice of their own children, Romanians have been for centuries providing a protective human wall against the spread of Islam. Comparing the actions of the aggressors "then" with those of the Nordics "now," the text implies that the savage acts of the latter even surpass those of medieval invaders. Indexing a deliberate act of sacrifice for the common good, the sentence "We gave our children as tribute" is used in contrast with "the Nordics are taking them by force," suggesting that certain of rules of engagement (e.g., those supporting a form of agency) have been replaced by violence. Furthermore, as a means to induce fear and to cultivate outrage, this form of aggression is being depicted as a looming, immediate danger at home, as an invasion of "here" by the Nordics who "are coming to take our children." The "here" vs. "there" dichotomy, consistently used in the discourse of the Pro-Bodnariu movement suggests not only a

perception of spatial divide, but also a separation of values. In this view, Romania, despite its marginal position and its proximity to the East, maintained its religious integrity, while the West is on the verge of losing its identity, and even potentially creating an unsafe setting for its own citizens.

Many supporters also added to the “here” vs. “there” dichotomy, praising the values of “here” (Romania) and criticizing the decay of “there” (the West). In this example, a supporter laments the predicament of Romanians to leave “here” to seek a better life “there:”

SM: And when you think about it that you leave for a foreign country so that you can offer your children a better life. Frankly I never heard about what happening in Norway before, I only heard something about Finland. Besides, the Romanian press keep praising other countries, when here is better. (original text in English)

While unfamiliar with the Norwegian situation (the narrative of Norwegian institutionalized abuse) as described by the family, this user offers their addition to the story, in which another Nordic country seems to share with supposedly similar practices. This user continues by invalidating the positive narrative presented by the Romanian media about “other countries” (presumably Western) and providing the alternative (presumably the truth) of “here is better.”

Another supporter elaborates on the “here” vs “there” divide, pointing out the differences in models of parenting:

OG: Go ahead, go abroad, thinking that you will offer your child a better life! Look at the way we are being treated there ... where they don't have any discipline in schools, and children are allowed to walk all over their parents with the help of those so called PC... children raised in Romania have moral values and are truly well brought up, they respect their elders and their parents. (original text in English)

These two comments share an almost identical vocabulary and framing of failed expectations (offering children “a better life” abroad). The depiction of “there” in this example involves lack of parental authority (supposedly as a result of the

state-controlled childrearing philosophy). In contrast, this supporter creates an idealized narrative of respectful and moral Romanian youth, suggesting that parents in Romania abide by a proper parenting model (which doesn't involve the "those so-called PC" – presumably child state workers).

At times the impact of these narrative of shared collective experiences reached remarkable emotional heights, as these comments (selected from a multitude of similar posts) illustrate:

FID: I say that we all benefit from this greatly. We sang in Cluj in rain and cold, but our souls were vibrating with emotion seeing how His children come together. And when his people humble themselves and seek Him, God responds. God, have pity on theses little ones!!! IN THIS MOMENT WE MUST BE UNITED AND WE MUST STAND WITH OUR ROMANIAN BROTHERS
VME I cried today when I saw promoted by the Romanian personality Vasile Lupasc. I was proud of my nation, and I was overjoyed to see how Romanians from the young to the old still have a soul across the doctrines. (original text in English)

These perspectives, one a participant in a street protest, and another from supporter who followed the collective action online share the same sense of national pride and achievement, both critical to the development and growth of a social movement.

As these examples demonstrated, the narratives of time and space (the memory of the past as informing the present) and "here vs. there" (space as indexing cultural values) represented some of the co-constructed dimensions of the collective depiction of national consciousness. Produced by the representatives of the social movement and amplified by supporters, these narratives shared in the digital space became powerful tools for advocacy and mobilization.

"In European tradition, the individual is subservient to the state": Narrating allegiance. Europe vs. America, a revisited relationship

The image of an oppressive Norwegian government created and promoted by

the organizers of the Pro-Bodnariu movement has been oftentimes placed in contrast with the American political system, perceived as the model for a democratic society. Informed by core tenets of American democracy, including freedom of religion and conservative values such as self-reliance and limited government intervention, representatives of the Pro-Bodnariu movement took the opportunity to highlight its affiliation with the American model. In an interview with Christian radio station "Vocea Evangheliei," journalist Cristi Țepeș explains for the Romanian audience the group's ideological choice:

In tradiția Europeană, individul este considerat supusul statului. In tradiția Americană, care au încercat să facă o societate liberă, cetățeanul este cel care-i dă statului autoritate, pentru că nu statul îi dă lui libertatea, ci Dumnezeu îi dă libertate, statul doar trebuie s-o recunoască. [In European tradition, the individual is subservient to the state. In American tradition, which tried to build a free society, the citizen grants the state authority, because not the state gives him his freedom, but God gives him his freedom, all that the state must do is recognize it.] (my translation)

According to Țepeș, the attainment of individual freedom has been historically contingent upon the relationship between the citizen and the state. The comparison between the European and American political frameworks reveals a binary relationship in the case of the former vs. the trinary rapport governing the latter. Used as many as four times in the long sentence describing American political values, the key concept of freedom is missing altogether in the brief, seemingly unquestionable depiction of the European political tradition characterized, according to Țepeș, by the state's control of the individual and its rights.

Chiming into one of the several conversations in the digital space condemning, if not mocking subservience to governmental powers, a user commented:

Original text in Romanian	Text in English (my translation)
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<p>Asta e un lucru care mă fascinează la vestici. Și e valabil peste tot. Ca român, sunt învățat să nu am încredere în instituțiile statului, și să nu presupun nimic. În afară de americani, care au în sange de a-și cere drepturile, și că un guven poate fi corupt, toate țările civilizate în general au o încredere oarbă în toate instituțiile lor, care de fapt sunt mai corupte ca și ale noastre, doar că ei sunt mai versați în corupție, iar ai noștri sunt amatori încă.</p>	<p>This is a thing that fascinates me about the Westerners. And this applies everywhere. As a Romanian, I'm used to not trust the state institutions, and to not assume anything. Other than the Americans, who have it in their blood to ask for their rights and who believe that a government could be corrupted, all other civilized countries generally have blind trust in all their institutions that in fact are just as corrupted as ours, except that they are more versed in corruption, while ours are still amateurs.</p>
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Introducing a more secular but still critical stance, this user declares his "fascination" with the Western world and characterizes those who blindly trust government institutions as naive.

America's model of integration of immigrants, perceived as the tenet of an exemplary, democratic society, is oftentimes referenced, especially from the representatives of the Romanian-American community in order to create a contrast with what has been perceived as the xenophobic, intolerant approach of the Norwegian Government. The extended Bodnariu family's allegiance to the American democratic processes, consistently referenced in the official rhetoric indirectly suggests unrestricted access to such values and implies the government's respect of individual freedom.

The text below, located in the "Our story" section of the family's website alludes to naturalization, unobstructed freedom of speech and the right to assemble, as fundamental democratic principles upheld by the American government. The text reads:

WHY THE SOLIDARITY OF ROMANIANS FROM UNITED STATES OF AMERICA?
Marius Bodnariu, father of the 5 children (*a Romanian citizen living in Norway married to Ruth – a Norwegian*), has most of his family living in United States as naturalized U.S. citizens: both his parents living in the Atlanta-Georgia

area together with a married sister, two other married sisters living in the Chicago-Illinois metropolitan area, and another married sister living in the Portland-Oregon area.

Romanian-Americans are outraged at the news and reports of events that unfolded in Norway in the last two months in the Bodnariu family's case of confiscation of all their 5 children by Norway's Barnevernet (*Norway's Child Protection Services*). As such, Romanian-Americans from across United States will continue to show solidarity with the Bodnariu Family who lost custody of all their children through a process that is against international laws and conventions. The demonstrators will voice opposition to Norway's Barnevernet and its inhumane Nazi-like tactics. (original text in English)

In this excerpt, there are a number of references to the Bodnariu family's naturalization and marital status. There are also descriptions of the immigration process and a mention of conservative family values. The excerpt provides not only a rationale for support of law-abiding citizens, but also a reminder of the affordances of the kinds of integration that are offered and secured by the state. The reference to a Romanian-Americans diasporic identity might indicate a belief that the community has been successfully integrated into the American socio-political and cultural fabric.

Conversely, as described by Peter Costea in an opinion piece written after a visit to Norway as the Bodnariu family's council, Norway appears to lack an understanding of what diversity requires and looks like in practice. Costea writes:

More than 10% of Norway's population consists of immigrants who bring to Norway diverse religions, cultural values, and traditions. Norway does not tolerate any of this, however. Unlike the United States where just about everyone, born or not born in the United States, believes in the "melting pot" that America has become, Norway and Norwegians do not believe in this concept or accept it. In Norway there is only one way, the Norwegian way. One mind, one thinking, one state of mind, one value paradigm, one mental mold. Respect for diversity of values is inexistent. (original text in English)

The idyllic, downright hyperbolic image of a diverse and welcoming America, in which "just about everyone" embraces the metaphoric fusion of values and places ("the melting pot") the Norwegian way, defined as intolerant and unaccepting, in an unfavorable light, reminiscent of that of a communist state, in which the concept of

ideological and cultural plurality contravenes the expectations of a democratic society..

In excerpts like this, Costea characterizes America as a land of inclusion and respect for difference. In this visual representation of tolerance and inclusion, a supporter raises in one hand the American and Romanian flags and the Bible, next to the portrait of the Bodnariu family.



Figure 14. Protest in Washington, DC

In a blog published after the Pro-Bodnariu/Anti-Barnevernet global protest entitled "16th of April, a day for the history books," pastor Cristian Ionescu, the family's spokesperson helps the English-speaking audience understand what he describes as a historically significant and unprecedented display of Romanianness:

This is going to be a classic example of a people with a destiny! Romania is one of the most disadvantaged countries in recorded history. Geographically located at the crossroads between great, aggressive, conquering empires, our country was always paying a high price for that prime location! It was hard to survive there!

Then, as Romania started to affirm itself on the world stage, World War II came! Then, Communism and Ceaușescu!
Hundreds of thousands of Romanians fled the oppressive regime! And after the Revolution that overthrew that system, immigration swelled into the millions for economic reasons.

All over the planet, in most countries of the free world, before long, you are going to meet some Romanians! They keep in touch with their relatives back in the native land, they know what's going on there, they established churches, publications, media outlets, TV and radio stations everywhere they went!

We come from a country so dominated by a tyrant, we thought he will never be overthrown! A few days before his demise he was as in control and defiant as ever! (original text in English)

Guiding the reader thru the numerous and various instances in which Romania has been historically challenged, Ionescu depicts Romanians as survivors of the Nazism, communism and the post-communist economic decline. He also describes the size and influence of Romanian diaspora, depicted as powerful and well-connected with the homeland. The interplay between the evaluation of the past ("It was hard to survive there") and the achievements of Romanian communities abroad (similarly described in the press release for the Houston referenced earlier in this chapter) shape the narrative of resilience, overcoming adversity. In this text, the achievements of the Romanian community enumerated by the Pastor seem to include the establishment of institutions that secure freedom of religion and freedom of speech ("churches," "publications," "media outlets," "TV and radio stations"), rights that have been denied or overlooked during communism. Once again, invoking the memory of the past and its struggles, Pastor Ionescu narrates the collective self as strengthened and empowered by its experiences of overcoming oppression.

Further addressing the dismissive attitude of a Norwegian official, Ionescu predicts the unraveling of the system:

Yes, defiance, that's the right word to describe Madame Horne's attitude! But under that facade, the system is cracking and soon will crumble to dust! You

know why? Because this is the predictable outcome of every oppressive system! (original text in English)

According to the Bodnariu family's spokesperson, the understanding of the present thru the experiences of the past of this nation "with a destiny" (Romania, as depicted in this prophetic narrative) includes the foresight and wisdom to predict the demise of a system seen as oppressive. With confidence that the history of overcoming adversity will repeat itself, Ionescu conveys a message of hope, predicting the self-destruction of what she describes as an oppressive institution, and along with its fall, the victory of the Bodnariu family and of the Romanian, Romanian-American and non-Romanian Christian "imagined community" (Anderson, 1983).

Summary

As the analysis of data in the previous chapter demonstrates, the hardships experienced by the Bodnariu family are typically depicted as emblematic of the values and experiences of an entire nation. In this chapter, I examined examples of discursive practices that contributed to a sense of unity and solidarity, thru raising awareness of shared past historic events that shaped Romanians as resilient and unwavering in the face of adversity. From invoking the attacks of the Ottoman Empire aimed at imposing Islam, to reactivating the recent memory of communism and its atheism, these narratives appeal to feelings of shared national pride derived from an old and rich history of overcoming hardship. These narratives of collective trauma and overcoming of suffering seemed to have triggered and fueled a bond between the Romanian participants in the social movement.

The analysis illustrates some of the ways in which organizers of social movements might invoke collective memories and experiences of the past in order to co-construct a narrative of shared trauma. The analysis also demonstrates how

digital users responded to the official discourse with additional accounts of historic pain and hardship. In many of these accounts, viewers elaborated on general depictions of national and collective hardship (e.g., abuses committed against Romanians during communism) by sharing personal stories of trauma (e.g., arrests of parents as a result of unsubstantiated and unjustified denounces). In response to the narrative of state control and abuse of power produced by the social movement organization, users amplified the story by comparing the practices of the Norwegian government with those of former Romanian secret political police.

The analysis shows the role of social media in depicting various reiterations of trauma inflicted on the Romanian people and how the messages spread from the social movement organization and taken up and further distributed by audience(s) in Norway and beyond. The organizers and followers of the Pro-Bodnariu movement both referenced memories of a shared past (including multiple instances of trauma inflicted various perpetrators) that contributed to the development of a public display and enactment of determination, resilience, strength, and courage. The organizers and supporters of the pro-Bodnariu movement also used social media platforms to distribute messages about what they perceived to be risks to the “traditional” family, and implicitly, the future of a Romanian Christian way of life. These messages and the responses generated by the supporters indicate a rejection of European values and the embracing of American framework of democracy, based both on civil liberties and religious values.

CHAPTER 6

NARRATING THE OTHER, DEBUNKING THE NORWAY "MYTH": FROM INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE TO IMMORALITY

While the previous two chapters explored narratives of sameness (and ideas of "normalcy" according to the (Romanian) Christian community), this chapter performs an analysis of how "others" (mainly the Norwegian government and social service agencies) are depicted. As Jasper and Poulson (1995) point out, one way to build a social network is through the "recruitment of strangers through moral shock" (p.423). In this case, the characterization of Norway and others who are "against" the family as deviant or morally compromised creates a frame around which the movement's followers unite.

As the analysis of data from emails, open letters, press statements, protest speeches shared in the digital space (on Facebook and the family/movement's website) will demonstrate, identifying, labeling and denouncing the "other" as the adversary became a critical, consistent element of the narrative of institutional abuse--particularly after the movement started to gain momentum and visibility. I examine how this narrative was produced by the family and its advocates, and then how it was re-shaped, enhanced and amplified by supporters who interacted with the organizers and each other through various digital practices (e.g., blogs, Facebook posts, petitions, etc.).

This chapter demonstrates how narratives of otherness/difference are shared and taken up by viewers via digital practices in spaces accessible to those outside of movement (the public). By examining the production and reception of the narrative of otherness/difference, the analysis reveals how such processes (of production and reception) are facilitated or strengthened by explicit contrasts with notions of "normalcy" (defined here as the family's/community's Christian practices and

morality). This analysis will examine how the family and its advocates (the social movement organization) and the viewing public invoked shared beliefs and experiences to collaboratively construct narratives of deviance and immorality (and Norway's secular society) and how these characterizations helped to mobilize support for the movement itself. This chapter also examines how narratives about democracy, social justice and morality contribute to the construction of otherness.

“Norway is a neo-communist regime. Period!”: Norway, a counter-narrative of socio-political and moral failure

Romanian Evangelical Christians were first alerted about the removal of the Bodnariu children thru a blog posted on November 16, 2015 by Pastor Daniel Bodnariu, Marius's brother from Romania. In his blog, published on the Christian blogsite <http://newsnetcrestin.blogspot.com>, Pastor Bodnariu, the first public co-teller, describes the events, as they have been related to him by his brother. His story includes the removal of the girls from school and of the boys from home by social workers and police, without court orders or any documentation. According to this story, the father, who was at work at the time, came home, and together with his wife, went to the police station to inquire about the children. The Pastor's story also mentions the removal of the baby, the same day as his siblings. He also reports the emotional distress of his brother and sister-in-law. As he assesses the situation, the Pastor proclaims:

Ceea ce se intampla in Norvegia in dreptul copiilor si a familiei traditionale asa cum a create-o Dumnezeu e strigator la cer! Copiii sunt considerati un bun al statului si statul pentru orice motiv ii poate lua si da altor "familii." [It is outrageous what is happening in Norway in terms of children's rights, and the rights of the traditional family, as God created it! Children are considered property of the state, and the state can take them for any reason and give them to other "families."] (my translation)

In this general assessment of the situation in Norway (as "outrageous), Pastor Bodnariu identifies children and "traditional" (heterosexual) families as targets

of discrimination. This statement contains the syntagm “traditional family – as God create it,” as a reference to the Biblical story of creation (a canonical text) in which the family was composed of a man and a woman. As he reinforces these commonly held religious beliefs, he also establishes differences between the interpretations of what family is from the Christian and the secular value systems, (“family – as God created it vs. “family”). In this way he establishes the moral tone and the superiority Christian over secular beliefs. The Pastor further explains the relationship between children and state in Norway, informing the readers about the ability of the government to seize children, and place them with “families” that do not represent the Christian definition of the term. In this excerpt from the first blog, the Pastor doesn’t make any specific accusations or direct associations of this case with the practice that involves placement in non-traditional families. In the following paragraph, he explains the extent of the government involvement in the family life in Norway:

Este abuz ceea ce se intampla. Cautand pe net am descoperit sute de cazuri si marturii ale abuzurilor ce se fac in aceasta tara si mai ales fata de familii in care un parinte sau ambii sunt de alta nationalitate. [What’s happening is abuse. Searching on the Internet I discovered hundreds of cases and testimonies of the abuses in this country, especially against families where one of both parents have a different nationality.] (my translation)

While in this excerpt, the Pastor labels the actions of the Norwegian government as abusive, he once again doesn’t make specific connections with his brother’s situation. Although he references a trend in the cases he found online in which the parents are immigrants (as in the case of Marius, who is a Romanian citizen), he doesn’t specifically integrate this case with the others. He does however inform (and warn) the reader about the overwhelmingly large number of cases of government abuse in Norway.

In his conclusion Pastor Bodnariu assured the reader of the family's good Christian standing:

Vreau sa mentionez ca familia lui Marius este o familie normala cu valori crestine, o familie care-si iubeste copiii iar ei ca parinti isi petrec foarte mult timp cu copiii nu ii neglijeaza ci ii iubesc ca pe ochii din cap. [I would like to mention that Marius's family is a normal family with Christian values, a family that loves its children, and the parents spend a lot of time with the children, they love them, and they love them to the moon and back.] (my translation)

Vouching for the family's abidance of Christian values, the Pastor also serves as character witness for the parents, stressing their loving nature. He also assures the readers of the parents' extreme dedication to their children. At the time when the blog was posted, only two days after the removal of the children, the parents were still not aware of the formal allegations against them. They were only officially informed of the formal allegations of caregiver abuse and religious indoctrination several days later, on Nov. 23.

As he concludes his blog, the Pastor also asks readers to pray for the strength of the parents and their children, and for the failure of "of any plan of the Evil/Devil."

This blog post didn't receive any comments from users on the initial platform (Romanian Evangelical blog), but a link posted on the newly created Facebook post received 90 likes and 77 shares. 8 Facebook commented with prayers. The same day, when the link to the electronic petition was added to another post by the family, the number of likes increased to 192 and the number of shares to 204. The 16 viewers who commented sent prayers and expressed outrage of the separation of the baby from the mother. At this point, only days from the removal of the children, information about the case came from the family members, who were trying to make sense of the events, and were asking for prayers from friends and acquaintances. This is typical for the emergence phase of a social movement, when claims of discontent are made in small social circles.

The same day, on Nov. 19, Pastor Ionescu from the Elim (Romanian) Pentecostal Church in Chicago posted a blog entitled "*Statul ateu ataca familia crestina*"/ "The Norwegian state attacks the Christian family." The blog, re-posted on Facebook the same day, was shared by 156 viewers. He recounts his conversation with Marius earlier in the day and re-tells the story of the removal of the children, while re-voicing Pastor Bodnariu's claim that Norway targets Christianity ("THE Christian family") and families as its most valued possession. This is the second inference of religious discrimination in a series of such allegations, that would ultimately translate, on Dec. 16 into allegations of religious persecutions by the Norwegian government. In his rendition of the story, the Pastor included the initial reporter (the school principal) and provides corrections to the original story (the mother was arrested at home, the father was arrested at work, the baby was removed the next day). This example of how the initial story (told by the brother) was re-told and enhanced by a second public teller (Pastor Ionescu). Yet, as typical for this stage of the movement, the story remained within a small space. This also illustrates how in the beginning of a movement stories are unclear, as the tellers are trying to make sense of the events. In both renditions of the story the requests for community engagement are modest and involve only spiritual sustenance through prayer. Also, the stance against the government is restrained. The engagement of most users is also limited to assurances of prayer and words of encouragement.

One user, however, questions the strategy of prayer:

Original text in Romanian	Text in English (my translation)
Ce rugaciune, oameni buni? Chiar traiti in basme? Aflati unde au fost dati copiii, mergeti si ii rapiti si plecati din tara asta de 2 lei. Alta solutie nu prea vad! Sau puteti incerca varianta voastra cu rugatul. Sunt curioasa peste cate secole va veti recupera copiii. Imi pare sincer	What prayer, kind people? Do you really live in the realm of fairytales? Find out where the children went, kidnap them, and leave this worthless country. I don't see another way out. Or you can try your prayer option. I'm curious how many centuries it will take you to get

<p>rau pentru ce s-a intamplat, stiu cum functioneaza lucrurile in Norvegia, dar daca copiii sunt dati deja altor familii, puteti sa stati in genunchi zi si noapte si n-o sa rezolvati nimic. Si daca rezolvati treaba asta doar prin rugaciuni, va rog sa ma anuntati si pe mine fiindca promit ca in momentul ala devin cea mai credincioasa persoana si construiesc o biserica cu mainile mele!</p>	<p>the children back. I'm very sincerely sorry for what happened, I know how things work in Norway, and if the children were already given to other families you can sit on your knees, day and night, and you won't accomplish anything. And if you solve this problem thru prayer alone, please let me know, and I promise from that moment on I'll become the most religious person, and I'll build a church with my own hands.</p>
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As she challenges both the strategy and the beliefs of the group, this Facebook user proposes a remedy (kidnap and run). She also reassures the other the family and other user of her familiarity with the Norwegian system, as a justification for her proposed solution to the problem. This is an example of an attempt to collective problem solving, in which audience members interact with the initial story (and the events) and other participants in the telling of the story to propose a resolution. While she emphasizes with the family (an indication of support), this Facebook user questions the means of addressing the problem and the practicality of such approach.

In response to suggestions of radical actions, Andreea Bodnariu Stoia, Marius's sister provided a clarification by replying directly (from her personal Facebook account):

thank you for your sincere comment. I completely understand your frustration. If my kids were taken away, I don't know how I would react because just having my nephews and nieces taken away is awfully painful and hard to stomach. My initial reaction, as a human being, would definitely not be the most peaceful one. But, as Christians we do place all of our cares onto the Lord firstly. Secondly, we rely on our brothers and sisters for prayer, fasting and support. This page was created JUST to gather support in PRAYER AND FASTING, because we already have done and are doing everything else. We don't need public insults to the authorities (it surely doesn't help Marius) or anything that can harm more at this point then help. Just because we don't update FB with everything we are doing in the long days and sleepless nights, doesn't mean we are a bunch of "radicals" sitting around and praying all day. Thank you for your concern! (original text in English)

While empathetic with the user and reassuring them about the legitimacy of their gut-reaction, Andreea invokes a Christian ethos of peace and non-aggression, while also re-articulating and emphasizing the previous calls for prayer and fasting (by Pastors Bodnariu and Ionescu) as a spiritual practice of the community. This post also suggests that other actions were taken/prepared in the backstage and/or there was uncertainty about what strategies were more effective.

As more details of the case continued to be supplied in subsequent Facebook posts, some of the supporters questioned the adequacy of this call to prudence and suggested a more proactive approach. For instance, Facebook user writes: AM: "*Cum i-am putea ajuta? Ceva concret!*" / How can we help them? Something practical!". A more emotional user pleads: GE: "*Offffaceti ceva ..bietetii copii*" /Aaaah...do something ... poor children."

In light of the potential legal ramifications of the case, in a clarification post published on November 21 (six days after the removal of the children), Pastor Bodnariu responded suggestions and pleas for action, explaining the role of the Facebook page:

We created this page for those who use social media with the sole purpose of drawing prayer support for Marius, Ruth, and their children as they go through this trial. Conversations or accusations against Norwegian authorities on this page, or other venues regarding this situation, do not benefit the Family or situation. I understand that the lack of details can be frustrating but our proceeding in alignment with the requests of the Family's legal counsel is in the best interest of the Family. (original text in English)

This response suggests that the family was in a place of vulnerability (the children had just been taken away and the parents were interrogated by the authorities) and uncertainty (they did not know what is the most effective course action). The Facebook page was initially envisioned only as a place for expressing and encouraging solidarity with the family without committing to a particular

strategy. At this point, the story of the Bodnariu family was only a social ferment in the making.

A second post from the organizers, aligned with the previous messages conveyed by the family (sister and brother/the administrator of the page) place emphasis on non-aggression, advocating for the Christian "love thy enemy" stance:

We are not instigating anyone to hate, we don't wish any harm to those who cause us harm! We also pray to God for those who harm us ...let's pray for this institution, barnevernet, for the employees there, they too have families, they too have children, let's pray that God works at their hearts, and that they change. May He give them a heart of flesh instead of a heart of stone, may he take away their blindness, and help them turn their faces toward Him, and to bless them! May God work, and may we give him all the glory!
(original text in English)

In this post on behalf of the parents, administrators of the page reinforced the family's position while at the same time accentuating the Christian ethos that requires one to love and pray for all people regardless of how they behave. This post reiterates prayer and love for all God's creations as a habitus, thus demonstrating to each other and to the world that they act as disciples of Jesus who is the primary model for this kind of life. In the logic of the Neo-Protestant values, there is no other choice but exercise restraint and respond to hate with love.

As my analysis of these excerpts demonstrate, these initial posts established the moral tone, rules of engagement and assigned roles among the participants (Barnevernet/Norway as the source of discontent, close family members as facilitators of undisclosed actions, Facebook users as providers of spiritual sustenance).

On Nov. 20, in response to a call for prayer and fasting (in Romanian), a supporter posted the first meme, as a comment.



Figure 15. "Norway, return the children to Bodnariu family!" – first meme

Using the Norwegian flag as a background for the message, this image user-produced and shared visual artefact is the first instance when Norway is being directly interpellated, and when a claim for the return of the children is articulated. Using a modified version of the Norwegian national flag represents a form of protest against the values this symbol represents. The Norwegian flag features the Scandinavian cross (a symbol of Christianity), an indication that (at least when the flag was designed), Norway identified itself officially as a Christian country. Stating a claim that calls for the reparation of a wrongdoing (children being taken away by the state power) in the middle of the Scandinavian cross suggests that Norway failed to abide by Christian morality. This meme was taken up by the organizers and used the very next day as a cover picture for the call for prayer and fasting in English. This indicates a change in the rhetoric and ethos of the movement toward a firmer, more proactive approach. Also, from this point on, this meme was used in the movement's repertoire as a background for future calls for prayer and later for protests, where it became one of the most prevalent visual forms of claim-making.

On Nov. 21, in a comment responding to the call for prayer (posted as a Facebook event), a supporter commented:

KA: Now we live in the last days, when a democratic country with a Christian history, with the cross on the national flag, with open doors to Muslim refugees, at the period before Christmas, accused a Christian family in Norway for "propaganda of radical Christianity" under that one of their children sang a song in a Christian school. As a punishment, the parents were deprived of parental rights over those 5 children and now no longer have the right to meet with them. This is something alarming. Also it is a sign that the Lord Jesus is coming very soon. Christian - watch over your lives! (original text in English)

This comment illustrates how the narrative of Norway's disregard of traditional religious values produced by the previous user (the author of the meme) is taken up by another supporter. Additionally, this user combines the flag narrative with the story told in previous posts by the family members to create an apocalyptic warning about the second coming of Christ. This user also interprets Norway's acceptance of Muslim refugees and the condemning of displays of Christianity (the song sang by the girl in school) as a detour from and rejection of traditional Christian values, as embedded historically in the nation's identity.

In response to the same post (the call for prayer) and in resonance with the previous supporter, another user wonders: DB: "what's wrong with norway/sweden? you are inficated by islam?" (misspelling and punctuation in original). This user builds on the theme of Norway's acceptance of Islam, further extending the blame to Sweden.

Starting with the first protest, the tone of the movement changed, as a variety and multitude of posters and banners (all produced by the organizers and shared as downloadable files on Facebook) filled the streets and public places. The majority of these artefacts included distorted representation of the Norwegian flag, especially of the Scandinavian cross by adding text of changing the shape of the

cross to reflect a mis-representation of Christianity (and of its family values, depicted as gendered /man/woman and children).



Figure 16. "Norway, stop child kidnapping"



Figure 17. "Barnevernet = childhood killer"

As seen in the first image above, the Norwegian flag is distorted into an outstretched whirlpool-like children-grabbing arm alluding to the removal of children by the state authorities. While the first image requests that Norway stop “kidnapping” (the word indexes criminal activity), the second image labels Norway as another type of violent criminal (killer). The crime suggested by the second image involves the separation of children from their parents, as indicated by the center line separating the two. Comparing the image on the left with the image on the right, we can notice that the Scandinavian cross has been removed from the latter image altogether, suggesting the complete disappearance of Christian values from Norwegian society. The bold text and the color contrasts between the text and the background in both memes elicits the attention of viewers, highlighting the claim/label as a matter of grave importance.



Figure 18. “Norway, let the children back to their family”



Figure 19. "Norway, do not separate Bodnariu family"



Figure 20. "Norway, do not separate them"



Figure 21. "Reunite the Bodnariu family"

Other symbolic visual depictions of Norway suggest oppression and infringement on individual freedom. In the image on the left the Norwegian flag appears in the shape of prison cell, and the Scandinavian cross, used as cell bars are secured by a lock with the label "Barnevernet." This image depicts Norway as a space of punishment and confinement, and child protective service as the locking mechanism. In the two similar images depicting the Norwegian flag as creating a physical gap between parents and children, as the two are separated by a steep, hollow abyss, unequipped with means of climbing out. The image suggests the rigidity of the system, who doesn't allow for ways for parents to be together with their children. The last poster situates the portrait of the Bodnariu family (analyzed in chapter four) on top of the Norwegian flag, once again modified by the removal of

one arm of the Scandinavian cross, yet another reference to the disrespect of Christian values.

While some of these visual artefacts made claims specific to the return of the Bodnariu children (“Reunite the Bodnariu family” and “Norway, do not separate the Bodnariu family,” others request the return of children (“Norway, let the children back to their family” and “Norway, do not separate them”). These protest signs are reminiscent of the initial bog, in which Pastor Bodnariu shares his findings about the many other families abused by Barnevernet. Also, they highlight the movement’s promise to advocate on behalf of all families affected.

The picture below, taken at the Pro-Bodnariu protest held on Dec. 19 (close to the first month anniversary of the removal of the children), shows the public display of support of the family.



Figure 22. Protest picture – Bucharest, Dec. 19, 2015

The image illustrates how the organizers of the Pro-Bodnariu movement repurposed the frame of the Norwegian flag to display a different portrait in which values usually by the national flag are converted into accusation of crime and immorality. In this image, the past (the family portrait in Norwegian attire and the Washington selfie) and present of the Bodnariu family are side by side, creating the transition between the narrative of joy and the narrative of trauma caused by the Barnevernet.

The posters created by the organizers also challenge the official image of Norway. As I explained in chapter two, where I presented contextual information about the case, according to surveys conducted by various international organizations Norway places at the top of the international charts in terms of social services and quality of life. While the official narrative depicts Norway as a success story and the "world's best democracy," the image constructed by the Pro-Bodnariu movement in instances like these portrays the country as a political, social and moral failure. The narrative constructed here (and taken up and amplified by followers) questions and critiques the Norwegian authorities' interference in family matters.

The visual images of the Norway, by now clearly identified as the enemy are complemented by other depictions, such as the one included in a blog post published on Jan. 8, 2016 and authored by Pastor Brie, a vocal supporter of the movement and community organizer, and entitled "Barnevernet, ia-ți mâna pe pe copiii noștri!"/ Barnevernet, take your hands off our children!" the author asks followers from the town of Sibiu to travel to the capital in order to join the protest scheduled for the following day. In this blog post, the Pastor articulates a rationale for participation, as he lists his grievances (in order of importance):

Original text in Romanian	Text in English (my translation)
În primul rând, protestez față de statul secular-ateu (Norvegia, în cazul nostru), care pretinde dreptul de proprietate peste copiii familiei Bodnariu. Vreau să afirm răspicat că statul nu are drept de stăpân peste copiii noștri; acest drept a fost încredințat de Dumnezeu părinților. Niciun stat de pe fața pământului nu știe mai bine decât părinții care este interesul copiilor lor. Nici o instituție de stat nu poate pretinde că iubește și îngrijește pe copii mai bine decât familia naturală. Trebuie să strigăm răspicat împotriva dictaturii statului secular ateu, care în timp ce se pretinde a fi democratic, se comportă ca un stat totalitar.	First of all, I'm protesting against the secular-atheist state (Norway, in our case), who claims it right of property on the children of the Bodnariu family. I would like to firmly argue that the state doesn't have the right of ownership of our children: God entrusted this right to the parents. Not a single state on the face of the Earth knows better than the parents what is the best interest of their children. Not a single state institution can pretend that it loves and cares for the children better than the biological family. We must firmly raise our voices against the secular-atheist stat, who while it pretends to be democratic, behaves like a totalitarian state.

In this excerpt, the Pastor identifies secularism and atheism as a root-cause of the government's alleged abuse of power. The Pastor's explicit critique and rejection of a state that operates under secular premises represents beliefs shared by the religiously conservative mindset (e.g., human rights are God-given and not granted by political or administrative entities; parents have the freedom to raise children according to their own interpretations of His word; and parents have a duty to protect their children). In this passage, the government is portrayed as responsible for protecting God-given rights (not legislative rights) and is asked to act in accordance with these religious beliefs. The government is also depicted as dishonest/deceitful. The Norwegian state is labeled and positioned as "the other".

In the following paragraph, Pastor Brie articulates grievances against the child protective services agency Barnevernet.

Original text in Romanian	Text in English (my translation)
În al doilea rând, ies în stradă pentru a protesta față de abuzurile comise de Barnevernet, o instituție care ascunde ceva putred, care în numele „interesului	Secondly, I take to the streets to protest against the abuses committed by Barnevernet, an institution that hides something putrid, that in the name of

superior al copilului” abuzează în mod grosolan dreptul copilului de a simți dragostea părinților și de a fi împreună cu frații lui În Norvegia, țara cu aer civilizată, progresist și democratic există un monstru, care hrănit cu sângele copiilor noștri, testează „proiecte sociale” pentru o nouă ordine mondială.	“the best interest of the child” grossly abuses the right of the child to feel the love of their parents and to be together with their brothers. In Norway, a country with a civilized, progressive and democratic image lives a monster, who fed with our children’s blood, tests “social projects” for a new world order.
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What makes this text particularly meaningful is the shift in focus from depicting the child protective agency as the cause of the problem to framing it as its effect. In other words, rather than seeing Barnevernet as the principal culprit, as depicted in the beginning of the movement, the Pastor presents the actions of the state agency as a mere manifestation of ungodliness, as the main issue permeating Norwegian society. This text depicts Barnevernet as a dishonest and devious organization, who uses an interpretation of the international legal framework (“the best interest of the child,” a United Nations normative) in a way that it deprives children of parental love. In this excerpt Norway is also depicted as hypocritical, projecting a positive image in order to hide criminal behaviors. The comparison of Norway with a metaphorical blood-thirsty monster, implicitly associated it with practices of Satanism.

In addition to associating the practices of Norway with those of secret criminal organizations, in posts by the organizers and users there are many direct references to totalitarian regimes, such as communism and Nazism. When those references are made, the practices of those regimes are characterized as similar to those of Norway’s authorities in this case of child removal. For instance, references that include comparisons of the practices of Barnevernet with Nazism were included in a call for an e-mail bomb campaign to media outlets to announce a protest in Washington, DC on Jan 6, 2016. Pastor Ionescu instructs supporters to copy and

paste the following text announcing the upcoming protest in the US Capital, and to send it to a listed (provided) of reporters:

Romanian-Americans will have a peaceful demonstration in Washington DC denouncing the abuses perpetrated by Norway's BARNEVERNET; impudently abducting all 5 children born to Marius & Ruth Bodnariu. Romanian-Americans are outraged at the news and reports of events that unfolded in Norway in the last two months in the Bodnariu family's case of confiscation of all their 5 children by Norway's Barnevernet (Norway's Child Protection Services). As such, hundreds of Romanian-Americans from across United States will demonstrate peacefully to show solidarity with the Bodnariu Family who lost custody of all their children through a process that is against international laws and conventions. The demonstrators will voice opposition to Norway's Barnevernet and its inhumane Nazi-like tactics. (original text in English)

After identifying the protesters as a diasporic ethnic group, this message provides a summary of the Bodnariu case. Positioned at the end of the excerpts, the reference to the similarities between the Barnevernet and the Nazi regime concludes the announcement, connecting the purpose of the protest to already known and vastly circulated narratives of Nazism. Without further elaborating of the meaning of the syntagma Nazi-like tactics, the text allows the audience to use their own knowledge and imagination to understand the gravity of the case.

The various facets of the establishment, such as the similarity of its practices with those of past or current totalitarian regimes (e.g., Nazism, communism) depicted in this text eventually became themes of the larger, co-constructed narrative in which random digital supporters joined prominent voices and of the community in co-creating the ever-growing and ever shocking image of the perceived institutional inhumanity, abuse and corruption. From brief posts such as:

DCC: Barnevernet, care este diferenta intre tine si SS-ul lui Hitler?

[Barnevernet, what is the difference between you and Hitler's SS?] (my translation)

MMG: Nazism is back!! (original text in English)

LJ: Hmm...only in time of Nazism or Roman Empire we find such laws.

(original text in English)

RS: Amazing international movement against norwegian fascism and official despotism. We shall fight! (original text in English)

to more elaborate statements, digital supporters expressed their agreement with the official depiction of Norway as a Nazi regime.

More elaborated user statements provide specific ways in which Norway's actions bear similarities with those of Nazi Germany. For instance, Facebook user RS writes:

The Bodnariu family, along with many others in Norway, live the nightmare of the Holocaust. Looks like the very unfortunate Bodnariu case brings to light many other similar atrocities happening in Norway. (original text in English)

Using a vocabulary of fear and aggression suggested by words such as "nightmare," "Holocaust" and "atrocities," this short text indicates some of the ways that the analogies made resonate with viewers of messages delivered by the pro-Bodnariu movement on digital platforms. Digital users of The Pro-Bodnariu movement were perceived by supporters as trailblazers serving the interests of other families affected by the actions of the same organization. Elaborating further on the similarities between Nazism and Norway's regime, another Facebook user adds:

MV: Din recuzita asa-zisei protectii a copilului din Norvegia lipsesc doar trenurile de deportare si lagarele de exterminare. Acestea au fost inlocuite de masini si institutia adoptiei! Norvegia este o rusine pentru umanitate! Un popor care a fost capabil sa creeze un individ precum Breivik este un neam nazist si lipsit de empatie! [The only missing props of the so-called Norwegian child protection are deportation trains and extermination camps. There have been replaced with cars and the institution of adoption. Norway is an embarrassment to humanity! A people who was capable of creating an individual such as Breivik is a nazi nation who lacks empathy!] (my translation)

In this amplified version of the narrative of otherness, a narrative about government authorities/agencies seizing children is presented alongside stories about the Holocaust and a mass-shooting of participants in summer camp of political

youth organization in Norway. In addition to labeling Barnevernet as a pseudo-institution perceived as serving against the interests of the vulnerable, this comment compares the protocols used by the Nazi regime as instruments of destruction used during the Holocaust with those of the Norwegian government. Characterizing the arrival of government officials for the purposes of removing the Bodnariu children and the subsequent adoption proceedings as similar to the removal of Jews by Nazis/Nazi followers, this passage clearly demonizes Norwegian authorities. This comment relies on intertextuality between three already-known stories (Nazism, Bodnariu and Breivik) and creates a digital portrait of institutionalized abuse. By using the case of Andres Breivik, the Norwegian far-right terrorist who committed a mass murder in 2011, supposedly because of an improper upbringing, the author of this post implies that criminality is one result of the country's failed child rearing policies.

In these ways, the official pro-Bodnariu movement narrative, supported and enhanced by social media users framed the Norwegian government as similar to Nazi rule. In order to further deepen already instilled feelings of fear and outrage, several pastors involved in promoting support for the Bodnariu family contributed to the production of such narratives which were widely consumed by Romanian Christians, evangelical, and secular audiences. This narrative depicts forced assimilation and genetic re-programming of migrants by the Norwegian government as well as instances of kidnapping children and placing them in secular homes, away from their maternal language, family religious and cultural practices.

One of the most elaborated articulations of this narrative comes from the movement's spokesman, Pastor Cristian Ionescu, in a televised interview hosted by RTN Chicago, a religious diasporic Romanian television, and posted on Facebook on

December 16, 2015. In an hour-long interview entitled "*Familia Bodnariu și persecuția religioasă*" / "The Bodnariu family and religious persecution," Pastor Ionescu presents a summary of the case for a Romanian-speaking audience, including the theory of assimilation initially introduced by Pastor Lascau, his counterpart from Phoenix, AZ. Asked by the host about the perceived interest of Barnevernet in breaking apart families, the pastor responds:

Original text in Romanian	Text in English (my translation)
<p>Se pune problema asimilării. Vorbeam zilele trecute cu pastorul Lascău și el avea o teorie foarte interesantă despre lucrul asta. Noi știm că în America e nevoie de 3-4 generații pentru asimilare. Ca procentaj, chiar dacă sunt afectate și anumite familii norvegiene, de norvegieni, ținta sunt familii etnice, ca procentaj din populație este un procentaj disproporționat de familii etnice care sunt ținta acestei institutii. Este o metodă extraordinar de simplă și de directă de asimilare. Sunt mai multi cetățeni norvegieni sau persoane de origine norvegiană în America decât în Norvegia la ora actuală. Rata mortalității este mai ridicată decât rata natalității. N-au copii. Este un mod de supraviețuire. Mai mult decât atât, este o luptă anti-familie, anti-creștină a societății europene. Și iarăși tindem să credem că există o țintă a acestei instituții, chiar dacă, că au și cazuri legitime, că dacă n-ar avea nici un caz legitim nu ar putea să existe, nu? Probabil că la început au fost insufleții de o cauză nobila, să protejezi copilul, dar a degenerat și a devenit un braț al asimilării. Mai mult, toată lumea vorbește ca este o mafie a traficului de copii. N-am avut noi în România problema asta? Și a fost mediatizată și recunoscută la nivel guvernamental. A existat o mafie a copiilor. Diferența este că asta e organizată. Mai mult, hai sa judecăm puțin modul in care ei operează. Hai sa zicem că ai cele mai bine intenții de a proteja</p>	<p>This is about assimilation. I was talking to Pastor Lascau a few days ago, and he had a very interesting theory about this issue. We know that in America assimilation takes place after 3-4 generations. Percentage wise, even though some Norwegian families might be affected, the target are ethnic families, because in terms of percentage, there is disproportionate percentage of ethnic families being targeted by this institution. This is an extraordinary simple and direct assimilation method. There are more Norwegian citizens of Norwegian origin in America than there are in Norway at the moment. The mortality rate is higher than the birth rate. They don't have children. This is a survival mode. Again, we are tempted to believe that there is a target of this institution, although they also have legitimate cases, because if they wouldn't have any legitimate cases they wouldn't be able to exist, right? Perhaps in the beginning they were driven by a noble cause, to protect the child, but this degenerated into an instrument of assimilation. Furthermore, everyone talks about a mafia of child trafficking. Didn't we have in Romania the same problem? And it was brought up in the media and recognized at the governmental level. There was a mafia of children.</p>

<p>copilul. Se pare că scopul lor nu este să corecteze familia, ci să ia copilul din familie. Mai mult, există o familie, tot de români, cărora le-au luat copiii și au mers până la Curtea Supremă. Și s-a decis că Barnevernetul a greșit și că a acționat abuziv. De doi ani de zile există decizia aceea și încă Barnevernetul nu le-a dat copiii înapoi, ba mai mult, acum i-a pus pentru adopție.</p>	<p>The difference is that this one is organized. Moreover, let's think about the way they operate. Let's say that they have the best intentions to protect the child. It appears that their goal is not to correct the family, but to remove the child from the family. Moreover, there is family, also Romanian, whose children were taken away, and they went all the way to the Supreme Court. They decided that Barnevernet was at fault, and it acted abusively. The decision is already two years old, and Barnevernet still hasn't returned the children, and to top it off, now they put the children for adoption.</p>
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Shared exclusively with the Romanian audience, these accusations of human trafficking play into the narrative of shock, outrage and fear that progressively permeated the movement. The suggestion that state institutions are engaged in criminal activities involving the exploitation of the most vulnerable members of society possibly renders not only a sense of compassion for the victims, but also potentially leads to feelings of unsafety and danger. The depiction of those trusted to protect children as members of a criminal organization adds both a sense of urgency of action and a sense of responsibility to eradicate crimes against not only the Bodnariu children, but also against all potential subjects of these unlawful and immoral practices. The idea that supporters of the Pro-Bodnariu movement were instrumental in solving a larger problem has been a consistent motivator used by the organizers to empower and mobilize participants, who were constantly reminded of their important role in serving the interests of other powerless victims. The image below constitutes one example of this strategy of frame amplification in which the victims are no longer the Bodnariu children, but other victims, depicted in the visual section of the banner as distraught and in pain. The demand that Norway, return the

children comes with both an ultimatum (“it’s time”) is combined with a series of black and white photographs of children in emotional distress. Images of suffering children might evoke memories of how children were treated during WWII or the Stalinist Gulag, a possible association with the depiction by the Pro-Bodnariu movement of the Norwegian child protective service agency as similar with Nazi and communist organizations.

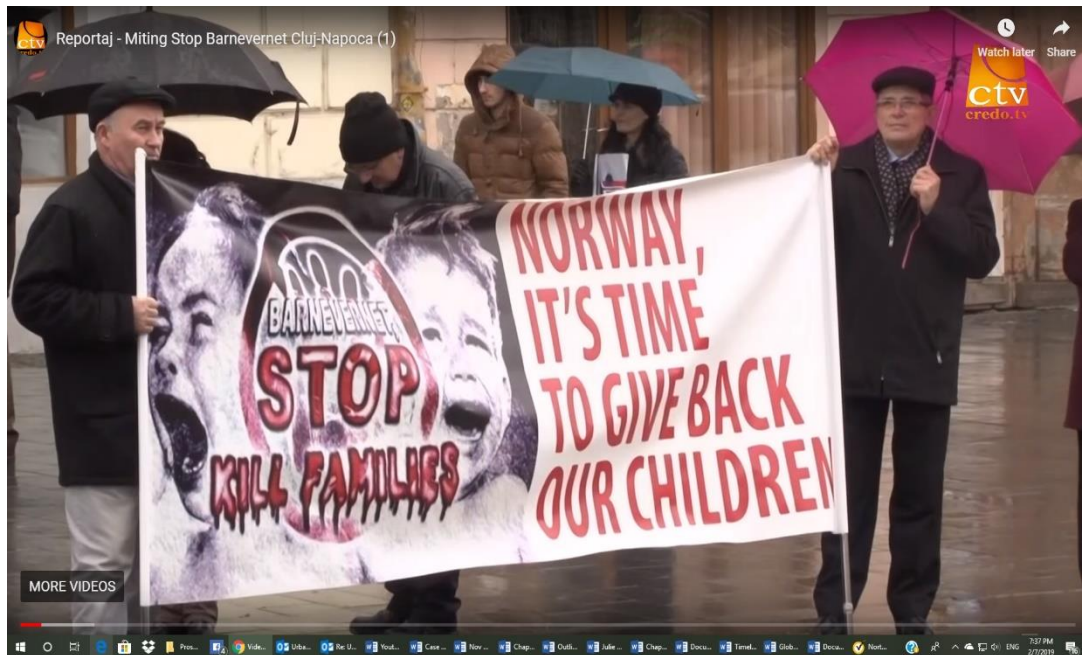


Figure 23. Protest picture Cluj-Napoca, Romania - Jan 9, 2016



Figure 24. Protest picture Ottawa, Canada – March 3. 2016

In a post-rally interview given in San Francisco to the Romanian Tribune Newspaper on Feb. 13, 2016 Newspaper, Pastor Lascau Lascau depicts the actions of the Norwegian authorities as a secretive power elite organization depicted by various conspiracy theorists as pursuant of international domination. After the reporter suggests that the suffering of the Bodnariu family somehow fulfills a divine mission conducive to a national spiritual revival (a theme widely used by the strategists of the movement), Lascau explains how the family's suffering can be viewed as part of the suffering of a larger group (the nation):

SB: Provocarea pe care Marius si Ruth o au acum este de a înțelege că durerea lor este pentru beneficiul unei întregi națiuni care trece in momentele acestea. [The challenge that Marius and Ruth have now is to understand that their pain is for the benefit of a whole nation that goes through these moments.] (my translation)

PL: Și nu numai, ah, națiunea norvegiană, să spun așa, ci pentru toate națiunile Europei. Ne îndreptăm spre globalizare și copiii ăștia răpiți sunt un fel de ieniceri ai unei noi ordini mondiale. Ei trebuie ruți de familie, trebuie ruți de religia familiei, trebuie indoctrinați în supunerea aceea în care tot poporul norvegian este așa. Europa are nevoie de asemenea ieniceri. Și lupta

aceasta impotriva familiei capătă niște forme aberante în aceste zile prin răpirea copiilor din familie. [And not only, ah, the Norwegian nation, but all the nations of Europe. We are heading toward globalization and these kidnapped children are a sort of janissaries of a new world order. They must be severed from the family, they must be severed from their family's religion, they must be indoctrinated in the obedience that the entire Norwegian people display. Europe needs such janissaries. And the fight against the family has nowadays aberrant forms thru the kidnapping of children from the family.] (my translation)

Referring to NWO-related narratives embraced by some members of the conservative Christian right, Lascau describes the seizing of the Bodnariu children as part of this clandestine organization's agenda of world domination thru globalization and population/mind control policies. The use of the appellative "janissaries," reminiscent of the Ottoman Empire narrative and its description of child abduction practices renders the association with a familiar image of violence and abuse well-known to Romanians. The repetition of the verb "must" in a passive construction alongside the past participles "severed" and "indoctrinated" suggests the role of the Norwegian authorities as obedient agents of a superior malefic power set to separate children from their families and religion.

In addition to equating the practices of the Norwegian authorities with those of Nazis, the organizers and supporters of the Pro-Bodnariu movement often compared the establishment's actions and behaviors with those of other totalitarian regimes. In this narrative, abuses by the Communist regime of Romania, among others, played an important role as a point of reference. In his letter to the Ambassador of Norway in Bucharest posted on Facebook on December 2, 2015, Romanian-American attorney Peter Costea accuses the Norwegian authorities of unfairly and unjustly reprimanding the family, a practice he finds indicative of radicalism. In his open letter, Costea writes:

We are further concerned that, to put it bluntly, the punishment does not fit the crime. In our opinion, the reaction of Norwegian authorities has been extremely subjective, an incredible display of totalitarian extremism. (original text in English)

The idea that history repeats itself, eliciting “horror” and/or traumatic memories of past experiences seems to deeply resonate with Facebook users, who contribute with their own analogies, such as in the example below. A Facebook user elaborates:

Original text in Romanian	Text in English (my translation)
<p>O fiara monstruoasa acest sistem totalitar ingrozitor, un lagar de concentrare. Asa era si pe vremea nazistilor. Rusine Norvegia. Nu voi inceta cu puterile pe care le am, sa relatez oricui si oriunde despre acest caz si despre acest sistem de “a fura” copiii parintilor. Nu stiu cu ce sa compar aceasta Norvegie, cu Germania hitlerista, cu Uniunea Sovietica si toate celelalte state totalitare din lagarul communist, cu Coreea de Nord sau cu toate deodata? In orice caz tara asta nu mai are voie sa fie numita democratica. Ma rog pentru sarmanii parinti avand incredere ca Dumnezeu le va aduce copiii inapoi si va darima din temelii acest Balaur numit Barvenet si Guvernul Norvegiei.</p>	<p>This terrible totalitarian system is a monstrous beast, a concentration camp. Just like during the time of the Nazi. Shame on you, Norway! I will never stop, to the best of my abilities, to tell everyone and everywhere about this case and about this system of “stealing” children from their parents. I don’t know what to compare this country with, with Nazi Germany, with the Soviet Union and all other totalitarian countries from the communist gulag, with North Korea, or all at once? In any case, this case should not be allowed to be called democratic. I pray for the poor parents trusting that God will bring their children back and will destroy from its foundation this monster called Barnevernet and the Norwegian government.</p>

As Norway’s practices are compared with those of other totalitarian regimes, the Norwegian authorities are labeled as a “monstrous beast” and “a monster.” In addition, the narrator promises increased engagement in actions of information dissemination, one of the very purposes of the social movement. This example also demonstrates the interplay between the cognitive framework, relational component and emotional investment of followers/advocates, the three dimensions of collective

identity (Melucci, 1985, 1989) necessary for commitment to actions, which represent ultimately the goal of social movements.

Also, in video excerpts (e.g., a video produced on 4/16/16 calling for a global protest), Norway's Barnevernet is characterized as an oppressive, abusive organization.



Figure 25. Global protest pro-Bodnariu, April 16, 2016 - first frame

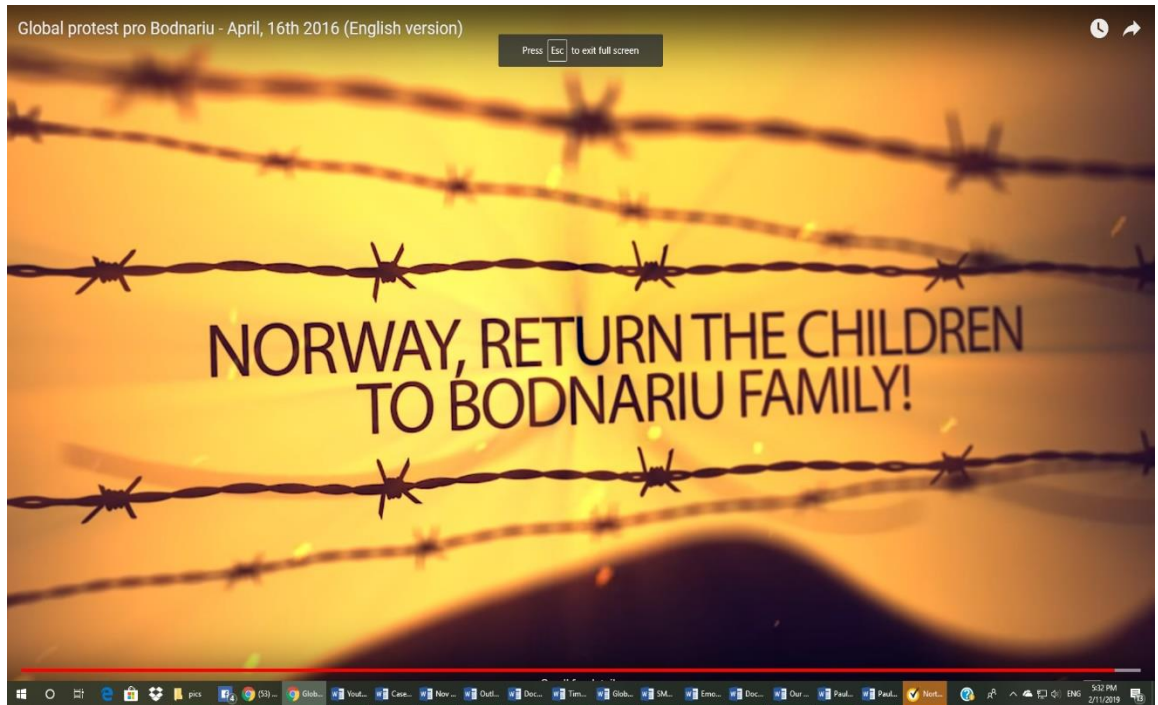


Figure 26. Global protest pro-Bodnariu, April 16, 2016 – second frame

The two introductory images feature a barbwire fence over a sunset, suggesting a space of forced confinement located at the end of light and the beginning of darkness (oftentimes found in narratives of Stalinism). In this short (2:31 minutes) digital story published on February 20, 2016, the organizers request the freedom of the children (“Norway, free these children!”), reiterating its stance that the removal of the children represents “crimes committed against humanity and the serious trespassing of the human rights.”

The narrative of totalitarianism was incorporated in several texts by various mouthpieces affiliated with the family and was in turn enhanced by supporters. In a blogpost from February 2, 2016, Pentecostal Pastor Ionescu shared a letter by Baptist Pastor Sammy Tutac addressed the Norwegian Ambassador to Romania. Entitled “WHY ARE YOU KIDNAPPING OUR CHILDREN?”, the letter reads:

Original text in Romanian	Text in English (my translation)
<p>Doamnă Ambasador, noi am trăit 45 de ani într-o dictatură, nu așa de bine pusă la punct cum este dictatura național-socialistă norvegiană, dar tot dictatură. Ne era frică unii de alții (cum se întâmplă în Norvegia astăzi), eram urmăriți, iar unii erau luați noaptea cu duba Miliției (tot neagră ca a Barnevernetului) și duși departe de casă (exact ca la voi). Este adevărat, tortionarii noștri comuniști nu erau așa de „educați” cum sunt tortionarii voștri de la Barnevernet. Ei nu luau copiii de la sânul mamei, iar dacă se întâmpla totuși, aveau demnitatea să nu afirme că urmăresc „interesul superior al copilului”, eventual al partidului communist.</p>	<p>Mrs. Ambassador, we lived for 45 years in a dictatorship, not one as perfected as the Norwegian national-socialist dictatorship, but a dictatorship, nonetheless. We were afraid of each other (just like in Norway today), we were followed, and some were picked up at night by the Militia (Police) van (black, just like the one from Barnevernet) and taken away from home (just like in your country). It's true, our torturers were not as "educated" like your torturers from Barnevernet. They were not taking children from their mother's breast, and even when it eventually happened, they had the dignity not to claim that they were pursuing "the best interest of the child," only eventually of the communist party.</p>

Citing the Romanian collective, lengthy lived experience of the communist dictatorship, the author labels and ranks the Norwegian political system at the peak of "perfection." The repetition of the noun "dictatorship" as many as three times in the first sentence stresses the understanding of the criteria that would enable such label, while also enforcing into the reader's mind the known implications of such regime. Recalling the feeling of fear rendered by mistrust and denunciations by fellow citizens, complemented by surveillance, secret arrests and deportation as examples of abuses by the Romanian communist dictatorship, the Pastor highlights perceived similarities between the two regimes. These similarities support his placing of Norway's actions on the same scale as those of the now defunct Romanian regime. Mocking Norway's stance on child rearing derived from research and implemented by the derogatorily labeled "educated" professionals but also branded as "torturers," the author draws a comparison between "our" and "their" human instruments of terror, in which the position of the Norwegian persecutors surpass

that of the much-feared Romanians. For those who have lived during communism in Romania, presumably the audience of this text written in Romanian, or those who have known about the atrocities committed by the regime, considered as one of the worst in the world, depicting the Romanian communist as humane in comparison with the Norwegian authorities suggest that the latter displayed an unprecedented level of cruelty.

Using fear-inducing appellatives such as “monster,” and “beast,” and “torturers,” both the rhetoric of the social movement and the responses of its online supporters depict Norwegian child protective services as a disgraceful institution that inflicted long-lasting pain not only on the Bodnariu family, but on the collective consciousness of the Romanian people. In his open letter to the Norwegian Ambassador, one of the first documents issued by the social movement organization, family attorney Peter Costea adds another dimension to the narrative of abuse, warning the recipient/adversary about the irreversible psychological damage inflicted on the community:

It will take at least a generation before Norway regains its respect with the Romanian people. For the next decade or so whenever the people of Romania will think or talk about Norway, the confiscation of the Bodnariu children will inevitably come to mind. This is a scar imposed by Norway's Barnevernet not only on the Bodnariu Family but on all of us Romanians. (original text in English)

The reference to perceived emotional trauma (described as a physical “scar”) was later taken up and amplified by supporters, who argued that suffering inflicted by the Norwegian authorities is affecting all levels of Romanian society, including children. In an open letter addressed to the Norwegian Ambassador on February 3, 2016, Romanian lawyer Maria Bornea writes:

În România, deja lumea sperie copiii cu oamenii răi de la Barnevernet, din Norvegia, care iau copiii cu forța din familii, și dacă continuă tot așa vor deveni celebri și vor lua locul lui “bau-bau” printre toți copiii Europei. [In Romania, people are already scaring children with the bad people from

Barnevernet in Norway, who are taking children away by force from families, and if they continue the same way they will become famous and will replace the Boogeyman for all European children.] (my translation)

In this example of frame amplification, the inclusion of Barnevernet as an evil character in the Romanian folk mythology surpasses national borders, gaining “fame” across the European continent as a child-abducting villain. And while in Romania, according to this author, some parents used Barnevernet’s name to frighten their children into obedience, elsewhere, others share their story of gratitude when they credit their own parents for keeping them away from Norway. A visitor on the family’s Facebook confesses:

RR: I am in total shock at how this organization is reacting in this brutal and cold blooded manner. I cannot help but think of South Africa before the outlawing of Apartheid. South Africa wouldn’t let go of its Apartheid laws up to the point it was a complete police-run state and internationally isolated. I openly thanked my mother today, that we never moved to a Scandinavian country with the same legislation from Germany, though my father thought of moving to Sweden 25 years ago. (original text in English)

By comparing the situation in Norway to events in other nations and from other time periods, this response reveals the power of referencing feelings of shock when describing Norway’s methods. The way Norwegian authorities are depicted seems to have also enabled further reflection (“I cannot help but think”). The narrative of abuse put forth by the movement organizers seems to have generated various associations with past events and practices (contained in the narratives of Apartheid, another political regime known for its blatant disregard and violations of human rights). Feelings of gratitude revealed in this response were echoed and complemented by others, as the example below illustrates:

VLWK: Shame on Norway!!! I’m glad my grandparents left Norway and raised our family in America! May God work on the hearths of the Government! Today I am Embarrassed to say I have Norwegian blood in me. (original text in English)

In another post, a Facebook user directly challenges the Norwegian government and accuses them of “abusing” the children: “What a disgrace to my heritage. You are the abusers. You should be hanged.”

The labeling of certain practices as cohesion, manipulation, disregard of parental rights and child abuse occupied a critical role in efforts to depict the Norwegian government as the “other.” Over time, even stronger accusations of religious discrimination began to appear on Facebook, in blogs, and in protest speeches. By February 2016, when the San Francisco protest took place, online statements from the movement critiqued the Norwegian government for procedural issues and infringement of religious rights. Initially framed as an issue of religious discrimination, as the movement acquired multiple voices and a more elaborate understanding of the facts, the allegations against the Norwegian government were upgraded to religious persecution, which entails a severe, repetitive violation of freedom of religion as a basic human right. The movement’s protest statement from February 13, for instance, overtly articulates the accusation of religious persecution:

We, Christian Romanian-Americans, used to harbor feelings of friendship and admiration for the people of Norway in connection to our common Christian faith, but we cannot understand, and we cannot tolerate the persecutory way in which the Norwegian authorities’ so called “concerns” about religious indoctrination and Christian radicalism have started the process by forcefully separating this family. Based upon the official documents in this case, we have legitimate reasons to consider and declare it as clear a case of religious persecution and human rights criminal violations as it can be. (original text in English)

On behalf of the larger Evangelical Romanian community and its representatives gathered in San Francisco, Pastor Ionescu delivered a direct accusation, this time addressing Norway as a third person. This change in the form of address changed as the movement progressed.

And now, here we stand, with God, his word and his principles. Here we stand, for the family, as God the creator ordained it, for the Bodnariu family, Marius, Ruth, Eliana, Naomi, Matei, Ioan, Ezekiel, and for all the families

affected by this malefic, anti-family and anti-Christian policies of the Norwegian government and its institution Barnavernet. Here we stand, against the inequity and depravity of man, against laws and institutions who represent evil and unrighteousness such as Barnavernet, against acts of persecution and infringement upon our values and God-given rights. Here we stand now, on the same truth will stand tomorrow and forever, and will never stand down. So help us God! (original text in English)

As this example demonstrates, descriptions of institutional abuse transitioned and widened beyond the frame, incorporating vigorous stances against Evil and its various manifestation. In this archetypical narrative of good vs. evil, the social movement organization and its supporters position themselves as rescuers of the family, the children and Romanian Christians living elsewhere.

By the time it reached its bureaucratization/formalization phase, the Bodnariu movement had a distinct identity and image (almost a brand). In this image, the adversary is clearly defined, as Barnevernet/Norway's name appeared in the visual protest materials in Romania and across the world, wherever Romanians are present. The selection of pictures below, taken at various locations on the day of the Global Protest (April 16, 2016) depict the instances of discontent with Norway/Barnevernet and solidarity with the Bodnariu family.



Figure 27. Global protest pro-Bodnariu, Vienna, Austria, April 16, 2016



Figure 28. Global protest pro-Bodnariu, Brisbane, Australia, April 16, 2016



Figure 29. Global protest pro-Bodnariu, New York, USA, April 16, 2016



Figure 30. Global protest pro-Bodnariu, London, England, April 16, 2016



Figure 31. Global protest pro-Bodnariu, Bucharest, Romania, April 16, 2016

On April 16, six months after the seizing of the children by the Norwegian authorities, as instructed by the organizers, supporters around the globe (using email and other forms of electronic communication) sent their accounts (e.g., video, pictures, and comments) from the protests to be shared on the Facebook page. Whether gathered in London, Brisbane, New York, London, Bucharest and other dozens of cities in Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand the supporters of the Bodnariu family conveyed the narrative of institutional abuse by Norway in a consistent way (as images from the various protests are almost interchangeable).

As part of the collective/coherent message about the adversary conveyed by visuals shared online, the organizers also provided the text of a protest statement. Local organizers were instructed to read the protest statement (written in English and Romanian) as provided, adding only the location of each protest. A video was also created and shared on Facebook and YouTube, along with a transcript.



Figure 32. Official global protest statement

The video is a multi-modal artefact that combines image with an audio narration. Unlike to other video documents produced by the social movement organization and shared in the digital space, this artefact contains only a static image from a protest, showcasing a large number of demonstrators carrying banners. The image is almost drained of color, with shades of black and gray, but colorful enough to let the red of the Norwegian flags stand out. Centered in the frame, the title ("Official statement for the worldwide the Bodnariu protest") is in bold white capital letters (to create a contrast that brings forward the purpose of the video). The audio message was delivered in English by Pastor Ionescu, the family's/movement's spokesperson. The text is read slowly, with clear enunciation and emphasis (the transcript of the audio message indicates the areas of emphasis).

I am including the transcript, as provided on the YouTube channel of the Romanian Evangelical television station CREDO TV on April 15, 2016. Although this is

a rather long text, I will include it here in its entirety to show the progression and the intensity of the accusation and of the depictions of the adversary.

PROTEST OFFICIAL STATEMENT We, the (Romanian Christian Community) OR YOUR COMMUNITY from CITY, COUNTRY, have gathered today, April 16, 2016, at LOCATION, to peacefully protest against the abuses committed by Barnevernet, the Child Protection Services in Norway!

Norway, we, the great multitude protesting today throughout the world, speak to you with ONE VOICE! So, HEAR US, Norway! On November 16, last year, your agents kidnapped the Bodnariu girls, Eliana and Naomi from school, they confiscated Matei and Ioan from their home, and, the next day, removed baby Ezekiel from his breastfeeding mother. In doing this, the Barnevernet: - VIOLATED basic human rights! - DISCRIMINATED and PERSECUTED against a family that chose to raise their children under fundamental Christian values, the Bodnariu Family! - TORE APART a healthy, loving, and well-esteemed family, the Bodnariu Family! - INFLICTED great pain and suffering upon two exemplary and highly educated parents, Marius & Ruth Bodnariu! - TRAUMATIZED five innocent, healthy, and unconditionally loved children, the Bodnariu children!

HEAR US, Norway! You thought nobody would hear of your atrocities because you have been able to hide your deplorable actions for so long... but WE became aware! You thought no one would see through your manipulative guise... but we saw through your veil of deceit and understand your hidden motivations! You thought nobody would condemn the atrocities you are committing... but we do and will make sure the entire world becomes aware of them! You thought no one would stand up to you... but we did and we will relentlessly continue to stand against sadistic and domineering attacks on families, parents, and CHILDREN! Norway, we are here and we are here to stay! 150 days strong and as determined as ever!

HEAR US, Norway! You've enlisted your mercenaries to present your actions as justified, implying that the Bodnariu Case is about abuse! However, lacking any witnesses or proof to back up your claims of abuse, what is it Norway that none of your agents or medical professionals, after thorough and controversial medical investigations and medical practices, could not find any indication, trace, or sign of abuse, trauma, or mistreatment? Quite to the contrary, while in the custody of your Barnevernet, the Bodnariu boys became visibly bruised and scratched?!

HEAR US, Norway! You say it's the superior interest of the child that guides your actions! Then, why don't you listen to the Bodnariu children who are unanimously pleading to go home to be with their biological parents?!

HEAR US, Norway! You say that your Barnevernet exists to help parents, but you continue to hold the Bodnariu children captive in spite of Norwegian psychologists AND psychologists hired by your Barnevernet vehemently claiming only the highest praises and positive feedback for Marius & Ruth as loving and caring parents! You returned baby Ezekiel back to his biological

parents, as a judge ruled against you! How do you explain Marius & Ruth being good parents to Ezekiel but not to the other four children?
 HEAR US, Norway! You stand against international laws, you stand against logic and common sense, you stand against biological parents everywhere, you stand against truth, and you stand against God! It is time for you to do the right thing: unconditionally and unreservedly reunite the whole Bodnariu family and drop the case and all charges against these parents! It is time for you to do the right thing: stop kidnapping children! ACT IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CHILD and DON'T confiscate children from their biological parents!

HEAR US, Norway! HURRY! Do the RIGHT THING and UNCONDITIONALLY and UNRESERVENDLY RETURN ALL of the Bodnariu children to Marius & Ruth Bodnariu before your deplorable actions COMPLETELY TARNISH your worldwide reputation! Do the RIGHT THING and UNCONDITIONALLY and UNRESERVENDLY RETURN ALL of the Bodnariu children before the ENTIRE world rises against you!

Norway, listen to God! (original text in English)

In order to illustrate the lexical analysis of the text, I created a word cloud of the vocabulary used in the text that depicts the Norwegian authorities.



Figure 33. Norway - Word cloud

The vocabulary is dominated by verbs and adjectives, and a small number of nouns (“Norway,” “abuse,” “mercenaries”). The verbs (“confiscated,” “traumatized,” “violated “removed,” “tore apart”) index violent, fear-inducing actions. The repetitive use of the pronoun “you” (vs. “us,” the united community) clearly identifies Norway as the perpetrator (as opposed to the formal accusation of abuse against the parents).

Another striking feature of this message is the use of the verbs “to hear” and “to listen”. Throughout the months that the Bodnariu case and the movement organized on its behalf unfolded, the Norwegian authorities did not engage in any public communication. With the exception of a couple of official statement delivered by Norwegian diplomats (e.g., Norwegian Ambassador to Romania in a televised brief statement) the Norwegian government remained silent. This silence was interpreted by the movement as both an act of disrespect, defiance and lack of humanity from the part of the state workers. This stance of silence embraced by the state enabled the organizers to make the public interpellation of the adversary a rhetorical strategy. The official protest statement prompted local calls to solidarity. In the following example, a supporter encourages participation:

IT: It’s time to show our support for Marius and Ruth Bodnariu case. Come, let’s do it this coming Saturday, in front of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, 111 Westlley Str. West Toronto, Ontario. Don’t just be sitting in front of the TV set, watching the drama unfold during this time of tribulation. Come out to raise awareness of Barnevernet atrocities against children and their parents, in the next round of manifestations all over the world. Barnevernet will crush like a ponzi scheme under pressure coming from good and active people like you. So, get information and then be motivated and inspired, after you watched so many tragedies happened to normal families and parents. (original text in English)

Using both shame and praise as a motivator, this supporter re-iterates the accusations against Barnevernet, while also predicting the successful outcome of the

case. This user also highlights the importance of collective displays of solidarity, as a way to showcase the victory of good against evil.

While another user responds with a similar tone (shame/motivation) another supporter find participation in the protest as a civil priority: "ST: We DON'T have any reason not to show up Saturday!!!!)"

IT: The big family of Romanians settled in Toronto, Canada are participating in a mass demonstration all over the world, in order to help Bodnariu family reunite with their own children abducted by the Norwegian CPS. (original text in English)

This time, the Facebook supporter moves from motivation to providing a pledge of commitment on behalf of the Romanian community in Toronto. This comment from a supporter demonstrates the framing of the collective ethnic identity, strengthened and reinforced by bonds of solidarity with Romanians worldwide.

Summary:

This chapter examined the narrative of otherness as identified, described and negotiated by various contributors to the Pro-Bodnariu movement rhetoric, from the official discourse by the direct representatives of the family to supporters from the outer circle (such as pastors from various communities or Christian journalists) to user comments. My analysis examined a selection of artefacts which responded to or complemented the official narrative as it identified the perpetrator, casted blame, assigned responsibility and ultimately devised action.

The chapter showcased how thru narratives of institutional abuse, of deviance and immorality the social movement depicted its adversary's worldviews and practices as non-compliant with its own understanding of social justice and morality. This analysis also demonstrated how supporters contributed to the construction of

such narratives by providing responses and comments that amplified and enhanced the portrayals of the adversary, depicted as unlawful and immoral.

The ability provided by social media users to publicly reflect, comment and share their stances with the virtual community created around the Pro-Bodnariu movement lead to the co-construction and negotiation of otherness, crafted around the official narrative of shock and fear. The use of a vast number of visual artefacts, made available electronically before the protests to all participants/groups contributed to a message of a well- organized and united community. The image of a coherent community (and narrative) was greatly facilitated by the digital space, where messages have been produced and distributed by the social movement organization and amplified, extended and re-circulated by supporters. The accessibility and convenience afforded by the virtual space enabled the co-construction of the movement's rhetoric, allowing digital contributors to support, validate, elaborate, co-create and perpetuate representations and understandings used as tools for information dissemination and resource mobilization.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In this study I explored how collaboratively produced narratives in digital/online spaces contribute to the development, support and growth of a social movement. Using the concept of narrative as a form of action (Wortham, 2001), I examined a selection of media statements, open letters, protest speeches, blogs, video and pictures that seemed to inspire and mobilize participation from a large number of supporters. Data included selected excerpts from an online social movement that began in Norway in 2015 and later gathered momentum and strength outside of Norway and Europe.

This multi-modal analysis of digital storytelling practices demonstrated how collaboratively produced narratives (e.g., of suffering, sorrow, persecution or resilience) emerge and gain traction in the digital space. In this study I examined how “narratives of personal experience” (Labov & Waletzky, 1968) are constructed by initial tellers and re-constructed, negotiated, amplified and disseminated by others for the purpose of creating bonds of solidarity against a common adversary. In this study, I also explored the role of collective memory in building a sense of community and shared identity as critical dimensions of a social movement. Lastly, in this study I investigated the role of co-constructed narratives of otherness, and how these stories help to identify and label the adversary. As this study demonstrated, these narratives are also collaboratively constructed and negotiated by various co-tellers (family members, advocates, supporters, other victims) as ways to voice the discontent, outrage and anger that ultimately lead to action. This analysis also reveals how resilience and resistance can be achieved both in the story world and in lived experience.

Demonstrating the dialogic and interactional dimensions of meaning-making processes, this case study informs how we might theorize and understand the role of identity and narrative in the emergence and amplification of social movements.

Collaboratively narrating personal loss

Because of their personal nature, narratives of trauma and loss (e.g., narratives of abuse, narrative of addiction, narratives of illness) are usually told and remain in small, intimate settings such as story circles (Lambert, 2013). As at times these kinds of stories could potentially carry judgement or social stigma, the audience is usually limited to family and friends, or perhaps small, informal story-telling settings (e.g., therapy or support groups). The telling of the Bodnariu family's story of trauma also began in a such setting, as a call for emotional and spiritual sustenance from a brother to another. This study showed how a personal story transitioned from an intimate and confidential setting to the digital space, where it was re-told, embellished and re-circulated by countless co-tellers. In many instances, many of the voices involved in the co-construction of the narrative of trauma and loss did not seem to be acquainted with the protagonists/victims, but established a personal, affective connection with them thru the story which they ultimately co-authored.

As this analysis demonstrated, this personal narrative of trauma and loss gained public traction within a couple of days after it was shared in the digital space. The almost immediate resonance of this story with the public invites the question posed by Labov (1972) in his examination of narratives of personal experience: "why this narrative – or any narrative – is felt to be tellable; in other words, why the events of the narrative are reportable" (p. 370).

Shuman (2012) argues that "the worthiness of a narrative depends on a

relationship between topic and context and the relationship among the participants in the storytelling occasion, as well as the people described or implicated in the narrative” (p. 129). In this case, the topic of the Bodnariu narrative (trauma cause by the interference of government in the personal lives of individuals) resonated by many categories of viewers, from those concerned with issues of social justice to those who believe in the limited role of government and with those who believe that physical punishment is an integral part of childrearing. Comments by signatories of the electronic petition launched by the family, as well as the those of participants in interactions with the stories posted by the family on Facebook indicate that this topic was meaningful to parents, Christians and non-Christians around the globe. In time, as the narrative of loss the Bodnariu family began to circulate, images of support (e.g., pictures from protests, video collages of testimonies and displays of solidarity) shared in the digital space showcased the relevance of the topic for individuals of all ages. This narrative of loss was also tellable because it was framed as a forbidden story, in many ways challenging the authority of the state and the official requests for discretion and privacy. This case demonstrates that narratives told against certain power structures and authorities are indicative of courage, even personal sacrifice, which in turn inspires and motivates audiences to be supportive of the tellers and to engage in actions that advance their cause.

The relationships among participants, described by the organizers as members of an extended family (e.g., “our children” from slogans, the consistent use of the pronoun “we” in speeches and statements etc.) also contributed to the high tellability of the story. Incorporating personal testimonies from character witnesses (e.g., other family members, longtime friends, pastors who knew the family, etc.) added a co-constructed dimension of the story. As the analysis demonstrates, this

collective portrayal of the victims as exceptional parents and irreproachable Christians rendered a sense of trust, confidence and credibility among the member of the larger group, who further shared the story and participated in actions that validated it.

As they shared by proxy the Bodnariu narrative, family members, their advocates, members of the community and supporters also interpreted and assessed actions depicted as contrary to their views, while sharing and promoting their collectively held values. In this collaborative narrative, even newer members of the “community of practice” (Lave, 1991) explained their understanding of the world, while engaging in persuading others of the validity and morality of their perspective. Some of the examples provided in the analysis showed how supporters engaged in the narrative dialogic depiction of ideal Christian behavior by referencing other texts (e.g., the Bible, speeches and sermons by pastors). In this regard, this analysis reiterates the role and potential of co-constructed narratives in the understanding of worldviews and social models.

These examples also illustrate heteroglossia (Bakhtin, 1984)—or how “every story is assembled from multiple coded of language usage and genre” (Frank, 2012). Similar instances of heteroglossia (e.g., the BBC documentary) that involved multiple layers of text and genre also appeared in both the narratives produced by the family (e.g., family website) and those co-constructed by supporters. These examples of heteroglossia/intertextuality demonstrated how the digital space, where certain stories can be linked to others (e.g., BBC documentary linked to page on the family’s website, YouTube and digital media articles linked to viewer’s comments) enables the co-construction of an emerging narrative. This co-construction in the virtual space is similar to the description of collaborative narrative building in conversation

(Riessman, 2008) in which each speaker adds a layer to what ultimately becomes the larger story.

The co-construction of the narrative of self in the virtual space was also exemplified in this analysis thru the examination of a digital story/postcard, send on behalf of the parents. In this digital story, the co-telling of the narrative of loss and trauma was shared between the protagonists/ parents and the author of the video card. In this co-constructed narrative, the image of suffering and desolation rendered by the digital story was conveyed both by the body language and physical interaction of the parents with each other and the audience (sitting together in an armchair, fidgeting, clenching their fingers, looking at each other and at the camera) and the depiction of the home by the person handling the camera. This highlights the potential of multi-modality digital storytelling to convey emotions and states of being by blending image, sound and narrative. Because digital stories are intended to be shared in the virtual space, they are also instrumental in eliciting empathy and compassion.

This analysis identified several such instances, and closely examined the co-construction of the narrative of trauma and loss by a supporter, who re-told the story of the Bodnariu family from the perspective of mother and grandmother. In this instance of emotional solidarity, this co-teller (repeatedly) invited the audience to "imagine" the psychological impact of trauma on the parents, while describing, from her personal experience, the taxing challenges of motherhood and post-partum. The display of emotions in this re-telling of the Bodnariu story generated displays of compassion and empathy for both parents, conveyed in prayers and heartfelt wishes for a positive resolution by a great number of supporters. This example reinforced my argument that narrative co-construction not only the result of the re-telling of a

series of events, but also, in large part, the product of a transfer of emotions from one teller to the next.

Unlike other fully-formed narratives (with a beginning, middle and end), as this analysis demonstrated, because of the nature of the events influencing the case (the legal actions and decisions by the state) the Bodnariu story was open-ended. So, in order to motivate and inspire supporters to contribute to actions that would potentially influence the outcome/ending of the story, a large component of the narrative told by the family, their advocates and supporters was based on an interplay between the present and the past. This finding strengthens the argument that “regardless of the context in which they emerge, the modalities thru which they are expressed, and the genres laminated within them, *all narratives depict a temporal transition from one state of affairs to another*” (italics in original) (Ochs, 1997, p. 189). My analysis showed how the juxtaposition of old family pictures (part of the past narrative of joy) with text describing current events or states of mind (e.g., the electronic petition, the video testimonies of family members and friends in the “Operation Global pictures, etc.) created the contrast between the happy past and the troubled present. This depiction of the transition from happiness to suffering helped shape the way in which the family, their advocates and supporters narrated the hypothetical future. As the analysis shows, in time, as the movement grew, the narrative of the future dictated by the adversaries (loss of parental rights and adoption of the children) was replaced by a narrative of hope, that eventually with the release of baby at first, than a month later of the other children) became a narrative of victory and triumph. The analysis of an excerpt from a radio interview, for instance, given by an advocate of the family after his visit to Norway in Dec. 2015 showed the construction of a hypothetical future in which the children were

adopted by same-sex parents. In this hypothetical future, the listeners were invited to imagine the lives of the children in a world much different than the parental home. This hypothetical narrative of the future eventually became part of the larger co-constructed narrative of otherness, in which the homosexual population was added to the list of adversaries.

Lastly, I found that the collective narrative of self and loss, shared in the digital space and co-authored by several co-tellers “do political work” (Riessman, 2008, p.8). In this case, one of the stated claims of the movement examined in this study was that successful resolution of this case would establish a precedent that in turn could potentially influence changes in policy. My analysis found that collective digital storytelling could be a valuable tool in informing the public and policy-makers of the experiences and viewpoints of those affected by these policies. As this study demonstrated, digital “community based-storytelling” (Davis & Foley, 2016) plays an important role in shaping and influencing public opinion, empowering the collective voice to demand change.

Also, by referring and sharing some of their experience (e.g., institutional abuse during communism) the co-authors engaged in the “collective digital storytelling” (Davis & Foley, 2016, p.320) of co-constructed claims of identity (e.g., victims, survivors, fighters etc.) that aligned them with the other victims (the family and other co-tellers) and ultimately motivated action. This study also demonstrated how storytelling in a (virtual) communal space can empower a group that describe itself as persecuted (Christians) to define and disseminate their beliefs and worldviews, and to counter those of others, depicted as deviant. As they narrate, leaders, members of the community and supporters interpret and assess actions depicted as contrary to their views, while sharing and promoting collectively held

values. This way, storytelling becomes a tool for group empowerment, community growth and civil engagement.

Study implications

For applied linguists, this study contributes the better understanding of storytelling and narrative as a goal-oriented “social activity” (Ochs, 1997) that contributes to persuasion, mobilization (Reissman, 2008) and problem solving (Ochs, 1997). This study provides an example of how storytelling and narratives “do political work” (Reissman, 2008, p.8), while also becoming “cultural tools” (Bruner, 1990) that serve to “articulate and sustain common understandings of what culture deems ordinary” (Ochs, 1997) or deviant.

This study also demonstrates how the past is referenced, understood and negotiated in digital spaces as a way to make sense of the present and to mobilize others (who may or may not have the same past experiences). By focusing on how collective memory and certain narratives of the past are used to establish meanings and debate understandings of national identity, this analysis illuminates some of the complicated and dynamic ways that a sense of community is articulated in the context of a situation perceived as an affront to Christian values and way of life. While this is not the first case of a family or community publicly disagreeing with legal authorities or government policies, this is the only time in recent history that a family’s public protests shaped a community’s actions in ways that influenced a legal decision.

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APPENDIX A
CODE BOOK SAMPLE 1

Dec. 2. Costa letter vs.

Alliance of Romania's Families
grassroots - bottom up -

Romania + interaction
family

pro-family - conservative

pro. life policies

biological parenting

no state intervention

* the inherent right to reasonably discipline their children

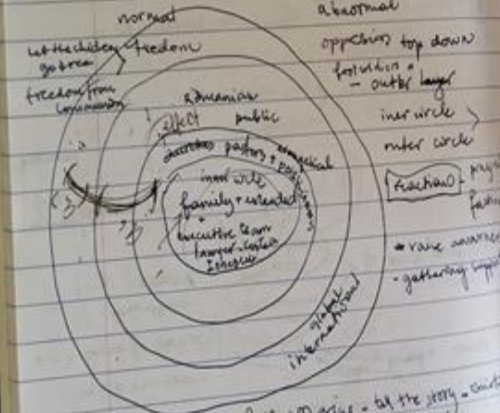
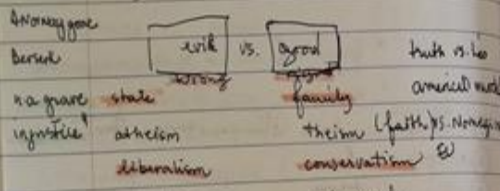
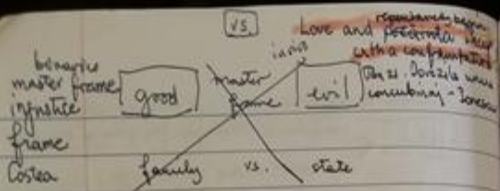
state family

Ambassador - government
state

liberal - social parenting
psychological parenting

family state

APPENDIX B
CODEBOOK SAMPLE 2



no agency

no agency

no agency

no agency

no agency

no agency

no agency

family unit, family care inside

family dominated time

to provide as many

to provide as many

to provide as many

to provide as many

to provide as many

to provide as many



APPENDIX C
IRB EXEMPTION



EXEMPTION GRANTED

Doris Warriner
English
480/727-6967 Doris.Warriner@asu.edu

Dear Doris Warriner:

On 11/29/2017 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Community, cyber-activism and a "pro-family" battle: A multi-modal analysis of a social movement
Investigator:	Doris Warriner
IRB ID:	STUDY00007245
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Paulesc_Julieta_HRP-503a-TEMPLATE_PROTOCOL_SocialBehavioralV02-11-28.docx, Category: IRB Protocol;

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (2) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation on 11/29/2017.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator cc:

Julieta Paulesc