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This Child Is Also Mine:
A Narrative Approach to the Phenomenon of
Atypical Custodial Grandparenthood

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Abstract

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The aim of the study is to render the nature of narrated world of human experience. The narrative approach was researched through the phenomenon of empirical world, i.e. atypical custodial grandparenthood in Lithuania when grandparents raise their grandchildren due to external migration of their children. Grandparents involved in the research were telling incoherent narratives about lived events and experiences; therefore the objective of the study was to discover and to detail narrative approach which would help understand grandparents' way of telling and their experiences of transitional life situation.

It took two years to enter the research field, because there was no official data about grandparents raising their grandchildren; it was also not clear how to get in touch with them in 2006. The research material consists of 12 interviews with grandparents, who took care of small grandchildren (up to the age of 7) for longer than 3 months. The method of active conversation was used to disclose the meaning that grandparents related with their experiences and lived events during transitional life situation. The majority of narrative studies in social sciences do not provide description of clear steps of narrative analysis, the particular and detailed process of data analysis was developed throughout the study: a) text segmentation, interpretation of meaning and reconstruction of individual narratives; b) reconstruction of grandparents' coherent narratives.

Through the process of reciprocal synergy of theory and narrative methodology, the research analysis contradicted the primary understanding of grandparents' stories as incoherent. It emerged that grandparents constructed narrative in an elaborative manner, i.e. their stories centered round the most meaningful events and experiences. Grandparents' narratives were grounded on family experience; their attitude towards transitional life situation was rooted in family culture, which helped assume responsibility in caregiving naturally. Interpretation of grandparents' way to use language to construct meaning revealed that they were still living in the sore moments of transitional life situation. Nevertheless, grandparents pursued to prove their capability to take care of small grandchildren, and the most important meaning of narratives constructed was that they treat grandchildren as their own children. Interpretation of modes of narrativity revealed that grandparents told stories led by inner narrative, or construct meaning in the interaction, during interviews with the researcher. Study develops the narrative conception that people create the meaning of lived events and experiences through various modes of narrativity (interaction, adoption and inner reflection) and through adoption of language toolkit (emplotment, temporality, focalization and social context).

Keywords: narrated world of human experience, narrative structure, mode of narrativity, method of narrative analysis, atypical custodial grandparenthood, transitional life situation.

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Introduction

Polkinghorne (1995) states that people become acquainted with a new situation through narratives, i.e. what kind of stories we have, create and reflect in our mind. Narrative is considered to be comprehensive when the events that constitute a story are arranged in sequence according to chosen criteria (Murray, 2003). Since I construct narrative about a phenomenon and seek to render it explicitly, I start by introducing the main concepts, which were developed in the process; reflecting on the congruence between my study and social work research; presenting the prehistory of the research and the phenomenon under investigation; as well as revealing the aim and the main questions of the study.

1.1. Main concepts of the study

We are all narrators as we seek to understand lived events and experiences of life; we become involved in multiple acts of narration (Abbot, 2002). Consequently, my study is devoted to a particular narrative about a social phenomenon. The dissertation proposes an idea that not only lived events and experiences of people can be presented in a form of narrative, but narrative approach might also be a 'tool kit' to understand the experience of human life (Bruner, 1991; Elliot, 2005) as well as a particular way to analyze a scientific knowledge (Bamberg, 2005).

Since an intense discussion on the concepts of narrative and story is underway (Riessman, 2008), I want to introduce and define the terms *narrative* and *story* the way they will be used in the work in the first place. According to Abbot (2002, 16), most speakers of English use the word *story* to mean what is referred to here as a narrative. When during social interchange people use the phrase 'I heard a good story', they actually do not only refer to the content of the story but also to various aspects of narration. Therefore, in the context of this work, the term *story* is used to emphasize a simple account of facts or events, whereas the concept *nar-*

narrative covers the complexity of a story, implicit meaning constructed by a narrator and the way it was rendered.

In the study, I construct a narrative about *atypical custodial grandparenthood*, the situation when grandparents raise grandchildren due to external migration of their children. In order to understand the social phenomenon, it is necessary to clarify the concepts that are essential to the process of comprehension.

Understanding is the 'product of meaning-making shaped by culture's tool-kit of ways of thoughts' (Bruner, 2005, 169). Western culture and society are permeated with cultural and scientific knowledge and presumptions, which are so taken for granted that they 'were invisible as belief – they took on the status of 'assumed', or 'dominant truths' (Payne, 2006, 23). In order to generate the dominant truth, a selective process, in which a person dissociates the knowledge that does not fit the dominant evolving stories, is required (White & Epston, 1990). For this reason, I refer to the result of collections of dominant truths (or stories) as *dominant narrative*. A person, who searches, presents, constructs different stories, and expands the dominant truth, constructs alternative knowledge (Payne, 2006); accordingly, I refer to the result of the process as *alternative narrative*.

Particular dominant narratives, as understandings, about social work studies exist in collective consciousness. Shawn and Gould (2001) state that qualitative research into social work is often criticized as weak, having the features of verisimilitude or life-likeness. One of the outcomes of the criticism is that social work research overemphasizes the context of social reality, leaving aside methodological tools, i.e. detailed principles how the social reality was uncovered (Riessman & Quinney, 2005). To avoid this criticism and to contribute to the area of social work research, I decided to develop and apply a detailed narrative approach to the phenomenon of atypical custodial grandparenthood.

Furthermore, Riessman and Quinney (2005) declare that a narrative approach cannot be perceived and understood without relating it to the

empirical world. I see this as an interdependent process – narrative as the substance of our world is perceptible through a concrete social phenomenon, and vice versa, the social phenomenon can be revealed only when applying a methodological tool. Hence the chosen subject of my study is *the narrated nature of human experience*.

Even though my thesis introduces the methodology, which helps to create a narrative about the phenomenon of atypical custodial grandparenthood, my concern is to convey it as comprehensively as possible. Lang (1994, 227) stresses that social work studies inwardly carry not only knowledge-building purposes, but also action-deriving purposes. I agree with the author and restate his idea when posing the questions: How are people of scientific community going to read this research? How will they generate their own understanding?

Holma (1999) maintains that people are active in their reflection, interpretation, confrontation or acceptance of narratives. To rephrase Burr (1995), when we reflect and interpret narratives we create our own understanding. Therefore, to avoid a speculative unification of narrative approach and of presented peculiarities of atypical custodial grandparenthood, I introduce the analysis of theory and research findings as an ongoing discussion of scientific narratives about this phenomenon. Correspondingly, to highlight my own interpretation and reflection of dominant narratives, I term the presented knowledge *dominant understanding*. Equally, I consider my own interpretation about stories, which do not correspond with dominant narratives or evidence-based data, and which contrast with the outcomes of other research, as an *alternative understanding* of the studied phenomenon. At the end of the study, I will reflect and discuss not only how people use language to create meaning (e.g. the meaning of grandparenthood), but also how researchers in the field of social work and other sciences should read this study and what kind of pitfalls they should avoid.

To sum up, this study is a story about my journey: why I became interested in a narrative approach; how my understanding about atypical custo-

dial grandparenthood has changed; and how I developed a narrative methodology to understand grandparents' stories, which I present to a broader scientific auditorium with hope that the reader will create a new and personal interpretative understanding about the narrated human world and about atypical grandparenthood.

1.2. Prehistory of the study: facing the 'new' phenomenon

Before revealing the peculiarities of people's ways to narrate their experience and specific life events, I want to present the prehistory of this study. I took interest in atypical custodial grandparenthood while I was researching the phenomenon of a transnational family, defined as a family, where spouses 'live some or most of the time separated from each other, yet hold together and create something that can be seen as a feeling of collective welfare and unity, namely 'familyhood', even across national borders' (Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002, 3). The research was influenced by personal practice of social work and work as a family psychotherapist in the Institute of Family Relations. I remember that in 2004 to 2005 grandparents willing to receive help for their preschool and preteen grandchildren started to appeal to this organization. Those seemed like usual cases of children experiencing problems when their parents worked most of the time and grandparents were the ones who took care of them. While I was trying to explore social situations of families, it appeared that grandparents had been taking care of grandchildren because of external migration of their children. Influenced by positivist theories of social work and family therapy, my mind was overwhelmed with many questions. What was happening in family after parents had left children and went to work abroad? It emerged that those family situations were extraordinary different in comparison to usual cases (loans to banks, living on the edge due to low salaries).

Initially little data or research about the families, where parents had temporarily gone abroad, could be found. For this reason, a quantitative research *Trends and Peculiarities of Labour Emigration in Kaunas* was

designed and implemented. Interesting data emerged: one of the main conclusions was that only 37 percent of children were experiencing emotional crisis (Malinauskas, 2007, 55). In the same year, the study about Lithuanian transnational families has been conducted and similar features were commented, i.e. the members of families saw only temporal changes in children's emotions and behavior after their separation from parents (Maslauskaitė & Stankūnienė, 2007). However, having compared parents' answers with those of grandparents with the help of correlation analysis, it emerged that children had the same separation difficulties no matter with whom they were left (Malinauskas, 2007, 55). The findings did not conform to the traditional attachment theory. According to Thompson (1999), all infants experience crisis, when they 'lose' the object of attachment or a secure object to relate with (one of their parents); this is especially true in the case of preschool-age children. As a researcher and social worker, I was puzzled. How do grandparents handle temporary care of grandchildren, especially that of smaller children? If grandparents successfully organize the care of grandchildren, can the features of positive 'care' be implemented in the particular area of social work – custodial grandparenting?

Later, after the quantitative research had been undertaken, I noticed that the controlled and reductive procedures were employed to separate the elements of social context, and significant factors of the context were overlooked, which would be different if applying a holistic qualitative description (Sherman & Reid, 1994, 3). As Riessman (1994, ix) declares, a quantitative approach presents a verification of hypothesis and barely findings. Therefore, many variables of troubles or challenges of children care in the research *Trends and Peculiarities of Labour Emigration in Kaunas* could not reveal the rich and complex phenomenon – grandparents' ability to take a full-time care of their grandchildren whose parents are external migrants.

Moreover, while implementing the research *Trends and Peculiarities of Labour Emigration in Kaunas* in the kindergartens of Kaunas city, ambivalent information was noticed when communicating with grandparents.

On the one hand, grandparents were afraid of answering the questionnaire and strong defence was evident during the short moments of data gathering. On the other hand, the involved grandparents were either telling no complaints or sharing how successfully the care of little grandchildren was organized. This dual information raised a hypothetical question: why is the message of grandparents twofold – defensive on the one hand and problem-free on the other? I thought that if grandparents had problems in organizing care, I as a social work researcher needed to reveal ‘negative’ (i.e. challenging or difficult) experience occurring in the context. However, if grandparents did not have difficulties in taking care of grandchildren, as a researcher I had to demystify the dominant understanding that only a mother was good enough to be the object of attachment, or that grandparents were not able to manage the care of small children. For example, one of the main classical approaches states that mother should be the main object of attachment to a small baby merely until the age of 3; thus until a child reaches preschool age (Bowly, 1982; Thompson, 1999, 348). Further research concluded a different approach, which altered the understanding about attachment as dependable on the quality of relations or on a secure place (Ainworth, Blehar, Waters & Wall, 1978). Caregivers started to be perceived as a possible and ‘healthy’ opportunity to become a secure object of attachment to children (Dozier, Grasso, Lindhiem & Lewis, 2007).

However, in Lithuanian society, judging attitudes towards the family situation, when parents just temporarily leave their children under the care of grandparents, exist even now. One of the cases to exemplify this opinion is the fact that families (including grandparents) experiencing external migration were marginalized or under the pressure of Lithuanian press. From 2006 to 2010, stigmatizing articles appeared in the newspapers (see Valevičienė, 2005; Laukaitytė, 2006; Masiokaitė, 2006; Laukaitytė, 2006) and electronic news portals (see e.g. *Children of emigrants – orphans of alive parents*, 18/01/2010, *Children – victims of emigration*, 19/10/2007). Hyperbolized metaphors as ‘emigration is a tragedy to a child’ or ‘children are

victims of emigration' were generating the dominant understanding in the society that this phenomenon was problematic in its nature. A spouse who stayed with a child or a grandparent acting as a caregiver were considered to be having problems with care or with children who mourn because of separation. I think, consequently, a stigmatizing attitude towards a family, undergoing the process of external migration, was constructed.

Having faced the stigmatizing attitude and lacking knowledge about atypical custodial grandparenthood, I began qualitative research into the phenomenon in order to understand and to expose the actual meaning of it, for Sherman and Reid (1994) propose that the aim of social work research is to highlight 'what is the absence of something'. When researching an unfamiliar phenomenon, it is important for me to introduce the diverse and multidimensional context of its existence and to interpret scientific and political attitude towards it.

1.3. Dominant understandings of atypical custodial grandparenthood in Lithuania

Scientific narratives on grandparents raising grandchildren due to external migration of their children usually start from the discussion on how the migration has changed the institution of family. Stankūnienė and Baublytė (2009) says that during 20 years of Lithuanian independence, new elements appeared in Lithuanian family under many economical and social changes. Due to one of the lowest EU living standards and living conditions, people, willing to improve their family welfare, started to emigrate. According to European Commission database, Lithuania had one of the lowest rates of family income in comparison to other EU countries in 2008 (Eurostat database, 22/02/2010).

Migration phenomenon has changed Lithuanian society considerably, because the rate of Lithuanian people's emigration is one the highest in 25 EU countries. It is estimated that nearly 10 percent of population has emigrated and live abroad (Maslauskaitė & Stankūnienė, 2007). 15,165

people emigrated in 2004, whereas in 2008 the emigration rate reached 17,015 (Statistics Yearbook of Lithuania, 2009, 61). During the period of economical crisis, Lithuanian emigration has become even more intensive and reached 21,970 (Statistics Yearbook of Lithuania, 2010, 57). At first it does not seem a big amount of people. However, considering the fact that the population of Lithuania is just over 3 million, the process has a considerable impact not only on the changes in population, but also on the social life and culture of the family.

External migration of one parent to work abroad is a usual migration phenomenon. The *World Migration 2008* report stated that highly developed countries such as Great Britain, France, U.S, Canada, and New Zealand constantly received immigrants who had left their spouse and children in the native country, which was termed transnational family. This phenomenon is analyzed from an immigrants' perspective: how they accept new culture and lifestyle; and how immigrants maintain relations with family members through the distance (see *World Economic and Social Survey 2004*; *World Migration 2008*; Malinauskas, 2007; Maslauskaitė & Stankūnienė, 2007). Yet both parents' migration is not even mentioned in the main *World Migration 2008* report as one of the peculiarities of migration process. This phenomenon is not only a feature of migration process in Lithuania. During the EU project *Equal* (Nr. EQ/2004/1130-28) or international conferences like *The 3rd Tampere Conference on Narrative: Knowing, Living, Telling*, social work specialists and scholars commented that the same phenomena existed in all low economy countries of the EU, such as Poland, Estonia, Slovakia and others. However I could not find any statistical data or research results about external migration of parents in the EU causing grandparents to become caregivers to their grandchildren.

Narrative about the significance of atypical custodial grandparenthood starts from the search for the 'real' number of custodial grandparents in Lithuania. The Population Census of 2001 concluded that there were 21 thousand households where a family member had temporarily

emigrated (Maslauskaitė & Stankūnienė, 2007, 46). In 2006 the Children's Rights Ombudsman Institution of the Republic of Lithuania studied the prevalence of transnational families among children up to the age of 18. Having questioned nearly a third of all children (n=195,788) in all educational institutions of Lithuania, they found that there were 9,267 (4.7 percent) children whose one or both parents were working temporarily abroad (as cited in Maslauskaitė & Stankūnienė, 2007, 50). Maslauskaitė and Stankūnienė (2007, 52) maintained that 22.1 percent of all transnational families co-resided with grandparents (three-generation households) and hypothetically claimed that grandparents might be the source of care during external migration of their children. Also the scholars proposed that nearly a fifth of transnational families included preschool children (Maslauskaitė & Stankūnienė, 2007, 54). However, there was no general data about the amount of preschool age children living with grandparents during their parents' external migration. In addition, considering the situation of Kaunas city, the research *Trends and Peculiarities of Labour Emigration in Kaunas* demonstrated that about 8 percent of families in Kaunas city with preschool-age children experience the process of external migration (Malinauskas, 2007, 14). Even in this research, which studied the experiences of transnational families in a broader perspective (it focused on both families, where one of parents was working abroad while another was raising a child, and families, where grandparents were raising grandchildren alone), out of 236 families involved in the research, 40 percent of custody cases were grandparents temporarily assuming the role of a primary caregiver of small grandchildren (Malinauskas, 2007, 15). Nonetheless these were more hypothetical features rather than a rule. In the course of the preceding qualitative research undertaken in the period 2006 – 2008, I visited all kindergartens in Kaunas (n=75) and contacted 39 grandparents who were raising their small grandchildren. The number of investigated grandparents was accumulated during two years of research, as

parents were coming back from abroad or taking a grandchild to live with her or him abroad.

In Lithuania, the phenomenon of atypical custodial grandparenthood is understood dominantly from the perspective of children's rights protection. Families, which emigrate to work abroad, usually leave their children in the care of relatives, grandparents or aunts in the majority of cases. Yet those caregivers are not considered to be legal representatives of children (Social Report: 2008 – 2009, 2009, 108). The *Regulations of Short-Term Child Guardianship* (No. A1-145) took the effect on 3 June 2007 and regulated the procedure for establishing a temporal custody of a child upon his/her parents' request. According to this regulation, the parents willing to emigrate temporarily and leave their child in Lithuania must appeal to the municipal Children Rights Protection department and appoint a person to take care of their child during external migration. Grandparents were mostly chosen as caregivers, whereas aunts or other family relatives were in the second place. After the regulations had become effective, temporal custody was assigned to 343 children upon their parents' request in 2006, as compared to 916 children in 2007 and 2,019 children in 2009 (Social Report: 2009 – 2010, 2010, 123). This *phenomenon is truly significant* in Lithuanian society nowadays.

When analyzing the data from the municipal Children's Rights Protection Offices, it emerged that in 2008 parents tended to leave children of school age with family relatives more than children of preschool age: the number of 7–17 year-old children was 1,584 (79.2 percent) compared to 435 of 0–7 year old children (20.8 percent) (Social Report: 2009 – 2010, 2010, 123). Although the age groups of children who have been placed under a short-term care were distinguished, the number of grandparents as caregivers was not indicated.

I assume that the issues of custodial grandparenting in Lithuanian social welfare system are analyzed from the perspective of child custody, when parents are unable to take care of their children. In case parents are

deprived of parental care according to *Recommendations for Custody and Administration of Property and Acceptance of Inheritance of the Child under Custody or Fosterage* (No. 47- 1766, 2008), grandparents are recommended as initial sources to become primary caregivers of children. According to the *Social Report: 2008 – 2009* (2009, 108) concerning the cases of individuals that were deprived of parental care, 640 custodial grandparents were taking care of grandchildren. A topical issue is that the latest *Social Report: 2009 – 2010* (2010) presents no data about grandparents as caregivers. Moreover, having analyzed the programs generated or supported by the Ministry of Social Security and Labor, I did not find any specific projects or professional information that would portray the process of grandparents' involvement in grandchildren caregiving. If compared to other countries, especially the US and UK, where legal and family policy dilemmas concerning custodial grandparents are already analyzed and discussed (Letiecq, Bailey & Porterfield, 2008), I state that multifaceted and unique *needs of custodial grandparents are still not recognized* by Lithuanian social system since the issues are not presented and discussed in any political and social welfare narratives.

One of the reasons why atypical custodial grandparenthood issues are neglected by Lithuanian social system and politics is that grandparents' participation in the care of grandchildren is viewed as a given or natural situation of life. World widely it is recognized that grandparents can be a safety net for grandchildren (Pebley & Rudkin, 1999, 219). In the developed countries, the number of young children receiving grandmother's care is increasing, as mothers of young children do take employment, especially those with lower income. According to Goodman and Rao (2007, 1117), grandparents raising grandchildren is a growing national social phenomenon in the US. It is declared that 2.4 million children in the US are being cared solely by their grandparents and 'the majority of these grandparents are providing care in informal, private care arrangement without the involvement of the child welfare system' (Letiecq, Bailey & Porterfield,

2008, 995). It is stated that in two out of three cases, informal childcare was rendered to working mothers by relatives (usually grandparents) outside the household in the UK (Gray, 2005, 574).

Second reason why atypical custodial grandparenthood issues are not discussed in Lithuanian social system and political narratives is that grandparenting is considered to be a natural transitional stage of life associated with certain inconveniences. Dittmann-Kohli (2005) suggests that the meaning of grandparenting refers to change, transition, and development. On the one hand, dominant understandings of changes in grandparents' lives might be approached from various dimensions: the acceptance of grandparenthood and the role of caregivers (Goodman & Rao, 2007); exploration of grandparent's role as a caregiver (Landry-Meyer & Newman, 2004); determination of caregiving in case of coresidence (three-generation household) (Musil & Standing, 2005; Pebley & Rudkin, 1999); a new meaning of life through building grandparent–grandchild relationship (Smith, 1991). On the other hand, many studies construct dominant narratives about grandparents' transition in terms of facing challenges or difficulties: psychological problems confronted by custodial grandparents (Heywood, 1999; Ross & Aday, 2006); health issues of grandparents as caregivers (Grinstead, Leder, Jensen & Bond, 2003; McCallion & Kolomer, 2005); social problems due to living below the poverty line (Fuller-Thomson & Minkler, 2007). Furthermore, considering the challenging nature of grandparenthood, the need for social and psychological support (Heywood, 1999) as well as policy dilemmas that grandparents as caregivers face (Gray, 2005; Letiecq, Bailey & Porterfield, 2008) are analyzed. Despite various approaches to the issue, in general, all studies discuss the meaning of changes that grandparents' experience and their movement from one life situation to another. All things considered, I construe the meaning of grandparenthood as *transitional life situation*.

The last reason for disregard of atypical custodial grandparenthood issues in Lithuanian social system is the nature of the phenomenon is not

clearly determined, i.e. whether it falls under the category of informal caregiving or under that of formal custody. All studies in the field mentioned above deal either with dominant narratives about custodial grandparents, where custody exists as a result of adult children's problems, or with intergenerational situation (three-generation household), where the care of grandchildren is related to long work hours of parents. Consequently, grandparents raising grandchildren due to adult children's external migration fall 'in between' the recognized phenomena. It is not custodial care because grandparents become primary caregivers only temporarily. Moreover, not all grandparents take care of grandchildren as in the case of three-generation tradition, where grandparents might be the main caregivers. Therefore, I term this phenomenon *atypical custodial grandparenthood* because this inquiry tries to describe the peculiarities of the phenomenon, which *does not conform* to the traditional understanding of custodial grandparenting or to the cultural tradition of coresidence.

While searching for a narrative approach to understand atypical custodial grandparenthood in Lithuania I had to be sensitive to the over-emphasized difficulties associated with grandparenting. Despite different conditions for being a primary caregiver, it is claimed that grandparents experience stress and health problems in the process of custody (Goodman & Rao, 2007, 1118; McCallion & Kolomer, 2005, 105). Nevertheless, some studies describe positive experience of grandparents as caregivers. The Pruncho's study pointed that the majority of grandparents rebrought love and joy into their lives; they reported greater feeling of self-esteem (as cited in Goodman & Rao, 2007, 1118). In most cases cultural context is considerably influenced by the atmosphere of grandparents' communication with grandchildren. Communication seemed more intimate in grandparenting families when they identified themselves as Hispanic, Mexican or African American (Goodman & Silverstein, 2005; Goodman & Rao, 2007, 1134).

Equally, I propose that the reason, why the focus is put on grandparenting difficulties in scientific narratives, is that the research mainly uses either

literature analysis or quantitative research methods with the elements of qualitative research (i.e. open questions). Woods (1996) states that the use of variables cannot reveal and examine the multidimensionality of various grandparenting 'cultures'; thus, this study does not take into account the diversity of grandparents as caregivers on the basis of age, gender, education level, income difference and distance. I have found only several qualitative studies in this field: (a) Hayslip, Baird, Toledo, Toledo and Emick (2005) studied differences in traditional and custodial grandparenting; (b) similar studies by Goodman and Rao (2007, 1134) as well as by Landry-Meyer and Newman (2004, 1005) revealed how custodial grandparents coped with transition, how they understood and found meaning in their role as caregivers of their grandchildren. Yet this study was an attempt to reveal the situation, when adult children were absent in the care of grandchildren or traditional grandparenting i.e. three-generation household.

I consider that indirectly my study generates an alternative narrative about the phenomenon of grandparenthood because the meaning of atypical custodial grandparenthood is produced from the perspective of two mainstream approaches: (a) the phenomenon overlaps with custodial grandparenting and traditional grandparenting; (b) grandparenthood is construed as transitional life situation.

1.4. Aim and questions of the study

As human life consists of multiple elements of realities, researchers conduct studies with an intention of reporting these multiple realities (Creswell, 2007, 18). Sherman and Reid (1994, 3) stress that a qualitative approach is an attempt 'to capture and recapitulate that richness and complexity through its descriptive methods'. Present study treats grandparents' reality from the viewpoint that narrative is a representation of people's lived events and experiences (Hänninen, 2004; Squire, 2008). Accordingly, to study the reality of people's experiences means to study their stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

In the course of this study, grandparents were invited to tell stories about their life period of becoming full-time caregivers of grandchildren due to external migration of their children. I found that grandparents' lives were saturated with multiple and complex stories about atypical custody: the diversity of daily care routines; time length of being full-time caregivers of grandchildren; the frequency of adult children's returns; family re-institution during children's temporal return (three-generation family); other family members raising grandchildren (aunts who live together, members of extended family). The stories about interrelations between grandparents and other family members appeared to be even more complex: long-term relationship history between grandparents and their adult children and later grandchildren; intergenerational family history; supportive relationship with a spouse; or lonely grandparenthood.

Despite the variety of storylines, one feature was common to all grandparents: their multiple stories about lived situations were difficult to link into united meaning and the style of telling was unpredictable. Grandparents' thoughts were unpredictably leaping around, stories were not congruent in terms of given theme: having started with one story they would jump to another one, their answers did not correspond with questions. Voss, Wiley and Sandak (1999) refer to narrative that involves causality disruption and unclear chronology as incoherent; accordingly, I reckon grandparents' stories and their style of telling as incoherent narrative. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) maintain that language and stories are the expression of lived human experiences, I raised the questions: what is the meaning of incoherent narratives, and what is their relation to the expression of lived situations? Plummer (1997, 15) inquires similarly:

How do they choose their language to articulate their concerns – where do the words come from? What sort of situation enables people to find a voice, and what happens to people once they give voice to their ...story? What gets left of the story?

Given these points, I choose a narrative approach to answer the questions because the meaning of grandparents' stories might be created not only through their wish to emphasize the essence of their experiences, but also through incoherent style of narration. Sarbin (1986), Hänninen (2004) and Squire (2008) propose that the meaning of experiences and lived situations is generated through the modes of narrativity, i.e. how people interpret reality and how they try to render it using language. Moreover, I doubted whether I, as a member of Western society, would understand the incoherent narrative correctly because in the society knowledge tends to be organized in a linear manner, i.e. stories should be put in the sense of order (Murray, 2003, 115). A narrative approach helps to study how stories are put together, how linguistic, societal and cultural elements form and influence people's mode of speaking and how the whole of factors persuades a listener (Riessman, 1993, 2).

There are two ways to study the mode of narrativity, i.e. how the meaning was constructed in narrative: a) analyzing the principles of story configuration and b) interpreting the way to create significance of an event or experience. Configuration is a structure or form of a narrative: i.e. 'the way in which the story is put together' (Elliot, 2005, 38). A way to create significance can be revealed through understanding that meaning is generated according to the modes of narrative circulation (Hänninen, 2004, 69). However, Squire, Andrews and Tambouku (2008) stress that, grounded on a considerable amount of theoretical statements, a narrative approach has multiple ways of investigation. Yet many of them are without a clear system and present only general methodological steps to the way narrative should be studied (Riessman & Quinney, 2005).

With regard to the above-mentioned, the *aim of this study* is to develop and detail the narrative approach, which helps comprehend grandparents' style of telling and their experiences of transitional life situation. And *the object of this study* is grandparents' narratives in the transitional life situation.

The *main question* of my study is:

*Why did grandparents tell stories in **that** way?*

Grandparents' style of telling and their experiences of atypical custodial grandparenthood are unfolded with the help of the following specific research questions:

How do grandparents narrate the meaning of transitional life situation and of grandchildren's custody caused by external migration of their children?

What are cohesion and diversity of reconstructed narratives told by grandparents about transitional life situation?

Life situations and personal or family experiences is rendered through certain narrative constructions (Elliot, 2005, 38) using different ways of narrativity (Hänninen, 2004, 72), influenced by social surroundings (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Kuzmickaitė, 2004). Particular meaning appears from the way certain narrative construction is established and used (Patterson, 2008). Thus, in order to reveal the understanding of grandparents' lived events, the first question is posed to reveal: how grandparents construct narratives, how social context is incorporated in the stories, and how they attempt to construct the meaning of life situations. Having reconsidered the multiple focus of the question, I state that grandparents narrate meaning according to *structure*, *context* and *meaning-making mode*. Holma (1999) proposes that narrativity, as a meaning-making mode, depends on the way lived events were individually reflected and interpreted, and I state that it can be revealed through the interpretation of the structure of grandparents' incoherent stories. Since social circumstances, personal self-reflection and the way to create meaning were distinct to every grandparent, I aspired to present a reconstructed narrative of each grandparent reflecting on all the elements that form individuality.

The second question is an attempt to reveal the coherence of grandparents' narratives, a general meaning of lived situations. A general picture of common experience might be accomplished through the process of reconstruction, where disorganized events are put in a particular order (Murray,

2003, 115). Moreover, the cohesion allows narrative to be comprehended as a unified whole (Elliot, 2005, 48) and to understand the experiences of grandparents having similar life events and situations. Social surroundings of grandparents consisted of unique and diverse life situations; consequently, they might use their personal social context as a distinguishing tool (Holma, 1999). Using the second research question, I pursue to reveal not only similarities, but also the diversities of grandparents' life situations. When looking for commonalities and distinctions of narrative structure and the ways of meaning-making, it was possible to answer why grandparents were telling stories in that particular and specific way.

1.5. Structure of the study

The paper tries to explore the narrated world of human experiences, i.e. how grandparents narrate the meaning of grandparenthood caused by external migration of their children.

Introduction (Chapter 1) deals with the major concepts and prehistory of the research, defines the phenomenon under investigation, and discusses the relevance of the topic. I have developed a particular design of the study (discussed in detail in subchapter 4.2.) – the reciprocal synergy of theory and methodology; in other words, the ontological statements of the study were generated throughout the research process. Therefore, Chapter 2 introduces the framework of narrative theory and how people use language to render experiences and lived events. I present the meaning of lived events and experiences as a narrative construction according to the mode of narrativity and the structure of narrative. Finally, in the chapter, I discuss the impact of social context on the stories of grandparenthood.

Chapter 3 deals with hypothetical knowledge by reviewing the studies that analyze the peculiarities of grandparents raising grandchildren in psychological, social and cultural perspective. Studies are analyzed as dominant understandings from an interpretative perspective: what dominant truth they introduce. The assumed attitude towards grandparenting

emphasizes various personal and family resources used to cope with challenges faced when rearing small grandchildren, whereas, in the scientific works and studies, the discussion in the field focuses merely on the problematic nature of grandchildren custody. Accordingly, I tried to incorporate the problematic nature of the phenomenon with extended understanding of it.

Chapter 4 presents the second part of reciprocal process, i.e. the methodology used to undertake this study, which was developed in the course of data analysis. Moreover, the principles of entering the research field are presented in the context of two-year search for possible respondents, building contact with grandparents and the reluctance of some participants to be involved in the study. The mode of collecting research material was generated according to sensitivity issues because grandparents as caregivers were afraid of sharing family stories and reluctant to tell the intensive experiences they had during transitional life situation. During the interviews grandparents needed to be supported to share sensitive stories; and therefore, the interviews became more like a conversation rather than a semi-structured narrative interview. However, I thought not only how to disclose their lived events and experiences, but also what kind of feeling they would have after the interview (Hydén, 2008). In order to portray the diversity of social situations of grandparents as caregivers shortly, with confidentiality respect, family situation and social aspects of grandchild care are presented. Further I developed a certain mode of research data analysis. As grandparents were telling incoherent stories, to understand and find different stories in the narrative, the analysis started with text segmentation, i.e. the texts were broken down according to the structural principles of narrative. Afterwards, grandparents' way to construct the meaning of outlived transitional life situations and experiences was interpreted. Finally, on the grounds of the interpretation, individual narratives were reconstructed. Reconstructed narratives answer the first research question and they are presented in Chapter 5.

To answer the second research question, the next step of narrative analysis is introduced and coherent narratives of the studied phenomenon are displayed in Chapter 6. Grandparents' stories being inconsistent during the interview, one of the aims of the research analysis was to structure grandparents' experiences into a scheme clear to any reader. As Murray (2003, 114) proposes, the use of narrative is an attempt to restructure the sense of order. Therefore, meaningful events are arranged in a certain sequence with respect to time and priority given to particular family members in narratives. Three major coherent stories emerged and were reconstructed: first priority narrative is related to grandparents' experiences and lived events with regard to grandchildren; second priority narrative describes grandparents' attitude towards adult children; the last coherent narrative represents suppressed personal experiences and lived events of grandparents.

Summary of study results, main conclusions and discussion are presented in Chapter 7. Findings in terms of human modes of narrativity, the way people construct meaning and the principles to understand lived events and experiences are discussed. As the studied phenomenon is mutually related with empirical data, the chapter provides not only overview of the features of atypical custodial phenomenon, but it also tries to represent its diversity and similarities in comparison to other grandparenthood phenomena. Considering the main question *Why did grandparents tell stories in that way?*, the relevancy of theoretical and methodological framework to achieve the aim and answer the main questions of the study is reflected.

Finally, in Chapter 8, knowledge generated throughout the study is discussed. On the one hand, it is reflected how the study might be perceived in the context of social work; and the challenges of advocating social work with grandparents in the future are presented. On the other the hand, general thoughts how narrative approach might be elaborated in the profession of social work are proposed. It is disputed how important it is to emphasize sensitivity issues rather than consequences of a stigmatized phenomenon while conducting research into atypical custodial grandpar-

enthood. Particularly, I reflect on the importance of comprehension with regard to any social group of our society hoping that the research and narrative approach will help the society and scientific auditorium to understand the 'unusual' phenomenon better.

2. Meaning of lived events and experiences: narrative approach

In order to discuss how people construct the meaning of a challenging life situation through narratives or to redefine that narrative is a tool kit to understand lived events and experiences, we should be sensitive to a variety of understandings of narrative and story. Therefore, this study does not present a vast amount of understandings of narrative but merely selectively chosen understandings that emerged as a subsequence of reciprocal synergy with data analysis (see subchapter 4.2).

Historically, narrative approach was recognized as an epistemological perspective, i.e. how narrative research methods should be implemented. Later, the narrative theory was generated and comprehended in an ontological stance. Consequently, nowadays nobody is astonished to find a collection of narrative theories, for example, in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* (eds. Herman, Jahn & Ryan, 2005) or fairly solid philosophical statements about narrative in *The Narrative Reader* (eds. McQuillan, 2000).

Accordingly, there is a large body of inquiries based on the diversity of narrative approach, including the implications in social work, which Riessman (2001, 73) calls a 'narrative turn'. Having started from a literary study, the narrative has acquired an increasingly high demand in the field of social sciences: anthropology (Behar, 1993; Bruner, 1986), psychology (Bruner, 1990; Crossley, 2000; Hänninen, 2004; Mishler, 1986; Murray, 2003; Polkinghorne, 1995; Sarbin, 1986), sociolinguistics (Gee, 1991; Labov, 1982), sociology (DeVault, 1991; Gubrium & Holstein, 1998; Kuzmickaitė, 2004), and social work (Hydén, 1994; Riessman, 1994). Moreover, Riessman and Quinney (2005, 406) declare that 'narrative study is cross-disciplinary, drawing on diverse epistemologies, theories, and methods'.

Grounded on a considerable amount of theoretical statements, a narrative perspective, unlike other qualitative research perspectives, cannot offer any overall modes of investigation or the best way to study narratives.

Despite these difficulties, Squire, Andrew and Tamboukou (2008, 1) state the all-embracing nature of narrative:

We frame our research in terms of narrative because we believe that by doing so we are able to see different and sometimes contradictory layers of meaning, to bring them into useful dialogue and sometimes contradictory layers of meaning, to bring them into useful dialogue with each other, and to understand more about individual and social change.

From the first impression the nature of narrative does not look multiple. On the contrary, the role of narrative in human life seems simple, because storytelling is pervaded in our lives. As Byatt (2001, 21) claims, narrative lies at the heart of a human being and

<...> is as much part of human nature as breath and the circulation of the blood. We are living in the narrative world, live our lives through narrative and ultimately are characterized in terms of narrative.

According to Cobley (2001, 1), at each instant of life people tell stories to themselves and to others trying to present an event and squeeze the aspects of the world in order to construct a narrative form. He cited Appleyard, who asserts that narrative is the mode of human impulse to make sense of each moment:

We tell stories to ourselves; of our journey from birth to death, friends, families, who we are and who want to be. Or public stories about history and politics, about our country, our race or our religion. At each moment of our lives these stories place us in space and time. They console us, making our lives meaningful by placing us in something bigger than ourselves. Maybe the story is just that we are in love, that we have to feed the cat or educate the children. Or maybe it is about a lifelong struggle for salvation or liberation. Either way – however large or small the story – the human impulse is to make sense of each moment. (Cobley, 2001, 1)

Nevertheless, according to Murray (2003, 112), narrative has an ontological status because there is no doubt about the ‘existence of narrative form in symbolic representations of human events’ (Hänninen, 2004, 72). Moreover, there is an on-going discussion about other understandings of the

relation between life and story. Shkedi (2005, 11), sustaining on Widder-shoven's (1993) ideas, stresses that narrative is not just merely a way to see the world; yet we construct the world through stories and we try to live our own lives according to the stories, which are told by ourselves or even by others.

In his writing *Philosophical Investigation*, Wittgenstein (1953) maintains that the link between reality and language is found in *language-games*. Language-games do not displace interaction between people but constitute them. The role of narrativity as a semantic link between the reality and language is indescribable (Holma, 1999, 13); and language is like an expression of people 'being in the world' (Gadamer, 1984, 336). Ricoeur, in his classical book *Time and Narrative* (1985), argued that if the world was temporal we lived with the need to create narrative, to bring order and meaning to a constantly changing event in our environment. His hermeneutical proposition went further: not only people created narratives, but narratives were also essential to our perception of ourselves.

Primarily, narrative looked like a simple social construction of our everyday life, yet it no longer provides clear starting or finishing points (Squire, Andrews & Tombouku, 2009, 2). As Mishler (1995) states, the main distinctions appear when using a diverse focus on narrative: the aspects of 'told' (*meaning*) or 'telling' (*structure*). Still there are many other different approaches towards the content or frame of narrative. Sustaining on Elliot (2005, 38), it is stated that there are three different interrelated functions of language; *meaning*, *structure* and interactional *context*.

Basically, when analyzing actual events and experiences that are repeated in narrative, we concentrate on the *content*. Further, the content can be conceived as having two functions: organization of events into a chronological account, and clarification of the meaning of those events and experiences in participants' lives (for instance, a widely-used Labov and Waletzky socio-linguistic approach (see Labov (1982; 2007))). Secondly, we focus on the *structure* or *form* of narrative: the principles of how a story

is put together. Thirdly, context lies in the performance of narrative, i.e. interactional situation, in which narratives are produced (for example, conversational analysis) (Elliot, 2005).

When analyzing the structure of narrative, having the picture of narrative form, it is possible to proceed with interpretation: consider how meaning is generated within actual events and those experiences. Moreover, meaning is related to narrative coherence, i.e. the information that a person has in mind ahead of telling a story. Gubrium and Holstein (1998, 165), sustaining on Denzin's (1989) ideas, discussed, that the coherence of narrative helped to avoid a simple focus on narrative structure. Although the authors emphasized autobiographical narratives, I think their approach can help understand the coherence in all kinds of narratives:

<...> what must be established is how individuals give coherence to their lives when they write or talk self-autobiographies [*I would add narratives*]. The sources of this coherence, the narratives that lie behind them, and the larger ideologies that structure them must be uncovered (Gubrium & Holstein, 1998, 165)

Elliot (2005, 48) adds that coherence allows narrative to be comprehended as a unified whole. In my understanding, coherence helps generate the understanding of one or many people's experiences as a unified whole.

In addition, many authors (Hänninen, 2004; Mishler, 1995; Kuzmickaitė, 2004; Murray, 2003; Riessman, 2008) emphasize the significance of social nature of the ways people narrate lived events and experiences. Mishler (1995, 110) stresses that through narratives a human seeks to transmit message about the world the teller lives in and shares with other people. Hänninen (2004, 74) maintains that a person is affected by social, cultural and material conditions; therefore, when constructing narratives, people employ actual conditions, various possibilities, and resources of life or difficulties they face in their lives.

In summary, the emphasis is on two ontological statements of narrative. First of all, narratives are natural social constructions of our lives (ontolog-

ical character) and carry the function of making sense of lived experiences or life events. Through language we express and understand lived experiences, through language people become connected to each other. People learn to make sense of the world around them while using language and constructing narratives. Thus the study strongly proposes the understanding that grandparents become conscious of life situations when they tell stories to other people. Consequently, in order to understand grandparents' experiences, further narrative approach is unfolded in terms of three main concepts: the *meaning* of lived events and experiences is constructed through various ways of telling; a particular *structure* of narrative helps to comprehend the way, in which the elements of stories are put together; and, lastly, the *context* is perceived as a discursive reality of the social surrounding, where lived events were experienced.

2.1. Meaning of narrative

The starting point of understanding the narrative is people's aspiration to make sense of lived events through language. There are many discussions whereas human experience is always narrated or not. The concept of narrative suggests that human experience to a large extent is organized in a narrative form (Crites, 2001). Sarbin (1986, 9) formulates that people 'think, perceive, imagine, interact and make moral choices according to narrative structures'. I emphasize the attitude of Bruner (1990), who states that the structuralism of narrativity (for instance, the order of events) can reveal the understanding of lived experiences and the perception of lived events. Clandinin (2006, 45) stresses that the interpretation of storied lives and a particular view to outlived experiences lead people to a constant shaping of their daily lives:

<...> by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful.

Meaning might be elaborated in various ways; therefore, I want to discuss them in more detail. What are the ways to understand life experiences or lived events? Even though narrative is a natural and obvious social construction of human everyday life, it is not a pure representation of lived and perceived life situations. In my point of view, while reflecting many dominant understandings of narrative, the study emphasizes that human experiences and outlived situations are always narrated in three ways: (a) through interaction with other people; (b) through inner interpretation, and (c) through adopted dominant understanding, which was generated by the society or by many generations of a family.

a) Meaning through interaction

The process of understanding life events can be the result of active, cooperative initiative of people in relationship (Holma, 1999, 13). Gergen (1997, 185) proposes that narratives are social constructions that are matured during constant social interaction. In other words, the most pervasive and powerful discourse of communication is narrative (Bruner, 1990, 77). When emphasizing Gergen's thoughts, Murray (2003, 112) proposes that narratives proceeded in interactions carry 'shared meanings', which help 'to make sense of the world'. The shared meanings produce knowledge about what is happening around, about 'the world', which constitutes the process of understanding. During the interchange of experiences, people understand how a particular situation was outlived only when they verbalize it. In other words, people willing to make sense of the situations get involved into interactive conversation. The way to understand the reality of life events does not become an objective observation of the experience or lived event, but a linguistic subsequence of the interactions, in which people are constantly and continually engaged (Burr, 1995, 4). In short, narrative carries its meaning not through semantic construction, but through its use in social interchange.

On the other hand, people constructing narrative during interaction do not exclusively have an intention to make the meaning of outlived life situ-

ations, yet the narrative is assumed to be constructed by shared experiences (Georgakopoulou, 2006). Many life situations (birth of a grandchild, for instance) might be personal or experienced together with other family relatives. Consequently, people might tell stories which are generated through their collective experience.

Furthermore, *interactive narrative* appears as a result of *complementary* process of human interaction. Gergen (2003, 148) proposes that narrative carries the meaning of lived situations in the following supplementary ways: (a) the meaning of a situation (experience) is realized through complementary action; (b) interaction expands or narrows the narrative of a lived situation; (c) the meaning of narrative is created only in case of non-problematic interaction; (d) to simplify the process of interaction, people create dominant stories.

b) Meaning through inner interpretation

The second way to generate meaning through narrative refers to inner reflection on experience, the story we tell to ourselves (Hänninen, 2004, 70). Holma (1999, 14) assents that people are not passive in the process of narrative creation. A person actively makes choices between various narrative alternatives offered by an interaction or social surroundings. The meaning of life situations or experiences emerges from the process of interpretation (Bruner, 1990, 61; White, 1995, 13), which proposes that people are interpreting beings. The more explicitly situation is reflected, the more elaborate meaning is created. Inner narrative appears in the process of interpretation and Hänninen (2004, 69) declares that:

The inner narrative represents the experiential mode of narrative form. It is an individual's interpretation of his/her life, in which the past events, present situation and future projects are understood using cultural narrative models as resources.

Inner narrative can be imagined as a continuous mental process of interpreting many sub-narratives of varying life situation to the varying degrees of self-reflection (Hänninen, 2004, 74). Further the author explains that

inner reflection might involve various functions: it makes sense of the past; supplies a vision of the future; saturates values and moral standards; defines narrative identity of an individual; and helps to regulate emotions. When constructing inner narrative, the more complex narrative projects become, the more they need conscious planning, reflections and interpretations. Thus the level of inner narrative interpretation is related to the complexity of the action structures, in which the person is engaged, and to reflection on them.

According to Hänninen (2004, 75), inner narrative must be seen as fully verbal. People use language to verbalize thoughts, feelings or experiences, especially in situations that require conscious reflection. Many processes of reflection might occur on the level of meaning rather than on the level of 'clear' verbal signs or images of self or concrete experiences (Novitz, 2001). In that case, people might not be fully aware of lived events. Therefore, when seeking deeper understanding of lived situations or experiences, people start the process of inner interpretation; get into interaction with others; or adopt dominant understanding from culture, family or society.

c) Meaning through adopted stories from family or culture

To generate meaning through inner discussion or through interaction, people require intensive self-reflection or positive supplementation. In that sense a person has to be fully aware of his/her aspiration to understand a life experience or lived event. However, over the time he/she consciously or unconsciously tries to reduce the complexity of understanding and adopt the meaning generated by culture, by society or even closer – by family.

There are many definitions: counter, canonical, dominant or positive narrative, however understanding of them differs. One of them is presented by Payne (2006, 11, 21) who uses the concept of dominant narrative and proposes that narrative might be applied to a culturally assumed 'truth' or to a proposition with a long history. People have a dominant 'truth' about how they should behave and how life events have to be experienced. As an example, a prevailing understanding of how childcare should be organized

might be naturally adopted from family propositions developed through generations or from culturally articulated 'truths'.

Burr (1995, 6) constructs a slightly different understanding when he points out that dominant understanding is not only generated by people themselves (for instance, family), but it exists in their cultural, historical and social contexts. Meaning is not situated between a word and an object, yet the given description of an event or experience is primarily influenced by the social or cultural context. The meaning of narrative is not simply seen as a product of that culture and history; it also depends on various social and economic adjustments that are dominant in that culture at that particular time (Burr, 1995, 4). Normative and cultural expectations of how life ought to be lived in the society were transmitted as narratives through generations. Bruner (2004, 694) declares that

<...> the tool kit of any culture is repleted not only with a stock of canonical life narratives, but with combinable forms constituents from which is member can construct their own life narrative canonical stances and circumstances, as it were.

In my opinion, which echoes with Holma (1999) and Hänninen's (2004) ideas that a person is an active interpreter of on-going narratives in the social situation, people do not adopt dominant and cultural understanding passively, yet actively.

To generalize the principles of how people construct meaning, it is important to consider Elliot's (2005) ideas that people try to create the meaning of narrative as a unified whole. In this way the coherence of narrative is developed as human interconnects multiple stories into one narrative. And in my view, in order to create narrative coherence, people may incorporate different ways of meaning-making: lived event may be partly understood through adoption of cultural narratives and partly through interaction or self-reflection. Hänninen (1996, 19) names this process the 'flow of narrativity', which is the centre of human life, in a dynamic inter-

play between different modes of narrativity and, I would add, between ways of meaning-making.

In summary, the narrative is a tool to understand and make meaning of experiences or lived events. Narrative as a meaning-making tool might be generated in three ways: through *interaction*, through *inner reflection* or through adaptation of existing *stories of culture* or *family*. Further in my work, I would refer to them as *interactive narrative*, *inner narrative* and *dominant narrative*.

2.2. Structure and context of narrative

As lived life situations and event experiences are comprehended through narrative, there are particular rules how people use language and its construction in the process of understanding the lived situations. There are many studies that utilize the structure of narrative. Influenced by Ricoeur's ideas about time and emplotment (Carr, Taylor & Ricoeur, 1991), by thoughts of Mishler (1986) and Labov (2007) about the syntax of storied 'events' as well as by Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) approach to multidimensionality of narrative, the starting point of an epistemological standpoint is: there are certain *rules* of narrativity that help to create the *form* or *structure* of narrative. Bruner (1990, 77) maintains that 'narrative structure is even inherent in the praxis of social interaction before it achieves linguistic expression'. In other words, language itself has a construction and helps people to organize their experiences in an understandable way.

Basically, narrative is structured as follows: introduction, development and summing-up (Abbot, 2002). Narrative becomes understandable when people introduce what a story is going to be about, tell the story in detail and, finally, sum up the most important features of the story. Enunciation and summing up might be more complex processes; therefore, a sociolinguistic approach was elaborated. Elliot (2005, 45) assents that one of the broadly used structural (sociolinguistic) approaches is that of Labov and Waletzky. Their standpoint was that narrative construction carries differ-

ent questions: ‘what is the story about?’ – abstract; ‘who, when, where?’ – orientation; ‘then what happened?’ – development of action; ‘so what?’ – evaluation; ‘what finally happened?’ – result (Labov, 2007). However this popular sociolinguistic understanding has limitations too, because Patterson (2008, 33) states that:

<...> if one takes strictly Labovian approach to some type of data then much will be lost. Focusing solely on chronologically ordered past tense clauses, analyzing them in isolation from the rest of the transcript, and taking no account of the context in which the narrative was produced, can only produce an overly simplistic, reductive analysis and interpretation.

Therefore the question arises: What kind of structural approach could reveal the nature of narrative taking into account the context? Or, what kind of understanding might incorporate approaches towards structure, which could disclose the human way to construct the meaning of lived events and experiences? Consequently, sustaining on the process of reciprocal synergy between narrative theory and data analysis, I state that the structure of narrative is generated considering: (a) plot (Carr, 1991; Murray, 2003), (b) time dimension (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), (c) focalization (Abbot, 2002; Elliot, 2005), and (d) social context (Elliot, 2005; Murray, 2003).

a) Plot

At first, to create meaning, a person tries to organize lived events, situations and experiences in a certain way. The *plot* of narrative is the way the stories are situated in it (Holma, 1999, 14). The plot helps to construct the entire story out of multiple events and incidents that sometimes have no coherence between them. Meaning depends on overall configuration of stories (I would add, units of stories) or on a particular sequence of stories in narrative (Herman & Vervaeck, 2005, 11). For instance, there are two story units: ‘mother is tired’ and ‘child does whatever he wants’. One plot and meaning will be ‘A child does whatever he wants (as always); therefore his mother is tired (of taking care)’. Different meaning emerges if narrative

is constructed as follows: 'Mother is tired; therefore a child can do whatever he wants'.

b) Time dimension

Whenever people seek to verbalize a lived life event (what happened in the situation) they try to express what was happening over *time* (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, 29). As Elliot (2005, 6) stresses, stories rely on the presumption that time has a linear movement from past through present to future. Carr (1991) proposes that people explicitly consult past experience, envisage the future and view the present as a passage between the two. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000, 29), 'any event, or thing, has a past, a present as it appears to us, and an implied future'. Or, in other words, time dimension imposes meaning by the very act of structuring stories into narrative with the beginning, middle, and the end (Elliot, 2005, 12).

Similarly, time dimensions allow people to construct events in a *sequential* way easier. A human situates stories in the plot and tries to construct time dimension in a particular sequence. Bruner (1990) maintains that our language carries the construction of narrative, i.e. how stories should be told according to time dimension, and how the sequence of events (stories) should be followed.

However, not all life situations can be experienced through time dimension. There are continuing or recursive life events and interactions, which last from past till future, as Clandinin and Connelly (2000, 29) state 'they are seen 'to be', to have timeless sense about them'. Consequently, some authors (Holma, 1999, 19; Ricoeur, 1985) instead of the term 'time dimension' use the concept of temporality in order to emphasize that experiences are temporal, yet may continue for a long period of time.

People use time to give different stories the shape of narrative; therefore, time dimension may reveal in what stage of interpretation process people are. While configuring the plot a person also imposes the 'sense of an ending' (Holma, 1999, 19), i.e. how stories lead to the end. Thus

repetition of a story reveals whether a person's lived situation is experienced and reflected in inner narrative and presented as a past event; or whether understanding arises during a complementary conversation and is presented as an event continuing in the present.

c) *Focalization*

Still the *plot*, the *time* dimension and *sequence* of stories within narrative structure do not reveal all the ways people organize experience, which might be expressed in the process of story telling (Patterson, 2008, 30). Another important element that comprises time and sequence within stories is *focalization* (Abbot, 2002, 66), which is also called the *point of view* of a narrator (Elliot, 2005, 10). There have been many attempts to define the relation between a narrator and an audience; or what knowledge a teller tries to generate to a reader (to an interviewer, in social research). Accordingly, some authors use the concept of narrator's relation with audience (Prince, 2000, 99) and some use the notion of protagonist's position within a story (Hänninen, 1996, 108). For me personally, the first approach is more acceptable as it focuses not only on the narrator's position in the story, but also on his relation with the reader. According to Prince (2000, 99), the narrator within narrative can be explicated either in the direct perspective of the person who is telling a story, or in the indirect perspective of the narrator. Here it is also important to search for the main protagonist (main character) in the story. Consequently, turning back to the main point, that people in the interchange relations construct narratives in order to express and understand lived experiences, narrative might be constructed from the perspective of any narrator who was involved in the lived experiences.

Furthermore, Carr (1991) describes the processes of focalization in terms of 'first order narratives' and 'second order narratives'. Abbot (2002, 64) stresses that first or second order narration is the voice of a narrator or 'who is 'heard' doing the narrating'. First order narratives can be described as the stories that individuals tell about themselves and their personal expe-

riences; they are coherent with inner or self narrative. Second order narratives are the accounts of people who make sense of other people's experiences; yet do not necessarily focus on other individuals (Elliot, 2005, 13). They can be collective stories of social context. In addition, second order narratives can be a collection of multiple interactive stories, for instance, a family story or a life situation experienced by a family.

I propose that chosen forms of narrativity (plot, time and focalization) pervade the possible meaning of lived experience; and the structure is generated during the process of interpretation. People make sense of their experiences by interpreting them (Hänninen, 2004, 107). Whenever people try to make meaning, to understand the event or to verbalize a situation, they actively employ the diverse forms of structure to create the meaning. The structure of narrative simplifies the process of interpretation or meaning-making.

d) Social context

In my point of view, the combination of all the forms does not only reveal meaning-making mode, but also the social context of narrativity. In the process of story construction, a human is an active interpreter of meaning; and when they attempt to verbalize personal experiences, people simultaneously render the context of situation. Holma (1999) and Kuzmickaitė (2004) state that people make choices between various narrative alternatives offered by social surroundings; whereas narrative structure formed through narrative circulation is shaped by living surrounding. As Hänninen (2004, 81) proposes, the course of life situation may take unanticipated directions, and then a narrative project encounters foreseen and unforeseen conditions of acting as well as other people's actions. Payne (2006) notes that actual life is full of unpredictability. Since nobody can make predictions about how a life situation will develop, human consciousness should always reflect on what is happening. Hänninen (2004, 81) thinks that 'the unpredicted turns of events lead to revision in the inner narrative, and what one learns from such experiences depends on their inner narrative

interpretations'. Therefore, narrative projects are influenced and shaped by a certain social context.

Moreover, Murray (2003, 116) stresses that a narrator is 'an active agent who is part of a social world'. As people interpret social surroundings, they seek to use personal social context as a tool to distinguish their narrative from the stable societal or dominant ones (Holma, 1999). For instance, a person might tell that specific unpredicted life events shaped his/her life situations.

According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000, 32), the situational context is necessary to construct and generate meaning of any person, event, or thing in the story. They propose that people construct experiences in narratives according to time context, dimensional context, and the context of other people. For instance, when exploring experiences in narrative about a phenomenon, the participant does not only construct the meaning of personal experiences, but also describes personal features of other people involved.

As the functions of narrative include maintaining one's agency, life events that cause a threat to a human personally are often interpreted as the solution to a difficult life situation or the way to reduce damage (Hänninen, 2004, 81). When people face serious life changes, transitional life situations or serious illness diagnoses, they might be shocked with projected futurity of their lives, and 'their conception of themselves and their world is likely to undergo radical changes' (Crossley, 2000, 539). Consequently, incoherent or disruptive narrative might be constructed. Depending on how meaning was constructed and how the process of interpretation was accomplished, resultant understanding may be disadvantageous or helpful in a wider sense. Through narrative reconfiguration, which can be accomplished in the process of individual reflection or with help of other people (self-support groups, social worker/psychologist, etc.), people attempt to create connection between shifting time and life situations, to re-establish the sense of meaning (Crossley, 2000). Payne (2006) sees the

reestablishment as the search for alternative narrative. People try to live up their lives according to stories (Widdershoven, 1993); thus the reconstructed narrative might bring strengths to transform life situation and elevation to another life stage.

To generalize Chapter 2, all approaches towards narrative consider the multi-dimensional approach: meaning, structure and social context are interrelated and help a person to give 'form' and understand the formless experience or lived event. Coherence or diversity of narrative shows the process of interpretation, the way various stories are linked together in narrative, and what issues are emphasized.

3. Dominant understandings of grandparenthood

In this chapter, dominant and alternative understandings of grandparenthood are presented. I found that often the phenomenon was revealed through the analysis of personal grandparents' experiences. However transitional life situation touches grandchildren even more. Children might accept life changes through behavioral and emotional reactions, and grandparents as the main caregivers help them to deal with the social surrounding. While helping their grandchildren, grandparents are affected by grandchildren's reactions; thus I name this situation *transferred* experience. Besides, grandparents' acceptance of care situation depends on the help received from social system. Consequently, the way grandparents handle the care of grandchildren and accept the life change is revealed in the following themes: (a) grandparents personal experience of transitional life situation, as they become fully involved in the care of grandchildren; (b) transferred experiences – grandparents' worries in relation to grandchildren's experience when being separated from parents; c) grandparents' need for help.

3.1. Understandings of grandparenting experiences

Various evolutionary biological, psychosocial, interpersonal and social elements determine the nature of grandparenthood. In other words, the biological basis appears every time a grandchild is born, adult children become parents and their parents pass into another generation, i.e. that of grandparents. More than two decades ago, Bengtson (1985, 11) stated that never before so many people lived long enough to experience the role of grandparents in our society. Furthermore, Hagestad (1985, 34) supplemented that the essence of changes is caused by demographic alterations in our society (increased life span and smaller families) that help individuals fulfill their role in grandparenthood.

One understanding of grandparenthood is from the perspective of life cycle and relationship between a grandparent and a grandchild. When interpreting Ericson's (1982) thoughts about the meaning of life cycle, Biggs (2005, 150) stated that relations of an elderly human extended from a personal perspective to a general one, i.e. leaving behind the aspects of self in other family members, usually the youngest generation. Kornhaber (1996, 17) calls this stage the aspiration to create the feeling of continuity, which is attained through connection with grandchildren: experiencing life events while putting more attention to the members of family and especially to younger generation. As interaction is reciprocal, both grandparents and grandchildren receive the impact of it.

A group of scholars, i.e. Giarrusso, Feng, Wang and Silverstein (1996); Fingerman (2004); Kornhaber (1996); Musil and Standing (2005); Goodman and Rao (2007); Kemp (2007), analyzed the nature of interaction between grandparents and grandchildren. Even though it was conducted two decades ago, one of the recognized studies was *Grandparent Study*, which brought into light the benefits of grandparenthood (Kornhaber, 1996). The main conclusions drawn in the study were as follows: (a) grandparent – grandchild relation was of secondary emotional importance only to parent – child bond; (b) lives of grandparents and grandchildren affect each other deeply reciprocally; (c) grandparenting brought meaning and joy into their lives; (d) children who had close relationship with grandparents were enriched in important ways; (e) parents benefited greatly when grandparents were involved in the care of grandchildren (Kornhaber, 1996, 4).

Reciprocal contribution of relations between grandparents as caregivers and grandchildren has been confirmed in recent studies too (Giarrusso, Feng, Wang & Silverstein, 1996; Fingerman, 2004; Musil & Standing, 2005; Goodman & Rao, 2007; Kemp, 2007). Nevertheless, Hayslip, Temple, Shore and Henderson (2005) stress that it is important to distinguish what kind of social surroundings influence the care of grandchildren when contextualizing the experience of grandparenthood. There are three

main groups discerned: grandparents in custodial care of their grandchildren, grandparents as daily caregivers to their grandchildren; and grandparents sharing grandchildren's care with parents due to coresidence. Some authors define the last two groups as traditional grandparenting (Hayslip, Baird, Toledo, Toledo & Emick, 2005, 169). Given these points, dominant understandings will be discussed in terms of custodial and traditional grandparenting.

Custodial grandparenting is usually presented and analyzed as a 'challenging and difficult' experience. This role is assumed out of necessity, usually related to mental, drug or alcohol problems in the parents (Jendrek, 1994). Compared with traditional grandparenting, custodial caregivers report more health and social problems (Musil & Ahmad, 2002, 96). Moreover, Goodman and Rao (2007, 1133) maintain that grandparents assume custodial care due to adult children's incarceration, unemployment, death and inadequate behavior with their children (such as abuse or abandonment). Therefore, unpreparedness for the new leading role cause grandparents' stress and health problems in the process of care (Musil & Ahmad, 2002; McCallion & Kolomer, 2005, 105; Goodman & Rao, 2007, 1118). Waldrop and Weber (2001) point that grandparents face extensive stressors and obstacles in their new custodial role. In their research, Grinstead *et al.* (2003, 318) concluded that over 75 percent of grandparents raising grandchildren reported feeling depressed or anxious most of the time.

Another common approach is to reveal grandparenting experience through the level of stress and coping. Ross and Aday (2006) maintained that 94 percent of grandparents reported a clinically significant level of stress. Differently, Musil (1998) found that only 38 percent of the grandparents indicated the level of psychological stress, high enough to receive mental health intervention. In many Western and non-Western studies, having discovered various levels of stress, it was stated that the experience of stress depended on different levels of grandchildren care handling, lack of beneficial emotional support and inadequacy of assistance (Oburu &

Palmerus, 2005, 232). Moreover, custodial grandparents experience higher economic hardship due to emerged needs of managing and organizing grandchild care caused by the needs of grandchildren. The study by Giarusso *et al.* (1996) showed that 28 percent of grandparents had household income below the average income of the country, whereas 10 percent of respondents' income was below the poverty line.

An alternative understanding of the problematic nature of custodial grandparenting maintains that grandparents experience the new life situation positively. Grinstead *et al.* (2003) claimed that grandparents indicated they experienced less distress and worries for their grandchildren's safety when they ceased to live with their delinquent or inattentive parents. Goodman and Rao (2007, 1118) described the positive nature of custodial grandparents' experience. Grandparents found their lives more satisfying, reported greater feelings of self-esteem relating to caring for their grandchildren. Although psychological, physical, and economic costs increased while performing their role of caregivers, grandparents found grandparenting emotionally and psychologically rewarding experience (Burton, 1992).

Dominant understanding of informal or traditional grandparenting (daily and coresidence care) presents the phenomenon as challenging and nurturing. Willing to maintain safe environment for grandchildren or just to help take care of grandchildren temporarily, grandparents provide care for grandchildren informally, by private arrangement with their adult children (Letiecq, Bailey & Porterfield, 2008, 996). There is less emphasis on the problematic nature of grandparenthood. It is indicated that there could be care difficulties related to problematic grandchildren's behavior or daily stress experienced due to different grandparent and adult children's viewpoints on grandchildren's nurturing (Musil & Standing, 2005, 89). Traditional grandparents emphasize the advantages of raising grandchildren more; whereas custodial grandparents reflect on losses associated with their life situations (Letiecq, Bailey & Porterfield, 2008). Grandparents experience feelings such as emotional closeness, gratitude, being impor-

tant again, self worth and family honor (Goodman & Rao, 2007). Sadly, I could find none of similar studies concerning grandparenthood either in custodial or in informal form of care in Lithuania.

The presented understandings portray grandparenthood as a 'steady' phenomenon. Kornhaber (1996, 17) states that the condition of inevitability, associated with grandparenting, may be viewed as biological, psychological, emotional and historical given, yet parenting a grandchild is very much a matter of transitional life situation. As life is unstable (Holma, 1999) and social surroundings affect the perception of a grandchild daily, the nature of grandparenting should be analyzed in terms of alteration. Transition can be revealed through a role approach, i.e. how a role changes when you become a caregiver to a grandchild; how grandparenthood is constructed in historical or cultural context; and what kind of changes can be recognized until nowadays. Since the approach is too broad, it is worth having a particular question in mind. Is grandparenting an individual choice rather than a circumstance in the extended family?

To start, the dominant understanding of grandparenthood as transitional life situation is revealed through the role conflict or meaning of care. As social performance of grandparenting is constructed through role timing and role ambiguity, it is possible to reveal transition through handling of a new role (how new roles are encountered). The study by Landry-Meyer and Newman (2004, 1021) disclosed that grandparents raising grandchildren had less time off than expected. In addition, other scholars proposed that grandparents timetabled their lives considering family and social expectations rather than their individual needs (Heckhausen, 2005; Harper, 2005). Considering the ambiguity of roles in grandparenting, in their study, Landry-Meyer and Newman (2004, 1022) maintained that grandparent roles were more definite in case of legal arrangements (for instance, custody) in comparison to the role of grandparents who had informal relationship with their grandchildren (for instance, three-generation families). Moreover, the researchers proposed that the latter grandpar-

ents involved in active care of grandchildren experienced the role conflict, as their situation contradicted the traditional understanding of the role, i.e. grandparents see their grandchildren often and spend time together whenever they want, but live separately from them and give priority to their personal needs. On the other hand, Goodman and Rao (2007) stated that there were two perspectives of role transition: stability versus instability, and security as opposed to insecurity. In other words, if seeing health or social difficulties in the lives of their grown children, grandparents feel more stable and secure when grandchildren live with them rather than with their parents. The things, which helped to cope with the transitional life situation best, were reliance on faith, finding meaning in the care, and seeing differences in grandchildren's lives (Goodman & Rao, 2007, 1130 – 1132). Almost identical conclusion was drawn by Hayslip, Temple, Shore and Henderson (2005, 31), who proposed that

<...> a predictor of role satisfaction suggests that custodial grandparents feel they are central to the family, feel, valued, and will be remembered for they job they have done in raising their grandchildren.

Even though the described perspective of roles portrays the dominant Western understanding of grandparenting, attention should not only be paid to the issue of role conflict, but also to the cultural approach towards the phenomenon. More detailed dominant understanding of correlation between culture and grandparenting has been enhanced in many worldwide studies that compared cultural impact of Native Americans and European Americans (Letiecq, Bailey & Kurtz, 2008), African Americans (Burton, 1992; White, 2009), Hispanic (Fuller-Thomson & Minkler, 2007), Latinos (Goodman & Silverstein, 2005; Goodman & Rao, 2007), Asians (Lo & Liu, 2009) and Africans (Oburu & Palmerus, 2005) on the grandparenting issues. However, cross cultural research into grandparenting is scarce in Europe. Only Hank and Buber (2009), in their study on grandparents' engagement in childcare indirectly, revealed how economic and cultural context influences grandparenting across 10 continental Euro-

pean countries. Nevertheless, the comprehensive cross-national account of the phenomenon in Europe is missing.

To generalize understandings of how culture is related to grandparenthood, I would say that there is a tension among attitudes towards the issues of grandparenting in transitional life situation. On the one hand, there is a dominant understanding of 'autonomy' in the Western countries, when individual grandparent's needs are emphasized or, in other words, the particular life stage is perceived as the start of individual life. Traditional grandparents desire to stay in contact with their grandchildren, wish to see them from time to time, and to build their relationship over time; whereas custodial grandparents of European American origin emphasized the negative impact of care because grandparenthood was perceived as a stage of life, which limited individual needs (Hayslip, Baird, Toledo, Toledo & Emick, 2005). On the other hand, in non-Western countries and, I would add, in less developed countries, grandparenting is perceived as a 'continuity', i.e. traditional grandparents recognize the process of raising their grandchildren as an extension to previous parenting; while custodial grandparents see their role as a new role in relationship with their adult children (Hayslip, Baird, Toledo, Toledo & Emick, 2005, 179). Besides, the latter approach custodial role with less stress (Goodman & Rao, 2007), have more confidence in 're-building' grandchildren's lives (Oburu & Palmerus, 2005; Lo & Liu, 2009), and perceive the role as a family stabilizer during various hardship situations (Botcheva & Feldman, 2004). Thus, the model of three-generation family is a more common pattern in the countries, where grandparents seek for the continuity to their lives.

Notwithstanding the fact that the meaning of grandparenting was not the main object of the following study, when comparing South, Middle and Nordic countries family cultures, Hank and Buber (2009) discovered three interesting issues. First, inter-generational co-residence is rare in the Nordic countries in comparison to Southern countries; therefore Mediterranean grandparents accept grandchildren more naturally and are more prepared

for any unexpected situation of care than Scandinavian ones (Hank & Buber, 2009, 67). Second, practical help to grandparents is common in the Nordic countries and low in the Mediterranean ones (Hank & Buber, 2009, 68). Finally, grandparenting is related to employment regimes in Europe. Female employment and participation is high in Scandinavian countries, like France and Germany, whereas less than 50 percent of Mediterranean women are involved in labor force. Moreover, high level of childcare development in the Nordic countries creates an opportunity for adult children to manage small children's care independently. On the contrary, the lack of public care in the South countries and fairly low employment of older women create the possibility for grandparents to be more involved in grandchildren's care than in other countries (Hank & Buber, 2009, 67). Sustaining on Hank and Huber's research, I propose that the cultures of childcare might be comprehended as orientated both towards family needs (Mediterranean countries) and towards individual needs (Scandinavian countries).

The historical and cultural approach is significantly related to the peculiarities of grandchild care in Lithuania too. In the twentieth century, the rate of coresidence was not high and the majority of young people tended to live independently (Kraniauskienė, 2009). In the time of communist regime, public childcare system created an opportunity for young women to be involved in labor force. Grandparents taking care of grandchildren were an occasional case rather than a tradition. The situation changed after Lithuania had regained its independence. Re-structured childcare system, low incomes of young families created obstacles for the young to live separately; and therefore, coresidence and intergenerational support became more common (Kraniauskienė, 2009). Resurgent economy again reinforced the traditions of young family, hence the aspiration of young people to live separately again. As an outcome of the situation, one part of young family generation migrated abroad seeking to improve their financial situation rapidly, to buy personal flat and to live separately from grandparents (Malinauskas, 2007).

However, no matter what kind of social and economical situation was in Lithuania, there existed certain universal meanings of intergeneration relationship, which, according to Burr (1995), are historically produced, and, I would add, are unchangeable. In Lithuania society, there exists a dominant understanding that if grown children need help, parents should do everything to provide it (Kraniauskienė, 2009), which is especially true in case of raising grandchildren and rendering financial support. It can be an outcome of high solidarity, which exists between generations in Lithuania, no matter whether they reside together or not (Gedvilaitė-Kordušienė, 2009). Subsequently, the reciprocal relationship is built. If possible, grandparents support financially and help take care of small grandchildren. Later, in older age, grandparents expect to be taken in care of adult children. However, this could be only in the families, where a good relationship between generations is built (Gedvilaitė-Kordušienė, 2009). The life situation is perceived according to the needs of family: first, the needs of adult children and grandchildren are satisfied and only later, personal ones.

In summary, there is a divergent and twofold dominant understanding of grandparenthood. On the one hand, the phenomenon is comprehended as an aggregation of joy, feeling of continuity, and that of being useful. On the other hand, it is perceived as stressful, limiting or challenging. Besides, in the EU countries, there are divergent grandchildren care cultures orientated towards the needs of individuals (i.e. grandparents) or towards the needs of family, which are formed by many social, economic and cultural circumstances. Family culture and reciprocal relations between generations is very strong in Lithuania. Nevertheless, I would suggest that culture of care in Lithuania is 'family orientated'.

3.2. Transferred experience of grandparents: a stigmatizing attitude

In order to explore the multireality of grandparenting, the specificity of problems, occurring in the care of grandchildren when adult children emigrate, must be analyzed, for people's experiences are built of deeply con-

tradictory components that depend on the social context (Phoenix, 2008). Heywood (1999) purposes that grandparents might find themselves in situations, when grandchildren experience separation from parents unpleasantly and traumatically. Goodman and Rao (2007) state that grandparents' level of stress depends more on the difficulties their grandchildren experience than on personal ones. Consequently, I refer to this indirect grandparents' experience coherent with grandchildren's experience of transitional life situation as *transferred experience*.

The outcomes of separation were actively studied in Lithuania. For instance, the study *Trends and Peculiarities of Labor Emigration in Kaunas* demonstrated that one third of small children were temporarily experiencing separation difficulties during parents' external migration, a fifth of them were having more serious emotional and behavioral difficulties (Malinauskas, 2007). A half of older children's generation (teenagers) was mourning about parting from parents, experiencing such feelings as sadness, anger, and anxiety about the future (Leliūgienė, Rupšienė & Plavinskienė, 2005; Maslauskaitė & Stankūnienė, 2007). Sustaining on Goodman and Rao's (2007) ideas, it is possible to state that grandparents raising grandchildren presumably experience a high level of stress and social difficulties, which are related to the way grandchildren respond to the separation from parents. However, this statement might be grounded on the perspective of negative viewpoint to the separation of a mother and a child, which, according to Payne (2006), might be understood or perceived as problematic. Before I implemented the qualitative research, I had constructed my conclusions about children's experiences caused by external migration of their parents based on negative viewpoint too.

Controversially, positive issues relating to the phenomenon of parents as external migrants were also found; however, this data was elaborated little or put in silence. Leliūgienė *et al.* (2005) found that after parents' external migration, children of transnational families became more involved in housekeeping, rated relationship with contemporaries better,

and had better opportunities to participate in various activities. Moreover, Maslauskaitė and Stankūnienė (2007) revealed the opinion of parents, according to which, 40 percent of their children improved school results and became more tender at home after emigration. Similarly, in the quantitative research *Trends and Peculiarities of Labor Emigration in Kaunas* parents and grandparents reported that their small children became more independent (Malinauskas, 2007). Despite scholars' conclusions that not all small or older children were experiencing difficulties (Leliūgienė *et al.*, 2005; Malinauskas, 2007; Maslauskaitė & Stankūnienė, 2007); I state that the situation of families in external migration process was hyperbolized or misunderstood.

For instance, I found the conclusions, drawn by the scholars Maslauskaitė and Stankūnienė (2007) in their study *Trans-border family*, ambivalent. Some findings of the quantitative research indicated that a half of all children faced separation difficulties, which was distinct from the results of the qualitative research. Moreover, parents mentioned that their children experienced sadness and missed them. Only five parents were involved in the qualitative research in comparison to the number of parents (n=309) in quantitative study, yet the scholars generalize information as follows:

Children are the most vulnerable members of the transnational family and in most cases they **do not receive appropriate parental care**. Parents frequently diminish, neglect or even ignore the challenges the transnational living arrangement brings to the children and the misconception of the situation has the impact on the fulfillment of their parental roles. **Children** of transnational families **suffer** the disruptions in emotional, intellectual and social behavior, but this state is often **neglected** and underestimated by the parents. The negative consequences for children are diminished by more frequent visits of migrant parents. (Maslauskaitė & Stankūnienė, 2007, 190)

Sustaining on Kuzmickaitė (2004) and Phoenix's (2008) ideas that people construct stories according to the social context, narrative is produced in terms of cultural and societal situation (people accept cultural and societal

dominant narratives without consideration). Hypothetically, I propose that conclusions of scholars: '*children do not receive appropriate care*' or families '*neglect children suffering*', were influenced by dominant narrative of the society that families do not provide proper care. Therefore, I think that transnational families (the ones that include grandparents as caregivers) become a stigmatized group in the Lithuanian society.

De-stigmatization of the phenomenon appears to be when research conclusions are based on research participants' voice (Rapp, Kisthardt, Gowdy & Hanson, 1994). In case of this study, the meaning of lived events and experiences should be presented from grandparents' point of view. Social work research has to have the advocacy position towards the stigmatized group of the society (Gould & Shaw, 2001); the group, which I would add, is also misunderstood. Consequently, avoiding the rigorous statements, I tried to construct narrative which would reveal varied nature of experiences, which occurred during the care of small children, whose parents were in the process of external migration. Moreover, I had to be attentive what kind of attitude, 'negative' or 'positive', this study brings to the Lithuanian audience.

3.3. Help to grandparents as caregivers:

preconceived and conventional understandings

Grandparents may face personal experiences associated with psychological and social changes (Heywood, 1999; Grinstead *et al*, 2003; Landry-Meyer & Newman, 2004; Ross & Aday, 2006), transferred worries related to grandchildren's daily needs (Fuller-Thomson & Minkler, 2007), or temporal emotional difficulties of small grandchildren (Malinauskas, 2007). However, grandparents' ability to handle transitional life situation depends not only on the variety of problems occurring throughout the care of grandchildren, but also on help and support they receive from their family and society (Kornhaber, 1996). King, Hayslip and Kaminski (2005) supplement this statement and stress that grandparents who experience difficulties or

are under pressure of social inequality should receive social assistance and support. In their research, Ross and Aday (2006) found that grandparents' level of stress was lower and grandchild care was better handled subject to help received from a spouse or from social network (friends, churches and senior centers). Moreover, Heywood (1999) states that there is a significant lack of specific help modalities for these grandparents as caregivers.

During last decades, the awareness of need for support programs for grandparents raising grandchildren has increased only in the US. Specialized programs for grandparents such as *Grandparenting Program* or *Project Healthy Grandparents* (Campbell & Miles, 2008) have been developed. There is limited evidence on how Lithuanian grandparents handle grandchildren care during parents' external migration. Moreover, the needs of grandparents are still in the process of recognition by professional social workers. While analyzing social programs supported by the Ministry of Social Security and Labor (see *Social Report: 2008-2009*, 2009), I could not find any programs, which would focus on the needs of grandparents as caregivers or on those of custodial grandparents. Therefore, the discourse of help might be approached only hypothetically.

Subsequently, the basis for support to grandparents as caregivers in transitional life situation is compared to their needs. Pebley and Rudkin (2008) extend that needs of grandparents raising grandchildren might be related to: (a) economic resources of grandparents or those of the whole three-generation family; b) geographic location of grandparents and parents; c) the quality of relationship between grandparents and parents or reciprocal involvement in each others' lives; d) the availability of other resources or help when problems occur.

Having conducted the research *Trends and Peculiarities of Labor Emigration in Kaunas*, it was found that economic resources were not a problematic issue for grandparents as caregivers as adult children supported them financially (Malinauskas, 2007). The quantitative research did not study the quality of the relationship; yet during data collection process, I

felt that adult children's decision to leave their children with grandparents was based on good relationship with them. Nevertheless, the geographic location can possibly cause problems. Gedvilaitė-Kordušienė (2009) points that solidarity between grandparents and adult children, thereby reciprocal involvement in each other lives, decreases because of reduced quantity of meetings and expanded distance between them. In my study, however, I discovered that adult children tended to emigrate temporarily (for 6 months on average), and if they returned they would stay in Lithuania for some time (for 3 months on average). Furthermore, if the distance between grandparents as caregivers and adult children was huge, adult children tried to keep contact through often visits (holidays) and intensive daily communication via telephone and internet (Leliūgienė *et al.*, 2005; Malinauskas, 2007).

Overall, in the literature, there are two dominant understandings of sources of help to grandparents as caregivers. I would distinguish a preconceived understanding, which represents the importance of specialized help to grandparents; and conventional understanding that grandparents are a usual target group of social support.

The proponents of preconceived understanding claim that the needs of grandparents have to be satisfied using several help modalities: support groups, legal assistance and domestic service (Campbell & Miles, 2008; Ramaswamy, Bhavnagri & Barton, 2008; Smith & Dannison, 2008). Social support groups might provide two different options: firstly, a support group might be the place, where grandparents become their own facilitators as they develop the skills of parenting and knowledge how to cope with emotional and physical stress experienced in grandparenthood personally (Kornhaber, 1996); secondly, a support group could be an educational place, where training continues while enhancing parenting skills and assisting grandparents to recognize their personal needs, to manage the principles of school issues, to recognize the modes of social services (Campbell & Miles, 2008, 122). Legal assistance constructs the

understanding that a social worker should assist with grandparenting issues (Smith & Dannison, 2008). Domestic service is comprehended as an individual case of grandparenting management, which conjointly assesses the challenges and needs of grandparents, designs the model of problem solution. If needed, a social worker (or a nurse) helps them to contact help sources and develop parenting skills according to their individual situation (Campbell & Miles, 2008, 122).

Other authors construct the understanding that help modalities should be recognized, but not overestimated. Shaw and Gould (2001) state that social work research seeks to create the discourse of advocacy, i.e. to raise awareness of the needs of a target group; therefore, people are presented as helpless and unable to cope with the situation on their own. Many grandparents as caregivers face difficulties similar to other social groups of society; in reality, only part of them need help (Ramaswamy *et al.*, 2008). Therefore, instead of presenting intimidating conclusions that all grandparents raising grandchildren have problems, they should be perceived only as a potential target group of support and their individual abilities to raise grandchildren should be explored (Goodman & Rao, 2007). Heywood (1999) proposes that grandparents as caregivers might appeal for help of a social worker or a family counselor if and when a problem occurs. Moreover, the help should be orientated towards grandparents' empowerment, because people know solutions, yet they are bound and oppressed by the understanding of the problem (White, 2003). This echoes with White and Epston's (1990) ideas that people enter help process because of 'problem-saturated description'. The goal of help process is to enable grandparents to externalize the problems and re-author lived events, constructing a 'new meaning so that it is no longer problems saturated' (Heywood, 1999).

To summarize, help modalities for grandparents raising grandchildren is an important topic in social work research, but it is more important to carefully observe what kind of understanding an inquiry generates. The need to help grandparents is an important approach; yet it is also essential

to understand the principles of help to grandparents if they need support. The reconstruction of personal narrative raises new meaning and people find solutions by themselves (Holma, 1999). Even though this inquiry does not aim to study the help process for grandparents as caregivers, at the end of the study I will reflect on how the accomplished steps of methodology might serve as possible guidelines to reshape the narratives of grandparents as caregivers in case their understanding will be overwhelmed with problem-saturated stories.

4. Methodology of research into narrated life situation

Based on the generated research design to analyze the narrated world of the grandparents' experiences, I present the narrative methodology of my research. I emphasize Riessman's (1994) understanding that narratives do not speak for themselves; a method is needed to uncover the meaning rendered by narrative, no matter what form of language is used. In taking a stand that comprehension of grandparents' incoherent stories might be revealed through narrative structure and modes of meaning-making, I will give explanation how the research was started, planned, reviewed and implemented. Unexpectedly, entry into the research field raised many obstacles, and it took two years to eliminate them. Therefore, I firstly present the process of entering the research field, because it served as an invisible background for the entire research process.

4.1. Entering the research field: facing ethical issues

in the Introduction, I described that the quantitative research *Trends and Peculiarities of Labor Emigration in Kaunas* focused on grandparents raising grandchildren up to 7 years. After the quantitative research had been accomplished, I could not understand how grandparents were able to handle the care of small children like their parents. Induced by interest in the topic, I defined sampling criteria as follows: (a) duration of grandchildren care should be longer than 3 months; (b) grandchildren under grandparents' care should be up to 7 years old.

Riessman (2001) states that social work research, which seeks to understand people's experiences under various social circumstances through narratives, should involve real people's stories and, consequently, should be based on inductive logic. The strategy of participants' involvement into the research consisted of two tasks: (a) to project ethical and sensitive involvement into research; (b) to organize 'face to face' conversations with grandparents.

Considering the experience in quantitative research, I knew that it would be a challenge to involve grandparents into qualitative research. In 2006 there was no evident statistics of ‘existing’ grandparents as caregivers in Kaunas or Lithuania. When undertaking the quantitative research *Trends and Peculiarities of Labor Emigration in Kaunas*, it became clear that it would be difficult to collect information about grandparents as caregivers. No official data about caregivers could be found in preschool institutions (kindergartens), schools or in the state institutions such as Children’s Right Protection Service of Kaunas City Municipality or Education and Training Department of Kaunas City Municipality. Parents would emigrate temporarily, leaving their children under the care of grandparents naturally, without any arrangements of official care (Malinauskas, 2007). Consequently, preschool institutions officially declared that parents were children’s caregivers. Yet after getting in contact with heads of preschool institutions, many cases of grandparents being the main caregivers to their grandchildren were revealed. It seemed like ‘secret’ data about custodial grandparents. The only people to know about atypical custody at home were kindergarten teachers (Malinauskas, 2007); thanks to intimate communication with children. Preschool teachers saw children’s response to their parents’ external migration. Children themselves shared openly with teachers about the situation at home. Therefore, one of the ways to contact grandparents was through kindergarten staff.

Actually, the second finding of the research *Trends and Peculiarities of Labor Emigration in Kaunas* revealed that the phenomenon of external migration is a sensitive topic. In 2006 respondents experienced fear when agreeing to participate in the survey, which was expressed in questions: ‘Is it going to be reported that my child works illegally?’, ‘Both parents are working, aren’t they going to take away my grandson?’ (Malinauskas, 2007). In the course of collecting research material, I felt that fear of the consequences of illegal external migration had decreased due to legalized migration within EU member states. However, some grandparents were

sensitive to the topic of informal care for grandchildren, which caused their questioning, ‘How is your research related to VTAT¹? Will my informal care be declared to the state institution?’ [field notes, 14/05/2007]. Similarly, grandparents were making excuses for informal care while explaining, ‘My care is only temporal, parents are fully beloved caregivers’ [field notes, 12/02/2008]. Consequently, it emerged that not only the topic is sensitive, but also my role as an ethical researcher is to approach the topic in a sensitive manner.

In every research, specific rules of participant involvement or interviewing must be considered. Hydén (2008, 123) proposes that a sensitive topic should be researched highly ethically; or, as Creswell (2007, 44) stresses, research plan and contact with research participants should be organized sensitively in terms of ethical considerations:

These are especially important as we negotiate entry to the field of the research; how we involve participants in our study; gather personal, emotional data that reveals the details of life; and ask participants to give considerable time to our projects. Giving back to participants for their time and efforts in our projects we need to review how participants will gain from our studies. <... >[we] need to be sensitive to any power imbalances our presence may establish.

In this study, the contact with grandparents and ethical considerations of the research were realized in the following steps:

a) Negotiated entry into the field

Research area was entered by appealing to the Education and Training Department of Kaunas City Municipality. Research and study procedures were introduced. The department favored the significance of revealing the phenomenon and wrote a letter of cooperation to all kindergartens (in 2006, 75 preschool institutions were in Kaunas) with a proposition to ‘provide conditions’ for research implementation. It was a very important step. When I called with an intention to introduce research, every director of a

1. VTAT – Child Right Protection Service

preschool institution would ask me how 'official' the research was; and the letter of cooperation was a key for future collaboration. At the beginning of research, almost every head of preschool institution had no information about temporal care of grandchildren. After my call, a director would ask for additional time (1.5 week on average), which was needed to find out the number of grandchildren raised by their grandparents. Usually it was a non-official study implemented in the following way: a meeting with a specialist of preschool institution was organized and verbal data about grandparents as caregivers was collected.

b) Invoking kindergarten to create a confidential contact between grandparents and the researcher.

The purpose of my second call to the head of preschool institution was to find out the number of children who were under the care of their grandparents in a certain kindergarten. Positive confirmation caused my request for their help to get in contact with the grandparents. In the first stage of data collection, I would introduce the purpose of the research and interview procedures verbally. Staff of the kindergartens would relay the purpose and tasks of the research to grandparents. If grandparents agreed to take part in the research, they would give their telephone number to the specialist. In the first stage of research, only 6 grandparents agreed to give their contacts, and even 14 grandparents disagreed to participate. Having reflected on data collection procedures and interviewees, I wondered why so many grandparents disagreed to be involved in the research.

I had a few considerations, why it was so complicated to involve grandparents into the research. Firstly, the staff of preschool institutions was unclear what kind of the research was going to be undertaken; thus, they did not know how to involve grandparents into the research. Secondly, I assumed the sensitive topic might raise grandparents' fear to share about illegal care or their hurtful experiences. Lastly, grandparents were on the defensive position because of the stigmatizing understanding, which blamed parents for leaving their children.

Having considered the above, in the second stage of data collection, the tactics to contact grandparents as caregivers had been changed as follows: (a) collaborative agreement between Vytautas Magnus University and a certain preschool institution was established; (b) open letters addressed to grandparents as caretakers stating the purpose and procedures (confidentiality and etc.) of the research were written. The established collaborative agreement helped the specialists to take a more active position when communicating with grandparents; whereas grandparents received letters which included a comprehensive explanation about the research and reasoning why their participation in the research was important. At the end of the letter, they were not simply invited to enter the research, but requested to indicate their telephone number, which would help to get in contact and have informative conversation between the researcher and a presumptive respondent. In the second stage, 10 grandparents as caregivers agreed to give their contact information, whereas 9 grandparents disagreed to give their telephone number to the specialists of preschool institutions. In summary, the amount of grandparents who agreed or disagreed to give their telephone number is presented in Table 1:

Information received from kindergartens	1 st stage of research	2 nd stage of research
Agreed to give a telephone number	6	10
Strong disagreement to participate in the research	14	9

TABLE 1. Quantity of grandparents as caregivers who agreed or disagreed to be give their telephone numbers.

c) Informative conversation with grandparents as caregivers

After the telephone numbers were collected, I would call grandparents with the following purposes: to expand on information about the on-going research, to discuss confidentiality issues, and to talk about a possible place for the interview. The consent to share a telephone number did not mean

that a grandparent would take part in the research. The majority of grandparents indirectly asked, ‘Why do you want to speak with me’ [field notes, 25/01/2007] or had a wish to decrease the importance of care by saying, ‘There is no significance of my care, it’s just a normal care’ [field notes, 06/10/2006]. However, the method of research data collection caused the greatest uncertainty among grandparents. ‘Are you going to give a questionnaire?’, ‘What ... you want to speak with me... how long, for almost an hour?’ [field notes, 10/06/2006] were the usual concerns. When talking to grandparents about the research I felt that nearly all grandparents hesitated to take part in the research. Even though I had contacted 16 grandparents, only 12 of them agreed to be interviewed. 4 grandparents gave many excuses for their reluctance to be involved in the research. The last grandmother said ‘I have nothing special to tell... I work until late evening and I don’t want additional troubles’ [field notes, 12/05/2008]. During the informative telephone talk, 4 grandparents were unwilling to share their life stories; accordingly, out of respect for their reluctance, further conversation was terminated. The number of grandparents who agreed or disagreed to be involved is presented in the following table:

Conversation via telephone	The number of grandparents
Agreed to be interviewed	12
Disagreed to be interviewed	4

TABLE 2. Quantity of grandparents who agreed or disagreed to be involved in the research.

Although at first it seemed natural that grandparents would wish to share their life situations, it emerged that 27 grandparents disagreed to be involved in the research, which led to understanding how sensitive the topic of grandparenthood was to the grandparents. As Renzetti and Lee (1993, 6) stress, research can seem more threatening than other life situations, considering that research intrudes into private life or touches per-

sonal experiences deeply; or that a study is associated with social control. Considering grandparents' unwillingness to be involved in the research, I propose that my research unexpectedly revealed a sensitive or even stigmatizing nature of the studied phenomenon, that atypical custodial grandparenthood was a sore subject to grandparents themselves.

The process of search of participants, building relationship with preschool institutions and with possible research participants, informative conversation lasted for two years (from May 2006 till April 2008). Duration was also influenced by ethical and epistemological issues, because while dealing with them, I searched for (a) the methodology, which could fully render grandparents' style of narration; (b) the model of interview, which would induce grandparents' willingness to speak.

Overall, from the beginning, I noticed that grandparents were reluctant to be involved in the research because of stigmatizing attitude towards atypical custodial grandparenthood. Therefore, during research I tried to deal with ethical problems by minimizing informative data about grandparents; yet, simultaneously, I was thinking about the way to present data to a broader auditorium. Confidentiality was kept with carefulness: the names of grandparents were changed; recognizable data (for instance, cities) was shortened to one letter; occupation or other descriptive data was altered. I elaborate on the ways to keep confidentiality in data presentation in subchapter 5.1.

4.2. Process of forming empirical research design

As it was mentioned in the Introduction, at the beginning of the research, I could not comprehend the meaning of grandparents' lived events because the stories they told seemed incoherent. According to Hydén (1994), an understanding about the phenomenon is deeper if methodology (ethical and sensitive approach towards the participants of research and dominant understanding about them) is considered. Initially, I thought that one of the reasons for incoherent stories was that I had not been sensitive enough

with grandparents. Kornhaber (1996) points that images such as ‘old’, ‘friendly’ and ‘happy to speak about their grandchildren’ are often attributed to grandparents. Before research, I had a similar idea and dominant narrative about the participants. Nevertheless, I found that grandparents were not old, and they talked to me with reluctance rather than had a friendly chat. Consequently, I thought that my erroneous attitude would influence grandparents’ telling manner. I discuss how ethical and sensitive issues were solved in subchapter 4.1, and how I induced grandparents to speak in subchapter 4.3. Moreover, I felt that even though the processes of organizing research were important, the key to incoherent stories lied in grandparents’ narratives; the methodology to analyze the narratives was needed.

Squire, Andrews and Tambouku (2008) maintain that narrative perspective does not have clear modes of investigation or best approaches how to analyze people’s narrated experiences. There are sociolinguistic approaches developed and presented in detail (for instance, Labov-Waletzky or Gee); yet other contributors to the narrative research discuss epistemological issues more on general level.

Thus, in order to form a primary understanding *Why did grandparents tell stories in **that** way?*, after 5 interviews, I stopped collecting data (interviews) and started to search for theory, which could explain the nature of incoherent stories, or, as Elliot (2005), Mishler (1995), and Squire (2008) state ‘uncover’ how the forms of narratives represent grandparents’ experiences and lived events. Having formed the first propositions of narrative theory, I returned to the field to collect another part of the research data. Later, I stopped for the second time. In the process of reflection on research data and theoretical statements, I discovered that forms of narrative represented the meaning of grandparenthood, but they did not explain why some grandparents’ stories were more incoherent, while others less. Moreover, the forms of narrative could not reveal the social context of a teller (Patterson, 2008), or teller’s interaction with audience (with me

in this particular case), and what kind of social status he/she represented (Abbot, 2002).

Tireless wish to answer the main question brought to understanding that grandparents actively interpreted lived events and experiences (Holma, 1999), and the level of interpretation depended on the applied mode of narrativity (Hänninen, 2004).

In sum, I refer to the process, which included two stops to collect data and to reflect on theory, as *reciprocal synergy of theory and narrative methodology* (see Figure 1):

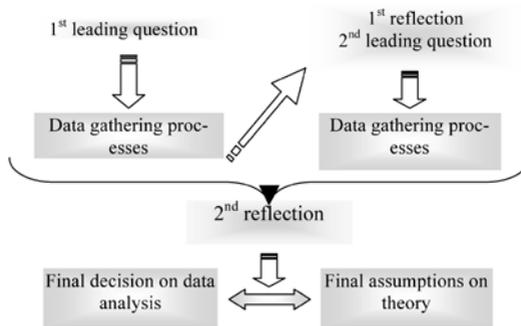


FIGURE 1. Reciprocal and circulative process of research implementation.

The generated research design echoes with Creswel’s (2007, 150) idea that the processes of data collection, data analysis and the final stage report are interrelated and are often pursued simultaneously. Huberman and Miles (2002) declare that all processes of qualitative research are custom-built, revised and ‘choreographed’ and, as Dey (1993, 6) points, ‘learned by doing’ rather than simply incorporated.

By the use of concept *reciprocal synergy*, I want to emphasize the two-way relationship between the processes of research (data collection and data analysis) and theoretical assumptions. First reflection on research data induced me to search for the theoretical insights, which could help com-

prehend grandparents' narratives. Accordingly, theoretical understanding helped me to decide how further interviews should be accomplished, and how research data should be reflected. In the final stage, research data and theory were reflected simultaneously. I was searching for the way research material could structure the variety of understandings about narrative theory. In parallel, I was revising how inductively formed theory could help interpret the manner of grandparents' telling deeper.

Considering the implemented approach, I state that *narrative* methodology was used: grandparents were asked to tell their stories about transitional life situation; interviews were performed using time dimension perspective, which is typical of narrative approach; and research material was investigated while applying the method of narrative analysis. Polkinghorne (1995, 9) declares that there are two main distinctions of narrative analysis: *paradigmatic* type that produces the knowledge of concepts (analysis of narratives); and *narrative* type that produces the knowledge of particular situations (narrative analysis). I choose the latter method, inasmuch as *narrative analysis* is:

<...> the procedure through which the researcher organizes the data elements into a coherent development account. The process of narrative analysis is actually a synthesizing of the data rather than a separation of it into its constituent parts <...> Narrative analysis relates events and actions to one another by configuring them as contributors to the advancement of a plot. <...> The result of a narrative analysis is an explanation that is retrospective, having linked past events together to account for how a final outcome might have come about. (Polkinghorne, 1995, 15)

Narrative analysis of grandparents' stories started from the recognition of particular narrative elements, i.e. structural narrative analysis. Further, concerning the issues of structure, every grandparent's narrative was synthesized; and it was analyzed how the meaning of lived events was constructed. Their analysis leads to a retrospective explanation (I refer to it as reconstruction), i.e. the presentation of diversity of grandparents lived events and experiences. The final conclusions about atypical custodial

grandparenthood were drawn after coherent narrative of diverse reconstructed grandparents' narratives had been developed.

In sum, I want to stress that in my thesis the concept of interpretation is openly used in the stage of data analysis. It refers to Mishler's (1995, 115) ideas that 'diversity of narrative models creates a more reflective position for research'. He states:

It's clear that we do not find stories; we make stories. We retell our respondents' accounts through our analytic re-descriptions. We too are storytellers and through our concepts and methods – our research strategies, data samples, transcription procedures, specifications of narrative units and structures, and interpretative perspective – we construct the story and its meaning. In this sense the story is always co-authored, either directly in the process of an interview eliciting an account or indirectly through our re-presenting and thus transforming others' text and discourses.

As research comprises a diversity of narrative models, I attempted to create my own tool kit to understand grandparents' experiences throughout transitional life situation in a more reflective position. Co-author position might be revealed through questions that seek to 'open grandparents mind' for reflection on their lived situation. Notwithstanding the inevitability of being a co-author, it was reduced not only by constructed knowledge about grandparents' narratives, but also by an acquired wider understanding of what it means for a grandparent to participate in the research and to be interviewed by the researcher.

Lastly, I assumed the position of both a researcher and a re-teller of incoherent grandparents' narratives. Therefore, I do not state that research methodology is an 'exclusive' way to understand incoherent grandparents' stories. This coincides with Feldman, Sköldberg, Brown and Horner's (2004) standpoints that researchers do not know better than a storyteller, instead they take the role of 'translating' the understanding expressed by research participants. Accordingly, I hope that, while searching for the essence of how grandparents present their experience, the study also became the 'translation' of grandparents' narratives and that every reader

would easily understand the significant aspects of atypical custodial grandparenthood caused by external migration of adult children.

4.3. Gathering research material

According to Creswell (2007, 138), while gathering research material, the field should be settled in terms of safe interview environment, revealing interview style and cooperative relationship between an interviewer and an interviewee.

The majority of interviews with grandparents took place in the environment of a preschool institution. Three grandmothers invited me to have a conversation in their house, stating that it would be quieter to speak. One grandfather was willing to come to my work place at university as he worked nearby. Other 8 grandparents agreed to speak in the kindergartens since it was a practical solution in terms of place and time (for most of them, the meeting was planned conveniently right after work and before they had to take grandchildren from kindergarten). As a researcher, I felt the importance of creating a trustful interaction between me and grandparents and to avoid the impact of different social surroundings. It was easier for grandparents to share their experience more openly in their natural environment (their flat); whereas, when talking with grandparents in the premises of a preschool institution, I had to put more energy to create a contact. In the latter case, only after introduction and 'ice-breaking part', a conversation about more sensitive topics could be started.

The type of interview was developed in terms of two perspectives: the means to gather research data, and assumptions of narrative approach. At first, interview was chosen as a helpful tool to construct naturalness and spontaneity, flexibility of questioning, access to non-formalized experiences and non-verbal responses (Gochros, 1998, 267). Non-formalized experiences that may have not been reflected by grandparents became stories when they were told during the interview. Moreover, Creswell (2007, 140) stresses that an interviewer must address 'emotional outbursts' of the

respondents. During the interview, the main sore subject to grandparents was grandchildren's reaction to the separation with their parents, and grandparents' attempt to help grandchildren to cope with missing their parents. Secondly, oral communication was established through a narrative viewpoint, not employing a simple stimulus-response model but, as Mishler (1986, 67) proposes, 'looking at how interviewees connect their responses into a sustained account, that is, a story'. With reference to Riessman's (2008, 24) standpoint, the goal of my narrative interviewing was to generate detailed accounts (stories); and the interview became a conversation – narrative discourse between interlocutors. A specific question was less essential than emotional attentiveness and interaction during our talk. Consequently, my interviews seemed more like a conversation rather than interviewed 'life stories'. At the beginning of collecting data, I planned to speak with grandparents about their 'life story' in the context of transitional life situation, i.e. what it meant for them to be full-time caregivers to grandchildren while their grown children were external migrants. Very quickly, however, it emerged that grandparents had not reflected their situation beforehand. After introduction and ice-breaking part, the question 'Could you tell me your story about the particular episode of your life as a caregiver?' was never fruitful. Grandparents looked thoughtful, wore a trouble look; yet life stories were not told. Some grandparents said directly, 'I don't know what to tell, for me, it would be easier if you asked questions' [field notes; 12/03/2008]. Therefore, in Gergen's (2003, 149) words, grandparents needed to be supplemented – the narrative was developed during interaction with the researcher.

Still I tried to lead conversation according to the principles of semi-structured interview. Usually, a semi-structured interview is a designed, combined, focused and open-ended communication about the events that are investigated by a researcher and an interviewee, which occurs outside the stream of usual life (Miller & Crabtree, 1999, 19). Yet Squire (2008, 48) declares that a semi-structured narrative interview depends on the

researcher's treatment of 'narrative'. My primary idea was that the conversation should reveal grandparents' life stories in the following way:

- » Stories should be developed in a consequent way and consist of meaningful events (Creswell, 2007, 170; Murray, 2003, 115).
- » Stories should be structured in the sequence 'past, present and future' (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, 50).

Consequently, in order to gather data with reference to the 'life story' approach, open themes (see Appendix 1) were prepared, considering situations relevant to grandparents' transitional life events and time dimension (see Figure 2):

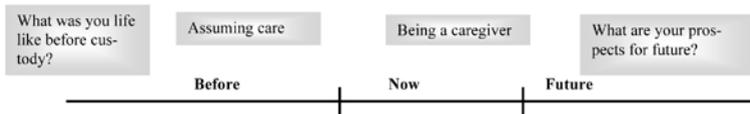


FIGURE 2. Open themes of interview concerning grandparents as caregivers' lives in transition.

However, none of the interviews was held according to the anticipated themes. When introducing the first theme 'What was your life like before custody?', I intended to follow the topic. Yet being sensitive to what grandparents were telling or, even more, what grandparents wished to convey, the interview with a prepared structure turned into a conversation about events, situations or experiences, which were important to the teller. On the other hand, the social surroundings of grandparents was so extraordinary that some themes seemed more significant than others. For instance, some grandparents had been living together with their grandchildren since their birth, thus the stories about becoming a caregiver were less meaningful as being a caregiver seemed a natural stage of life. Inductively, as a researcher, I had a feeling, similarly as Hänninen (2004) states that grandparents were telling their inner stories, which were more important to fol-

low than the plan of themes prepared in advance. As Riessman (2008, 82) stresses, some narratives do not function in time as others.

Generally speaking, a narrative discourse between an interviewer and an interviewee turned into the conversation as complementary interaction between me and grandparents. According to Gergen (2003), lived life situation becomes conscious and constructed when a person tries to tell it to other people; to tell it, however, a supplementary interaction is often required. It is possible to propose that a certain kind of open-ended questions creates opportunities for narrative (Riessman, 2008, 24). On the other hand, the proposition may be debatable because, if situation have not been reflected internally or with other relative, people are able to tell stories only when they are provided with particular storytelling guidelines. For instance, there were many pauses during interviews, since when asked, 'Tell me what happened?', grandparents would pause or remain silent. It seemed that grandparents had never thought about this; therefore, an explicated request 'Tell me what happened in that situation... to you or to others' helped grandparents to continue constructing their stories. From many guidelines provided (e.g. 'you', 'grandchild' or 'other'), grandparents would choose a certain object, which was the most important to them and would start a story with regard to it. Besides, if transitional life events have been self-reflected, or, as Holma (1999) maintains, people have experienced the process of interpretation, a question neither guides nor disturbs the process of storytelling. A good way to exemplify this is a question 'How was this situation to you?'. The majority of grandparents would answer by telling stories about their grandchildren's response to a certain situation. Even though the question was repeated several times, grandparents would reply with a short description 'it was difficult' or 'for me everything was ok', and would start new stories about grandchildren or other family members.

Accordingly, I propose that when people tell stories in their minds, their consciousness is actively reflecting daily events (Hänninen, 2004, 75). In that case, the conversation with narrative guidelines as open themes will

not disturb or mislead them as they have already constructed their inner narrative. On the other hand, people who have reflected less on the situation do not need guidelines, yet complementary relationship as their narrative of life events will be constructed in an on-going interaction.

The real dates when interviews were conducted are presented in Appendix 2. The conversation with grandparents took 55 minutes on average. The length of an interview was determined by recurring stories of grandparents. In three cases, during our conversation, I became aware of non-verbal language of grandparents such as time checking or some sort of anxiety. It appeared that grandparents became anxious because kindergarten closing time was near. One of grandparents said indirectly that her granddaughter did not feel well '*I measured the temperature in the morning, nothing... but then I got a message from the teacher... that she sits on the knees all the time...*' [6: 298]. Since she was very anxious, our conversation ended in a few minutes.

Mainly, grandparents agreed only for one interview. When designing research methodology, a subsequent interview was planned in case research data needed to be supplemented. However, the question about the possibility to meet again was met by grandparents with astonishment and they would respond, 'Why do I need to be interviewed again? Everything I told was a true'. I felt that grandparents resented this request and, in the last interviews, I ceased to ask this. Moreover, in the course of data analysis, I discovered that questions help grandparents to expand and construct the meaning of lived life situations sufficiently. A subsequent interview would only be a way to acquire knowledge of individual interest rather than exploration of uniqueness of grandparents' narratives.

Summing up, conversational interview became particularly congruent with the main question of the study *Why grandparents tell stories in that way?*, because it helped to render the unique style of grandparents' telling, their linguistic style to narrate experiences.

4.4. Reflective description of research participants

Hänninen (2004, 74) claims that people’s style of narration might be influenced by an actual condition of life. To portray the social surroundings of grandparents as caregivers, general information about grandparents (their age, duration of custody, peculiarities of family situation) is presented in the Table 3. In order to keep confidentiality, the names of grandparents were changed.

Grandparent	Age	Duration of custody	Reflective presentation of family situation
Ona’s story (1 st interview)	66	Continuous period of 2.5 years	Grandmother, together with her husband, took care of two her daughter’s children; they were 11 and 6 at the time of the interview. They came from countryside, where they lived all the time until the care. Daughter could seldom return from abroad and grandchildren saw their mother after 2 years for the first time. At the time of the interview, grandmother was only taking care of the youngest grandchild, the elder one had already moved to live with his mother. Daughter was planning to settle and live abroad and to take both children with her in the future.
Dana’s story (2 nd interview)	48	Continuous period of 6 months	Grandmother and her husband took care of their eldest daughter’s children (10 and 4). Grandmother’s family was experiencing ‘nest emptying’ period, i.e. she and her husband worked and were raising a teenage daughter. At the time of the interview, grandchildren were gone to their parents. Having envisaged difficulties, parents decided to take their children to live with them in a foreign country temporarily, and to see whether they would assimilate there. Children planned to live and work abroad only temporarily and then, having paid their debts, come back to live in Lithuania.
Asta’s story (3 rd interview)	65	Continuous period of 18 months	Grandmother (a widow) took care of her grandson (6) since he was a baby because her son with his family lived in the same flat. Son started going abroad two years ago and grandmother induced her daughter-in-law to leave

as she thought young people should not live separately.

Grandmother has been the main caregiver to her grandchild since his birth. Children were planning to earn some money, come back to Lithuania and buy a flat. Grandmother wished her children lived nearby.

Rita's story (4 th inter- view)	46	Continuous period of 1 year	Grandmother and her husband took care of two grandchildren (4 and 3) and their youngest 7-year-old daughter simultaneously. At the time of the interview, however, the grandmother was raising one grandchild, whereas another grandchild had already gone to live with her parents in a foreign country. Having created a new family abroad, daughter planned to settle and take granddaughter to live with her for a short time (she wanted to find out if her child was able to adapt in a foreign country).
Lina's story (5 th inter- view)	49	Two periods of care: 3 months and then, in three months, 1 year	Grandmother looked after her granddaughter, who was five years old, together with her second husband. Daughter left with her husband abroad, then returned and after a three-month stay in Lithuania, left alone to a foreign country again. Alongside grandmother's story, the story of concern was reflected as she was worried whether her daughter and son-in-law would not separate. At the time of interview, son-in-law had already returned, yet he was very busy and granddaughter was still living with her grandmother. Son-in-law would take granddaughter only at weekends. Daughter was going to come back to Lithuania and live here.
Birutė's story (6 th inter- view)	48	Continuous period of 7 months	Grandmother and her husband have lived with her daughter's family all the time. At the time of the interview, granddaughter was 3.5 years old. Daughter conceived very young, so grandmother and her husband helped a lot from the very beginning both with granddaughter's care and with finances. Daughter and son-in-law went to search for better life abroad. Grandmother was used to taking care of her granddaughter, and she treated her like her own daughter. Grandmother looked at serious things with humor and was

making jokes during the entire interview. Daughter and son-in-law were planning to earn some money, to buy a flat and live separately after their return. Grandmother doubted they would do that; she said they would still live together with her.

Aldona's story (7 th interview)	48	Two periods of care: 1 year and then, in three months, 9 months	Grandmother has lived together with her daughter and granddaughter since granddaughter's birth. Grandmother looked after her granddaughter together with her husband; their eldest school-age son was living with them. At the time of the interview, granddaughter was four. Daughter lived with her mother until granddaughter was three years old. Due to the lack of money, daughter left to a foreign country to work. During summer, daughter took granddaughter to live with her for three months, but she had to return granddaughter to grandmother due to troubles with caregiving. Grandmother was used to taking care of her granddaughter as she had raised her from when she was a baby. Daughter was going to earn some money and return to live together with her family.
Petras's story (8 th interview)	59	Continuous period of 3.5 years	Grandfather, who is a pensioner, tried to help his daughter, a single mother, to look after the grandson since his birth. At the time of the interview, grandson was seven. Due to subsistence difficulties, daughter left abroad, and grandfather willingly started taking care of his grandson. Grandfather was taking care of grandson together with his wife, who worked and had a small business. At the time of the interview, grandson was in the first grade. Daughter was planning to return to Lithuania, but grandfather stated he was not sure about that since life abroad was better.
Jonas's story (9 th interview)	55	Continuous period of 2 years (with a short break)	Grandfather with his wife looked after his granddaughter (10) and grandson (6). Their youngest son, a school-leaver, was living with them. Care started with a weekly supervision of granddaughter (their son lived in the countryside) when she started attending school and would go home only at weekends. When talking, grandfather mentioned his family was very large since they raised 5 children, and his wife

would look after one of their grandchildren all the time. Parents would come back to visit their children frequently (every 2-3 months) and would take them for a short vacation to a foreign country.

Parents went abroad due to financial difficulties and, having earned some money, were planning to return and to buy a homestead near K. city.

Marija's story (10 th inter- view)	58	Care in several periods: 4, 3 and then again 4 months	Alone, grandmother was raising her daughter's child, who was 3.5 years old, at the time of the interview. Daughter is a famous artist, living an active life of an artist, preparing projects all over the Europe; and therefore, grandmother's care is help to her daughter to realize art projects. The indicated periods of care are the periods when grandmother looked after her grandchild in Lithuania. There were some cases when daughter got offers to participate in large projects and working grandmother took a leave of absence and went abroad to look after her grandson. Daughter is going to live in a foreign country with her son.
Odetta's story (11 th inter- view)	55	Two periods of care: 6 months and then, in half year, another 4 months	Grandmother was taking care of her grandson, who was 3.5 years at the time of the interview. The grandson was born and lived with his mother abroad; he has had a chronic disease since birth. As doctors could not diagnose the illness, grandmother took her grandson to Lithuania to perform some examinations. After they diagnosed chronic respiratory disease, which required special care, grandmother and daughter decided that it would be better for grandson to grow and live in Lithuania under supervision of doctors. Grandmother looked after her grandson together with her husband; a younger son, who attends school, was still living with them. When grandson's health had improved (in half year), daughter took him to live abroad. After some time, when grandson was ill again and seeing it was difficult for her daughter to solve her problems alone (she was divorced), grandmother took over her grandson's care and brought him back to Lithuania. Grandmother did not know exact future plans of her daughter.

Roma's story (12 th inter- view)	62	Continuous period of 5 years	Grandmother has been with her granddaughter since her birth. Granddaughter was born in a foreign country and grandmother lived there with her daughter's family and was like a 'nanny' to her granddaughter for three years. They would come to Lithuania only on holidays. When granddaughter was three, they decided to plan their family return to Lithuania. At first only grandmother and granddaughter returned to Lithuania. Grandmother not only took care of her granddaughter, but she was also responsible for the construction of family house. At the time of the interview, granddaughter was five. Daughter and her husband were planning to return to Lithuania and to live together with grandmother.
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TABLE 3. Reflective description of the research participants.

Considering the described social context of the research participants, it becomes obvious how unique and diverse social surroundings of each case of grandparenthood are.

4.5. Narrative analysis of research data

Squire, Andrews, and Tambouku (2008, 2) state that there are no self-evident categories of narrative analysis. It lies in the ontological statements about human narrativity (Hänninen, 2004, 20), or in narrative knowledge, which is acquired during the analysis of research material (Polkinghorne, 1995, 5).

Riessman (2008, 23) and Elliot (2005) declare that transcription is an important process of research, which forms the basis for further data study. According to the scientists, research questions influence how detailed a transcription should be. Questions about the structure of narrative and relationship with audience require a more detailed transcription than those about the substance of lived experiences. Mishler (1995) argues that narrative analysis needs a particular interpretation by researcher. Therefore,

every transcription should become a detailed narrative, consisting of various information (words, interrupted words, pauses, non-verbal information), rather than being a brief answer to a given question.

As interviews with grandparents were conducted in a manner of conversation, to convey this atmosphere, the transcription of digitally recorded data was accomplished according to the following principles: (a) transcribing 'what is told' – words, pauses, swallowed words; (b) noting what was seen and heard. For instance, pauses and silent moments as well as grandparents' crying or laughing were captured. Remarks about the moments of silence or gallows humor helped to interpret why grandparents were telling stories in a particular way in even more detail. Some principles of notation are presented below:

... – indicates pauses during the talk;
.. – means an interrupted word, for instance daugh.. for daughter;
[] – heard and observed non-verbal information, for instance: moments of intensive emotion [grandmother is crying]; long pauses [grandmother is silent for several minutes]; using plural pronouns in a talk [speaks in a plural form];
<> – omission of speech irrelevant in the research (mostly used in the presentation of data).

In sum, the text of transcribed 12 grandparents' interviews consisted of 140 pages. All textual material was used for data analysis.

As the recognition of narrative structure and narrative retrospective explanation was performed in a particular manner, it is essential to present the steps of narrative analysis accomplished on the basis of my own understanding.

To answer the first research question *How do grandparents narrate the meaning of transitional life situation and of grandchildren's custody caused by external migration of their children?*, each interview was shredded or segmented into structural elements (therefore, simultaneously I will use the concept of text segments and elements of stories) and later their composition was interpreted. As grandparents developed their own subjective

meaning of their lived situations (Creswell, 2007, 20), research narrative analysis was an attempt to reveal the varied and multiple construction of narratives. Structural elements were *meaningful events of multiple stories, focalization, time dimension and social context*. Interpretation means that I analyzed how all elements constitute the plot, i.e. how each grandparent tried to make the meaning of transitional life situation. Consequently, the final conclusion provided a retrospective explanation of individual reconstructed grandparents' narratives, i.e. how a particular linguistic structure helped to construct the meaning of lived events.

The process of data analysis to answer the *first* question is presented below in detail. It was implemented in the following stages:

1) *Text segmentation according to the structure of narratives*. Text segmentation was performed while borrowing several steps of data analysis coding. Segments as a helpful tool were used to mark the elements, indicating the forms of narrative, such as:

- » *Meaningful events of multiple stories*. When reading the interview material, I searched for particular multiple stories within narrative. The multiple stories consisted of meaningful events, actions or incidents; for instance, a short story about how the care grandchild was organized. Grandparents could tell a story in different parts of conversation, i.e. come back to the story at any time during the interview.
- » *Focalization* was revealed when searching for an emphasized person within a multiple story: which family member's experience was mostly stressed in the story. For instance, an emphasized position of a grandchild would be if, in narrative about daily issues of care, a grandparent emphasized grandchild's reaction, behavior, and feelings rather than explored personal feelings and responses to the situation and vice versa.
- » *Time dimension* was analyzed considering what tenses were used to retell a meaningful event. In other words, I investigated how grandparents remembered past events, reflected on ongoing life moments and projected future life situations while questioning: How was a past event told (using past tense or not)? How was a present life situation constructed (which tenses were involved)? How was a future moment projected?

- » *Social context* was revealed while analyzing how grandparents emphasized particular social circumstances in the multiple stories; and vice versa, particular events of multiple stories were employed to reveal the social context of grandparents' family.
- » All distinguished elements were marked with key titles. For instance, the extract presented below can be understood as a grandparent's introduction into the context of grandchild's care and was titled 'grandmother_care_grandchild_context'. Titles were created inductively to ease the management of segmented data. It is obvious that, in the presented unit, the narrative construction consists of certain meaningful events or particular forms of narrative. Example of segmented (or shredded) text segments and titles are presented in Box 1.

Box 1. An extract from the 12th interview

019 I was bringing her up and to work they let, everything. I was there until I grew her up. And then anyway she, her... perspective to return home. She wants home, to come back and and ... well simply doesn't want to let the girl, well.. If she didn't think of returning, she would take her to school and everything. Hmm, so we agreed with grandma, talked, I would help... so this is. So we help [*talks in plural*], well... we call each other everyday, talk... she comes often. Comes once a month, we communicate often, on the phone. Well. So what else...

Grandparent_reason of taking care_situation

Time_past present

Grandparent_aspects of grandchild care_interaction

Grandparent_takes care about keeping relations_situation

Child_wish to keep contact with children_grandchild-child interactions

- 2) *Segmentation of interview texts – management of titles.* With a certain amount of titles, every interview was analyzed in a similar manner. Only the elements in the narrative, that did not have an equivalent in the list of titles, would be marked with a new title. The process of segmentation, an easy and quick access to any place in the interview, and the comparison of titles with the meaning were performed using computer software *Atlas.ti 6*.
- 3) *Saturation of text segments in all interviews.* In the course of analysis, the number of titles became enormous; therefore, some interdependent segments got the same title, or text description was altered until the final description was determined. Finally, the saturation of material occurred when a variety of titles and their meanings had been cumulated. In the 10th, 11th and 12th interviews, new titles appeared because of the unique-

ness of grandparents' family social context, yet the titles defining grandparenthood or grandparents' experience were saturated. Overall, 262 titles and multiple meanings of narrative construction were created and presented in the Appendix 3.

- 4) *Interpretation of the plot: search for meaning.* While performing text segmentation, in parallel, I was interpreting how the segments of narrative were 'displayed' through various kinds of responses and understandings that appeared across the storied data (Denzin, 1990). Here, I want to emphasize that text segmentation and titling had a different approach in comparison to the usual coding tradition. Developed on the basis of various traditions (such as grounded theory and ethnographic research), the usual way of coding is to discover the occurrence of codes within the data or search for correlations among different codes in the second stage of analysis (Silverman, 2001, 123). Polkinghorne (1995, 16) points that narrative analysis is employed not simply to discover or describe an element of narrative, but also analyzes the relations of elements by configuring them according to one aim, i.e. plot. In my research, the segments of structure were interpreted while analyzing them with reference to the question *Why did grandparents tell their stories in that way?* The *Atlas.ti 6* program has a helpful function of *Memo Manager*, which aided me to write interpretation during the process of text segmentation. Each interpretation was marked with the same number as the paragraphs of the interview. For instance, interpretation of an extract from the 7th interview is presented in Box 2:

Box 2. Example of interpretation (an extract from 7th interview)

061. Well, <> it's the first separation, how did you feel about the situation?

062. The little one parted very... I don't know, maybe if we had lived separately and daughter had brought and left, maybe it would have been differently. <> And, well, everything is normal... only it was somehow more difficult to my daughter

061-062. After a repeated question, the grandmother explored how separation was to her little grandchild. It seems she wanted to say that without any difficulties. Maybe it's a collective experience, because the grandmother had difficulty to recognize herself as individual members of the family. She tells a contextual story what kind of family life they have all together.

Grandparent_difficult_experience and feelings. (question question-how this situation to you) situation_context

grandchild_behav-experience separation with mother_grandchild-child interaction

Time_past

Context_'simply one family'

Interpretation of all 12 narratives constituted 40 pages in total. Significant parts of interpretation were illustrated by extracts from an interview and marked with the same number as the paragraph of the interview. While revising the interpretation, the number of a paragraph and software *Atlas.ti* made it simple to return to the primary text segmentation or to the first steps of interpretation.

- 5) *Deconstruction and reconstruction of each interview: understanding the mode of meaning-making.* I state that the generalization about grandparents' individual way to construct meaning was accomplished in the manner of deconstruction and reconstruction. According to Abbot (2002, 98), deconstruction is a search for people's unconscious willingness to say something, which often remains unsaid and exists in between the lines. Usually it can be revealed through: (a) pauses, silence, and repetitive words; (b) reflection of written interpretations (memos); (c) incorporation of narrative elements into one unit (meaningful stories, time dimension, aspects of focalization, social context) and considering what is unsaid in it. I refer to the summary of interpretation as a reconstruction of each interview, or in other words, understanding of grandparents' way of meaning-making. Reconstructed individual narratives are presented in Chapter 5.

To sum up the procedures of analysis with reference to the first research question, I want to point out that reconstructed individual narratives could answer the main research question *Why did grandparents tell stories in that way?*, yet similarities could not be found in grandparents' constructed meaning about their experiences and lived events. The similarities among different tellers might be evaluated as coherent narratives (Elliot, 2005), which consist of multiple stories. Multiple stories might be termed cohesive stories (composed of similar events or meanings), which at the same time are diverse. Coherence allows comprehending the meaning, constructed by all grandparents, as a unified whole; whereas diversity allows differentiating and highlighting the meaning, constructed by all grandparents, as unique. Consequently, the picture of *coherent narratives* gives a *more general view* of common experiences as lived events.

Cohesion and diversity echo with the main outcome of narrative analysis, i.e. generation of a story common to all people in the research (Polkinghorne, 1995, 17). To fulfill this task of narrative analysis the *second question* was posed. The question *What are cohesion and diversity of reconstructed narratives told by grandparents about transitional life situation?* tried to reveal the common meaning of grandparenthood and transitional situation, which was generated through language. Coherent narrative development involved the following steps:

1) *Search for commonalities in grandparents' narratives.* 12 reconstructed narratives were compared in search for common elements in grandparents' reconstructed stories. Similarities could appear in the elements of narrative construction, among stories, or in the interpretation of grandparents' way to construct meaning. When reading reconstructed stories, it emerged that focalization was the most usual element to all grandparents' stories. I refer to them as *three main groups of coherent narratives*. One group of stories, that constitutes the first coherent narrative, was grandparents' experience closely linked with grandchildren's situation in the context of grandparenting. The second

group of stories was related with grandparents' concerns about the social life situation of adult children. The third group of stories was about the indirect grandparents' experiences in caregiving and in transitional life situation.

2) *Establishment of cohesive stories: the process of emplotment.* It is important to emphasize that, while pursuing to present the prospect of reconstructed coherent narratives, the nature of narrative was also embodied. According to Murray (2003, 114), the use of narrative is an attempt to restructure the sense of order. Order is referred to as *emplotment*, i.e. the events are arranged in a certain sequence or priority. I found that three coherent narratives were filled with multiple stories, which consisted of meaningful events, or stories with a particular social context. And vice versa, meaningful events (grandchild care) or particular time (grandchildren and parents' separation as a past event) formed similar and *cohesive* multiple stories. However, those grandparents' stories were inconsistent. Thus, one of the aims of research analysis was to *structure grandparents' experiences into a scheme clear to any reader* as follows:

- » *Finding a common element in cohesive stories (emplotment of inconsistent stories).* Meaningful events were grouped according to similar meaning or social context. For instance, although a grandchild and his/her parents' separation was experienced differently (transferred grandparents experience), there were some commonalities either. I grouped those nearly common multiple stories and, as a result, three cohesive stories were developed. I discovered that the segregated and grouped cohesive stories differed from each other, which I termed the diversity of stories.
- » *Sequence of cohesive stories.* Murray (2003) claims that the sense of order in narrative appears if multiple events are laid in linearity of time dimension. I grouped common elements according to three dimensions of time: how grandparents memorize past, reflect present and project future. For example, in the coherent narrative about grandchildren, there were some meaningful events of the past, such as family situation until the care of grandchildren, grandchildren and mother's separation, and grandparents' help to overcome separation.

Grandparents would tell the events not necessarily in the logical sequence, whereas my task was to restore the sequence of events. The period before care was the first family situation in the past; then the separation followed; and the last meaningful event was the description of grandparents' help to the grandchildren to cope with separation.

3) *Representation of final narratives.* To define the prospect of possible coherent narratives consisting of cohesive and diverse stories, I used the concept of *flow*. According to Mishler (1995) and (Hänninen, 2004), 'flow' outlines how general narrative of a phenomenon goes from past to the future, what are general ways for people to live through a specific life situation. For me, 'flow' meant that coherent narrative was constituted of cohesive stories, which simultaneously might be diverse. Therefore, if cohesive stories were different, I tried to describe them separately in detail. On the other hand, if they were similar enough, I assumed that different stories were interlinked and formed one cohesive story. The flow of stories was developed with reference to time dimension (the second step). The general prospect of coherent narratives with detailed view of cohesive/diverse stories is presented in Chapter 6.

The final important aspect of research data analysis was language used in the process. Data analysis was performed in the Lithuanian language, inasmuch as grandparents' narratives and the context of conversation was rich in information, and it opened many possibilities for study. Grandparents' speech was influenced by a regional tradition of narrativity; consequently, they spoke using specific terms and intonation. Besides, my first language was also Lithuanian, and I assumed I could understand grandparents' narratives deeper and analyze them more competently in my native language. Then, the research analysis (my own written interpretation and extracts of grandparents' speech) was translated into English by a qualified translator. I reviewed the outcome, considering whether the translation had rendered the meaning of grandparents' speech or not. It should be noted that the Lithuanian and English languages differ in terms of their syntax, semantics, etc., thus some peculiarities were difficult to translate. Anyway, I pro-

pose that it is worth to present the translated extracts (even if translation limits the meaning of them), because the prospect of coherent narratives becomes richer and deeper. It is possible for anyone to perceive how I tried to 'translate' incoherent stories, why I developed a particular interpretation; moreover, the reader might create their own understanding of grandparents in the transitional life situation.

5. Grandparents' individual ways of constructing meaning

The first part of research data introduction pursues to answer the raised question: *How do grandparents narrate the meaning of transitional life situation and of grandchildren's custody caused by external migration of their children?* According to Riessman (2008, 77), the question word *how* attracts attention to the narrative construct: *how* informants speak about events and experiences important to them. The analysis of the components of narrative construct allowed understand in what ways and under what principles grandparents constructed their experiences of transitional life stage. The presentation of each grandparent's story reveals the complexity of narrative construction and experienced process of reflection on the lived event. Here, I also want to sustain on Hänninen's (2004, 72) idea that every person uses various ways of narrativity that depend on involvement into the process of interpretation and reflection.

5.1. Reconstruction of grandparents' stories

After the analysis of the main principles of narrative structure in theoretical and methodological parts, each story is introduced in the following order: (a) multiple events are described (plot), (b) time dimension, focalization and social context analysis are presented and (c) a grandparent's individual way to construct meaning is interpreted. Multiple events are various stories about important transitional life situations that were distinguished at the moment of the interview and were repeated several times during the interview. Time dimension analysis revealed which events were developed in the narrative, i.e. those of the present or of the past, or of the future. Focalization analysis reflected which family member was mostly analyzed by a grandparent in narrative or, in other words, which family member received most attention in the story. Social context analysis was used to reveal how grandparents tried to emphasize the uniqueness or oneness of lived situations. When interpreting, a simple narrative construct was also

considered, i.e. if there was an introduction to the story; if one or several events were told; if the situation was generalized. The reflection on all parts of narrative structure allowed building the understanding and interpreting the grandparents' way to narrate their experiences.

When presenting an individual story, one specific challenge was faced: how to introduce individual stories and to keep confidentiality at the same time? To achieve this, detailed characteristics of every family were not disclosed, and some parts of stories were omitted in compliance with grandparents' requests. Due to these reasons, multiple stories are introduced in a general form and details from the interviews with grandparents are presented only in the interpretations of narrative construct. The presented title of each interview describes overall meaning constructed by a grandparent.

1st interview with Ona. Daughter's complicated life abroad and difficulties with grandchild's fosterage.

Multiple stories

Difficult start – daughter's departure. Grandchild's description. Grandmother Ona defined the meaning of transitional situation in terms of the events that caused troubles to the family and not to her personally. The first situation was daughter's departure and a variety of difficulties she faced abroad. Ona sought to retell the details of her daughter's deception and describe the difficulties she experienced at work. This was one of the most painful events to the grandmother as she told the story emotionally, with tears in her eyes. The story reflected grandmother's desire for daughter's better success to make a living in a foreign country. When talking about her daughter, Ona started telling about her elder grandson as though unawares. After a short introduction about her grandson leaving abroad (the reasons remained unclear), the grandmother returned to recollections of the past. She developed the story about this grandchild and his behavioral and learning difficulties in Lithuania; she was afraid that after spending a few years abroad, the grandson would have even more difficulties in Lithuania

in comparison to the time when he was still living with the grandmother. At first glance, it seemed that Ona was criticizing her grandson; but then she did a 'leap' in her story and finished it with a statement that he also had various skills.

Grandchildren's separation from mother. When describing the elder grandchild, the grandmother passed to the third painful part of the story, i.e. grandchildren's separation from their mother. She disclosed the experience of a younger grandchild, which manifested itself through longing and uncontrolled anger; yet soon she started justifying her daughter for not being able to return earlier.

The situation is becoming regular. Mother's return. While grandmother Ona talked emotionally about her daughters departure (in high pitch), she relaxed after she had touched the topic of daughter's return. She talked about regular routine both in her and in her daughter's life. When telling about daughter's temporary return, the grandmother spoke in a calm voice, used few emotions and did not go into details about the events. She stressed that children were waiting for their mother very much, and it was a feast-day for everybody in the family. Nevertheless, indirect pride could be felt when the grandmother was telling that, after mother's return, the grandchild was more obedient to his grandmother than to mother. It seemed that Ona wanted to claim indirectly that she was the central axis of the family and daughter could not work abroad without her help.

Challenges of care. Grandmother Ona did not go into details about the daily round of care; she only mentioned it was difficult to agree with grandson on his clothing and bed timing. It could be felt that grandmother loved her grandson and indulged him.

Daughter's plans. Why is daughter not able to come back? Future without a resort. Having revealed family experiences, grandmother Ona started telling the reasons, why her daughter could not return, or why it was not worth coming back. She considered two possibilities: what would happen if daughter returned, and if she continued living abroad. According

to the grandmother, in Lithuania a single mother could not earn much (daughter was divorced); on the other hand, she discussed that if daughter took both grandchildren abroad they would have to hire a nanny and she would not have enough money for a normal family life. Grandmother Ona did not want to go abroad since this seemed too hard life challenge for her. The grandmother completed her story with the generalization that at the moment (at the time of interview) her situation as well as that of her daughter's was without a resort.

Time dimension

It is difficult to determine time attributes of the narrative constructed by the grandmother since different time formats were used in one story. The following extract reveals that grandmother Ona told the most sore experiences integrating the events of the past and present: when talking about the past (for example, previous work situation of her daughter, *she had never seen such a horror*) grandmother finished the story with generalization about *present* work situation.

She was all alone. And left. <> Well, he met them and drove into those mushrooms. She said she **had never seen such a horror** in her life, you see [talks about difficulties her daughter experienced earlier].<> She goes to those houses [works as a community nurse]. <> So she works there **at present**. It's probably two years as she's been working there. And now she works legally [goes into details about work at the moment] [1:6 – 12]

Having listened to interview records, it may be seen that the grandmother told the past events with intense emotions as though they have happened recently. Considering the construct and repeated listening of records, it is possible to assume that the grandmother is still experiencing the feelings related to her daughter's previous difficult situation abroad and grandson's experiences. Grandmother Ona talked little about the future; thus, it is possible to assume it is not easy for her to consider the possibility of living without her grandson.

Focalization

The stories reflect grandmother's concern about the needs of other family members. When asked how the grandmother accepted one or other situation, she told experiences of her daughter and grandson, i.e. events related to other family members. This may be represented with an extract from the end of conversation. When the interviewer asked what she would like to emphasize in her experience of transitional life situation, the grandmother responded that it would be the painful experience of other families (*it's difficult for children and parents*):

Maybe you would like to stress something I haven't asked? Or to tell something, you know...

-<> Well, you know, the most important thing, it's a disaster for **children and** for those **parents** who left, also in moral aspect. It is very **difficult**. Not to see your child growing up, not to be together. Same for children (grandchildren). Yeah, it's a big misery.<>[1:87-88]

Only when the questions were repeated, grandmother Ona started sharing her personal experiences: how difficult it was for her to start taking care of grandchildren, to move from countryside to town, to comfort her daughter when seeing her difficulties with work abroad. It may be concluded that in her worries about others, the grandmother's experiences are reflected indirectly (intertwined experiences). For example, seeing that her daughter's work situation abroad had improved, Ona worried less.

Social context

The grandmother compared her daughter's social situation with life principles abroad as though trying to stress that daughter did not reach the level of well-being of local people. When disclosing her concern about the elder grandchild, the grandmother compared education systems of Lithuania and of a foreign country in order to claim and create a picture that the grandson would have learnt more in Lithuania than abroad. When sharing about care difficulties, the grandmother emphasized the social context, problems with children's behavior, conflicts (*they don't share something*),

little space at home (*that flat is small*) and compassion for her daughter due to the difficulties she experienced abroad (*I feel pity for my daughter*). The three factors that cause difficulties are reflected in the extract:

It was also very difficult. <> Sometimes they argue in the morning, or **don't share something** or ... In short, it was very difficult. <> And the space... **That flat is small**. We moved into that two-room flat – five dwellers ... Four. <> It's hard for me to take care of children and of everything else. At the same time **I feel pity for my daughter** all the time. <> [1:36-38]

A way to construct the meaning

It was most important for grandmother Ona to stress experiences of her daughter and grandson in her stories and not those of herself. When laying and comparing the past and the present, the grandmother clearly depicted how the experiences and life situations of her family altered. Although she wanted to emphasize that she was a minor person in transitional situation, her story also reflected that without her help the situation would not have started. The main grandmother Ona's way to construct the meaning was comparison of the past and the present.

In my opinion, Ona did not reflect much on the situation. She simply conveyed the passed event (for example, daughter's departure), used little introduction into the story, her stories finished abruptly, without generalizations. It is possible to assume that reflection or even perception of transitional life situation was happening during the interview, i.e. in relationship with the interviewer. Since during the conversation, the interviewer's questions about the future helped the grandmother project the future life, which she had not reflected on.

2nd interview with Dana. *I did everything I could:* painful grandchildren's separation from parents.

Multiple stories

Daughter left because of debts. Grandmother Dana started describing transitional life situation with the life situation of her daughter and the factors

that caused her daughter to leave abroad. Daughter's family had bank liabilities; and therefore, they worked from morning till late evening. Financial crisis could be felt in the family. Seeing her daughter's wish to leave, the grandmother started preparing for upcoming care of grandchildren, i.e. she discussed with her husband that they should help their children and 'assume' the grandchild's care.

Painful beginning: grandchild's emotions and grandmother's help. The moment of a grandchild's separation from his parents (daughter and son-in-law) was the most sensitive topic in grandmother Dana's story. She told in detail how difficult it was for a grandchild to part from parents: he outlived it emotionally, cried and was sad. During the interview, the grandmother's wish to find the words to define the situation could be felt. She told that her grandson stuck to the fence and they could not tear him away. Later he fell into his grandmother's arms and cried. At the point of the interview, the grandmother was also crying and defined the situation as '*something terrible*' [2:20]. It is possible to state that it was her joint experience as, when reading a text and listening to the recording, the understanding was formed that it was difficult not only for the grandchild, but for the grandmother, who had to watch the whole process of experiences, as well.

Grandmother's help to grandchildren. As a response to grandchildren's experiences, the grandmother started talking about personal help that eased grandchildren's experience of separation. In grandmother Dana's words, she tried to do everything to ease the fate of grandchildren: simply to love, to engage in various activities with them, to take a good care of them, and make them feel needed and loved. As though incidentally, she remembered the experience of the younger grandson whose response to separation from mother (grandmother's daughter) was delayed. Story details about grandson walking around with his mother's picture and about his questions when talking to mother on the telephone (*Where have you been?* [2:42]) also reveal the experience of the whole family: sensitive and painful separa-

tion, the grandmother's and other family members' (grandfather, daughter) attempt to help the grandchildren. Grandmother Dana's wish to ease the situation for grandchildren was so strong that it was clear she would not have forgiven herself any mistakes during care (for example, if they had fell ill seriously), if anything had happened to her grandson.

Negative attitude from outside. Wish to prove the grandson is not bad. While the grandmother was expressing concern about her grandson's status, another painful situation was disclosed, i.e. negative attitude at school. The grandmother described several situations when her grandson or she personally received critical remarks from teachers about parents leaving their child and working abroad. It seems that the grandson had behavioral disorders as the grandmother consulted the specialists and tried to engage him into some activities so that he could realize himself. Dana as though discussed and made excuses in her story that her grandson was not bad: they only had to find a way to approach him. She also criticized her son-in-law who was too strict to the child and compared that her kindness and tenderness helped reach better results, i.e. good marks at school, the boy's wish to participate in trainings. When generalizing the time she devoted to her grandchildren, the grandmother stated that she had to do everything to make transitional life situation easier for grandchildren, to be instead of mother they missed.

Grandmother's state. Mourning. Since the interview took place only one week after grandchildren's departure to a foreign country, the grandmother had difficulty in finding words to describe her feelings at the moment. According to Dana, the state of separation corresponded with her menopause symptoms: she had insomnia, felt tired and experienced various emotions (worries about grandchildren's adaptation in a foreign country, which indirectly stated she missed being together with them). When generalizing, the grandmother mentioned her other daughter (grandchildren's aunt) was also experiencing the separation as she helped with grandchildren's care.

Future: concern about grandchildren. Having formed the picture of mourning process, the grandmother completed the conversation telling that her emotions and experiences were not so important. The most important thing was for grandchildren to live with their parents. It is interesting that she finished the conversation with a discussion about poor family policy of the Lithuanian government and with search for the answer: Who was responsible for Lithuanians' need to emigrate?

Time dimension

When talking about significant events, the grandmother created a feeling that her experiences were continuous, i.e. she was still experiencing the situation, her feelings born in the past were still persisting in the present. Grandmother Dana generalized the past event (*fell into, was shivering*) using the present tense (*it's something terrible*). She was telling with tears in her eyes:

<> so the kid **fell into** my arms and every cell of his body **was shivering** [event in the past]. You know, **it's something terrible**, you know [generalization now] [2:20]

Another example from grandmother Dana's story illustrates her emotional state at the moment of the interview. The extract shows that in the generalization of present feelings about separation from grandchildren, the grandmother relates her emotions (*it's very hard*) with the past experience of seeing grandchildren's suffering (*It was very difficult for me*):

How did you handle this period of separation?

-It's very hard. <> It was very difficult for me. Those kids... They were very very important to me. <> I go to sleep, fall asleep and then I jump from my sleep. [2:133-134]

It seems that grandmother's feelings, that had formed earlier, were also prevailing during the interview; thus, it is possible to state that grandmother Dana was still experiencing them.

Focalization

The main attention was given to grandchildren during transitional life situation. Painful experiences of grandchildren and the peculiarities of daily behaviour were the main topics. Daughter's situation and experiences of her relatives were less important. One case of focalization is when repeatedly asked about personal experiences, grandmother Dana responded it was difficult but then suddenly 'skipped it' and started talking about the help received from the whole family (husband, daughter) and completed her story, '*We simply are one family*' [2:52]. Another case of focalization is when talking about mourning and emotions related to the separation from grandchildren (triggered by the interviewer's question *what you feel now*), Dana introduced that she was sad (*sadness*), mourning but later started talking about her daughter's painful experience of separation:

I wonder what you feel now, this...

-It's simply **sadness. Sadness.**

-*Mourning?*

-Maybe morning. Maybe... [she is crying]. Now the girl came the other day, and you know she... <> She comes and says, 'Well, mom, I don't know', she says, 'Well, you see how difficult it is for me' <> [continues talking about daughter's feelings] [2:143-146]

Later when asked about emotions towards the separation without pressure, grandmother Dana turned to another topic and started talking about flat repairs they have to do. It seemed it was not easy for her to deal with her feelings. On the other hand, concern about others was underlying; and thus, it was important to pay attention to her personal experiences. When talking about herself, Dana used short definitions so it may be assumed that the reflection on experiences was going on during the interview.

Social context

During the conversation, it was important for grandmother Dana to create a social picture of her daughter's departure. The main way to construct daughter's social situation was the use of details. The grandmother was lay-

ing the reasons (too big liabilities to the banks, tedious work at the supermarket, seeing children only at weekends) and creating a picture that her daughter had no other resort but to leave. Social context of a grandchild's behavior was created differently. Having generalized behavioral difficulties of the grandson, she analyzed the differences in upbringing as the way to show tenderness. She compared the way her son-in-law treated the child (*he doesn't know how to show this*) with her way of upbringing (*I more tend to...*):

Well, my son-in-law... He read.. <>. I **more tend to** read fairy tales, to sing, to caress, to put to sleep. <> And I saw this kid lacks tenderness. He needs tenderness. <> Maybe son-in-law... He loves those kids so much. But **he doesn't know how to show this**. Or there is maybe something inside that doesn't allow him doing this. <> [2:122 – 124]

A way to construct meaning

One of the features of grandmother Dana's way to construct the meaning was the search for words to define painful experiences of the family. The grandmother also tried to show that the events that affected her family, affected her personally as well. It may be assumed that the grandmother blamed herself partially since she could not make grandchildren's separation from parents less painful.

It is possible that the grandmother had not reflected much about the lived situations. The stories were not constructed according to usual construct traditions (introduction, action, conclusion), yet they presented individual stories reflecting the abundance of emotions and details. A range of events were laid in detail and generalization might happen in between them. The events were constructed from past till present in time; and therefore, it seemed that the grandmother was still in the process of events, experiences and reflections, i.e. she was still experiencing the past events during the interview.

The main feature of experience construction was the description of events that affected her family. When completing the story, the grand-

mother started analyzing her help in one or another situation, which allowed assuming that the main experience of transitional life situation was mainly her aspiration to help others.

3rd interview with Asta. Constant and ordinary life with a grandchild.

Multiple stories

Children's departure. Good working conditions abroad. When asked about the beginning of transitional life situation, grandmother Asta did not start talking about personal experiences, yet she described the reasons why children had to leave abroad. Inconsistently, in various parts of the interview, the grandmother stated the reasons for her son and daughter-in-law's departure: work situation in Lithuania, relatives' invitations to come and earn some money. Grandmother Asta retold many details showing that son and daughter-in-law earned a lot and their working conditions abroad were good.

Constant and ordinary life with a grandson. Grandmother Asta narrated about her grandson's separation from parents calmly, as about a usual, everyday event. The grandmother had lived with her son's family since the grandson's birth and helped to raise him. When her daughter-in-law started working, the grandmother became the main caregiver to the grandson. As it was customary for the grandmother to take care and raise the grandson, she could not discern determinant experiences after children's departure. Therefore, in the continuation of the story, she started sharing about everyday situations of grandson's care. Grandmother Asta told that their daily routine was ordinary: daily going to the kindergarten, simple stay at home in the evenings. The only thing that distinguished was the difficulty the grandmother had when settling with grandson about his clothing as he was the one who chose what to wear.

Supposed future. When describing the daily routine of grandparenting, the grandmother started talking about children's returns and their plans to buy a flat. At the time of the interview, grandmother Asta lived with

her children in 1.5-room flat, in a transitional room; and therefore, she explained she wanted to live separately from her children.

Relationship with daughter-in-law. Further meaning of the narrative, which the grandmother attempted to render during the interview, was a series of stories about past situations with her daughter-in-law. Grandmother Asta was proud she got along with her daughter-in-law, considered the woman to be her daughter. She told in detail how daughter-in-law would serve her and her friends when they came to visit her and she was also happy the woman was hard-working and tidy at home.

Time dimension

In the majority of cases, grandmother Asta used the tense adequate to the event situation. If the event took place in the past, the grandmother told it in the past tense; and if she talked about a present event, she used the present tense. It may be assumed that due to the usual situation of grandparenthood, the grandmother either did not accept the significant events or outlived them; and consequently, she constructed her recollections using the respective tense. Many events were told in the past tense. An exceptional place in the narrative that included all time dimensions was the family's plans about the flat. Having touched the situation that children left to work abroad in order to acquire a more spacious flat, the grandmother mentioned the things she said to her children in the past and in the present (*I said* and *say*), remembered the past projection (*if we bought one-room flat, would you leave*) and returned to current discussion of the flat.

They, let's say, want to sell this flat and to buy a house somewhere. And **I said** I didn't want to live with them. **I say**, 'I will have to raise children again'. <> This is what they want. They say **if we bought you one-room flat, would you leave?** I say, 'Of course I will leave'. But they don't like living here. Because this flat is poor. Three rooms, you know, transitional. One big and two small. Through the big room you go into the small ones. [3:132]

It is possible to assume that the grandmother's desire to live separately that appeared in the past was not solved at the time of the interview; a possible solution was projected in the future.

Focalization

The main focus of experience in grandmother Asta's narrative was on family members and not on herself. When asked repeatedly about personal experiences, grandmother Asta did not share her experiences on the emotional level but those in relation to her grandson. The grandmother generalized it was not *difficult* and moved on to grandson's education.

And you say it's not difficult for you? How did you feel about the situation...

-Well, it's not **difficult**. <> It's easier to raise your own child, but this grandson is easy to up bring. <> And you know my grandson knows anyway that I won't hurt him, won't beat him, so it makes it difficult to educate . [3:71-72]

It may be stated that the majority of transitional situations were related to the relationships with other family members; and that was why the grandmother was not used to consider herself personally.

Social context

It was very important for grandmother Asta to emphasize different working conditions in Lithuania and abroad. When providing various details, the grandmother disclosed her concern that if the conditions were good, she would be calm about the children.

Grandmother analyzed the impact her daughter-in-law had on her grandson and recollected her daughter-in-law's present respectful attitude towards her. Asta seemed to talk with a prevailing understanding about the relationship between a daughter-in-law and a mother-in-law (which is usually defined as a negative one), showing that their relationship was good and respectful. When explaining the factors of respect, the grandmother stressed her daughter-in-law was a '*workwoman*' and gave a lot of attention to the reasons that influenced her diligence (for example, the fact that she was raised in a big family – *she didn't grow up alone*):

Well, that this daughter-in-law is like this, I don't know. **Workwoman.** <> When a friend comes to visit me, she instantly makes the table, treats with coffee. I don't have to. If she's at home, she brings everything, serves. <> **She didn't grow up alone.** <> They were six... How many in the family? Five sisters and one brother in daughter-in-law's family. You know, they almost raised each other, they lived in the countryside all the time, so... <> Simple people <> She'll do anything. If she goes somewhere, to visit relatives, or so, she does everything, tidies up, so... She doesn't sit and wait for others to bring and do things. [3:146-150]

A way to construct the meaning

It is interesting that when constructing the narrative and its meaning, the grandmother did not introduce into the story, did not generalize the event in many cases; she simply seemed to be retelling what had happened. The grandmother talked in short sentences; and therefore, the interviewer had to expand the experienced events using questions and specifications. It is possible to maintain that the reflection of events was happening at the moment of the interview, i.e. by means of supplement interaction. The events were rendered without any specific order, suddenly moving from one significant situation to another. For example, when talking about the way daughter-in-law educated grandson, the grandmother suddenly started talking about interrelationship and respect expressed by daughter-in-law. Nevertheless, it is not possible to claim that the grandmother had not reflected on the transitional situation. The main focus of the narrative revealing grandmother's reflection of lived stage of life was material well-being of her son's family which should solve the problem of a small living space and change the usual lifestyle with children and grandson.

It was obvious that the grandmother wanted to communicate the message to her interlocutor that she accepts the usual life with her grandson as inevitability of big family living together and also as help to her children 'raise to their foot'.

4th interview with grandmother Rita. Difficulties of separation from granddaughter.

Multiple stories

Unexpected start of granddaughter's care. Grandmother Rita defined transitional life situation as unexpected or, in other words, the one that happened unexpectedly. In order to understand her definition, it is important to introduce the family situation. Grandmother Rita was already raising her youngest seven-year-old daughter and taking care of a grandson (a child of her other daughter, who left to work abroad), when she found out that her third daughter's husband (son-in-law) left her granddaughter in a weekly kindergarten (her daughter had already left to work abroad). The granddaughter's adaptation in the kindergarten was extremely painful. When she fell ill and got into hospital, the grandmother could not endure such neglect of the girl and took her home. Thus, grandmother Rita was not taking care of one grandchild, yet of two. They were children of different daughters. At the time of the interview, grandmother Rita was blaming neither her daughter nor son-in-law for abandoning the granddaughter; she was only stating that she had nothing else to do but to take care of this granddaughter as well. Grandmother Rita defined the meaning and the beginning of transitional life situation as an inevitable life situation, in her own words, 'You can't leave a child without care'.

Granddaughter's care and granddaughter's description. As her granddaughter was experiencing the difficulties of separation and adaptation, the grandmother described further life with granddaughter as life with her own child. It is interesting that the grandmother did not share any experiences of parenting another grandchild (boy) and did not distinguish any situations of care. Probably she would not talk about the grandchild's (boy's) care because it was short-lived; and moreover, the relationship with him was different. As grandmother Rita claimed, a strong interrelationship with her granddaughter was built instantly. The relationship was disclosed through the description of granddaughter, when presenting the details of

her active behavior, everyday tricks. Considering grandmother's elaboration on her personality, the way she solved conflicts (with respect to child's personality), it is possible to make conclusions about the aspects of care. It was not easy for the grandmother to take care of active granddaughter and to solve everyday conflicts between her youngest daughter and granddaughter; still, she did not complain and lived with a credo: 'While children are little, you cannot expect much from them'.

Painful future. Grandmother and granddaughter's separation. Future perspective was the most painful topic to grandmother Rita. There was the moment, it seemed to the interviewer that the grandmother did not hear the question about the future. After he had specified the question, Rita disclosed that she was afraid to look into the future and was afraid of her daughter's wish to take the granddaughter to live with her in the foreign country. The grandmother defined the interrelationship between herself and granddaughter as that of a mother and a child. Thus, she looked into the future with fear as she thought her granddaughter would suffer the separation again; the way it happened in the kindergarten where she was 'left' alone for a long time.

Time dimension

Grandmother Rita retold the events using tense corresponding the situation; yet she constructed significant events in the past using the present tense. The extract from the interview represents the situation when the grandmother started talking about present relationship (reflection on the present) with her granddaughter (*I love her more*) after she was talking about the beginning of care in the past (*Well, I was tugging with them*).

My husband works as a driver. A jitney driver. He gets up early or comes back home late. I'm always alone. **Well, I was tugging with them.** And those nappies...

-Yeah and the age. If she's one year and a half...

Don't know how to eat.<> I. [granddaughter] was a year and seven [months] while those [daughter and another grandchild] were five.<>

-So you worked as both a grandmother and a nanny. <>

-No. You know, I. is like a daughter to me from her birth, not like a granddaughter. Maybe **I love her more**, though I have my own littlest one, I love her more than... [4:95-99]

The grandmother could not project the future coherently and kept returning to the events of the present. After a repeated question about the future (*it won't be easy*), grandmother Rita mentioned the feelings she was experiencing at the moment (*we're afraid*); and then returned to the present sharing about her granddaughter's response to the separation. Therefore, Rita illustrated that not only she was experiencing a trauma of separation, but her granddaughter was too.

It won't be easy for both of you..

-**We're afraid**. She keeps telling, 'I won't go to any Ireland. Dad [tells to her grandfather], if you want, you go.' [4:200-201]

Since the grandmother mostly used the present tense, it may be assumed that she had not reflected the painful experiences of the past and the future and the reflection was going on during the conversation. On the other hand, her reluctance to talk about the future could be evaluated as self-defense against painful experiences.

Focalization

The main grandmother Rita's attention was given to her granddaughter and family members in the narrative. She would recursively return to granddaughter's definition and relationship with her. This may be represented by the extract where, when asked about transitional life experiences, the grandmother responded, '*Many things happened*'. When elaborating on that, she was not talking about personal issues yet about her granddaughter's behaviour (*she wants everything*).

-**Many things happened** [laughs]

-So first let's talk about joys?

-Well, many things happened, oh dear. **She wants everything**... Some day she wants only eggs and eats nothing else <> After I **weaned her off** eggs and

weaned her into sweet curd, which I give to her every morning. Oh dear... Little by little. Then she got a scare. We went to the countryside and she got a scare and started peeing. [4:145-147]

When talking about her granddaughter, Rita mentioned the means of behaviour correction she used (*weaned off*, *weaned into*), which revealed the grandmothers' wish to take a good care of the child.

Social context

At the beginning of the conversation, when grandmother Rita mentioned various names and different durations of care periods, the interviewer was lost; as a result, he spared a considerable amount of time to ascertain the social context of grandmother Rita's family. For example, it was not clear for the interviewer which daughter's child the granddaughter was, and he would try to specify which grandchild Rita was talking about. Later, it emerged that the grandmother was mostly talking about the granddaughter who was left without care, and with whom she had a close relationship.

During the interview, grandmother Rita gave a lot of attention to the description of her granddaughter. Since she was also raising her youngest daughter, she would compare the granddaughter and daughter. When retelling various situations, the grandmother attempted to depict her agile granddaughter. Two extracts represent the way Rita kept going back to supplement the image of the agile and active girl (*it's better to run* or *she's always climbing and monkeying around*).

Oh, she set her heart on a bike, but is afraid to ride it. Well, I went and bought a bike. It was no point – she rode it four times and brought a broken thing. It ended. **It's better to run.** It's not that she were... She doesn't have her favorite toy or something. [4:235]

She runs and ... You can't... You have to watch her... <> Now we were looking over that little house. It's T. avenue, near the street. We were only talking to that woman and then I turn around – she's not there. She's already in that house. It seemed like her own house. Somewhere. By metal staircase. She is climbing already. **She's always climbing and monkeying around.**

A way to construct the meaning

It is not easy to define the way grandmother Rita constructs the narrative meaning: at first glance her stories seem chaotic yet later their tendencies may be comprehended. The main style of narrative construction is to present the abundance of events using humor without introduction into the story and story generalization. Since the events are presented in the present tense, it is difficult to perceive their order. It may be assumed that grandmother Rita gave little thought to the lived situation, i.e. she interpreted the outlived events little. On the other hand, in case she reflected on that, the narrative was mainly constructed about the granddaughter. The grandmother did not attempt to define personal experiences of transitional life situation during the interview, yet she tried to describe the existing relationship with the granddaughter. That is why the main stories are about the granddaughter; and when comparing the granddaughter to her little daughter, she defines herself not as a grandmother but as her mother.

It seems that the grandmother wanted to emphasize that she was the only one to take care of her granddaughter and to seek her well being. The moment of separation in the future is the turning-point in the narrative. The grandmother as though asked herself how she would have to separate when she gave so much love to her granddaughter and she accepted her as mother.

5th interview with grandmother Lina. Granddaughter is joy.

Multiple stories

Beginning of care. Granddaughter is joy. In order to reveal the meaning of transitional life situation, grandmother Lina did not choose to talk about the situations that caused the beginning of granddaughter's care, but revealed the essential meaning of transitional situation, i.e. relationship with granddaughter. The grandmother defined in a very sensitive and beautiful manner that being with her granddaughter was joy. From the very beginning the grandmother reflected the meaning of transition to her.

She disclosed that to take care of the granddaughter was, first of all, life with responsibility, which was different from responsibilities of raising her own children.

Staying with granddaughter since she was little. As grandmother Lina did not live with her granddaughter from her birth, she recalled the prehistory of building a relationship. The interrelationship started earlier, before the transitional life situation. Grandmother Lina was a medical nurse and she felt responsible for granddaughter's health improvement. They would go to the seaside in summer for a month, would spend holidays together. Since her daughter and son-in-law were students, she would take granddaughter with her during their examinations.

Granddaughter's reaction to separation. Feeling of responsibility. Another story important to grandmother Lina was granddaughter's separation from her mother. At the time of the interview, the grandmother was taking care of the granddaughter for the second time; and therefore, she seemed to compare granddaughter's separation for the first and the second time. In the conversation, grandmother remembered that the first separation was painful to the granddaughter (she had troubles sleeping at night, cried). Thus grandmother (together with her daughter) was preparing the granddaughter for the second separation in advance. According to the grandmother, after the daughter had left, the granddaughter reacted to the separation in a calmer way. Later the grandmother mentioned current situations when it was difficult for her to understand granddaughter's reactions such as serious attacks of anger. Nevertheless, grandmother Lina did not search for possible reasons for this behavior; she would rather analyze the way she talked to the child and helped her calm down. When the interviewer asked about personal experiences, it seemed significant for the grandmother to stress how important it was for her 'to handle' the granddaughter's care and the feeling of responsibility helped her most.

Girl and parents' relationship. Later grandmother Lina passed to another story, emphasized granddaughter and daughter's reactions at the moments

of meetings (daughter came back several times). She emphasized granddaughter's joy when she met her mother. It was important for the grandmother to mention that daughter was missing her child (granddaughter) and said several times it was difficult to live without her. The grandmother stressed that granddaughter could live abroad together with her mother, but then it would be harder for the daughter to earn money.

Possibility of separation. Granddaughter – this child is also mine. At the end of the story, the grandmother touched the future perspective. She told that her daughter was planning to return to Lithuania; so it seemed to the grandmother that her granddaughter would automatically live with daughter. After a repeated question about the future experiences, the grandmother clearly stated that she would not be sad as constant granddaughter's being with her mother was the most important thing. When asked (with reference to the situation) whether daughter supports her during granddaughter's care, the grandmother defined one of the main meanings, i.e. she did not need support as this was her support to daughter, in grandmother's words '*this is the least I can do to help her*' [5:102]. She completed this story with one of generalizations that help was not needed as granddaughter was also her child. At the end of the conversation, grandmother Lina created the atmosphere of guilt because she compared the differences in daughter (children) and granddaughter's care: she could not give as much attention to her daughter when she was little as she did to her granddaughter.

Time dimension

Time dimension helped reveal the situation (process) of the grandmother's experience. Experiences that did not cause any troubles were constructed in the past tense; whereas the situations or experienced that were still going on or were important were told in the past and present tense. During the interview, grandmother created the feeling of continuous experience. The extract shows that after the interviewer's question about the situations of granddaughter's illnesses, grandmother Lina started talking generally about

the past events (*outlived*); and then passed to evaluation of situations at present (*I see <> I can handle everything*).

<>how did you feel about <>(granddaughter's) illnesses,<>?

<> I **outlived** everything fairly easy <> And I **see** that I **can handle everything** perfectly well. Perfectly well. I can handle every situation. [5:161-162]

Focalization

The main attention in Lina's stories was given to granddaughter and daughter. It seemed more important for grandmother to show granddaughter's reactions and daughter's experiences. Yet when talking about granddaughter's behavior, she would start talking about her personal reactions; in this way, she created an image of helping and sensitive grandmother. In the presented extract it may be seen that when the grandmother started talking about granddaughter (*she*), she defined her help (*we tried to talk*) as a response to granddaughter's emotions.

<> As **she** tried to beat me also, to push and the like. And **she** was so attached... **She** was afraid I wouldn't leave her anywhere. **She** wouldn't stay anywhere alone. Maybe it was simply her distrust. Not only aggression. As **she** simply was afraid... For example, I would go somewhere and **she** would say, 'Granny don't leave me. Will you come? Will you be back soon?'. She wouldn't stay alone in the room<> **We tried**... Whenever the aggression showed, **we tried to talk to her**. [5:54]

The usage of plural *we* shows grandmother's relationship with her granddaughter and that lived event is a mutual experience.

Social context

The grandmother tried to create various social contexts in her stories: circumstances that had an impact on granddaughter's care, her feelings about parenting her children and granddaughter. Lina laid the factors that conditioned granddaughter's care purposefully and coherently as though striving to justify her daughter, who had no other resort but to go to work abroad. She compared similarities of raising her children and granddaughter and claimed that talking (*we talk*) helped her settle things with granddaughter

(*she's easy to agree*); the same she did to agree with her own children (*When I was raising my own kids, I also managed to agree with them*).

She tells me, 'Granny, buy me this'. But then **we talk** maybe it's not necessary, maybe something else, but this demand is gentle <>. **She is easy to agree. When I was raising my own kids, I also managed to agree with them** on maybe not buying this thing, maybe some other time, or the like. Maybe we don't need this, we can do without it. I did this with my kids and I try to do the same with her <> [5:86]

When comparing the two different periods of parenting, the grandmother made it clear that the accumulated experience she gained when raising her own kids helped her to deal with the present situations with her granddaughter. Moreover, the grandmother was also creating the image of her as a specialist of solving dilemmas.

A way to construct the meaning

The data analysis revealed that the grandmother had reflected on transitional life situation. She was telling events coherently, used adequate tenses, made introductions and generalizations to the stories. As Lina discussed the lived events with her sister, who was also taking care of the grandchild, and as she told about the situations to her daughter, who was concerned about the girl's experiences, it may be assumed that the narrative had been reflected and interpreted with the help of the interactions.

The grandmother was constructing the narrative in the way to reveal not the series of events, but her relationship with granddaughter (in grandmother's words, '*This child is also mine*'). Lina attempted to show that the relationship with her granddaughter she had created (her daughter already had it) made the situations like granddaughter and daughter separation less painful. To specify, the grandmother did not attempt to show everything was fine, yet she tried to disclose the strong interrelationship that helped the granddaughter outlive painful situations in a shorter period of time.

Besides, Lina attempted to show the basis for the relationship with her granddaughter (*love*<> *it's different* [5:02]). The grandmother searched for words, compared differences between parenting her child and her grand-

daughter so that she herself and the interviewer could make a fuller picture that her granddaughter was loved differently, i.e. with more commitment, rejoicing every moment. Finally, when comparing the care of her granddaughter and her child, Lina showed that she spared more energy and time to her granddaughter than she could give to her daughter. When her daughter (mother to the granddaughter) was little, she took her to a weekly kindergarten. She also made excuses she had no possibilities to support her financially as though it was one of the reasons for daughter's external migration. When assuming the responsibility for granddaughter's care, the grandmother aspired to help her daughter 'to stand up on her own legs'.

6th interview with Biruté. The peculiarities of common life with a naughty granddaughter.

Multiple stories

Life together. Easy granddaughter's separation from mother. When the interviewer asked to tell about transitional life situation or its beginning, grandmother Biruté did not start analyzing the changes in her life, yet presented a general understanding about the family (*we've lived the whole life together* [6:18]). Being together was the main meaning constructed by the grandmother. She also added that having lived together all the time, the granddaughter experienced the separation from her mother (grandmother's daughter) easily. It was difficult for the grandmother personally to separate from her daughter as she was very young, and Biruté was afraid to let her go to a foreign country. The situation that granddaughter did not react to the separation from her mother surprised the interviewer, so he repeatedly asked about the issue. Grandmother mentioned she cried before parting from her daughter, her granddaughter also cried. However, she emphasized that it was only a short-lived experience. Nevertheless, it was more important for grandmother Biruté to mention not the reactions to separation,

but the fact that her daughter was trying to keep in touch with the granddaughter, she missed her and called often.

Daily round of grandparenthood: granddaughter's tricks. Another important topic, which the grandmother wanted to emphasize, was everyday life with granddaughter. It seemed that it was usual for the grandmother to live with the girl and to take care of her. She also mentioned her husband's (grandfather's) contribution to the care. When elaborating on the topic, Birutė did not tell common details of her life, yet talked more about the play-up of her granddaughter and the decisions she made about that. The grandmother emphasized that one of the main rules of parenting was the development of granddaughter's self-sufficiency.

Household on grandmother's shoulders. When elaborating on the aspects of granddaughter's care, the grandmother recalled her former daily round with daughter and son-in-law. She mentioned the story of her daughter's family (she got married very young) and former differences of the families. Birutė stressed that the departure was a good lesson to her daughter as it was a perfect opportunity to learn to live independently (the grandmother had been responsible for the household when they lived together).

Unclear future of the family: the possibility of living together. The last broad topic in the narrative was grandmother's concern about the future. Birutė was considering the possibility for her daughter to come back to live in Lithuania and for them all, to live together. According to her, daughter and son-in-law would not manage to earn enough money to buy a flat after their return. Although grandmother Birutė discussed the friction (conflicts) the two families had and their differences, her wish for her daughter to come back and live together was prevailing. Longing for her daughter was also reflected in the grandmother's relationship with her granddaughter. Birutė often called her by daughter's name and was happy to have one more little daughter. Moreover, the granddaughter helped return back in time and experience pleasant feelings of motherhood once again.

Time dimension

The majority of events were retold in the tense relevant to the event. The grandmother's style of narrative construction distinguished with the feature that the majority of events were constructed with a present perspective, i.e. the grandmother attempted to tell the events happening at the time rather than those of the past. When asked about her experience of separation from daughter, Birutė did not stress the experiences of the past yet talked about general changes in life. This is represented by the extract from the conversation where the grandmother talks about her daughter's actions in the past tense (*she wanted to leave* and *she said she would leave for 3 months*) and discusses the changes in life that were also true at the time of the interview from a present perspective (*take, go, return*).

And you...

Of course, it takes more time, I can't say otherwise. You have to **take** her to the kindergarten, **go** to work later and **return** earlier... there's less money (yeah)... but what else can I do. **She wanted to go** very much... let it be. **She said she would only leave for 3 months** but ... I don't know how it'll be. [6:21-22]

As the moment, when transitional life situation began, was not distinguished during the interview, the opinion that daughter's departure was only a temporary life stage prevailed – when she returns, family life will take its common course.

Focalization

Grandmother Birutė gave most of her attention to granddaughter, daughter and little of that to herself. When analyzing the extract from the interview, it may be assumed that the grandmother did not understand the question. It was more important for her to disclose granddaughter's behavior, daughter's experiences or the aspects of living abroad; to describe the situation, behavior and wishes of her granddaughter and daughter.

How did you feel about the situation? <>

Her departure... she would mention it at the beginning, vaguely... then 'Mom can I leave ... maybe it'll be better?' They want their own flat, I under-

stand her perfectly well, they want another... put together, two rooms, but it won't happen, they both are such people [giggles] [6:65-66]

When asked about personal experiences once again, it was difficult for the grandmother to evaluate her feelings and experiences; she defined them most often in one or two words, such as *not difficult* [6:122]. Nevertheless, the bond between Birutė and her granddaughter may be found in the story. The extract shows that the grandmother is forgiving to her granddaughter when she does not want to do something.

Yeab, forgive more?

Well, of course, grandmothers always allow... <> and granny would also help ... I would say, 'Gather your toys'. She does for a while, then cries, doesn't want to and comes to me, 'Granny, come, pick toys, help me...' So we go and gather toys together <>[6:119-120]

It is possible to assume that the important events were the collective ones, the situations were outlived mutually.

Social context

Grandmother Birutė was trying to reveal several social contexts of the situation: granddaughter's character and the differences of two families that lived in one flat. Having presented the details about her daughter or son-in-law's behavior, Birutė described the situation in the following way: grandparents were tired of young family's lifestyle (repeated visits of daughter's friends, son-in-law sitting at the computer for a long time). When describing granddaughter's agility (*cannot sit, falls down*) and her tricks, the grandmother was creating the context of worries and joy at the same time (grandmother's '*laugh*' illustrates that):

She moves all the time, cannot sit even for a minute, falls down from the chair. If she goes to take a bath, falls out of the bathtub... [**laughs**]... A. goes up or slides down the stairs, or come, other times she climbs the coil pipe, impossible to reach, or climbs into the sink... when she was little I simply had to shorten all curtains. She couldn't walk, yet would grab them as a monkey...[6:250]

The grandmother was wise when parenting her granddaughter, because she remembered her mother's excessive control and tried to raise her daughter and granddaughter differently, develop their self-sufficiency from an early age.

A way to construct the meaning

The grandmother did not see any specific personal experiences; she was more worried about general well-being of the family. It seemed to her that daughter's departure was a way to become independent and mature. Moreover, she considered granddaughter's care as raising her own child. Grandmother Birutė tried to render the meaning of transitional life situation, i.e. granddaughter was a joy in her life.

Birutė constructed the meaning of transitional life situation in several ways, presenting various situations with humor. At first, her talking style seemed chaotic as there was no introduction into the story, no generalizations. It seemed that the grandmother did not answer the questions. The analysis revealed that grandmother Birutė had not reflected her life changes to be a kind of crisis or alteration, but accepted this as a usual life situation of a big family. Humor was not reflected directly in the text. However, intonation and sarcastic generalizations of the story created it, which witnessed that the grandmother accepted the situation with a natural joy. Therefore, the unheard questions were not accidental. Birutė told her inner stories, i.e. the way she interpreted the situations. It may be assumed that a deeper interpretation and reflection of the situation was happening at the moment of the interview with the help of interactions with the interviewer, when she paid more attention to personal experience.

7th interview with grandmother Aldona. Simply one family.

Multiple stories

Reasons for granddaughter's care: daughter's wish to leave. In order to reveal the meaning of transitional life situation, grandmother Aldona started her story with the reasons for granddaughter's care, i.e. her daughter's wish

to leave and earn some money. Her daughter was divorced so the main motive for leaving, according to Aldona, was her wish to improve family well-being and to save some money for studies. The grandmother shortly mentioned she did not know her daughter's further plans.

Separation from mother: 'Everything was normal'. Life as one family. When talking about her daughter, the grandmother started discussing the impact of separation. She searched for words to define the way her granddaughter experienced the situation but not to define her own state. Having failed finding the right words, she generalized '*everything was normal*' [7:64]. In this way the grandmother wanted to tell that the granddaughter, who lived with Aldona since small age, did not accept the separation very painfully. The grandmother stressed that her daughter was the one to suffer most; and, whenever the circumstances were favorable, she would come to visit them.

Everyday life of grandmother and granddaughter. Another group of events that created the same meaning of narrative was the peculiarities of everyday life. In this story, the grandmother also mentioned other members of the family (grandfather and son) and told how they interacted with the granddaughter and helped with her care. Aldona did not present many situations or details about everyday life with her granddaughter; she simply mentioned that situations were similar to those of a usual life with a small child, i.e. taking her to kindergarten, taking from there, going to bed, etc.

Life with/without granddaughter. Future. This was the second time grandmother Aldona took care of her granddaughter as her daughter, affected by longing, had taken the granddaughter abroad. When financial difficulties appeared, she returned the granddaughter to grandmother. When recalling the situation, Aldona started comparing what it meant to live with and without the girl. In her words, '*The house was empty*' [7:30] and it seemed that only after granddaughter's return the feeling of a full family came back. Therefore, the grandmother naturally completed the conversation with the analysis of daughter's plans, but emphasized that the

plans did not depend on her and she could not tell her daughter what to do. Nevertheless, the grandmother wanted her daughter to come back to Lithuania, finish her studies and live together again.

Time dimension

Grandmother Aldona told the majority of events with respect to the time of a situation. Since she had not experienced hard feelings, she mostly talked about the present. Yet the grandmother moved to the future family context several times when talking about the past. The following extract shows that when talking about her daughter's departure (*she left again*), Aldona related the event of the past with the future plans of her daughter (*she's planning to come back or to return for good*).

Later, when school year started **she left again**, and now for Christmas she returned and and ... the little one remained here. <> and until she settles, but perhaps she'll be here until summer, because my daughter **is planning to come back for good** in summer, <> Well, she'll come back to finish if her plans wouldn't end until then... **but at least this was the plan** that that ... **to come back for good** in summer. [7:38-40]

Time dimension reveals that one of the most important experiences is fear for her daughter's plans; because it will depend on the plans (*at least this was the plan*) whether the granddaughter would live with her or separately.

Focalization

Since the grandmother constructed the narrative how transitional life situation affected her relatives, she rarely mentioned herself and did not identify her place in this stage of life. Family, granddaughter and daughter's experiences were more important to her than personal ones. The following extract reveals how she started talking about her granddaughter (*the little one parted*) and daughter (*it was more difficult to my daughter*) when asked about her feelings:

Well, <> it's the first separation, how did you feel about the situation?

The little one parted very... I don't know, maybe if we had lived separately and daughter had brought and left, maybe it would have been differently. <>

And, well, everything is normal... only **it was** somehow **more difficult to my daughter** [7:61-62]

After repeated specification, the grandmother only mentioned that during the first separation she was worrying about her daughter (*I sent her off with tears in my eyes the first time* [7:76]). It is possible to assume that the experiences were collective, mutual, because the grandmother had difficulty in distinguishing individual members of the family in her stories, she was used to evaluating situations in family's eyes, as she said '*our family*' [7:70]

Social context

At the beginning of the conversation, Aldona gave a lot of attention to the description of family composition (even pets were mentioned) and painful status of her daughter's family (divorce). The grandmother probably felt the interviewer would not perceive all relatives' names and family composition easily so she introduced her family situation to the interlocutor. The only social context that the grandmother wanted to reveal to the interviewer was the context of a big family living together. Although her daughter had lived separately for two years, the grandmother told it was usual for her to live with daughter's family (*it cannot be otherwise*):

<> so you even like such a big family? Isn't it tiring when there is such a big family?

Well, it seems **it cannot be otherwise**... somehow I don't know, it seems it should be this way... no it's not tiring for sure. Besides we lived together when they got married... <> Well, and then it seemed this... we didn't divide this is your pot and this is ours, separately. It seems it's your children and **it cannot be otherwise**... [7:185-186]

A way to construct meaning

Grandmother Aldona did not discern the importance of transitional life situation, and it was difficult for her to find words and meaning to define the experiences. Due to this reason, the grandmother told about this stage of life in short stories and only the interviewer's questions expanded the topic being developed. It may be assumed that Aldona had not reflected much on this situation. On the other hand, it is understandable since

granddaughter's care was a usual outcome of life and the situation of a big family. The reflection of lived life situation was happening during the interview, i.e. using supplement interaction.

Because of natural understanding about life in a big family, it was usual for grandmother Aldona to evaluate things in her family's eyes. It seems that she adopted one of the prevailing cultural narratives, i.e. one family, common interest, and personal experiences are not so important. It seemed that during the interview, the grandmother tried to show to the interlocutor that the period of granddaughter's care was simply a natural stage of life.

8th interview with grandfather Petras. Grandfather as the best friend.

Multiple stories

Daughter's departure. Relationship with a grandchild. As the majority of other interviewed grandparents, Petras started the conversation with a short elaboration of the story about the reasons for daughter's departure. His daughter was divorced and was not doing well, whereas his son had already been working abroad. Thus it seemed natural to the grandfather that his daughter left to work abroad searching for a better life. When introducing into the factors of transitional life situation, Petras proceeded with the most important topic – the details of grandson's care. He started enumerating the reasons why it was namely him who assumed the care for the grandson (in the majority of cases, it was a grandmother who took care of grandchildren). Besides, grandfather Petras was attempting to stress another meaning in the story as well, i.e. the reason why his relationship with the grandson had started earlier. After he had retired and his grandson had fallen ill, he would often go to look after him; when summer came, the grandson would spend most of the time with his grandfather.

Grandson's separation from mother. While discussing the meaning of relationship with his grandson, Petras touched a further topic of grandson's separation from mother. The grandfather emphasized that it was a

rather easy separation because the grandson had already used to being with his grandfather. When asking to specify what exactly 'easy' meant, he started laying the factors that helped his grandson to feel like home with his grandparents. Boy's own room, grandparent's activities and time spent together helped the grandson to accept the life with his grandfather as a usual situation of life.

Daily routine with grandson: feeling of responsibility. In his story construction, the grandfather gave a lot of attention to the significance of grandson spending time together with his grandfather (and vice versa). He told about everyday walks, joint routine works and games they played. A partial devaluation of his contribution to the care was reflected in the narrative. The grandfather claimed he did not do anything special when taking care of the grandson, he only engaged in some activities with him, i.e. they went for a walk, played together, worked in the garden, made food. After a repeated question on personal experiences, grandfather Petras identified a strong feeling of responsibility for his grandson. He acknowledged that it was tiresome in his age, but did not elaborate on this topic because he did not want to complain about the situation. Further segments of the story revealed the daily round of grandparenthood and his relationship with the grandson. Petras stressed several times, as though unwillingly, that he was proud he got on with his grandson very well and that the boy was his best friend. It seemed significant for the grandfather that it was the grandson who thought of the notion 'best friend'.

Means of keeping in touch with daughter. The grandfather was trying to show that the grandson did not lose contact with his mother (daughter). Petras told in detail how his daughter called often on the phone, and his grandson wrote messages to his mother. The daughter and other family members, who had emigrated temporary, would often come back to visit the grandson and family, which the grandfather defined as '*not enough time to turn around*' [8:68]. In this topic grandfather Petras recalled the situations without his grandson as though unawares after the interviewer

encouraged him into this. The grandfather mentioned he experienced the feeling of emptiness when he was not with the boy, he lacked him in the house.

Daughter's plans: grandson unwilling to go abroad. Having turned to the future perspective, grandfather Petras shared that the plans depended on grandson and daughter's decision. He mentioned that the grandson did not want to live with his mother in a foreign country at the moment. The grandfather was not proud that the boy preferred living with him to living with his mother abroad. He simply wished his grandson would experience less painful feelings. Petras discussed his daughter's possibilities to return to Lithuania, the good wage she got abroad and doubted whether she would return to live here soon. The attitude that one does not have to make hasty decisions but to let the situation solve by itself prevailed in the story. Finally, in the end grandfather Petras indirectly revealed he wished the grandson would not leave and remain to live with him.

Time dimension

Grandfather Petras devoted most of his attention to the present, to daily routine of grandparenting in his stories. He mentioned the events of the past narrowly; therefore, it may be assumed that the past events had already been outlived and did not wake painful memories at the moment of the interview. Moreover, the grandfather rejoiced in his stories, that he succeeded to become the main caregiver to the grandson smoothly, and the care had no obstacles. The most difficult task for him was to project the future. For example, he started telling his daughter should return sometime in the future, then turned to considerations about present communication between the grandson and his mother (*they talk often and he hasn't forgotten*), and finally, finished the story with the query what the grandson would be in the future (*how he will develop*).

<> if she returns [talks about daughter], back to K. [town], as she had job and everything there and ... <> He grows and matures, he'll start... anyway, he'll be 7 then, 8 and 9 then, goodness knows. <>... no, to keep in touch

with his mom <> I say almost ev.. every evening he writes those messages and and **they talk often, he hasn't forgotten**... and he gives the news <> **how he will develop**, how his mind will be later, it's difficult to say [8:144]

It may be assumed that the difficulty to project the future appeared because the future situations depended on his daughter; and that the grandfather was used to reflect the situations of the current moment.

Focalization

The grandfather gave most of his attention in the stories to his grandson and daughter and to their experiences. When his daughter did not succeed with her family life (got divorced), the grandfather wished she would create material well-being of her family abroad. When asked repeatedly, however, the grandfather disclosed his personal experiences as well. For example, he experienced a strong feeling of responsibility for all family members, which was not only evidenced with the grandson's care but also with the aspiration for well-being of all family members. At many points in the interview, the grandfather used the plural *we*; in other situations, he presented the grandson's and his own behaviour as a shared moment (*to us* or *we eat, we say*)

You probably have to go everywhere automatically?

Well, **we** go everywhere already <>. [8:90]

Saturdays she also works till 2 pm. Well, yeah, and and... breakfast **to us** and dinner **we eat**, let the granny do the supper when she comes home, **we say**, at least once a day let her express herself. [8:96]

It may be assumed that the grandfather accepted the lived events as shared moments of family life and not as individual experiences of family members.

Social context

When analyzing the daily routine of grandparenting in the narrative, the grandfather paid much attention to the explanation why he was the main caregiver to his grandson. His retirement, wish to help his daughter, and love to his grandson were the multistories the grandfather analyzed; until

it became obvious that the grandfather not only was the best friend of the boy, but he also assumed the role of father. In the analysis of present friendly relationship between the grandfather and grandson (*he's my best friend* <> *he stresses often* or *he obeys me more*), Petras also revealed it did not interfere with the role of father (*we also fall out*). He compared that the grandson obeyed him more than his grandmother (*he's the boss*).

Uh, well, he has some friends in the garden but nev.. we never approached that... this and that is good but grandfather **is the best friend. He stresses often** that... 'This is my best frie..' when he has something good, the best bite goes to the best friend... Doesn't forget. <> **We also fall out** for a short time, as they say you can't this and that... 'Why grandmother allowed? Why she said it's ok?' Well, it happens sometimes but it passes away quickly and nothing. We are friends and everything is ok <> Yeah, **he obeys me more**. Yeah, **he's the boss** to the grandmother as they say. [8:156-158]

When analyzing the feeling of responsibility, the grandfather compared the differences between parenting his own children and taking care of the grandson. He showed that when they were young, his children were growing much more self-sufficient, and he was depressed with worries about household and subsistence. Nevertheless, the grandfather attempted to reveal that the fact he was not taking care of his own child and felt responsible to his daughter, determined the feeling of responsibility in the situation in contrast to worries about household and subsistence.

A way to construct the meaning

At first glance, it seems that grandfather Petras had reflected the transitional life situation only partly. He told the situations in detail, introduced into the situations, and generalized the stories. The grandfather seemed to tell personal inner story where the main focus was on family members and on disclosure of the relationship with his grandson, i.e. grandson considered him to be his best friend (and vice versa). In many cases, it was easier for grandfather Petras to describe his grandson's response to the situation; it took him some time to find the right words, and it was more difficult to find words to express his experiences. It was easier for Petras to perceive

his experiences when comparing a previous situation and the present transitional life situation. Time dimension of narrative construct reveals that the grandfather had difficulty in projecting future and in thinking about the situation when he would live without his grandson. The main meaning (that the grandfather attempted to render) of the constructed narrative was that the grandson missed his father and the grandfather was happy to be in his place.

9th interview with grandfather Jonas. The peculiarities of a big family.

Multiple stories

Big family situation. Spontaneous caretaking of grandchildren. Considering his family size to be exceptional, first of all, grandfather Jonas introduced to the situation, i.e. which son's children he was taking care of at the moment. At the moment of the interview, grandparents were taking care of two grandchildren. Since the son was living in the countryside, the granddaughter started school near grandparent's home so that she could be with them after school. In case of bad weather, the granddaughter would stay with grandparents for a longer period. When the second grandchild grew up, parents took him to the kindergarten in town. He would also stay for a night with grandparents in order to be with his sister and profit from being with grandparents (for example, get exceptional attention from them). Therefore, when describing various life situations, the grandfather wanted to show *'it happened'* spontaneously and naturally that his grandchildren's care started way before their parents left abroad.

Children's departure. Full care of grandchildren. Little by little the grandfather moved to another topic, i.e. children's departure to work abroad. It was not easy for the interviewer to understand which of the big family's children went abroad first; yet it seemed that the parents of the granddaughter in care were invited by other brothers who had already emigrated. It appeared as a natural outcome to become a caregiver to his grandchildren for grandfather Jonas since the grandchildren had already got used to

living with their grandparents. Jonas indirectly emphasized that his wife (grandmother) was more taking care of their granddaughter and since he had to take the grandson to kindergarten, he became friends with the younger grandson.

Children's separation from parents. Parents' initiative to keep in touch with children. When elaborating on the moment of separation, grandfather Jonas stressed that the grandchildren did not have painful experience. Grandparent's place was like a second home to them and this served as an auxiliary factor. On the other hand, it was important for the grandfather to stress how children aspired to keep in touch with grandchildren, called everyday via Skype, saw each other's faces. Children would often return to Lithuania for holiday and the grandparents' themselves with grandchildren flew to visit parents several times.

Daily routine of grandparenthood: relationship with grandson. When discussing the current transitional life situation, the grandfather paid a lot attention to his care of a younger grandson: he would take him to kindergarten every day, take him from there, and go shopping with him. The grandfather compared that earlier it was his wife who took care of a big band of children; whereas at the moment, when he was retired and worked part time, Jonas could spare more attention to grandchildren's care. When asked about the role of a caregiver he had assumed (whether he feels like father or like grandfather), Jonas mentioned that they were friends as though unawares. The grandparent was happy that he was important and needful to his grandson.

Future: further care of grandchildren. The peculiarities of a large family. When projecting the future, grandfather Jonas was not sure, because the situation depended on the children working abroad. Nevertheless, it could be felt that the grandfather was calm as he was sure his son would come back to Lithuania and build a house near K. Consequently, his grandchildren would live with them until they were in school. Then, further in the conversation, the grandfather started developing the meaning of a big family

so that it was clearer to the interviewer. Grandfather Jonas has lived in a three-generation family, which was open (many relatives and friends would visit) all the time; and thus, it seemed natural to him that his grandchildren would spend much time with them in the future. Jonas noticed that there had been many people in their house all the time: ‘*We have never lived alone*’ [9:96]

Time dimension

When constructing the narrative, grandfather Jonas kept to the sequence of events and told them according to the time dimension relevant to the situation. However, some significant events were constructed following a different principle: having started talking about a past event, Jonas would make a leap and start telling about the present situation or experience. For example, in the analysis of the moment of grandchildren’s separation in the past, he mentioned grandson’s feelings after the separation (*wasn’t feeling well*), and then, having made a leap, the grandfather started describing everyday communication of grandchildren and their parents (*every day they talk*), i.e. tried to show what was happening at the moment.

How did you feel when seeing A.’s and L.’s acceptance of their parents leaving?

Well, of course, first of all A. **wasn’t feeling well**... but with modern communication means it’s possible every other way. **Every day they talk** using the computer, via the computer and this Skype. [9:45-46].

It is possible to assume that grandparent Jonas tended to assess and reflect on the situations happening in the present.

Focalization

In the elaboration of stories about a big family, the main attention was paid to family relatives and grandchildren. Although he had difficulties not to define his feelings, it was obvious that grandfather was happy about grandson’s care and the feeling of being needed.

The grandfather told some stories using the plural pronoun *we*. When talking about his and his wife’s experience after the grandchildren left, or, for example, when talking about the time spent with the grandchild, the

grandfather mentioned what they did with his grandson and used ‘*we*’ several times.

Here **we**.. of course, he goes with me to that countryside, my granddaughter tidies there, **we** cut trees, make wood or do something, everything. He does everything with me <> **we** go. **We** play <> [9:136]

Moreover, when talking about other events, the grandfather presented the situation not only from family’s perspective but also revealed his personal attitude to the experience. The extract shows that Jonas identifies the time spent without grandchildren (i.e. joint activities) using plural pronoun *we* (*we’d go, race*); whereas the experience and life without grandchildren and children is defined from a personal perspective (*it’s empty* <> *it was better, less worries, then it became boring*)

<> it was this time, I think it was July or something, I don’t know, when **we** well...two of us remained <>. You return, go to the countryside, it’s empty again, there’s nothing. Yeah... somehow it was good. **We’d go, race** to some friends at weekends, to Klaipeda, to Nida, to some other place... when with family, you can’t go like that, but when it’s just two of us it’s possible. First it was strange, **then it was better, less worries**. And **then it became boring**. <> [9:122]

Although, considering the narrative construct, it is not possible to say exactly whether the grandfather defined the experience personally or not; it is possible to assume that it was the feeling experienced by the grandfather. The conclusion is based on a general feeling of analysis, because when reading the whole interview, it was clear that grandfather Jonas had his own opinion.

Social context

The grandfather felt that the interviewer had a different experience about living in a big family; and therefore, he spared a lot of attention to elaboration on the meaning of three generation family, full house of children (<> *family gathers around the table, 16 people, only family members* <>[9:96]). The grandfather wanted to reveal to the interlocutor that such moments

as temporary separation from parents were experienced differently in a big family.

Another meaning of social context creation was that the grandfather, wishing to understand the present relationship with his grandson better, started comparing how much attention he had given to his children, and how much he was involved with his grandson at the moment. It was obvious that he was spending much more time with his grandson (*I didn't spend so much time with my children. <>I couldn't find time*); and therefore, for the first time he felt the pleasure of taking care of a child (grandson) (*and now <> we do something, anything*).

I have this association whether you walk as a grandfather with a grandson or as two friends...?

It looks like two friends... I mean, well, he asks questions, now he's at this age, so he asks about everything. I tell and explain. **I didn't spend so much time with my children** when they were growing, so I simply... I couldn't make, because I worked from morning till evening and and... would run everywhere. **I couldn't find time. And now**, well <> We <> take, **do something, anything** <>[9:137-140]

A way to construct the meaning

When constructing the narrative, grandfather Jonas used several principles, i.e. to present the series of events and, if it is necessary, to introduce the social context. In detailed analysis, it was difficult to relate various events into one narrative, because the grandfather did not always introduce the situations, and some stories were not generalized. However, he would spare much time to introduce into one or another social situation so that the listener (interviewer) had a clear understanding of the context. Thus predominant ambiguities about the links among the events did not impede the understanding that Jonas was not interested in minor details. It was much more important for him to reveal a miscellaneous life of a big family, what it meant to be in such a family. The image of a big family is created: family members do not try to emphasize minor happenings which

occur fairly often in such families in comparison to small ones, and they focus only on much more important things.

I think that the grandfather had not reflected on transitional life situation partly, i.e. the narrative was constructed using interactions with family members. It seemed that Jonas told the stories he already knew, such as the stories of family context, which could only be created on the principle of interchange between family members.

When comparing the amount of attention spared on his children and on the grandson, the grandfather showed indirectly that he felt guilty about the lack of attention to his children and was happy he could at least give more attention to his grandson, who, in his words, *'is maybe... loved most of all'* [6:68].

10th interview with grandmother Marija. Grandson is joy.

Multiple stories

Daughter's aspirations abroad. Grandmother's wish to help her daughter with grandson's care. Grandmother Marija started her story with an introduction into her daughter and grandson's situations. Feeling individual reasons for daughter's emigration, she tried to emphasize the factors of departure: the grandmother thought it was best for her daughter, making a career as an artist, to implement her aspirations in a foreign country. The daughter gave birth to a son and then, wishing to combine both motherhood and the career of an artist, asked the grandmother to come to a foreign country and to help her raise the grandson temporarily. Later Marija stressed that she told her daughter personally that after her grandson was born, she would help her as much as possible. The understanding of help came from personal experience (the grandmother is an artist herself), and so she remembered how difficult it was for her personally to combine the career of an artist with the role of a mother.

First contacts with a little grandson. In order to make a contact with her grandson, grandmother Marija went to stay with her daughter and

grandson for a month. Since the daughter had been trying to return to work for some time, the grandmother started taking care of her grandson when daughter started working; in her own words, she was trying to get in touch with him. The grandmother told about her first meetings with her grandson with pleasure and stressed that, after the grandson grew up a little and daughter left him for a longer time, it was not difficult for them to make a connection.

Grandson's care – personal psychological preparation. When moving on to the grandson's care in Lithuania, first of all the grandmother wanted to emphasize the problem of grandson's bilingualism; and only then started talking about personal preparation. She was searching for words to define what it meant for her, a working and active lecturer, an energetic public woman, to become a caregiver to her grandson. The grandmother was constructing the meaning of psychological preparation as she knew beforehand that she would have to help her daughter with grandson's care. She identified her fear, yet was more concerned about simple everyday things (for example, how to dress him) as opposed to worrying about deciding whether to assume the care of her grandson or not. Marija recalled difficult cases as well: when her grandson fell ill with scarlatina, she was very much worried about his health. It was hard for her to combine her work with grandson's care and decide how to treat him since her daughter did not agree with family doctor's recommendations. Nevertheless, the grandmother stressed that it was not the challenges that were the most important in the care, but waiting whether the grandson would accept life without his mother, whether he would like to be with his grandmother. The grandson liked being with his grandmother and Marija thought she was capable of taking care of him. As the grandmother was still working, she kept telling how she managed to combine work and grandparenting and was happy she '*handled*' it due to her personal effort and due to considerable help she received from close people.

Grandson's separation from his mother. Grandson's relationship with grandmother. The grandmother also remembered painful moments of the life stage, especially her grandson's separation from daughter. Marija told about one parting when the grandson had strong emotions when separating from his mother, i.e. cry and anger. Only having returned to Lithuania, the grandson calmed down. They learned from their mistakes and the daughter would prepare her son for forthcoming separations, which, according to the grandmother, made the separations less painful. Marija stated that one of the reason for less painful separation was grandson's being accustomed to her and his love to grandmother.

Grandson's character. Moving on to the daily routine of grandparenting, grandmother Marija paid a lot of attention to former challenges of care. The grandmother told about her grandson's likes and about a long process of going to bed in the evening. However, she did not complain about that, yet more wished to describe her grandson's character. When telling how these situations were solved, Marija revealed she accepted grandson's '*principles*' and did not rush to change them; she even tried to adapt to them. She also was happy she could reach her own goals in education, i.e. involve her grandson into various activities.

Temporary custody arrangement. When describing everyday life, the grandmother mentioned the peculiarities of obligatory legalization of temporary custody. She was telling with excitement how she experienced a shock having found that she had to arrange an official custody for a grandson in order to ensure social and health support in case of an accident. Anger and disappointment prevailed in the grandmother's story. She told she had to prove her mental health and capability (financial and emotional) to take care of her grandson. Grandmother Marija had difficulties with documentation since her grandson had different nationality (born abroad); and thus, the administration of custody documents protracted. Later she generalized that legalization of custody also gave the feeling of full right to grandson's care.

Grandmother's life without her grandson: future self-realization. It was important for the grandmother to project the future. She took care of the grandson in stages when her daughter needed her help most; therefore, she was planning her forthcoming short-term moments of care in advance. Grandmother Marija was telling that her daughter was worried she could not be with her child; and thus she searched for the job that would allow her working in one constant place (at the moment she was working in several European countries). There was no sadness in her story; she was discussing a possibility to visit daughter and grandson and thinking about a future job. The grandmother thought it was important for her to improve her qualification; she was telling she would have more time for children whom she was teaching, for their preparation to participate in forthcoming art competitions.

Time dimension

In grandmother Marija's narrative, time dimension was constructed considering which family member the story was being developed about. When talking about the daughter and her situation, Marija used time dimension corresponding the situation in the majority of cases. Whereas when telling about her grandson and about the events she participated in, the grandmother used two tenses – past and present. For instance, the grandmother was telling the situation when the grandson returned to her for the second time (*when he came back*), which was an event in the past, and then she constructed her and her grandson's behavior in the present perspective (*I think or he looks at me and smiles*).

<> when he was two years old, he reacted to everything in one way, and now when he is three years old, he grew up, there are all kinds of problems <> **when he came back** [past perspective] **I think** how I will handle things as he doesn't say a word. He speaks his own language... [present perspective] <> **he looks at me and smiles** but... he doesn't speak. At all. [present perspective] <> then I heard before going to bed, as he called me: 'Granny' [past] [10:56]

Combination of two tenses created an atmosphere that grandmother Marija was outliving the same concern when she could not talk with him

and the prevailing joy when the grandson said *granny* in Lithuanian in the evening.

The analysis of future projection enabled to understand that it was not easy for the grandmother to see her future without the grandson; therefore, whenever she touched the topic of the future, she would return to the present situations of the care. Marija elaborated on the topic of present grandson's occupation (the grandson was attending kindergarten, afternoon workgroups) and as though accidentally moved to the topic of future school. It seemed that the grandmother was persuading herself because she thought the grandson would have to live with his mother constantly when he started school as his mother would have to take care of school issues and not the grandmother.

Focalization

In the narrative being constructed, the focus was on the grandson and on the grandmother herself. It was important for the grandmother to start the stories with her grandson; unlike other grandparents, however, she analyzed the impact of the situations and events on her personally. Important situations were constructed using the plural pronoun *we* (*we suffered less here, we do, or we come to grips*). This shows the way the situation was experienced:

When I have to organize some event, it's a bit tiring, because when he is in the kindergarten and when he... isn't ill. Now he falls ill less, this winter **we suffered less here**. [10:87]

Well, what **we do**. **We**... I somehow, **we** also have to, well **I run with him now to that X school**. <> Sometimes we don't go when the weather is bad. Well, we ... then **we come to grips** <> In the musical theatre he was three times, in the puppets' theatre, in the drama theatre, every time or every Saturday or Sunday we do something with him. Now we were in the zoology museum. [10:96]

The extract shows that the grandmother also uses singular forms as she says '*I run with him to that school*'. It is possible to assume that the grandmother constructed and evaluated the personal experience through her

eyes. This is represented by another extract, where the grandmother told about formalities grandson's temporary permit arrangement and dealing with the Migration office (*it's very unpleasant to me*):

And now Migration office is waiting. **It's very unpleasant to me**, you know, because it seems the child is some criminal a little, as he needs... a permit to live. That grandmother is ... I am, is, the Migration office said I'm nobody. There are parents to watch their child and grandmother has nothing to do with that. [10:132]

Social context

The grandmother gave a lot of attention to highlighting and emphasizing the social context of her daughter and grandson. Grandmother Marija understood that her daughter, as distinct from the majority of Lithuanians, did not leave her native country to earn some money but to take an opportunity to make a career. Her grandson was born and grew abroad; therefore, it seemed natural he experienced the difficulties of bilingualism when living in Lithuania. Besides, the grandmother was analyzing her personal social context, i.e. life without the grandson, the projection of future when she would not have to take care of the child; she was trying to show her occupation and was constructing an important meaning of work in her life (<> *As I also have to improve my qualification* [10:180]).

A way to construct the meaning

It seems that the grandmother had reflected on and interpreted transitional life situation, because the inner narrative prevailed. She would answer the questions broadly; and it even appeared that the grandmother kept starting an additional or new topic unrelated to the main story. When analyzing the narrative, a thought would come to mind – why does the grandmother intertwine two different stories? Only the generalizations of narrative revealed the principle the grandmother used to construct the narrative, i.e. to join different stories and make one conclusion. For example, when the grandmother was telling about her grandson's care, she started talking about the particularity of her job as though unawares, and at the

end she generalized that the specific kind of job allowed her organizing the grandson's care in a more flexible way.

To summarize, the conclusion may be drawn that grandmother Marija was constructing the following meaning of transitional life situation: the grandmother, who was about to finish her career as an artist, agreed to take care of her grandson and in this way helped her daughter to make a career, which was only possible abroad. Experience acquired by the grandmother and her psychological preparation helped accept the grandson the way he was and to handle the problems she faced during the care. The grandson '*brought extremely great joy*' [10:92] to the grandmother, who was satisfied with active self-realization (work) but lived alone.

11th interview with grandmother Odeta. Grandchild filled in the emptiness of the house.

Multiple stories

The story of daughter's departure. Painful separation from daughter. Like the majority of grandparents, grandmother Odeta started her story with the reasons that influenced the transitional life situation. Having graduated from school, daughter received an invitation from her friends and left to earn some money for her studies. It was painful for grandmother that the daughter was deceived by a boyfriend who was her child's father. Daughter had lived with the man for some time, and then they separated. Grandmother Odeta told her daughter's story with tears in her eyes and pitied that her daughter gave birth to a child being so young, which encumbered the possibilities to study and make a career. On the other hand, Odeta confessed that she was not ready for such a rapid departure of her daughter, as she had only recently separated from her parents.

The story of grandchild's illness. This was the main topic in grandmother Odeta's story. She kept returning to the topic during the entire interview. The grandmother was telling that when the grandson was born abroad, he fell ill many times during his first year. The grandmother narrated in

detail that her daughter had many troubles with that, and the doctors who unsuccessfully treated the child finally made it even worse. Seeing that her grandson was constantly ill, grandmother Odeta decided to take him to Lithuania in order to examine him thoroughly and to diagnose the illness adequately. The grandmother was happy that Lithuanian doctors diagnosed chronic airway disorder. Thus she started proper treatment according to their recommendations.

Taking care of an ill grandson. Another part of grandmother Odeta's narrative was related to the care of the grandson with health problems. She shared that it was hard to arrange treatment when not knowing the diagnosis and combine work with grandson's care. When the illness flared, her daughter was worried a lot. The diagnosed airway disorder was very much alike to the illness of the late father of the grandmother (family experience) and that of her daughter living abroad. Having calmed down, the grandmother told that then at least she knew how to take care of and treat the grandson. When the illness stabilized, the grandmother was happy that a little boy was living with her at the stage of life and helped with the empty-nest syndrome, i.e. a younger son was living in the grandmother's family but he was rarely at home; her husband was not eager to communicate either. Consequently, she was happy that she at least had a close person who needed her.

Grandson's experience of living without mother. In several parts of her narrative, the grandmother talked about what it meant for her grandson to live without his mother. Since he was a little boy, according to grandmother, he did not fully understand the moment of separation and considered his grandmother to be his mother. At another point in the story, she was telling about grandson's longing for his mother. The grandmother was crying while talking, so it was obvious the situations were painful experiences to her due to grandson's suffering.

Grandson's future. The grandmother mentioned that the future depended on her daughter. She knew that, after the grandson's health

improved, there was a real possibility that the daughter would want to take him with her. Strong interrelationship between the grandmother and her grandson were reflected in this part of the story. He reminded her of a pre-teen daughter, and she experienced the feelings of motherhood for the second time. Nevertheless, Odeta understood that the grandson belonged to daughter and not to her and discussed that she could not wish the grandson for herself; therefore, she left the topic open as the daughter's decision would have to determine the situation.

Time dimension

Grandmother Odeta often told important experiences according to the following principle: having mentioned an event in the past, she constructed her personal or other family members' behavior in the present perspective. For example, when describing the past situation that caused a lot of troubles when her grandson '*fell ill with pneumonia*', which happened just after she had brought him to Lithuania (*I brought him here and in a week*), she laid further actions of family members in present perspective (her personal: '*I'm afraid to tell my daughter*' or *I think*; or her daughter's: '*I want to talk*')

<> it was horrible when he **fell ill with that pneumonia** [talks in agitated voice] <> That's how it was. **I brought him here and in a week...** and **I'm afraid to tell my daughter**. She keeps asking: 'How's Modestas, **I want to talk** to him through the Internet'. And we're already in hospital with him. 'Good', I say, 'He's sleeping'. She talks to me on the phone. I tell, 'The kid's sleeping, he's good'. And he has had this temperature of 39 degrees for 5 or 6 days, it doesn't drop. Oh Jesus, **I think**, if something happens, it'd eat my heart out. [11:61]

As grandmother Odeta was telling about the majority of important events with tears in her eyes, it is possible to assume that she outlived the painful moments of transitional life stage once again during the interview.

Focalization

Grandmother's story clearly reflected that she was more concerned about her daughter's destiny and grandchild's health than about her personal experience. For instance, when asked how she handled the situation (*how*

did you take) when the daughter returned for a holiday with the grandson, Odeta started elaborating the topic with focus on the daughter (*she wanted to come back to Lithuania for a long time*)

So, **how did you take** the situation, having invited your daughter and grandson to you?

No, you see, at the beginning, **she wanted to come back to ... Lithuania for a long time**, even when the kid was little. [11:52-53]

It is possible to think that it was difficult for the grandmother to look closely to her family experience; she was worried about her close people's suffering. Nevertheless, Odeta tried to discuss how the events affected her personally. After she had been asked the same question for the second time, she would think and answer in short sentences; whereas it was too hard for her to define more painful experiences as she was overwhelmed with emotions. For example, the grandmother told with tears in her eyes how painful it was for her grandson to separate; and, after a repeated question what it meant for her to see this, she could not respond, only cried.

A close relationship with family members is also revealed by another moment. Grandmother Odeta often answered the questions using plural forms to describe their actions together with grandson (*what we do, we take a walk, go somewhere or stay at home*).

What we do? He wants to go somewhere all the time. When we don't go, **we take a walk**. There is this neighbours' kid, plays with a dog. Runs in the meadow. What else... there are only few days. Saturday, Sunday until noon, then he gets up in the afternoon... and **we** again **go somewhere**, something. Or we make something to eat. Or **we stay at home** <> [11:68-69].

It is possible to assume that the grandmother was not used to assessing the situations personally, the experiences seemed common or mutual to her.

Social context

Grandmother Odeta focused on several social contexts in her narrative: daughter's situation and the story of grandson's illness. For instance, she felt that her daughter's story was not ordinary, it was revealing; therefore,

she told in detail why her daughter (being very young) left abroad (*there was one who turned her brains*), why she did not return to Lithuania (*it appears, she was already pregnant and she found a job there and stayed*)

Secondary school, she was about to enter... to study further. **There was one who turned her brains**, this A. [giggles], that his mother is in X [foreign country] and they have to go there, to earn for studies. <> Well, they left, a month passed, everything, I waited and waited and nothing. No... only she called 'Mom, I'll be back, mom, I'll be back'. So I say, 'How are you studies, everything'. 'I'll postpone, maybe later, next month', this was it. She kept dragging. Then, **it appears that she was already pregnant.. well. So she found a job there and stayed.** [11:29]

Several social contexts may be envisaged in the story of grandson's illness diagnosing. The grandmother was comparing health care systems in Lithuania and abroad, doctors' attitude towards children. Finally, she generalized that Lithuanians undergo discrimination abroad as they do not take seriously health problems of foreign-born people. She compared the health care system of the country to the medicine of 'stone age'.

A way to construct meaning

To generalize the principles grandmother Odeta used to construct the narrative it is possible to assume that the grandmother had reflected and thought little about outlived events during the transitional life situation. It seemed that she was experiencing the painful situations once again. Moreover, the stories were created without introduction and generalization. It may be thought that due to supplement interaction, partial interpretation was happening at the moment of the interview, when the grandmother started thinking what it meant for her personally to live with the grandson.

The grandmother wished to render indirectly through her story that she suffered about unsuccessful life of her daughter and her grandson's illness. Grandson's care was also help to her daughter diagnose unclear nature of grandson's illness. The grandmother shouldered the experience of painful separation of grandson and his mother, i.e. she wanted to do everything to avoid painful experience of her grandson. It may be assumed

that the main personal meaning of transitional life situation, which the grandmother wanted to render, was a relief after the grandson's illness had been diagnosed and peace when his health had stabilized; besides, being with the grandson filled in her inner emptiness.

12th interview with grandmother Roma. Close relationship of three generations

Multiple stories

The story of daughter's departure. At the beginning of the narrative, grandmother Roma wanted to introduce the situation how her daughter left and assimilated abroad. Her daughter left long time ago when the majority of Lithuanians went to work illegally; and therefore, both daughter and grandmother were afraid that she could be caught and deported to Lithuania. It is interesting that the grandmother returned to the topic at the end of the interview in order to provide more details. Although it had happened 10 years ago, the grandmother was telling the story in an excited voice, which reflected her concern about daughter's emigration and her assimilation abroad. During the first year, the daughter worked hard and lived in a constant fear of being deported; and only later, after she married a Lithuanian and found a good job, life in a foreign country became less tense and hard. The grandmother recalled her first visits when she went as a tourist and was afraid they would not let her into the country. Furthermore, when staying with her daughter, she was afraid that the police would arrest them. After Lithuania had entered the European Union, the daughter legalized her stay in the foreign country. When generalizing the topic, grandmother Roma was proud that her daughter had assimilated in the foreign country in the course of time and her lifestyle was similar to that of local people.

Being with granddaughter since her birth. Another story that influenced a new stage of life was the birth of a granddaughter. The grandmother participated in daughter's childbearing, tried to visit her daughter abroad

and helped take care of the granddaughter. Roma remembered she would spend half a year abroad and then she would return and spend a month in Lithuania. A strong wish to help her daughter was reflected in this story.

Return to Lithuania with granddaughter. The grandmother told that, when taking care of the girl abroad, she started discussing with her daughter it would be better to take the granddaughter to kindergarten in Lithuania. Besides, the daughter promised to return to live in Lithuania in some time. Although return to Lithuania arose the experiences of separation and longing for mother and granddaughter, Roma was happy to return as she did not like living abroad. Moreover, she stated that the girl recovered after she started going to kindergarten and communicating with other children. In grandmother's words, 'She became a completely different child'. The granddaughter became a brave and active participant in various activities, the circle of people she socialized with had expanded: she used to socialize only with family members abroad, whereas in Lithuania, she communicated with relatives and children in the yard.

Why is it better to the granddaughter? When encouraged by the interviewer, the grandmother started considering where it was better to live for her granddaughter: in Lithuania or abroad. On the one hand, she assessed that although her daughter came back to Lithuania often (every month), the granddaughter missed her mother. On the other hand, Roma explained that she did not like life abroad, she did not want to stay there longer. Besides, her granddaughter would have to integrate into the community of local children if she had not returned to Lithuania. Since the daughter was about to finish house constructions in Lithuania with the grandmother's help, Roma thought that she was afraid to come back since she had a good job abroad. Although the head of the firm was ready to organize daughter's work flexibly (she would be able to work two weeks in the foreign country and then spend two weeks with her family in Lithuania), it seemed that the grandmother had given the future dilemma and the responsibility of decision-making to her daughter.

The aspects of living with granddaughter. Taking care of granddaughter as of own child. Another important topic to grandmother Roma was everyday worries and pleasures of granddaughter's care. The grandmother did not resent granddaughter's behavior as she understood that, in the majority of situations, the girl was missing her mother; and therefore, Roma was trying to compensate for a temporary absence of mother. She shared that she liked leading an active life (went to theatre often), emphasized and introduced that another elder grandchildren help her with the care. The grandmother did not distinguish any troubles with granddaughter's illnesses since she did not experience great difficulties with that – she treated the girl in the same way as her own children. During holidays, they would be together with her daughter, who had a possibility to come to Lithuania often. The grandmother recalled that she was sad and missed the rhythm of life when the granddaughter went to visit her mother abroad for a holiday.

Grandparenthood as help to children. Moving on to the essence of the care, grandmother Roma shared that the essence of her life was to help her children. She was telling she would continue living with her daughter after she returned to Lithuania. Roma was sure her daughter would take care of her in her old days. In the grandmother's words: '*... whatever you give to your children, you'll regain treble later.*' [12:166].

Time dimension

The analysis revealed that grandmother Roma retold the events according to time dimension of the situation. For example, she laid the events related to her daughter's departure in the past tense. Grandmother Roma related the majority of daily events to the present time. For instance, she mentioned that after giving birth, her daughter returned to work in three weeks (*stayed or became stronger*), and then she continued her story with general description of daughter's work at the moment (*gets up, works or have to clean*).

<> maybe three weeks **she stayed** [at home after giving birth to a child]. Then she had to return to work. Yeah, yeah, yeah. You know, she **became**

stronger a bit, they say it's not an illness [laughs] ... childbearing. <> she **gets up** very early in the morning, at five, and returns about noon. <> At around two pm. Since she **works** in X [firm], they are responsible for cleaning, so... <>, then they **have to clean** from seven to eleven.. [12:33-35].

Therefore, the feeling of present tense prevailed, i.e. it was important for the grandmother to stress what was happening at the time. It is possible to assume that the majority of events had been reflected; and as a result, the grandmother was emphasizing the present.

Focalization

The main attention in the stories was paid to the granddaughter and daughter, which is best reflected by the extract from conversation when the grandmother wanted to stress her granddaughter's feelings and experiences as opposed to her personal ones: *'You know... the child... it's difficult to her, most difficult. We, you know, manage somehow, we... know, but it's very hard for her. It's twice or three times harder.'* [12: 218]. On the other hand, there is no personal attitude to the lived events in the grandmother's story, as the majority of events she had also participated in were described in plural person '*we*'. For example:

... well, it happens sometimes she doesn't listen, but usually **we** obey. <> Maybe G. is even more stubborn than the boys [other grandchildren]. But **we** don't have these quarrels, **we** don't argue <...> **we** get on with very well... [12:156].

It may be assumed that the experience was assessed in family's perspective; and thus, she accepted the events as common, interpersonal ones.

Social context

Grandmother paid a lot of attention to several social aspects: daughter's assimilation abroad, grandmother's unwillingness to live in a foreign country, and definition of family relationship. The grandmother told in detail what the difficulties of assimilation meant to her daughter, she wished to render what her daughter had to suffer. Nevertheless, when her daughter had assimilated abroad, Roma stressed that both she and her daughter

liked living abroad because of different culture and customs. With reference to her daughter's words, the grandmother tried to convey the message that '*It's good everywhere but best in Lithuania*':

No, she said, 'Lithuania is everything to me'. She is a patriot, my husband was an exile so it's somehow ... engrained, this love to Lithuania is somehow different, she's somehow... '**It's good everywhere**' she said, '**but best in Lithuania** to me. I get off here and feel so good, it's good here'. [12:269]

When developing the social context of family relations, the grandmother wanted to emphasize the strong emotional relationship among family women. It was natural that Roma would often mention events without aspiration to emphasize them but to show the interrelationship (*together with daughter, we were giving birth together in the hospital* [12:27]) or that granddaughter '*is a small part of me*' [12:84]). In the grandmother's opinion, the relationship was a guarantee that in case one member of the family was in trouble, another family member would certainly take care of him/her.

A way to construct the meaning

When analyzing how the grandmother constructed important experiences of transitional life situation, two moments emerged: non-succession of events and emphasis on family opinion. On the one hand, it seemed that grandmother Roma had created her inner narrative and followed it throughout her story: the situations were not described according to time succession, yet according to their importance. On the other hand, grandmother Roma considered the events as collective experience. Consequently, it may be assumed, that family narrative (the story created using supplement interaction) prevailed. Due to non-succession of events, it was difficult to perceive the meaning. However, the conception about strong interrelationship (*we*) was predominant all the time.

When rethinking the social context, it seems that the grandmother wanted to stress that Lithuanian emigrants, feeling a strong connection with

Lithuania, agree to separate from their children temporarily so that they would form Lithuanian identity while living in Lithuania for some time.

To summarize, it is possible to claim that grandmother Roma was striving to tell the narrative of 'three-women generation' communication and being together, their help to each other; as Roma said at one point of the interview, *'My daughter doesn't leave me, doesn't leave me anywhere, I always have to participate everywhere... there is a bond among us three'* [12:243].

5.2. Summary

When generalizing individual grandparents' stories, it emerged that grandparents centre their stories round the most significant events of transitional life situation. For some grandparents (Dana, Rita), the most touching event was grandchildren's separation with parents; whereas for other grandparents (Birutė, Aldona, Petras, Marija) separation with their children emigrants was a meaningful event. The third group of grandparents (Ona, Lina, Odeta, Roma) considered both events of equal importance.

It became obvious that the most meaningful experiences of grandparents were not related to them personally, yet to their grandchildren. Grandparents were telling stories about grandchildren's experiences when parting from their parents: their behavior or their emotions expressed at home or in kindergarten; their feelings while talking with parents on the phone and etc. Similarly, grandparents emphasized the experiences of emigrated children.

Time dimension helps to understand the process of reflection on meaningful life events. In most cases, grandparents were still living in the sore moments of transitional life situation. They constructed stories as if the event had not been lived yet. In most cases the events were: disruptive grandchildren's separation with parents, illnesses of grandchildren, and children's problems with adaptation in a foreign country.

Social context helped render the meaning of family or particular relations among family members, i.e. that family needs are more important

than individual demands. Families had very bound relations among generations. For them (Asta, Birutė, Aldona, Roma), it was normal to live together; therefore assuming the care of a grandchild was very natural and even was not define as an important experience of transitional life situation.

Lastly grandparents' way to construct meaning was comprehended and interpreted, considering the emphasis they put on a specific event or experience and the things left untold during the interviews. According to Abbot (2002), meaning often remains unsaid and exists in between lines. Grandparents (Ona, Lina, Aldona, Petras, Odeta) had an especially strong wish to help children create their family welfare, but, in most cases, they did not have enough financial resources. Therefore, taking care of grandchildren was a silent aspiration to help children. In other cases, grandparents (Lina, Petras, Jonas, Marija) had had an intense work life, they felt regret for not spending time with their own children, which I would describe as emptiness of relations in their lives. Thus, grandparenthood was the last chance to create a significant and mutual bond with grandchildren in their lives.

In sum, all grandparents tried to emphasize they were able to manage daily routines of small grandchildren. Moreover, in most cases grandparents treated grandchildren as the members of their family. Consequently, on the one hand, it was an intense and responsible experience to parent and take care of them, but on the other hand, this formed natural and joyful experiences of transitional life situation.

6. Coherent narratives of transitional life situation

The second part of data presentation seeks to answer the question raised: *What are cohesion and diversity of reconstructed narratives told by grandparents about transitional life situation?* According to Riessman (2008, 53) the question word *what* attracts the main attention to the context, i.e. *what* the informants tell about events and experiences important to them. When revealing what grandparents wanted to render, the meaning they construct about transitional life situation is also conveyed.

When analyzing the meaning of how grandparents lived out the changed situation of life (when their children left and they had to parent their grandchildren), the main tendency emerged that grandparents recognized their experiences of transitional life situation through a transfer principle, i.e. they accept the experiences of another family member as though they were personal ones. Biggs (2005, 150), interpreting Erikson (1982) ideas, states that an elderly person pays more attention to their close people and especially to younger generation: other peoples' feelings are more important than their personal ones. On the other hand, narratives constructed by people are influenced by collective experience (Murray, 2003). The experienced events affected all members of family; and therefore, grandparents do not tell the story of their personal life, yet the story of the whole family. On the surface it seems that the narrative is constructed around a grandchild; however, a more detailed analysis revealed that it describes indirect experiences of grandparents either.

The tables presented in next chapter show the view and map of *three coherent narratives*, the way cohesive and diverse stories are woven into one. During narrative analysis, three major and obvious coherent narratives emerged: a) 'This Child is Also Mine: Grandchildren's Experience'; b) 'They Thought to Work, Earn some Money and Return: Children's Destiny', and c) 'Friend, Parent or Grandparent: Grandparents' Experience'. Coherent narratives about grandchildren and personal grandparents'

experiences consisted of *three* cohesive and simultaneously diverse stories; whereas coherent narrative about adult children consisted of *two* cohesive and diverse stories.

The order of coherent narratives is constructed in terms of the sequence of meaningful events and time dimension. Time dimension is the main element of reconstruction and it is divided into: grandparents' memories of the past, grandparents' reflections on the present, and projections of the future. An event or meaning constructed by grandparents is based on the extracts, where grandparents or other family members' names have been changed in order to retain confidentiality. For clarity's sake, when segmenting or joining the narrative lines, each narrative segment is marked by a number indicating, which grandparent uses one or another meaning in the interview. Only one or two stories that reflect the text segment in the narrative are chosen for extracts.

6.1. *This child is also mine*: grandparents' experiences intertwined with grandchildren's situations

The major and most sentimental experiences of grandparents are related to their grandchildren's experiences, their behavior and emotions that prevailed when parents had left to work abroad. In simple terms, grandparents' emotions depend on the impact of this life stage on grandchildren, which is best reflected by one grandmother's comment, '*I see the child suffers, and also I ... I feel pain*' [12: 96]. Grandparents would tell entire stories what their grandchild did or what he/she felt when their mother left (in most cases it was their daughter who left), or how they acted when their mother or parents returned. Table 4 illustrates the scheme of the most prominent stories that transpired in the material. In the upper side of the scheme, the most significant events of coherent narrative are presented according to time dimension: 'until the care'; 'grandchild and parent's separation'; 'grandparent's help to overcome separation'; 'grandchild's communication with parent'; 'grandchild in the daily life'; 'life after par-

ent's return' and 'the end of care/ the future of grandchild'. Further, the scheme presents the generalized lines of three cohesive and simultaneously diverse stories, where only the beginning is marked by an interview number to indicate what story a grandparent is involved in when telling his/her experiences. In case of branching of cohesive stories, the numbers are marked repeatedly. It is clear from the presented map, at which specific stages of transitional life situation cohesive stories intersect (for example, 'life after mother's return'), and at which stages of narrative (future projection – when the care ends) the story is divided into minor story elements.

Stories are introduced in order to maintain the line of coherent narrative. When analyzing the meanings constructed by grandparents that reveal grandchildren's (and simultaneously grandparents') events in the past, three cohesive stories that could be named *Story of Painful Experience*, *Grandchild's Attachment Story* and *Story of Life Together* have been composed.

MEMORIZING PAST: STORY OF PAINFUL EXPERIENCE

The element of the story – *Care started without preparation*. In the analysis of grandparents' reminiscences of the past experiences, the first of three stories reflected in the data material was a painful story about grandchildren's feelings that touched grandparents profoundly. Narrative starts with a general aspect – neither grandparents nor grandchildren were preparing for the care. At different times during the interviews, grandparents remembered the beginning of care and told how the care started independently of them: they had nothing else to do but to accept the care. The story reconstructed by grandmother Dana starts from an introduction that transitional life began with her children planning to leave (*I understood they'd leave*). The working grandmother started persuading her husband to agree with the care and accepted the future situation '*well, what else to do*':

I saw her diplomatic move, talks like that, moving towards that. **I understood they'd leave**. Anyway would leave. Well. I then started my husband

Memorizing past		Reflecting present			Projecting future
Until the care and parent's separation	Grandparent's help to overcome separation	Grandchild's communication with parent (child)	Grandchild in daily life	Life after parent's return	The end of care, the future of grandchild
<p>Care started without preparation (1, 2, 4, 11) →</p> <p>Grandchild experienced separation with parents pain-fully →</p> <p>Relationship with grand-child was built gradually (5, 8, 9, 10) →</p> <p>Grandparent/ grandchild lived together from birth (3, 6, 7, 12) →</p>	<p>Striving to do everything to make grand-child's life easier →</p> <p>Grandparents knew how to deal with the situation →</p> <p>Not reflected during the interview →</p>	<p>Grandparents help to maintain communication with parent</p>	<p>Daily routine of grandparenting</p> <p>Sickness of grandchild</p>	<p>Grandchild's response to parent's return</p>	<p>Concern about grandchild's future (1, 2, 11, 4)</p> <p>It is not im-portant where grandchild will be, it is impor-tant his/her life would be easier (5, 8, 9, 10)</p> <p>Child will come back and grand-child with his/her parents will live together with me (12)</p> <p>Future story of grandchild is not explored (6, 7, 3)</p>

TABLE 4. The flow of cohesive and diverse stories about grandchildren.

simply talking into, so that, well simply not to get into a quarrel. No pressure. **Well, what else to do.** Those children are very dear to me. I loved them endlessly. **I love those children.** They to me...<> How to say, he was in the first grade, the elder one, and here was this child when that school year was coming to an end, when he already gave him the thought that he could give that note that a child passed to the next grade, he came simply with his father. They brought me those children. With all their bags and pouches. And that was it. And they left.[2:20]

In the story of this grandmother, one could feel that she was preparing for the care. Grandmother Dana's decision was influenced by her strong feelings towards a grandchild. She said, '*I love those kids*'. Present tense was used, which revealed that grandmother's feelings were still true, she still felt that way.

When disclosing the significance of the beginning of care, grandmother Rita, who was parenting more than one grandchild, indicated that her granddaughter's care began unawares, as though incidentally. Grandmother Rita introduced that she was planning to refuse the custody (*I said I wouldn't take care of her*). When constructing her narrative, however, she drew a conclusion that she had no other choice but to take the girl with her. The granddaughter attended a weekly kindergarten, she had an illness/disorder of unclear origin (in grandmother's words, '*something like depression*'); and consequently, she got into hospital. Seeing her granddaughter's illness and, as it emerged later, her neglect, grandmother defined her decision with a phrase '*what else could I do*':

They left to me but at the moment I said ... **I said I wouldn't take care of her** since three kids [grandmother was raising her own child (the youngest), one grandchild and this granddaughter would be the third one] are too much. And the flat is small. So she left to her husband (son-in-law) and said she'd look for a nanny. She'd send money and the nanny would look after her. Son-in-law would say he didn't come along with the nanny, he had to thrust and thrust money to her and she probably wouldn't give I. anything to eat. So my husband offered, 'Give her somewhere nearer home, to a weekly one. Anyway mother would go and see her sometime'. So he did. But I. lasted only three days in the kindergarten. And he gave not his telephone number but mine. At work my boss came and told, 'Go – your granddaughter is sick'. So I went. **What else to do?** ... I went there – she had already

been taken to the hospital. Well, she had something ... They said she was felling normal during the day. **Something like depression.** And at night... She was in the weekly one, so I imagine there were few kids there. So the kid got sick because of that. **What else could I do.** [4:55].

It is clear from the element of the story that grandmother related the beginning of care with strong feelings for her granddaughter, which will be revealed in more detail in the further segment of coherent narrative.

The element of story – *Grandchild experienced separation with parents painfully.* Grandchildren's emotions were a very important topic for grandparents. When remembering the situation, grandparents would not only start telling how the care started, but they would also develop another segment of the story – separation of grandchildren from their mothers – in parallel. Grandparents' stories revealed that the separation was painful both for grandchildren and for grandparents. The majority of grandparents in this group expressed themselves clearly that they would have done anything to avoid the situation. Grandmother Ona pointed that she regretted bringing grandson to see off his mother:

I so regretted having brought M. with me. He saw she had to go, to get on the plane and mother disappeared. Oh dear, the kid was tearing and fussing. There was his mother and then she disappeared...<> [1:59].

Grandmother Dana retold the life situation in the following way:

You know, we went to the airport... I think he's a kind of difficult kid. He's very naughty and it seemed to me he'd take it, well, very normally. They'd already been talking to him in advance, everything. And here she was in the airport, you know, had registered. Went inside there. And the kid stayed. And, you know, we went outside... Of course, it wasn't the plain she took, but I think at least the kids will have such an image in their minds that there she was flying, they saw everything. **The kid was stuck to that fence,** you know, **we couldn't tear him from it.** Besides, well, how to call him, my son-in-law's father says, 'Let's go home, what's happening? Funeral?' Of course, **it was very hard for me,** he saw <> all that. He started talking like that. So when he came to that kid and wanted to move him, meaning, let's go already, so the kid fell into my arms and **every cell of his body was shivering.**[2:20]

The story segment reveals that the grandson was strongly affected by the experience since grandmother Dana defines his reactions as follows: ‘*the kid was stuck to the window, we couldn’t tear him from it*’, ‘*every cell of his body was shivering*’. Grandmother also defines her emotions indirectly (*it was very hard for me*). Grandmother’s personal accusation may be felt in the text: she blamed herself for letting her grandson go together and experience the painful moment.

This event also discloses another meaning of the story, which is indirectly defined in the extract from the interview with grandmother Dana. Grandchildren’s feelings were unexpected, unanticipated for the group of grandparents. The analysis revealed grandparents’ regret about taking grandchildren to see off their parents. Self-accusation is clearly reflected in the narrative of grandmother Dana, where seeing her grandson’s emotions, she would like to return back time so that he would not have to experience the situation; in her words, ‘*I simply don’t know how I would have acted*’.

I simply don’t know how I would have acted if I had foreseen this in advance, that he would react in this way. <> Maybe I wouldn’t have gone with him to the gate there and everything else. I wanted the kids to see there are planes, there is their mother, she’ll fly away. You know, **it’s something terrible**, you know. **Something terrible** [grandmother is crying]. **Little one. He understood nothing**. He didn’t understand anything of what was happening. [2:20]

Grandmother Dana’s feelings are revealed not only through words, but also through her emotions during the interview. She could not find words to describe the situation, she searched for meaningful words. The grandmother repeated ‘*something terrible*’ several times and started crying. This shows that although the event had happened in the past, grandmother was experiencing the feelings during the interview. With her cry, grandmother as though stopped her search for meaning and passed to another grandchild’s experience, which she generalized ‘*little one understood nothing*’.

The element of the story – *Striving to do everything to make grandchild’s life easier*. The last segment of the story reveals and leads to another mean-

ing of coherent narrative, i.e. grandchildren's feelings not only during the separation, but also when living apart from parents. Grandparents were affected by their grandchildren's experiences. When observing and helping their grandchildren, grandparents constructed narrative that reflected strong feelings and concern; the text was filled with emotions during the interview. Cohesive story reflects grandparents' reactions of unexpectedness, incomprehension and concern, which were usually evidenced by a generalization '*I don't know*'. Additional troubles were caused by grandchildren's age, i.e. they were small and their reactions were intuitive; and therefore, it was not easy for grandparents to understand what was happening to their grandchildren. Despite incomprehension, grandparents put a lot of efforts to make the separation as easy as possible for grandchildren.

The extract from the conversation with grandmother Dana illustrates how grandparents were affected by grandchildren's emotions about separation with parents. Grandmother introduces the situation with a statement that her grandchild did not understand the separation; in her words '*he didn't understand at the beginning*'. Later she discloses that when mother called, grandson kept asking her '*where have you been?*' Grandmother Dana tries to explain his behavior and generalizes the story with the question: What further consequences the separation would have caused if the grandchild's care had lasted longer?

And everything came to the little one much later. It came to the little one later. **He didn't understand at the beginning.** He knew, well, that she left. Maybe to work or somewhere else. Well, left those parents, left. Mother left. <> And then he started asking me. Once daughter called and he took the phone and ... This question asked, it seemed to him that she is somewhere here, nearby, somewhere hereabouts, and he tells her, '**Where've you been? Where've you been?**' And then he shoots a series of those questions, so it means it seems to him that she is somewhere near here, but he only understands the thing – what's taking you so long. Where've you been for so long. And there comes the second part... Good that they came to take (visit) them so soon after the Christmas. If it had taken longer? **I don't know.** The kid was walking around for a week after Christmas... The little one. It was the little one. He was walking around with a picture of

his mother, **I don't know** how long he was like that, a week or so. [a pause, grandmother crumples] [2:42]

The segment of cohesive story not only illustrates that it was difficult for grandmother Dana to understand what was happening to the grandson or how long the experience lasted (*I don't know*), but also reflects grandmother's feelings. Grandmother Dana was almost crying, which made her end the story.

Other grandparents were also worried about grandchildren's reaction to separation from parents, yet it was much more difficult for them to find words to describe their experience. It may be assumed that grandparents had not reflected on the experience and outlived it once again during the interview. Grandmother Odeta found it hard to word the experience and she defined her grandson's reaction with one word '*cried*'. Nevertheless, pauses made during the interview, tears and personal cry reflected grandson's and her personal feelings during this stage of life.

Well, we, I told him... somehow. Well, he **cried** when the child [daughter] left. Mummy's gone, gone. And whenever he sees a plane, keeps telling 'Mum is flying' [as if laughs, and then **cries**]... I say, 'You'll also fly' [**cries**]. Then he says, 'I know, my mummy's working'. So, he somehow accepts the thought. [11:157]

The element of the story is related to grandparents' wish to help, to protect grandchildren from suffering. The two stories – grandchildren's reactions and grandparents' help – are interrelated, concurrent. Grandparents assumed various measures of help and protection. Once again, it was not easy for grandparents to define their actions. Grandmother Odeta wanted to protect her grandson from new suffering so she asked her daughter not to come for a visit (*don't come as it'll be trauma to him anyway*).

And somehow daughter said, 'I'll come to his birthday', in June. I said, 'You **don't come as it'll be trauma to him anyway**'. 'You'll come', I said, 'and then you'll go another day'. I said, 'He will start crying again he wants mummy'. 'Well, now', I said, 'he's got used to us', and so I said, 'wait a few months'... somehow it's difficult for those children certainly. [11:157]

When constructing the meaning of help and having difficulty in finding words, grandmother Dana revealed the essential moment of the help in the situation, *'I tried so hard to make them feel with their bodies and souls how important they are'*. Meanwhile, not being sure of her help, she concluded her story with a short phrase *'I don't know'*.

I don't know how to tell this. I **tried so hard to make them feel with their bodies and souls how important they were to me**. That it was difficult for me as well... **It was very difficult for me**. I simply **couldn't sleep at night**. I didn't sleep at night. I'd go to the kids, listen to their breathing, well... **Those kids are so dear to me**. Besides, they don't have anyone close nearby. So, how is it possible not to love them now? Simply, **I don't know**. [2:50]

Not being sure about her help, grandmother Dana disclosed her feelings as well. Inner anxiety about grandchildren was so strong that grandmother could not sleep at night (*'it was difficult for me'* and *'I couldn't sleep at night'*); and consequently, she would go to observe grandchild breathing. Nevertheless, grandmother generalized their interrelationship (*those kids are so dear to me*) when constructing the meaning of help.

It was difficult for grandparents in the group to define grandchildren's reactions and their help. Moreover, it was easier for them to describe the existing interrelationship, as *'those kids are so dear to me'* [2:50] than to reflect on grandchildren's feelings, their actions and help.

MEMORIZING PAST. THE STORY OF GRANDCHILD'S ATTACHMENT AS A RESULT OF RELATIONSHIP.

The element of the story – *Relationship with a grandchild was built gradually*. Another line of cohesive story reflecting another kind of beginning of care and different grandparents' experiences is the way grandparents built their relationship with grandchildren. When analyzing narratives, it emerged that some grandparents accepted the changes in their lives naturally: grandchildren's care was a planned stage of life for them. Grandparents did not construct the meaning of the beginning of transitional life situation from the start of care; yet they emphasized the importance of

brief repetitive stays with them. Under various social situations, the segment of cohesive story is based on three examples.

Grandmother Lina did not start her talk about the beginning of care, yet about the significance of relationship building. She defined it with words '*we would still be seeing each other often*'. She was concerned about health improvement and generalized, '*communication took place in summer most often*':

I would take her with me from childhood. She was one year old when they left K (city). As, although they lived separately until she was one, **we would still be seeing each other often**. Well, then spring, spring and a bit of summer I would look after her. We would always go to the seaside together with her. Because she needs sand, sea water, for her legs, so that her legs would be stronger. **This communication took place in summer most often**. [5:06]

The case of grandmother Marija is slightly different. Bonding with her grandchild started when she would go abroad to her daughter, an artist. The grandmother remembered and constructed the story concluding that the interaction started when they spent a month together and she defined the bond with a statement '*so I spent the whole month with him*':

No, my daughter is an artist, that's why also she spends more time with her... her schedule is more flexible, differently from other people. Well, one-year-old was when we started to see each other more <> we decided I would come to look for that kid for one month, we'd stay together. So I took leave of absence in December, flew there and we stayed together in X city [Germany], it was pleasure. <> **So I spent the whole month with him**... [10:38]

Still another different situation is for grandfather Jonas. He stated that their care started when parents searched for opportunities for their daughter, who grew up in the countryside, to attend school in K. city, considering the fact that grandparents lived near the school. It seems that the grandparent is 'setting' the reasons why the granddaughter's care started, he is repeating '*still*' and grounds the beginning of care. In the generalization, however, it is clear that the bond, the connection between him and a

grandchild is more important to the grandfather than the reasons of care. Grandfather Jonas conveyed the interrelationship from the granddaughter's perspective with words '*she's got used to staying with us*' (or *they all grew up together with us*). The present tense used shows the interaction and not the start of care; it indicates that the interaction started in the past and continues till now:

No, well how to say. To say the truth, those grandchildren are mine, they are practically growing with me, from the start, as ... as the situation is like that. They had bought this living place, let's say, a part of a homestead approximately 38 kilometers from K. (city) <>. And until L., the granddaughter, had to start school, well ... at the beginning they lived there, <> Later, when L.'s school had started, they decided she must attend it in town, since they lived 7 kilometers away from school as well, and they **still** had to drive her <>. And **still** father is going to K. (city) everyday to work, plus we live near school here, so they said, talked to us maybe we could take her. We'll take her. And this L. started going to school from our home. She started her first year... She's lived with us for four years already, although her parents would stay with us, but how to say. They would come, spend some time and she... on Fridays would go to the countryside, and any other day, sometimes when she wished she would go home in the middle of the week, sleep with her parents and come back to school. When she did not want or the weather was bad, she went from our home. **So she's got used to staying with us...** well, **they all grew up together with us...** [9:36]

The element of story – *It was not easy for a grandchild, but helse got used to living with grandparents*. Grandfather Jonas's story is related to next story element – the stage of grandchild's separation from parents, which is described by the grandfather '*it was not some kind of shock*'. This shows that care seems natural to him and the grandchild perceives it as a common life situation (*they all grew up together with us* [9:40]). This adaptation to the situation is reflected in other grandparents' stories when creating the coherent narrative of abiding by the situation. Grandfather Petras told about his grandchild's '*settling*' when constructing the meaning that grandson feels like at home with him, in his words, '*It was like home*':

Well and the kid **had settled down** here, **it was like home** for him. He wouldn't worry about that anymore, that his mother left and so on... there

were no tears, no big, nothing, somehow very normally and now she goes and comes twice a year and and... no mummy stuff no... <> he manfully and and we go to meet in the airport or to bring home, or to see her sometimes... sometimes he doesn't go – mother will start crying I'd rather stay at home... doesn't go. [8:36]

At first glance, when evaluating grandfather's Petras story, it seems that he wanted to say that his grandson had no emotions or he was not touched by the separation. However, the analysis of pauses in the story segment allows assuming that grandfather had not reflected on the situation until the interview: it was difficult for him to find words that define grandson's reaction, he made a lot of pauses. It is possible that grandfather Petras wanted to say his grandson had abided by the circumstances, had accepted the separation as inevitability of life. Consequently, the grandfather does not assess his grandson's separation with mother (grandfather's daughter) as a critical transitional life situation, but as an ordinary stage of life.

Grandmother Lina states that separation with mother was a painful experience to a granddaughter (*'it used to be'*); she adds *'for her to get used to'*, and finally generalizes that granddaughter got used to the separation (*'until she got used to'*).

Even **it used to be** that if she leaves in spring or sometime. **Until she got used to**. Until she gets used to, she needed maybe two weeks, **for her to get used to**. She would have bad afternoon sleep, would toss and turn and would often wake up at night. And I asked (my daughter). When she slept at home, she said, everything was all right. **Thinks it is a trauma for her**. <>... [5:52]

It may be seen from this segment of coherent narrative that different from the coherent narrative constructed by the first grandparents' group, grandmother Lina does not elaborate on the first granddaughter's separation with parents, yet talks about her reactions after the separation in general terms. It is interesting that grandmother generalizes, *'Thinks it is a trauma for her'*. The verb *'thinks'* does not indicate which family member assesses granddaughter's reaction as a trauma. When reading the text several times, an idea occurs that daughter considers the separation to be a trauma. On

the other hand, it is possible that the grandmother is constructing the meaning of separation invoking dominant narrative. There is a prevailing meaning in the society that children experience trauma when they are separated from their parents; and thus, grandmother Lina generalizes her story invoking the constructive meaning of dominant narrative.

Nevertheless, the essential meaning of help after separation that grandmother Lina wants to emphasize (which also matches other meanings constructed by this group of grandparents) is getting used to grandparents.

The element of story – *Grandparents knew how to deal with the situation*. Another segment of cohesive story constructed in parallel was grandparents' help when they saw grandchildren's feelings after their separation from parents. Grandparents would go back to the details of grandchildren's experiences and would tell in parallel what means of help they used to solve the situations.

Grandmother Marija relates two elements of narrative: separation of a grandchild and his parents and preparation of the grandchild for the separation. When constructing the meaning of help, grandmother Marija describes her grandchild's reactions and focuses on grandchild's preparation. She describes her grandson's feelings and crying as '*he would trickle tears*' or '*he said goodbye with tears in his eyes*'. It was her daughter (not grandmother Marija) who helped the grandson to accept the situation and to prepare him. Grandmother told the following about grandson's preparation:

<> Well she started explaining to him from the beginning. 'You know, M., I took you', everyday she with him, 'I take you there, but you'll have to, you know.' She started more, told, well, started more in a psychological way, 'You know, granny will help you, she helps us...' like with an adult. It seems she's prepared him well, in February they, well, three weeks were and then she brought him to me, so, you see, he came back having missed me, without any... <> And he simply **would trickle tears**, he knows that mother will leave in two days, two days she spend with us. <> Well and then... then he somehow err... **said goodbye with tears in his eyes** and that's all, didn't go to see her in the airport. We saw her through the door and that's it, kissed

her and everything, of course a bit... tearfully, but only he needs this... **and that's that** ev.. **everything like that**. On the whole, I can't complain, you know, he... there are some moments of of waywardness or the like, but for example he very often says to me, 'Granny I love you so much'. [10:73]

In the segment of coherent narrative, grandmother constructs a generalization '*and that's that*', '*everything like that*', where one could see information that it is not easy for the grandmother to remember her grandson's reaction. When constructing the story, grandmother as though makes a pause and in the following sentence she already starts speaking about pleasant issues, i.e. interrelationship.

Grandmother Lina also constructed cohesive story from two important elements of stories. Firstly, she described how the child outlived the situation and, at the same time, she complemented it with another story – search for the means to help grandson to outlive the separation. It was not easy for the grandmother to define granddaughter's experiences as she contemplated in her story '*maybe it was such distrust*', and further described her granddaughters' reluctance to stay alone (*Granny, don't leave me*). The constructed moment of help may be approached in two ways: on the one hand, grandmother considered her granddaughter growing up (*she's grown up, she understood*); on the other hand, she discussed their help through talking (*we tried to talk to her*). Grandmother Lina generalized her story with a jump to the present: '*now everything is different*'. This generalization reveals the difficulties grandmother had when defining personal efforts to help her granddaughter. Considering the second extract with grandmother Lina [5:56], she constructed a different meaning of personal help. Grandmother Lina introduces into the story by the phrase '*I tried to prepare her morally*', and then she enumerates her efforts, compares granddaughter's preparations:

And she would be so attached... She would be afraid I didn't simply leave her anywhere. She wouldn't stay anywhere alone. **Maybe it was such distrust simply**. Not only aggression. As she simply was afraid... For example, I'd go somewhere and she used to say, '**Granny don't leave me**. Will you be back? Are you coming back soon?'. She wouldn't stay alone in a room. Now

she's probably **grown up, she understood...** She began to understand. **We tried...** Whenever the aggression showed itself, **we tried to talk to her.** So I explained to her that nobody should have a fight and the like. But the girl didn't understand. **Now everything is different.** It seems it should be this way. [5:54]

When to England, **I tried to prepare her morally** in advance here. Then it was easier. Because when to Sweden, everything was off hand, <> Mother, my daughter, was going already. And everything happened so quickly. For the first time. So she wasn't prepared, may be that's why trauma was more serious. And now simply... We talked in advance that you'll go to kindergarten, we'll make friends with other children, I'll be in the kindergarten, I'll come to be with you. You'll talk to mummy on the phone, <>. So may be it made **easier** for her <> Because I said that she'd become aggressive. So **we tried somehow to make life easier** for the girl. [5:56]

When reflecting upon the situation, grandmother Lina pays the main attention to her granddaughter's reaction, not to herself. Grandmother evaluates her help with words '*we tried*'; she makes a pause, however, and explains her help as an attempt to talk. It is possible that grandmother uses first personal plural '*we*' in order to indicate that she provided help together with her daughter. The difficulties to generalize the story (*we tried somehow*) shows it was hard for grandmother Lina to define what helped her granddaughter to outlive the separation (*to make life easier*).

When summarizing the meanings of this group and comparing them to overall coherent narrative meanings constructed by another group of grandparents, it may be observed that these grandparents accepted transitional life situation in more natural, personal way and with less worries. Nevertheless, similarly to the first group of grandparents, it was difficult for grandparents to analyze their actions and emotions when major focus was on grandchildren.

MEMORIZING PAST. STORY OF LIVING TOGETHER.

The element of the story – *Grandparents with grandchild lived together from birth.* The last group of grandparents constructed cohesive story of *Life Together.* The grandparents pointed that transitional life situation did not

start with unexpected care or creation of constant relationship, yet with life in three-generation family. When constructing story about grandchildren's care, grandparents did not emphasize the beginning of care or the stage of changed life. Grandchild's birth was expansion of the family. Four grandparents construct events in their stories in first person plural '*I was giving birth... together with my daughter*' or they tell their stories in a wider aspect of the whole family (*we live together, <> we're together from birth*).

As he grew up from small age, **from birth we are together**. So when he was smaller, he'd call me mum. They both worked, so they would leave at seven in the morning and return at about ten in the evening. So... they both worked then. I'm used to the and it's not difficult. [3:34]

We lived together, we'd spend all time together. [6:18]

I was giving birth... together with my daughter, we were giving birth in hospital, together. And her husband was there, everything, but I was next to her all the time. [12:27]

The segments of cohesive story reveal that grandchildren's birth or daily life with them was a natural stage of life for grandparents. When constructing stories using first person plural '*we*' grandparents did not try to disclose the aspects of care, yet they tried to describe a steady family life.

The extract from the interview with grandmother Aldona displays and grounds the fact that grandparents, who underwent a similar experience, have difficulty in reflecting about natural stage of life. Her story starts with the construction of situation in terms of family (*as one family we lived*). Although there are many pauses in the story segment, it seems that grandmother had not reflected on the situation as she personally defined '*I can't even imagine*'.

How did you live until your daughter left... especially speaking of you as a grandmother?

<...>Together as much as possible, but while grandmother was working not much... well after work we would talk, stay together but on the whole w.. well how to say, well **as one family we lived**, in one place and I I I... I don't know... **I can't even imagine** that somehow, somehow... simply as a family and that's all. [7:50]

The interviewer's question invited the grandmother to reflect on the situation of living together personally, yet grandmother Aldona was lost and searched for words to define the life situation. This is reflected by unfinished words and pauses. The separation was not so significant for Aldona and other grandparents in this group as it was for grandparents of other cohesive stories groups. Their stories about separation were short and involved little hesitation.

On the other hand, grandparents' approach to this element may be explained by the fact that their stories were like contradiction to the existing dominant narrative: the separation of little children from their mothers must be painful. Grandparents stressed that their life included '*one family*' or '*living together all the time*'. In a grandchild's eyes, a grandmother was not a person they see rarely. She was much more. Grandmother was a person their family shared a common history with – they lived together all the time. As a result, grandparents had reflected little on the aspects of living together.

The element of story – *No separation difficulties, ordinary situation for a grandchild*. It was important for this group, the same as for other groups, to stress the impact of separation on the grandchildren in care. The extract from interview with grandmother Birute discloses the difficulties grandparents have when they try to define grandchild's experience after separation from parents. When remembering the separation of her granddaughter and daughter, the grandmother as if contemplates on granddaughter's reaction. She constructs her story telling that granddaughter reacted only at the moment of separation and did not envisage further painful emotions (*There were no tears anymore*). The story construct, however, reveals her doubts and no sureness concerning grandchild's situation. Grandmother constructs the beginning of her story with the statement '*She feels in her little heart*', and generalizes at another point of the interview '*I don't feel she misses her mom*':

Grandfather took her there and went with her. She'd set her heart on going with mummy, she's going through that entrance and she: 'Mummy don't leave, don't go'. Father said all people hushed, it was silent and everybody staring at her... so was I, I almost cried... but then it was OK, there was a snowman ... well, and that's that, **no more tears** from that time, that's all <> Well, of course **she has feelings in her little heart**, but she's so sensitive, quiet... if you reprove her, she only pouts [6:44-46] I don't know, maybe the time period is too short, but for sure **I don't feel she misses her mom** [6:54].

Grandmother Birute's doubts or, in other words, generalizations, and present tense used to construct her story shows that grandmother had little reflections and had not made final conclusions during the conversation. Once again, it is possible to assume that grandmother reflects the situation that confronts the meaning constructed by dominant narrative that children should have painful feelings about their separation with parents. At the moment of the interview, grandmother Birute had been taken care of her granddaughter for seven months. Having noticed that the girl was very sensitive after the separation, she created a confrontation with the generalization (*maybe the time period is too short but I don't feel she misses her mom*).

All stories of this group reflect doubts and considerations about grandchildren's reaction when parting from parents. Grandmother Aldona also gave contra-arguments to the dominant narrative concerning grandchild's response (expected crisis when separating from parents). She defined her granddaughter and daughter's separation as a farewell with '*no great fuss*' and explained the source of granddaughter's '*indifference*' with words '*if we lived separately, it would have been different*':

The little one parted very... I don't know. Maybe **if we lived separately**, daughter brought her and left, maybe **it would've been different**. And now, when we all together, she probably thought we are family and it's nothing. She said goodbye to her mother, bye bye... without any tears, **no great fuss**... [7:62]

Having constructed the meaning 'being with grandchild was a natural stage of life', grandparents in this group did not reflect on the aspects of personal help to grandchildren further. When the interviewer tried to return

to the topic of separation, grandparents would not hear the question of specification and would proceed with their concerns about daily care, i.e. with the topics that were more relevant to them. The extract from interview with grandmother Birutė represents the situation: the grandmother did not hear the specifying question about separation and started talking about her ordinary life with granddaughter, about granddaughter A.'s likes.

What concerns you and A., was it clear from the beginning that everything was going to be fine?

Well she likes travelling, going out... on Saturday, Sunday, we bend fingers that on Saturday, Sunday we are going somewhere already. <> These are first words: 'We're up, we've slept, now let's eat, get dressed and go to M. [shop], to children's room'. [6:73-74]

The leap in the grandmother's story is not accidental as the majority of grandparents told their inner narratives; and therefore, they would answer the questions with the stories that prevailed inside them. The question about the past and grandmother's story about the present revealed that grandmother had outlived the separation and it was more important what was going on between her and granddaughter at the moment than the things of the past.

When summarizing three different types of cohesive stories 'Remembering the past of transitional life situation' constructed by grandparents of all groups, it is possible to see that the meaning of experience is related to the social situation of a family, their desire to help grandchildren or various strategies to accept life changes. Common attribute when constructing the meaning of experience was the difficulty to define life stages that had not been reflected on during the interview.

REFLECTING PRESENT. THE ASPECTS OF DAILY LIFE WITH GRANDCHILDREN

Considering grandparents' reflection on the present, data analysis revealed that three different lines of cohesive stories joined into one common story, which may be defined as 'aspects of daily life with a grandchild'. Signifi-

cant events narrated by grandparents had not necessarily happened at the time of the interview, yet they were in process and usually were still continuing. The main meanings reflected in grandparents' recollections of daily life were as follows: grandparents' helping grandchildren to communicate with parents; grandchildren's illnesses; grandchildren's description; and grandchildren's joy when their parents returned (see Table 4).

The element of story – *Grandparents' help to maintain communication with parent*. Having addressed the topic of daily care, all grandparents emphasized the means that helped maintain relation with their parents (children) in one or other way. The majority of grandparents had computers with Skype software installed through which grandchildren could both talk with their parents and see their faces. Some grandparents or parents did not have a computer; and therefore, parents would call their children almost every day. In many cases, grandparents thought a constant contact helped grandchildren to resign to the separation. Story constructed by grandfather Jonas reveals the meaning of communication for grandchildren best. At the beginning of the story, he told that his grandson A. was 'somehow or other', as though stressing that his grandson had hard feelings, later he emphasized the significance of everyday communication; in his words, grandson-child 'bond didn't vanish' because of 'modern communication means':

Well, of course at the beginning A. was **somehow or other**... but with **modern communication means** it was possible in other ways. Every day a computer, through computer, via those Skype things they communicate. We have all this computer at home **and and ... let's say**,... that **bond didn't vanish**. You'd say they're gone, can't see or hear. It isn't so, as they've already, they... as I said communication means, modern computer, internet, I have everything they had installed, fiddled around. In the evenings they talk to their parents for hours... sometimes it's boring, 'I don't want to talk to you'... besides there are cameras, they see a face as well, **so, how to say**... [9:46]

Considering pauses and reflections such as 'and and ... let's say', it could be assumed that it is not easy for the grandfather to identify the meaning of

Internet communication. Pauses and repetitions (for example, communication means), signs of difficulty to define feelings ‘*how to say*’ shows that the grandfather was reflecting on the meaning during the interview.

The extract from the interview with grandmother Roma illustrates the difficulties to define the meaning of telephone communication. The extract does not only represent the significance of conversation to granddaughter, but also reveals how the interviewer’s question may be a key helping grandmother to generalize what is difficult for her to express. When identifying the meaning of telephone conversation, the grandmother only describes what she generally does (*we talk*). In the introduction to the topic, there are two pauses revealing difficulties for grandmother to define what is happening. Later, when she hears further question ‘*does she calm down?*’ grandmother uses the same term to describe ‘*and the girl [granddaughter] calms down*’ associating the action with the previous one ‘*we talk*’:

We discuss, **talk** through phone, everything... say goodbye, goodnight and that’s it, and we dream each other... <>

So **does she calm down** after conversation?

And the girl calms down. She says, ‘Call me again, call me again...’ **We talk** each day twice or three times, once we return from kindergarten ... **we talk**... [12:71-73]

The element of the story – *The daily routine of grandparenting*. Another important meaning of daily transitional life situation, which was in one or another way interwoven into narrative constructs by all grandparents, was daily life with a grandchild. Data analysis revealed that grandparents retell this stage in simple terms as though everyday moments are natural, happening unconsciously depending on grandparent’s daily routine (for example, whether the grandparent works or not). It emerged from data analysis that social situation, which had formed the meaning of grandchildren’s experiences and had affected grandparents simultaneously, had less significance in the present. Although it was difficult for grandparents to describe painful moments, it was even more difficult for them to retell the

present. It may be assumed that after they had outlived the separation and after the daily routine had been established, grandparents reflected less on what was happening every day with the grandchild in care. Grandmother Odeta could not distinguish any important activity and generalized ‘*Well, what can I say*’ and described daily life as follows:

What we do? She wants to go over and over again. When we don’t go anywhere, we go for a walk. There is a kid next door, they play with a dog. Run in the meadow. **Well, what can I say...** we have few days only. Saturday, Sunday until dinner and after dinner he gets up ... and we go somewhere, do something. Or we cook. Well, we sit at home, he’s ill often. We only sit at home. <> [11:69]

The meaning of grandmother Odeta’s generalization ‘*he’s ill often*’ is related to her grandson’s chronic airway disorder. Doctor’s recommendations for the grandson were not to spend much time in cold and damp weather.

Another grandmother Roma tried to stress that she involved her granddaughter into various social activities, like going to various events, she pointed ‘*we go, we go*’. Although prevailing pauses reveal that the grandmother was reflecting on her granddaughter’s and personal activity during the interview or had not reflected on that enough.

So how do you feel? [the conversation was about grandmother Roma’s occupation]

Well, I feel quite well, so I say maybe **there is enough activity**, well we would go to the theatre with Gabriele, we also go to.. at weekends we also go to concerts, I can’t say I stay at home all the time, I go there every day, but ... but **we go, we go...** when some more serious fore.. concert or some circus or something, we attend... [12:154]

It is interesting that when constructing meaning about personal occupation, grandmother Roma was talking about supervision of the house being built; yet when asked about her feelings, at the beginning she generalized, ‘*there is enough activity*’. Further, constructing the meaning of occupation, she returns to her activities with granddaughter. Such a shift from personal occupation to occupation with granddaughter may be explained by the fact that spending time with granddaughter is a priority to grandmother

Roma over other activities during transitional life situation. Priority given to grandchildren's needs over personal needs is also reflected in the narratives of other grandparents.

Nevertheless there appear situations like eating or going to bed in everyday situations that cause difficulties for grandparents to look after grandchildren due to age, character, and lifestyle differences. Story of grandmother Marija deeply reflects her adaptation to grandson's way of going to bed. She identifies the process as the '*most difficult thing*'. The grandmother tried to adjust to her grandson since '*I see he wouldn't fall asleep anyway*'. Moreover, she justified her grandson's behavior and attributed responsibility to her daughter who, in grandmother's words, '*stayed late with him*'.

Oh dear dear, this is the **most difficult thing**. You know. In the autumn there were those long evenings... it was still very difficult. So we would go to bed earlier. Let's say I would take him, I talked him into going at about nine. Of course, and and oth.. you could forget about TV. When you're alone you can relax, watch something or so. Not now, we do something else, you can't spent all the time with TV v.. when with child. So we go to bed, let's say, and I read, I read to him there. Then... and he plays, it was a period that he he wouldn't fall asleep for two hours and I'm so sleepy and I fa.. I fell asleep several times. 'Don't sleep', he'd touch my nose or something. But I... it's easier for me when I lie with him, I rest. And then nothing. And then then he at ten or so, running for an hour, would take toys or draw something. He would draw something, but.. this was such a period of time. Then he became bored with that apparently, and then he I see... in winter we started to spend longer evenings together as **I see he wouldn't fall asleep anyway**, I also became bored that he's banging about anyway. He likely has a good afternoon sleep in the kindergarten. They said he slept, he was the first to go to bed... so this is our little problem. So you see the earliest he.. probably.. fell asleep at half past ten, few times at ten. And this is a problem already, daughter has already warned us. **He'd stay late with her...** they're, you know, something like artists, so they'd spend evenings out, would carry him with them everywhere, so he got used to that. And then in the mornings, I wouldn't say he sleeps long. No, no. It's not difficult to wake him up... but I can't... I don't wake him, you see. It's a great happiness to him. It's my action that I ... hmm in..**I don't wake him, he sleeps off**. And then his... quiet, **he has calm nerves**. For

example, today he slept until quarter to nine. And sometimes he even wakes up at half past seven, although he went to sleep at eleven. [10:106]

This narrative not only reveals grandson's way of going to sleep, but also grandmother Marija's adaptation to her grandson's wellbeing. In parallel, the grandmother constructs another meaning, i.e. concern about the grandchild's physical health. Marija relates healthy and proper sleep (*I don't wake him, he sleeps off*) with his health (*calm nerves*).

The element of the story – *Sickness of a grandchild*. The meaning of health is present in all grandparents' daily caregiving. It is inseparable aspect of everyday life. Since grandchildren were small and small children tend to fall ill more often, it is natural that a grandchild's health and his/her illnesses were an important part of everyday care. In the majority of cases, grandparents thought that grandchildren's health would cause troubles, which could be illustrated by the extract from the conversation with grandmother Rita who stated, '*I thought it would be a hardship*'. Apart from her fears, the grandmother was happy the illnesses did not cause any particular problems with care. Grandmother Rita compared her granddaughter's stages of life – abroad and in Lithuania – stating that her granddaughter was more often sick when in a foreign country (*she was ill there*) than being under her care. At the end of her story she reflected '*Well, I don't know*' and generalized the story with the conclusion that her granddaughter '*isn't ill*'.

You know, she wasn't ill even once. They said **she was ill there** (abroad) seriously: was sick, coughed, temperature. But weather is bad there. Here she fell ill only... In June she had chickenpox. Every morning I strictly gave milk with honey and sweet curd cheese of course ☺. And medicine. Well, only that... One can say, a professional disease. In spring and autumn she has cough and snivel. **Well I don't know**. And otherwise she has nothing. **Isn't ill**. I didn't have any trouble with that. **I thought it would be a hardship**. [4:163]

When analyzing stories of other grandparents, it emerged that all of them were afraid of grandchild's illnesses in the process of care and were happy

they succeed in helping him/her to be less ill or in taking care of diseases that are natural for that age (chickenpox, collective diseases). Grandfather Petras responded that they *'didn't fall ill'* while they stayed at home and completes his story with a phrase *'we didn't have serious illnesses'*:

Wellll, this was the reason also... if talking about illness of child to us. So, he's not much ill when with us. But it was... last year in November, those snuffles and bronchitis, caught something. While he stayed, stayed away from kindergarten, while at home, we were here, **we didn't fall ill** at all. While... collectives, collectives at once. Anyway... and the doctor says, 'The child has to when in collective to have all those diseases', that are common perhaps... Well, anyway, we **didn't have serious illnesses**. [8:80]

First person plural used by the grandfather Petras to construct sentences (*we didn't fall ill*) reveals and substantiates that the grandfather assumes the aspects of the grandchild's illness on himself, perceives the significant event as a general experience.

While it emerged that taking care of ill grandchildren and their treatment was an ordinary meaning of daily grandparenting, data analysis revealed that some grandparents assumed responsibility to improve grandchildren's health as well. Grandmother Lina generalized in short that *'we both go to the seaside every time. As she needs sand, sea water, for her little legs, so that her legs were stronger*. [5:06].

When revealing his way of solving grandchild's health problems, grandfather Jonas also claimed grandparents' responsibility for strengthening of a grandchild's health. With the introduction to the story *'no illnesses were frightening'*, grandfather Jonas explained the absence of difficulties with health while describing his wife's (grandmother's) experience when raising 5 children and while sharing about annual travels to the seaside. The analysis of grandfather Jonas's way to construct the story segment showed that he was striving to emphasize indirectly he was able to take better care of his grandson than his children (*lived with his parents, he was ill more often*). The grandfather compared the frequency of his grandson's illnesses when he stayed with parents and under grandparents' care. Like the majority of

grandparents, at the end of the story, Jonas thought it was his responsibility to take care of general health of grandchildren. He finished his story '*I said to my children <> grandchildren should be in Nida*'. And as a result, he stated '*I have no major diseases*'.

Since my wife has raised five... in principle **no illnesses were frightening** anymore. As I said, five grew up, we had various illnesses, so a paediatrician when my last kids were growing and we called out doctor or somebody, so she would say, 'Why are you calling me, you're disturbing me,' she'd say, 'You know what to give, how to give and everything else'. And there is no problem... and now the first thing when A. went to that kindergarten and **lived with his parents, he was ill more often**. And later, strange as that may seem (he spits several times), ... last year when he went to the Old Town kindergarten, every morning I would wake him up at 7 and would drive him, so during the whole year (it's interesting, he talks in first person plural) when he went to kindergarten, hadn't fall ill even once. So here in the kindergarten everybody was surprised about that. But what concerns illness –not once. <> Another side of the story is, you know sometime ago we had with our children, when they were little, laryngitis and some other diseases, so the doctor, I don't even remember her name, told, 'Take your kids to the seaside in summer, at least for a short time, you'll see they'll be healthy'. And we would do that, in Nida, somewhere from 1979 or 1980 we hadn't missed a summer without Nida. Both with children and with grandchildren and with the entire... just as I said, last summer we didn't go with grandchildren at all, as they were there. And there was a problem. So I told this year, **I said to my children**, 'As you wish, but **grandchildren should be in Nida** in August. Do whatever you need, be wherever you want, but they should be there. Then you'll all be healthy.' And last summer, that summer when parents left. We were there at least three times with our grandson. Here... and **no major diseases**, I don't have for sure. [9:128]

Grandparents' responsibility for general grandchildren's health improvement may be interpreted in various ways. In my opinion, elderly people feel they have acquired more experience; and consequently they not only take momentary measures when their grandchild is ill, but are also concerned with overall hardening of grandchildren. Only grandmother Odeta had different situation as the reason for care was her grandson's illness, which was diagnosed only in Lithuania. However, since the nature of grandson's chronic disease was the same as her daughter's in the childhood,

grandmother felt she had skills and knowledge to look after her grandson. She responded that, after the diagnosis had been confirmed, she knew how to treat grandson's illness (*so I somehow know everything, what may happen and how to treat*):

<> But when his conditions, with those lung.. this... now they confirmed this X **diagnosis** [chronic airway disorder]... so somehow, everything... it was an **overpast stage**, since with L. [daughter] I had those problems all the time as her illnesses started from 8 months, as my father choked from this disease... this might be genes, it descended. <> **so I somehow know everything, what may happen and how to treat** and... <> [11:103]

Considering this extract with grandmother Odeta, the meaning of 'diagnosis' may be understood. It may be observed that it was hard for grandmother during transitional life situation. Grandmother indirectly defined her knowledge of diagnosis as a relief, knowing how to act, in her words, '*everything ... is an overpast stage*'.

The element of the story – *Grandchild's response to parent's return*. The last segment of cohesive story constructed in the present – grandchildren's experiences after their parents' return – had been important to grandparents and related to transferred experiences. The stories of all grandparents addressed the aspect. Moreover, when constructing experiences, it was important for them to tell about it, to emphasize the joy experienced by grandchildren when they met their parents. Although it again was difficult for grandparents to define grandchildren's emotions and feelings, when reading the interview one could feel their tone change, become more joyful. The extracts from conversations with grandparents Petras and Ona reflect the main meaning of the experience, i.e. grandparents were happy to see their grandchildren's wish to be with parents. Grandfather Petras defines his grandson's emotions in terms of sticking to mother's hand (*with mother, didn't loose hold of her*); whereas grandmother Ona responded the child '*stuck to his mom and didn't leave her alone*'.

But then **with mother, didn't loose hold of her**, you know, hanging on her everywhere, with mother finally... [8:132]

Well... kids... Of course it was hard. I took the elder one to meet her in the airport. When he saw her, **stuck to his mom and didn't leave her alone.** [1:54] and M.... As the plane lands early, he only came here. And nothing. It is nothing to him. 'Mummy, mummy, mummy'. Nothing. He kept going to kindergarten in the beginning. One or two days. Then he was glad finally. He went everywhere with his mother, everywhere with his mother somehow. He recognized after two years his mummy. [1:56]

To summarize the principles of present cohesive story construction, it may be observed that experiences transferred by grandparents are interrelated. Yet it is difficult for grandparents to retell their feelings since everyday activities do not evoke strong emotions in comparison to memorized elements of cohesive stories.

PROJECTING THE FUTURE: THE END OF CARE, THE FUTURE OF A GRANDCHILD

Having joined the present narrative into one cohesive line, another view emerged in the analysis of grandparents' future projections. Grandparents' general narrative has split into minor stories. It was difficult for grandparents who reflected little about the end of grandchild's care and new experiences that were about to come, to picture grandchildren's and simultaneous their own future. Future projection was often co-constructed with the help of interviewer.

The element of the story – *Concern about grandchild's future*. It was complicated for the first group of grandparents who formed the cohesive line of *Grandchild's Painful Experiences* to construct the future perspective. When reconstructing stories, it seemed that grandparents were more concerned with what awaited their grandchildren in the future than with projection of the future. Grandmother Odeta started crying and grandmother Dana identified her worries about her grandchild's state indirectly. Grandmother Dana would repeat in a tearful manner that she should not worry about grandchildren, '*I shouldn't worry as they're with their parents. Everything must be wonderful for them [2:134]*'; however, a clear anxiety could be felt in the text '*now you think, how those little kids should feel in that*

strange country? [2:202]. Difficulties to identify future perspectives, future experiences could be explained by the fact that their transitional life situation started suddenly, grandchildren had no preparation; and as a result, they saw painful experiences of grandchildren. The care they provided was like help to their grandchildren to outlive separation from parents. Uncertainty about the future, assimilation in a foreign country, questions how grandchildren will handle separation from their grandparents once again had an impact on grandparents' understanding about the future. It was easier for grandparents to evaluate the moments of present than those of the future. Grandmother Rita's anxiety was increased by granddaughter's unwillingness to part from her. At one point, the grandmother mentioned, 'She doesn't want to leave me [4:35]'; whereas at another point of the conversation, she emphasized her granddaughter's words 'I won't go to this Ireland [4:201]'. Grandmother Rita was concerned that after separation her granddaughter would not fall ill with *depression* and she constructed story in the following way:

Yet she's probably found a better one, her other half. <> Another man. They're young after all. If they were nearby I could maybe come and do something. What could be done through phone and messages? Well, this struck to her and that's that. Then they pull about the kids. They'll bring them there and they'll get **depression** once again. When we went to the airport, she didn't react to anything. She was in a hurry to get home, not interested in mother leaving. Let's go to the car and that's all. And now how we'll have to part, I don't know.

- *It's difficult for both of you, isn't it?*

'**We're afraid**', she keeps saying, '**I won't go to that Ireland.**' <> [4:197-201].

First person plural used by the grandmother (*we're afraid*) reveals that the situation is not only important to granddaughter, but also to grandmother Rita personally.

The element of the story – *It is not important where a grandchild will be, it is important his/her life would be easier.* The group of grandparents who had been forming the cohesive line of *Grandchild's Attachment Story*

projected the meaning of care end as follows: it was easier for them to approach the future, to tell about children's plans to come back or to settle abroad for good. When analyzing stories, a general meaning emerged that it was important for grandparents that grandchildren stayed with their parents in the future, especially after the school would have started. On the grounds of the extracts from the interview with grandparents, it may be observed that grandmother Lina defined her '*granddaughter wants to be with mother*', whereas grandmother Marija emphasized the importance of grandson staying with his mother when he starts going to school, in her words, '*when it comes to school, mother should be around.*'

But I understand **mother should be with her child**. It's the only thought that comforts me that mother should be with her child. Not grandmother, but mother. [5:120]

You see she'll bring him, but I'm planning that kindergarten is kindergarten, but when it comes to **school mother should be around**. Not in Lithuania anymore for sure. [10:152]

Grandparents in this group constructed short meanings about the future; and consequently, it may be assumed that grandparents had few thoughts about grandchildren's future. At the moment, interrelationship has been established, life together has become a usual thing and it is complicated to project the future without a grandchild.

The element of the story – *Unexplored future story about grandchild*. The last group of grandparents, who formed the line of cohesive story of three-generation family, had difficulty in projecting grandchild's future similarly to the previous group of grandparents. We will see in further chapters that adult children's future was more important to these grandparents. I assume that it was natural for grandparents who have understanding of three-generation family to believe that their children left only temporarily. Grandparents imagined that children would return to live with them; and thus, they did not distinguish one or another destiny for their grandchildren in the future during the interview.

When looking at the attributes of grandparents' projection of the future, a general peculiarity may be discerned, i.e. it is difficult for grandparents to project and define grandchildren's future. Coherent narrative resolved and split into three cohesive groups: first, grandparents had difficulty in wording grandchildren's future, which yet was reflected in their emotions; second, grandparents seek and wish the future for grandchildren with their parents or an easier life situation than the present one; third, grandparents did not analyze their grandchildren's future since living together was a natural continuation of their further life. A possible reason for difficulty to project the future may be grandparents' faint reflection about upcoming stage of life. Moreover, this stage of life often depended more on children working abroad than on grandparents.

6.2. *They thought to work, earn some money and return:*

grandparents' experiences intertwined with children's situations

Another coherent narrative, which tries to answer the second research question: *What are cohesion and diversity of reconstructed narratives told by grandparents about transitional life situation?*, reflects how grandparents perceived their experiences in relation to the experience of children, who had left to work in a foreign country. When grandparents were asked about the beginning of transitional life situation during the interview, it seemed natural to them to disclose various aspects of children's life, the needs that caused their leaving. Social changes in children's families initiated changes in grandparents' lives.

During research analysis I discovered that grandparents' experiences were directly related to the peculiarities of children's adaptation and assimilation in a foreign country. In case children had difficulties, grandparents were worried their children did not have luck abroad; whereas in case of good assimilation and good wage, grandparents were happy about improving social well-being of their children. Grandparents told stories about their children's adaptation, introducing the interviewer and a future listener to

peculiarities of life in a foreign country. This chapter, however, deals only with the stories that reflect grandparents' experiences related to children's experiences best. The paper does not compare lives of Lithuanian emigrants or does not expand on the principles of Lithuanian assimilation abroad.

Table 5 shows that coherent narrative construction about children differs from coherent narrative lines about grandchildren. If grandchildren's experiences important to grandparents were influenced by various social situations of extended family or interrelationship established between grandparents and grandchildren, it is obvious that the reasons for children's departure were similar. Grandparents' stories have a common beginning and only children's experiences, differences in children's assimilation, distinguish the directions of story flow. The grandparents who had reflected on the present or projected the future constructed similar meanings, i.e. the narrative was common to all grandparents with an exception of grandmother Marija's story about her daughter-artist, which did not coincide with the cohesive story line being created.

In order to show the flow of coherent narrative, the cohesive stories are presented in terms of time: one narrative line in the past, then another and etc. Only after the analysis of all cohesive story lines has been completed, further time dimension is entered.

MEMORIZING PAST: FACTORS OF CHILDREN LEAVING AND LIVING ABROAD

The element of the story – *Work abroad as an aspiration to maintain family welfare*. The cohesive story that reveals grandparents' concern about children starts with a situation and reasons that determined their children's wish to leave. The extract from the interview with grandmother Lina discloses the meaning constructed by all grandparents: it was difficult for children to live, work, and simultaneously maintain family welfare in Lithuania (*difficult financial situation*). Her words that generalize the situation – *can't make money* – reveal not only the meaning she is constructing, but her concern either. The grandmother used present tense which implied

Memorizing past	Reflecting present	Projecting future
Beginning of story How child experiences separation from grandchild	Child's life abroad Child strives to keep relations with grandchild	Future of child's family
Work abroad as an aspiration to maintain family welfare (1,2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12)	The work and life is much better abroad than in Lithuania (1,2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12) →	Child aspires to be with grandchild (all)
It was difficult to leave grandchild and go away (1,2,5, 6, 11, 12) →	Aspects of relationship with grandchild through telephone, internet and short visits	
Not mentioning child's experience, rather focusing on grandchild's situation (3,4,7,8,9) →	Friends and relatives helped to assimilate abroad	
Work abroad as an opportunity to make career (10)	No mentioning of child's life at the present time →	
	Grandchild's birth – no problems to continue career (10) →	
	Grandmother encourages child to keep daily contact	

TABLE 5. The flow of cohesive and diverse stories about children.

that daughter's financial well-being was also important to grandmother at the time of the interview.

Difficult financial situation. One thing. We can't help much. **If we had something to help them, they probably didn't have to go.** Besides to earn something here to pay for studies and they didn't have where to live... They have to lease a flat, to pay for everything. **Those can't make money.** [5:34]

The extract shows that grandmother Lina did not only contemplate on the reasons for their departure ('*one thing*'), but also took responsibility for not being able to help children financially '*if we had something to help them, they probably didn't have to go*'. This sentence also reflects dominant narrative that prevails in the countries where family culture, values and relationship between generations is strong. Awareness that older generations should contribute to children's family welfare dominates. Essential wish to help children is present in other grandparents' stories as well.

The narrative that had a common beginning is divided into two parallel stories: first – difficulties experienced through separation and adaptation abroad; second – help of social network when leaving abroad.

MEMORIZING PAST: DIFFICULTIES OF LEAVING AND SETTLING DOWN.

The element of the story – *It was difficult to leave grandchild and go away.* Next segment of the story, composing a common line, was children's emotions when parting from their children (grandchildren). Some grandparents saw that the separation affected their children considerably. Grandmother Lina's narrative reveals it is not easy for her to describe daughter's emotions. She says '*I don't know*' and, trying to measure the scope of daughter's experience, she repeats several times that it was '*difficult*' for her daughter.

It was **difficult** for daughter to part. **Difficult. Very difficult. Very difficult.** And she told, at the beginning she would call almost every evening. She would say, 'I can't. I want to talk to her at least through the phone'. When in Sweden, it was easier. Maybe because they both went, maybe. **I don't know.** Because they would call but not like that. They didn't need to call so often. And now, when she left it was very **difficult** for her. [5:58]

Having failed to find words to describe the impact of separation on her daughter, grandmother generalizes the important event with a word *difficult*.

The element of the story – *The beginning of life abroad was challenging*. In parallel, grandparents would touch another children's experience, i.e. their adaptation and assimilation in a foreign country. Not all children experienced painful difficulties of assimilation; and therefore, it was important for some grandparents to mention the topic. However, grandmother Ona's story is the best reflection of grandparents' feelings when their children have difficulties with integration into new labor market or society. Words do not reflect the feelings of grandmother herself, yet pauses, high pitch of voice, repetition of words and phrases like *such horror, very difficult, torture*, reveal not only difficulties experienced by daughter, but also the impact of the situation on grandmother. Although her daughter went abroad four years ago, it seemed that grandmother was experiencing a recent event.

Then it wasn't still clear if they would enter the country or not because only some used to enter. She knew the language already a little bit. <> It was agreed that some man would meet them in the airport with a red shirt. Well, they always say like that in those firms. Well he met them and drove into those mushrooms. She said she had never seen **such a horror** in her life, you see [talks in high pitch] <> So then... They somehow managed to leave those mushrooms and went to work in some kind of restaurant. There they did the dishes, learned the language, well, you know. There it was somehow better. Those mushrooms... It was in the press here, I heard, I followed. They had torturing conditions there. They lived in huts. And from early morning... you know, you could work as much as you want and earn as much as you want. If you have strength, you get up and pick. Pick and put those... You cut and cut and those mushrooms keep growing. You cut again. And in this way... <>. And you are bent all the time, see nothing. When you come home, it's cold water, rough accommodation. They said it's **horrible**. They they found out... When they were going from Lithuania they said it couldn't be such a **torture**. They lived all together they said. You put your things and you can't know if you'll find them. It was really bad. They spent there maybe two months. Then this man had pity on them. He took them to some restaurant. Well, it was **difficult** in that restaurant. **Very difficult**. Unusual, but

it was all right. Well, that's how they started [the voice calms down]. Well, later, after they had worked for a year probably, they attended some language course. Finished the course. Started looking around what others were doing there. One friend came. <> And offered to go to that Belfast.<> So they went to Ireland. And there she had finished medical school... I sent those document and diploma and she went to patient care. <> So she's still working there. It's probably two years as she's been working there. And now she works legally. <> [1:04-12]

Grandmother Ona finishes her story with a short reflection about present. She not only revealed her feelings, but also enabled to see that intensive feelings were told more extensively, with details, the story is explicated. When the changes in daughter's life had occurred, the situation had been solved, the grandmother did not elaborate on the topic much, she spoke in general sentences. On the one hand, it is possible to assume that it was important for the grandmother to emphasize complexity and scope of the situation and experiences. On the other hand, daughter's experience had touched grandmother considerably, the daughter asked grandmother (mother) for help repeatedly, i.e. she shared her troubles. This meant that in the past grandmother and daughter used to discuss the experiences more so the past issues had been more reflected on.

Moreover, passing from past to present in grandparents' stories (story construction from the past to the present) reveals another meaning. When grandparents tell their story in simple past tense, it is possible to assume that they had experienced difficulties. When grandparents experiences are in the process, they tell about the significant events in present or past progressive tense, which can be represented by the extract from the interview with grandmother Odeta [11:33]. It seems that grandmother Odeta identifies the difficulties daughter had with assimilation and generalizes using phrases '*it's still difficult*' and '*she has to pay the nanny*', which seems like a part of present coherent segment. Knowing the details, i.e. that daughter still has difficulties with subsistence (*flat rent every week*) yet at the time of the interview grandson was not with daughter but with grandmother Odeta, the daughter did not have to pay the nanny, the questions arise:

Why is grandmother constructing some significant events of the past using the present tense? Why does not she separate the significant difficulties of the past from those of the present? Grandmother Odeta told:

She has completed er .. this... something related to transport, something like travel agency. She works with documents and accounting, something like that, I don't really know, in some firm. She gets a minimum wage according to their standard of life. And as she is alone, **it's still difficult** because **she has to pay the nanny...** and and **flat rent every week...** [11:33]

In response, one could assume that grandmother uses the present tense to talk about past events subconsciously as her daughter still has difficulties with assimilation (even without grandson) in a foreign country and grandmother still worries about that.

REFLECTING PAST: HELP OF SOCIAL NETWORK WHEN LEAVING ABROAD.

The element of the story – *Not mentioning child's experience, rather focusing on grandchild's situation.* Another group of grandparents, who formed a parallel line of cohesive story, constructed stories telling their children had no difficulties to leave. It is interesting that some grandparents have not even addressed the issue of separation of adult children with their children (grandchildren). They focused only on the meaning of grandchildren's experiences (see the subchapter 6.1). In my opinion, grandchildren's emotions had affected grandparents deeply, which blanketed the experiences of other close people. As they had not given much thought to children's perspective of the situation, it is natural that grandparents did not include adult children's experiences into general conversation with the interviewer.

The element of the story – *Friends and relatives help to assimilate abroad.* Grandparents who have not analyzed children's experiences of separation from grandchildren, mainly focused on analyzing what influenced and helped their children leave. When comparing with the first group, this group of grandparents emphasized their feeling of safety that children left with the aid of social network, i.e. family relatives and friends encouraged

and helped in the situation. Unlike grandparents in other group, these grandparents did not use words defining difficulty or easiness when constructing the meanings of children's assimilation. They enumerated circumstances and reasons for the situation. For example, grandfather Petras narrated his story following the principle of naturalness, naming one of the reasons that his daughter '*was seduced*':

<> My son left for London, well, it's been three or maybe four years he's lived there already. Well, after some time, I don't know, half a year after my daughter **was** also **seduced** to go. Well, her child was then ... how old was he – four maybe. Yeah, he was already four and she touched me to look after him [giggles]. For half a year to start and then she'll see how it will go in half a year. So now it's been three years, since September the third year has started, when she's there when ... they're all together there.

When comparing the segment with a similar one *The beginning of live abroad was challenging* and the extracts from the interviews with grandfather Petras and grandmother Ona [1:04-12], it may be seen that experiences involving less difficulties are constructed in a short and generalizing story.

MEMORIZING PAST: DAUGHTER-ARTIST'S DESTINY.

The element of the story – *Work abroad as an opportunity to make a career*. A different situation and diverse experience was developed in the story of grandmother Marija. Her daughter aspired for the career of an artist and went to study abroad. Since grandmother Marija was also an artist, she thought of her daughter leaving not as a way to improve family welfare, but as self-expression and self-realization of an artist; and especially as a possibility to aspire for a good career. Grandmother tried to explain that in order for her daughter to make a career as an artist, she had to have mobile life in various countries. '*For her career, it not so simple, that you can change your work, you can sit in one place and as I'm an artist myself, I know that* [10:48]'. However, grandmother Marija did not present many details about the peculiarities of her daughter's life abroad since the major touching experience was grandson's birth.

The element of the story – *Grandchild's birth, no problems to continue career*. In case of grandmother Marija, whose daughter artist lived in various European countries, the grandson's birth was a potential hindrance to her daughter's career. Having raised two children and possessing the knowledge and similar experience how children influence the career of an artist, grandmother Marija accepted the grandson's care as help to her daughter (*you need to help, otherwise it's finished*). It may be seen from the extract that the grandmother was preparing for a possible birth of a grandchild and defined her daughter's feelings '*it was complicated*'.

We had a case like that, I knew that if she needs me, I told her, '**If you have a child, I'll help you**'. I had decided this long time ago, there wasn't even any child. <> Oh dear, **it was complicated** to her, you know, she's she's if she chooses a career, then **you need to help otherwise it's finished**. Then.. it means her work, her studies, m.. m.. goes down the tubes. Then, you know, I told her, 'I know the life, how everything happens', there in K. she s.. finished, studied, now it's Masters ... she entered, after the child K. was born, university. So it's complicated, so I ... when she called me she'd have a child, **I said to her** that ... 'Mom, will you help me?', she said at first. And and he maybe wouldn't be even here. **You know how it is**. <>[10:48]

The analysis of the story segment reveals one interesting detail which is introduced by the grandmother at the beginning of the story with a statement '*If you have a child, I'll help you*'. Later she returns to this meaning, repeats it; however, when responding '*so I said to her*', she does not elaborate on her reaction or action and finishes with a thought that the grandson would not even be born but not for her. Nevertheless, her final phrase '*you know how it is*' makes it possible to assume that grandmother wants not only to disclose her help to daughter subconsciously, but also discusses the issue with the interviewer, who is an outsider to grandmother Marija's social world. He is not an artist, yet he himself has children; and therefore, the grandmother is trying to explain all the possible factors that would enable people 'on the outside' to better understand artist's life and difficulties not only with living abroad but with having children as well.

Data analysis revealed that experiences transferred by grandparents when responding to children's lives at the moment of interview begin to coincide. In common story, two sub-topics appear that are intertwined and inseparable: the aspects of work and life abroad. With an exception of grandmother Marija's story about her daughter artist, other grandparents constructed a story that work provides a possibility for their children not only to make good money, but also to take care of family welfare for the future.

The element of the story – *The work and life is much better abroad than in Lithuania*. It was important for grandparents that their children lived abroad better than in Lithuania; and consequently, grandparents often compared the possibilities in foreign countries and those in Lithuania. The most striking example on good work conditions is the story of grandmother Asta. She was striving to mention various details that would help to form a view about her children's work conditions, stating that '*there everything*' was organized for the good of employees (*they give accommodation to them, there is kitchen, bedrooms, dining room*), the whole family could '*live together*', workplace was '*neat*'. Grandmother Asta finished her story being proud that her '*son*' was not some laborer, i.e. was not picking vegetables, but a '*tractor driver*':

They are in Denmark, in greenhouses. From Denmark Copenhagen it's about 30 kilometres away. So that farmer has his greenhouses. And they give ... **they give accommodation to them. There is everything: kitchen and bedrooms and dining room.** And the surroundings. And they have kindergartens. Well they **live** as ... they **together**. Another family is also together. <> There are those flowers growing, put or packed or something. Because they take them out. Let's say lettuce. They say everything ... The greenhouses have concrete floor, everything is **neat**. As soon as a lettuce sprouts up you can eat it. They gather them, pack, drive, take out. If they have an order to some countries, they put everything, prepack and export. Mainly flowers and sprouts. Vegetables like tomatoes and cucumbers – they don't grow those. Only sprouts mainly, they say. And everything, they say, in carts is going.

They only take with hands... Well **my son**, he's with a raiser, he mainly **drives a tractor**. That's how it is. And that's all. [3:10-12]

When reading the extract of grandmother Asta's talk, one can feel that the grandmother feels calm as her son and daughter-in-law's work and life conditions are good abroad. It is interesting that grandmother Asta has revealed children's life conditions in a foreign country with more details and in a more specific manner in comparison to her experience of grandparenting in Lithuania. It is possible to assume that grandmother Asta, as well as other grandparents, who let their children work abroad with great concern, calms down when she sees her children are having good life abroad. I would say that grandparents have inner reflections on various details as grandmother Asta generalizes '*there is everything*'; consequently, an elaborate narrative is being created, the meaning of which is 'my children do not have problems abroad'.

Not only life and work conditions are important to grandparents, however. Grandparents are concerned that their children would lead an equivalent life and have equivalent work conditions as the citizens of a foreign country. Grandmother Roma responded that her daughter had bought a flat and lived as '*all those Londoners*'.

Yeah, yeah ... in the fifth zone. She has a house, bought. Er, through the bank for 25 years. She has a house... something like that. Well, a flat. With three bedrooms, a living room, a dining room, a yard... as as everybody there, lives as **all those Londoners** [12:41]

The element of the story – *Aspects of relationship with grandchild through telephone, internet and short visits*. When analyzing the data about grandparents' experience transferred to children, a clear meaning is being constructed: communication between children and grandchildren. A similar segment was obvious in coherent narrative about grandchildren, yet the major difference in this segment is grandparents' wish to emphasize children's efforts to keep a daily contact with grandchildren. For instance, grandmother Aldona defined her child's striving to keep in touch with a

grandchild several times as she kept repeating ‘*very often*’ and stressed that, after they had acquired a computer, they were be able to communicate ‘*more often*’.

Er, through computers, yeah **very often** and she calls and and ... and on the whole and she talks with Gabriele for a long time, well... <> We’ve started using computer recently as she has recently connected at home, otherwise we couldn’t always go to the computer lab...<> or now she has at home there, so of course it’s **more often**... well, she used to call on the phone very often... several times a week always and sometimes even more often... [7; 106-107]

Grandparents emphasized that it was very important for their children to keep in touch not only through a telephone or internet, but also through short visits to Lithuania, or when taking their children for short vacation abroad. Grandmother Roma stressed that her daughter was planning returns and they saw each other every month (*she knows when she’s back, she has already planned*).

And now she is planning, now here... she’s coming ... on We.. [Wednesday] on the first and then she’ll come home for All Soul’s Day, here [it seems she wants to tell her daughter will come every month]. **She knows when she’s back, she has already planned**, she buys her tickets in advance. [12:231]

Not all children could return every month as in the case of grandmother Roma. In order to reveal the essence of everyday contact, the story of grandmother Lina was chosen, where children’s emotions and their desire to keep in touch was addressed. Grandmother Lina retold this story segment in the name of her daughter Lina and used direct speech to report what daughter told her about everyday contact. The significance of communication may be observed in grandmother Lina’s remark that the content of conversation is not important (*let’s talk anything*). The important thing is to hear voices of close people: ‘*it’s important, mother, to hear your and K.’s voice*’

She would call more often and tell she missed and ‘**Let’s talk**’, she says, ‘**anything, it’s important to hear your and K.’s voice**’. She says, ‘At least I could hear how...’ ‘It’s much easier when I know everything is all right, everything

is OK', she says. 'It so hard in my heart that' she says 'I left the kid to you'. [grandmother laughs]. She says, 'I can't live without her', she says, 'I started dreaming her'. [5:60]

A more thorough analysis of the narrative construct reveals that the grandmother introduces the situation using the past tense and continues with the present tense. This segment shows that the conversation took place earlier, yet the present tense used makes it possible to assume that the daughter's experience is still continuing. Grandmother's laugh does not show her contra-argumentation, but probably reveals the excitement she feels during the interview. The laugh serves as a reduction of the stress source. Moreover, the laugh is a pause, during which the grandmother seems to understand what daughter wants to convey; and consequently, her next sentence finishes this short segment of story.

REFLECTING PRESENT: ASPECTS OF ARTIST'S LIFE ABROAD

The element of the story – *Grandmother encourages her child to keep daily contact*. Unlike other grandparents, grandmother Marija's worries and experiences were different. Her daughter artist left to work abroad in order to have better carrier possibilities. Although grandmother devoted more attention to past experiences of her daughter, she did not tell about her daughter's aspects of life at the moment of the interview. It is possible to assume that grandmother talked with her daughter about grandchild and did not discuss the aspects of life; and consequently, constructed meanings related to the grandchild. For example, grandmother Marija's story was different from other grandparents' stories because, when talking about the present, she indirectly emphasized personal efforts to induce her daughter not to break every day contact with grandchild. Grandmother Marija did not blame her daughter (she was not telling story in a condemnatory manner), yet she tried to justify her (*she doesn't have time to call*). It was difficult for the grandmother to define grandchild's emotions and she expressed

her doubt (*he has sort of anger*) and identified her request (*find at least a minute*).

Well it's sometimes a long time, well, it happens, I say, **she doesn't have time to call** for a week or so, well she says, 'Well n.. no free time'. So I say to her, I say, try so that he ... sometimes **he has sort of anger**. You know, how on earth his mother ... then he somehow ignores her a bit. Although now it's more often ... at least call, **find at least a minute**, at least every other day.
[10:73]

The construct of grandmother's story using the present tense reveals that her efforts for her daughter to keep in touch with the grandson every day are not solved; it was relevant at the time of the interview as well.

PROJECTING FUTURE

Grandparents' projection of the future (concern about their children's future) coincided, the constructed meanings of narrative were similar and cohesive stories became a collective one to all grandparents.

The element of the story – *Child seeks to be with grandchild*. Grandparents were concerned by their children's plans, on which transitional life situation depended. It emerged that it was topical to all grandparents whether their children strive to be with grandchildren. When analyzing data, it was revealed that grandparents seemed to be assuring the interviewer (and a future listener simultaneously) that, although children aspired to restore family welfare at the time, they were planning to live with their children (grandchildren) in the future. The major difference in meaning construction is that some grandparents revealed children's plans more safely and others doubted because they did not know the future of their children.

When constructing a story about children's future, grandfather Jonas introduces into the story with an emphasis that in the future his children wish to live with their children (grandchildren), retelling children's words '*we can't live without children*'. Completing the story, the grandfather reflects that telephone upbringing does not serve as being with children and moves on to more detailed future plans of his children. Grandfather

uses the present tense (*now they are planning*) and emphasizes that children at the moment are making concrete plans. Grandfather Jonas unfolded his children's plans as follows:

Yeah, yeah. They are really planning. They said, '**we can't live without children**' and they continue to anyway... and of course they tutor through the phone, but telephone upbringing is one thing, when yammering. I told A. didn't listen, but it is not the same as they were here. So they have the plans to finish this year, come back and...<> So **they are planning, planning**...<> No, there is, to say... L., near L. (L. is a village) there are some homesteads for sale. They would like to buy some little homestead somewhere there, as my son is a builder, woodworker and the like, he said, 'even if I buy a hovel, I will then build, reconstruct...' so he wants to return and is planning to settle there... [9:100-104]

Other grandparents were not sure when constructing children's plans; it was difficult for them to project their children's future as if it depended only on their children or on their work conditions. Grandmother Roma stated she was not sure about her child's future, and she started her story with a phrase '*I don't believe*'. Her being unsure was revealed directly, when grandmother herself stated '*it's difficult to say*', repeated a phrase '*I don't know*', or generalized '*who knows*'. Moreover, her doubt unfolded through a series of pauses and swallowed words.

I don't believe that that my daughter c.. well, **I don't know**, but ... but **we've agreed** that I'll come back, come back. But when she talked ... she said her boss .. well doesn't want to let her go. She said, you'll spend two weeks in Lithuania and two weeks there. That was the talk... so I don't know what's gonna happen, **it's difficult to say**, life will show.<> Well I can't say because I can.. **don't k.** she doesn't know herself what's going to be. She said, 'If they'll establish such conditions, maybe I'll stay' <> What will be ... it's difficult to say. Today is one thing, tomorrow it's difficult ... to say. Who knows, what this boss, maybe ... it'll click to him, maybe he just talks. **Who knows**. [12: 249-253]

Although grandmother Roma was unsure, it was important for her to define the major objective of her daughter: to return and stay with her granddaughter (daughter to the child). Having mentioned '*it's difficult to say*' in the story segment, it seemed that the decision depended only

on daughter. Yet the first person plural used in the phrase '*we've agreed*' revealed that both daughter and grandmother aimed at the decision.

When considering the peculiarities of grandparents' projection of the future, a general finding may be discerned: it is easier for grandparents to project and define children's plans. I think children were grateful that grandparents took care of grandchildren and felt responsibility to speak about future. Therefore, this segment of narrative is more reflected compared to that about grandchildren's future. Even though grandparents didn't know exact future solutions their children had made, they were assured that children wanted to be with grandchildren.

6.3. Friend, parent or grandparent: personal grandparents' experience

The last construction of cohesive and diverse stories reflects personal experiences of grandparents. This is the last reconstructed narrative in search for the answer to the question: *What are cohesion and diversity of reconstructed narratives told by grandparents about transitional life situation?* As grandparents give priority to experience of others (they are concerned about other people and not about themselves), personal grandparents' experiences need to be reconstructed most. When during interview grandparents were asked about transitional life situation, they were telling about grandchildren and children's experiences. During the research data analysis, I discovered that they disclosed their own experiences and personal meaningful events inadvertently or unconsciously. Table 6 shows that the segments of grandparents' cohesive stories are related to grandchildren/children's experiences; and therefore, this illustrates that social situation, problems or significant events have affected both sides.

When analyzing research data, it was difficult to identify a common construct of cohesive and diverse stories except for significant events. Considering the map of constructed coherence narratives about grandchildren and children (see Table 4 and 5), a certain tendency emerged: when the

Memorizing past		Reflecting present			Projecting future	
Experience of beginning of transitional life situation	Comparison Care between then and now	Acceptance of daily life with grandchild	Acceptance of grandchild	Role in the transitional life situation	Life when grandchild is away on 'holiday'	Desires for the future
Natural acceptance of separation (3,8,9,10)		Grandparents couldn't evaluate it, because it seemed natural (3, 6, 7, 9, 12)			During transitional life situation they have always been together (1, 3, 6, 12)	Confidence about living together in the future (1,3, 6, 7, 8, 12)
Difficult to describe individual experience (1,2,4,11)	Compare how they parented children with present care (all)	Tiredness of being responsible all the time (1, 2, 4, 11)	Raising grandchild as their own child (all)	Parent, friend or grandparent (all)	Inner or home emptiness (2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11)	Unfolded willingness to keep contact in the future (2, 4, 5, 9, 1)
It was difficult to separate from child (5,6,7,12)		Feeling high responsibility (engagement) (5, 8, 10)			It's good time to do extra work (10)	Willingness to work and to take care of another grandchild, who is living abroad (10)

TABLE 6. The flow of cohesive and diverse stories about grandparents.

stories interlink and then divide, the opinions of grandparents' who created the meaning of cohesive story might become diverged. The Table 6 obviously illustrates that cohesive stories 'wave' (merge into one and then resolve). The lines of cohesive stories are presented after the analysis of each time segment, i.e. first of all there are three different beginnings of cohesive stories, then their merge, and etc. In pursuance of clearance, each divided narrative is marked with a number, indicating whether the meaning constructed by a grandparent coincided with that of the group or moved to the meaning formed by another group.

MEMORIZING PAST: EXPERIENCE OF THE BEGINNING OF TRANSITIONAL LIFE SITUATION

When grandparents were remembering their past experiences and their emotions at the beginning of transitional life situation, three different beginnings of coherent narrative were observed.

The element of the story – *Natural acceptance of separation*. The first group remembered the beginning of care as a natural stage of life as though it could not be otherwise. Nevertheless, it is not easy for grandparents to evaluate their experience using words. Grandfather Jonas's story construct shows that he makes pauses after the introduction into the story. The beginning of care did not cause '*some kind of shock*' to him. After a pause, in next sentence, he explains the reasons: he used to take care of grandchildren, in his words they '*grew up together*'.

And when parents left for Ireland, this **wasn't some kind of ... shock** to us, that we'll have some new kids or something, little ones or something, as we... well, they **grew up together** with us [9:36]

On the one hand, it seems that the difficulty the grandparent had when defining the situation is caused by the experience; on the other hand, one could see how much the grandfather has discussed the event with other people or reflected individually. I would assume that the difficulties to define appear due to the grandparents' tendency not to reflect on natural

things, but to link the reasons with passed events directly. Consequently, the stories that do not reflect detailed explanations are constructed. In order to understand the experience of grandparents in this group, the opinion of grandmother Marija is used as a basis, which helps to reveal the experience more extensively. She talked about '*psychological preparation*' at the beginning of care and thus '*it wasn't so scary*' to accept the responsibility.

You know how it is. So this **psychological preparation** has been happening for some time, so **it wasn't so scary**. Of course it's always scary because... er er how it's going to be, **how I'll put those clothes on**, how this kid looks, he seems... yeah there were some moments, that how how she's going to leave and I'm waiting for that day and think. She'll leave and I'll stay with the kid. I think it's the same for everybody... 10:48]

On the other hand, when accepting the responsibility grandmother Marija presented an example in her story that she felt anxiety due to her grandson's clothing (*it's scary*). Still, the grandmother wanted to emphasize that difficulties did not appear due to the care, but due to small trivia that are natural at the beginning of care.

The element of the story – *Difficult to describe individual experience*. Another group of grandparents had even more difficulties to identify and define the experiences at the beginning of care than the first group. Having mentioned what they went through, grandparents did not focus on personal experiences when developing the story; they would switch the topic and start explaining the factors that caused the main experience. For example, grandmother Ona only mentioned, '*And it was very hard. Very.*' [1:36], without going into details. Grandmother Odeta searched for right words to describe her experience for a long time. When introducing into her experiences, she used the words *strange* and *difficult*, and later she tried to identify the difficulties as '*to do something*'. Having recalled her grandson in the past, she started comparing what her grandson was at the moment and in this way finished the story not about herself but about her grandson.

No, it was **somehow strange** to me that this ... it was **somehow** strange at the beginning, **somehow difficult**. Still you're scared **somehow, to do something**, maybe you'll do something wrong or say something wrong. Besides he didn't talk much, only his own language for some time but ... now this year he's already 'granny, won't give to anybody', he's holding me in his arms. Smarter he is ... 11:57]

The difficulties grandmother Odeta experiences when trying to define her feelings is seen from repetition of the adverb *somehow*. It may be assumed that grandmother Odeta had not thought how the beginning of transitional life situation affected her personally; and therefore, only during the interview she started constructing the meaning.

The element of the story – *It was difficult to separate from child*. The group of grandparents who constructed the third beginning of cohesive story revealed that transitional life situation started with the separation from their children. This group consisted of grandparents who used to live with their children and grandchildren all the time (intergenerational family); and consequently, separation from a child, usually daughter, evoked strong emotions. Grandparents in this group also had difficulties to name their experiences and emotions. When reading the segments of their stories, I noticed that grandparents would start searching for the essence of their experiences during the interview. Grandmother Birutė defined the separation as *painful* in one sentence: '*It was painful... I was crying and A. was crying and of course mother was also crying ... only you couldn't see as she went away*' [6:94]. The broader perspective of grandparents' experiences was disclosed in further conversation with grandmother Birutė. Her words '*imagine how scary*' do not reveal the experience. Yet the pauses she made and frequent usage of adverb *somehow* and, finally, her tears revealed the intensity of experience.

When this situation was, I was worried **somehow** to let my child going to ... strange country and ... it was difficult, **imagine how scary** [talks with tears in her eyes] <> And for me... <> And for me it was very difficult, you know. **I don't have a husband, it's hard... my girl left, so ... it's even harder**

[cries]. And for her ... I feel it's bad. She doesn't say anything but I feel ...
[12:310-312]

When considering the construct of the narrative segment (for example, the word *imagine*), grandmother Birutė's intention to approach the interviewer and a future listener to her experience becomes clear. Daughter's leaving was a great change in the grandmother's life. She started living alone (granddaughter was born abroad later). She seemed to mention what the loss of husband meant to her '*I don't have a husband, it's hard*' and, in addition to that, she had to part from her daughter she permanently used to live with. Thus, the grandmother defined the separation as a turning-point of the experience: '*the girl left – it's even harder*'.

BETWEEN PAST AND PRESENT. COMPARE PARENTING THEIR CHILDREN WITH GRANDCHILDREN'S CARE

The analysis of research data showed grandparents' aspiration to emphasize the difference between the present care and the former care of their own children. In other words, they compared parenthood and grandparenthood. When constructing the meaning of care, grandparents started to distinguish prevalent differences between parenthood and grandparenthood unconsciously. Different lines of cohesive stories joined into one, and then, using different wording, grandparents similarly constructed experience narrative. It is hard to determine the time dimension, to which this experience belongs, as grandparents compared the care of their own children that happened long time ago (parenthood – past tense) with the present care of grandchildren (present moment).

The meaning constructed by grandparents is deeply reflected in the extracts from conversations with grandmother Birutė and grandparent Petras, where the difficulties to define their experiences emerge again.

In the extract from the conversation with Birutė, pauses and frequent usage of the adverb of manner *somehow* revealed the grandmother's desire to find a distinction between the two different cares. She was trying to dis-

tinguish that different ways of care were influenced by experience acquired during many years, which caused greater patience. According to her, when they were young, *'there was no patience'*. Later, going back to explanation (*now everything is different*), grandmother Birutė compared her behavior as a parent (she would *slap* her children); whereas the pause about the present tells that she acted differently with her grandson at the moment. It is interesting that grandmother related one of the reasons for her patience to her *'old age'*:

Nooo.. **somehow** we were younger, when with own kids, there was no ... **experience** after all. **Really there was no patience**. Get dressed, eat, do something ... now **everything is different** ... <>[6:262] When I was raising my kids **I'd slap** them sometimes and shake, all the things happened... and now I even don't know, maybe it's **old age**... 6:270]

When analyzing grandmother Birutė's story segment in greater detail, it is still difficult to determine time dimension. Pauses reflect the leap between the past and present. The comparison creates the meaning of care as there are few details and explanations in the segment; however, it is obvious that the grandmother's behavior with regard to grandson's discipline is different in comparison to parenting her own children.

Grandfather Petras' story reflects another meaning of how grandparents used to take care of their children. This comparison creates a picture of personal experience of transitional life situation. At the beginning of the story, the grandfather tells how he viewed child care in his youth (*you see everything differently*): in his words, *'there was no fear'* that something would happen to a child. At the moment, he felt greater responsibility, *'cares more'* when raising a grandchild. When going into details, grandfather Petras provided an example that earlier his attention was given to various things but not children: to *'clean the house'*, to do other works. Now the focus is on the grandson, taking care of his tidiness, his protection so that he *'wouldn't fall ill'*. Having generalized the present meaning of

grandson's care, the grandfather made a conclusion that as a grandparent he 'worrys more' that he used to as a parent.

No, I say, everything and and it wasn't... maybe maybe when you're young, **you see everything differently** and and that ... everything was free and easier, as I said to let them outside **there was no fear** that something would happen, we didn't worry so much about our child as we do about grandchild ... here it's much much more as I said ... and at night, only fall asl.. only slept for a while, just fell asleep and then we run to see him. If he's covered, if he isn't cold or something [a shade of laught in the voice]? <> Or at least I think that we care more than about our own children ... you see, with our children it was was what – what? Work, problems, so we ran and ran. From work you ran to the kindergarten to take them, left at home somewhere, it doesn't matter whether it's tidy or untidy, next time you'd leave him on the floor, at least he was busy with something. As you also have to **do house-cleaning** or other things and the kid, it's important that he doesn't cry and that's all. And here you care for something more, for ... for order and for being more tidy, for **not to fall ill** and something more. No, maybe you **worry more**, take to heart everything somehow... as the focus is on that child. Well, some ... **I don't have to worry about work** and that's ... we do all those things ... well ... [8:98-100]

The statement that the grandfather reflects during the conversation is based on the fact that some story sentences are about the past, while others are about the present. Grandfather Petras completes the story with generalization why he can spare more attention to the grandchild. He emphasized the fact that he was not working (*I don't have to worry about work*) and may spend more time with the grandchild.

REFLECTING PRESENT. ACCEPTANCE OF DAILY LIFE WITH A GRANDCHILD.

Data analysis concerning the meaning grandparents render to the present care of grandchildren revealed the diversity, i.e. grandparents formed various stories. Moreover, when comparing transferred experiences about grandchildren in the present (Table 4) and about children in the present (Table 5), when grandparents started to form one coherent narrative line, another situation became obvious. At the beginning, the stories resolved,

later they combined into one, and then divided once again. The meanings constructed by grandparents passed from one story line to the other.

The element of the story – *Grandparents couldn't evaluate it, because it seemed natural*. Grandparents who lived with their grandchildren from their birth or had a strong interrelationship could not distinguish the meaning of this particular stage of life. The grandparents talked a lot about other people. After they had been asked how they were, they would simply mention it was not a difficult situation for them. The chosen segment of grandmother Aldona's narrative serves as an example to illustrate the difficulty she had to create the meaning. After introduction that she had joyful moments and those of tiredness (*give joy and sometimes we were tired*), the grandmother made a pause and generalized '*as in every other home*'. Besides, she added she did not feel the burden of housekeeping.

Well, it was every way. Of course, they would **give joy** and sometimes **we were tired**, for that peace and ...<> As in **every other home** perhaps ... nothing serious, as I said, it doesn't feel like some house burden. It seems everything is as it should be... [7:142]

In the segment, grandmother Aldona's shift from herself to housekeeping is not incidental – this is the moment of focalization. It is possible to assume that she had not thought personally what the meaning of this stage of life meant to her and only kept seeking to take care of others. Consequently, the grandmother did not reflect on her personal experience as she generated a common meaning significant to all family members and not to one in particular.

The element of the story – *Tiredness of being responsible all the time*. Another group of grandparents revealed they were going through a stressful stage of life when discussing the aspects of care in the present. During the interviews, grandparents searched for the right words to reflect their personal experiences. Words *hard*, *difficult* and *tiredness* were quite frequent. It is important to mention that grandparents did not accuse their close people of the experience. They only wanted to explain that it could

not be otherwise. In the chosen extract and interview (narrative segment) with grandmother Ona it is possible to envisage that in her introduction into *difficulties* she describes the factors that cause the feeling of *difficulty* in detail. Squeezing into one flat (*little space*) and grandchildren's disobedience (*they disobey*) were the major moments of difficulty during the care.

<> oh dear, everything is **difficult**. It's also **hard** physically – two kids already. And the lack of space ... The flat is small. We moved into that two room flat – five dwellers ... Four. Children in one room and grandfather with them. I settled in another room. **Little space**. Especially in winter. The kid is small, that little one. Another a teenager. They play, skylark, **they disobey**. It's **hard** for me to take care of the children and of everything else. At the same time I feel pity for my daughter all the time. The start there was so awful, you can't help otherwise. You can't tell to leave everything and come back. They borrowed money to pay for the trip, everything. **I feel sorry for her and she misses children and it's difficult for me**. Well... **I wouldn't wish such life for anybody**. [1:38]

The feeling of difficulty was also reinforced by seeing that it was hard for her daughter to part from children. The grandmother defined this feeling: '*I feel sorry for her and she misses children and it's difficult for me*'. In order to show and define the scope of experience, she generalizes: '*I wouldn't wish such life for anybody*'. This sentence fully reflects the intensity of experience for it is used in Lithuanian to show the 'depth' or 'burden' of intensive experiences.

The element of the story – *Feeling high responsibility (engagement)*. The third group of grandparents defined everyday care as an experience of strong feeling of commitment. Although other grandparents mentioned the feeling of responsibility, the story segments of three grandparents, for whom the feeling of responsibility was the main meaning in transitional life situation, were selected.

At the beginning, grandmother Marija expressed her thought that when preparing for the care she could think of more fears, in her words: '*when you think and prepare yourself, you can think of various things*'. Later the grandmother responded that the feeling of responsibility (*you have*

responsibility handed to you) helped accept the fears, handle various situations with her grandson. It seems that grandmother Marija wanted to say that responsibility and direct care (*when you dive into that*) helps to handle the care, face the challenges, in her words: ‘*and then everything seems ok, why worry...*’:

Not at once the next day, there is no such fear as **you have responsibility handed to you** and then you, then that’s that. **And then everything seems ok, why worry**, why ... You see how it is. You know, when you do something it isn’t so scary, but **when you think and prepare, you can think of various things...** it seems while you don’t do, don’t see how it’ll be... you feel scared. And then **when you dive into that**, everything seems to work out. [10:50]

Grandmother Marija’s story segment shows that it was difficult for her to define emotions, which is reflected in pauses and skips in her thinking. Therefore, another story of grandmother Lina was chosen. The meaning constructed in the story not only shows the feeling of responsibility, but also the ‘inexplicable’ one. Grandmother started her story with a doubt (*well, all this I don’t know*), and the next sentence introduced, ‘*I handled it quite easy*’. Grandmother Lina considered she accepted the situation easily as she was constantly supported by her sister. Despite that, when she did not succeed in full definition of the meaning of experiences, grandmother Lina generalized that she experienced the feeling to spent as much time with granddaughter as possible, in her words ‘*I have to be with ... [granddaughter] all the time*’. She identified one of the factors that determined her wish to be with granddaughter as the feeling of ‘*great responsibility*’.

Well, all this I don’t know. I somehow **handled everything quite easy**. I don’t know why. Maybe it was easier because **my sister is leading similar life**. She manages similarly. Now I see that ... At first I thought I won’t deal with it. Now I see that everything goes perfectly. Perfectly, **I handle every situation**. When sometimes I have to go somewhere suddenly or the like well, it somehow works out unexpectedly although I feel that I am alone with her. This is how I feel. Such feeling. Since I feel **great responsibility**, maybe that’s why I have this feeling, **I have to be with ... [granddaughter] all the time**. [5: 62]

This segment of the story is not selected accidentally: grandmother Lina's story reflects the difficulty grandparents have to define the stage of transitional life. Saying directly '*I don't know*' may be understood in two ways. On the one hand, it may seem that grandmother had little discussed the moment with her family; and therefore, it was hard for her to describe what happened during the interview. On the other hand, it may be that grandmother had reflected the situation many times, but she could not find words that would help to construct the experience. This assumption arises from the way grandmother Lina enumerated the factors of the event: sister's example (*my sister is leading similar life*); personal assessment of the situation, the way she handled the difficulties. Yet grandmother had experienced another feeling she could not find explanation or definition to – she simply felt stimulus to spend as much time with her granddaughter as possible. I would interpret this feeling as a great commitment to grandparenting.

REFLECTING PRESENT. ACCEPTANCE OF A GRANDCHILD

When talking about daily life with grandchildren, grandparents touched the topic 'What it means to live with a grandchild' consciously or unconsciously. This topic was important for all grandparents and joined the stories into one common line of coherent narrative.

The element of the story – *Raising grandchild as their own child*. When talking about grandchild, grandparents constructed the meaning that life in the transitional life situation is almost the same as with their own children. When grandmother Marija was asked if it was not difficult, she indirectly answered, '*When you are into this then it's not difficult. You raise the child as your own*<>' [10:184]. Grandmother Aldona responded that she treated her granddaughter and her own children in the same way as '*children are children... as they all were mine [laughs a bit] ... well, I don't know. I don't know how to say...*' [7:69-72]. It may be observed that grandmother Aldona found it difficult to construct the meaning. This is revealed in her

direct answer ‘*I don’t know how to say*’ and in pauses between the meanings. The response of grandmother Roma was similar: she imagined and treated her granddaughter as her little daughter ‘*I think... I can’t imagine she’s my granddaughter. She’s my l.. little daughter...*’ [12:281].

It is interesting that when asked about the beginning of care, grandmother Lina started constructing the meaning of care with a statement ‘*Child is a great joy*’. Although grandmother also mentioned another meaning important to her (the feeling of responsibility), the main topic of the narrative was ‘*greater love*’ to the grandchild. Using comparisons between parenting children and grandchildren, grandmother Lina wanted to stress that her concern about granddaughter was much greater. She worried more about her granddaughter (*you worry a lot*) and with further comparison she completed her story: ‘*Well, I’m shaken down with her as with my own child*’.

*Somehow this was very interesting to me as I think it’s some **responsibility, troubles**. Of course being with a grandchild all the time **brings some joy** as well* [grandmother interrupts and starts talking]

Child is a great joy. I loved my children. I somehow love my grandson even more. I don’t know why it is so. This love is different. Maybe you feel greater responsibility for a child. Much greater responsibility. When your own child falls ill, you know how to treat him, take care. When this one falls ill **you worry a lot**. Even the most simple illness. I’m a medic. But every time I’m so worried if something is wrong. And I’m so terribly scared that something could happen. God forbid! If some accident or something. Whose fault would it be? It’s a great responsibility. But **love is** maybe **greater**. Than for my own children. Although, as I said, I loved my children very much, but this ... <> We go everywhere together. Since she was little. My daughter studied. So in spring I used to take her with me here. She’s registered here. So we do exercises, massage all the time as she has some problems with her legs. Granny goes everywhere. **Well, I’m shaken down with her as with my own child.** [5:02]

The extract contains interviewer’s words in order to show the principles of the grandmother’s narrative construction. To picture the situation better, it is worth mentioning that the interviewer had just started talking about the purpose of the interview. It seems that the grandmother was touched

by words *responsibilities, troubles* and especially the phrase '*brings some joys*'. The grandmother could not remain silent, interrupted the interviewer and started talking. Grandmother as though created the narrative when comparing past and present so that the interviewer could get a better picture of the situation. It is interesting that the grandmother generalized and found the meaning rather quickly. When talking about the peculiarities of grandparenting, grandmother Lina unexpectedly found the sought meaning and completed her story with emphasis that she had shaken down with her granddaughter as with her own child. Treating grandchildren like their own children is closely related to another meaning: the role assumed by grandparents.

REFLECTING PRESENT. ROLE IN TRANSITIONAL LIFE SITUATION

The element of the story – *Parent, friend or grandparent*. When talking about everyday care, grandparents discussed the role they assumed in grandchildren's care. One cohesive story line was chosen, since when narrating, grandparents as though considered their role in the family, what they were for grandchildren and how grandchildren accepted their role. The conception of the role was important for all grandparents and served as a mirror that helped to understand themselves better in the context of care. The topic of role also revealed an established relationship between a grandparent and a grandchild. When grandparents faced difficulties to define the meaning of passed events, the interviewer sometimes helped them to orient themselves in the context of care with a question about the role they had assumed. Three major roles were mentioned by grandparents: parent, friend and grandparent. The chosen stories describe the meanings constructed by each of the three roles.

The first extract reflects the cases where grandparents felt themselves in the role of a parent. The role also depended on their relationship with little grandchildren since they strove to accept grandparents as mother or father. It was difficult for grandparents to identify the factors that con-

structed the meaning of a specific role. The extract from the interview with grandmother Rita represents the situation where grandmother herself started developing the topic of the meaning of the role while developing the topic of grandmother's decision (the interviewer asked if it was easy to decide). Grandmother's consideration was reflected in her statement '*What do I know*'. She mentioned it was easier with the granddaughter as she was a girl. Afterwards, grandmother made an initial pause (*I don't know*) and started another topic, i.e. granddaughters wish to call her mother. She simultaneously drew a parallel view of interrelationship. In continuation of the conversation, grandmother returned to the topic of role naming herself mother. She said, '*Because mom allows everything*', and the surprised interviewer asked repeatedly. Then grandmother responded that she was mother, in her words '*as there is no other mom*' and called her daughter by name.

- So for you, let's say, **was it easy to decide** to take care of I. [*granddaughter's name*]?

Maybe because she's a girl. **What do I know**. I have all girls and this is a girl [laughs]. It was more difficult with grandson. Well, he was a bit naughty. Well, boy is a boy. And girls they are nicer [laughs]. **I don't know**. She's never called my granny, neither mother nor grandmother. **She calls me mom**. Although everybody says this mother is old [laughs again]. [4:24- 25]

Because mom allows everything [laughs]. Dad not so much.

Mom, you mean yourself?

Yeah, **as there is no other mom**. There is K. [*daughter's name*]. K. left to buy candies. [4:158-161]

Grandmother Rita was telling this part with laugh in her voice. At first she said she did not consider herself to be a real mother, but simultaneously defined that at the moment she accepted the role of mother unconsciously. While talking about herself or about her husband, she used concepts *mom*, *dad*. During the conversation, it emerged that grandmother slightly reproached her daughter and son-in-law that they did not take care of granddaughter when she was in hospital. It seems that her daughter had

personal troubles and grandmother with her husband accepted full care of the granddaughter when they felt she was left without care.

Other grandparents clearly defined that they felt they were performing the role of a mother. The main meaning they conveyed was being accustomed. The extract from the conversation with grandmother Roma represents the meaning when talking about everyday care she mentions that granddaughter is *accustomed* to grandmother ‘*as to her mother*’. The concept that delivers the meaning is defined by the grandmother ‘*I raise her as my own children*’.

Well somehow, **as to her mother** [is talking from granddaughter’s point of view]. It’s nothing, I also was **accustomed** to that. Well, it’s okay to me ... **I raise her as my own children**, yeah. I am considered a young mother now, well ... 12:77]

Considering the narrative segment, the phenomenon of focalization is clear as grandmother introduces the topic from granddaughter’s point of view and then moves to her personal opinion.

The second meaning constructed by grandparents when reflecting everyday care was the topic of friend, i.e. to be a friend for a grandchild. Grandfather Petras described that his grandson considered him ‘*my best friend*’. Later in the conversation he described the situations of their joint activity and generalized, ‘*we get along very well*’.

And grandpa, as he says, is **my best friend** [laughs pleased]. Well we’re together all the time. Go somewhere. Here, at home, when we have some free time, we go to that pinery and everywhere and and we study together ... we walk along the street, as he learnt to read so quickly. The names of the street. ‘Grandpa, what’s the letter here and there’... we started that way, started when walking around and and he learnt how to join the letters and now he has no problems at school <> **we get along very well** ... [8:38]

Here again the grandfather is constructing the story from grandson’s point of view and only his laugh indicates that he personally agrees and approves the definition of friend and the constructed meaning.

Grandfather Jonas supplements grandfather Petras' story. In this case, the interviewer helped to identify the role, as in his own words, he had an association what grandfather's daily life with a grandchild reminded him of. The grandfather agreed and confirmed that they '*look like two friends*'. At first when defining the meaning of friends, the grandfather grounded it with everyday activities, in his words '*he asks about everything*' and '*I tell and explain*'. Later the grandfather touched a sensitive personal topic which seemed as a partial indirect self-accusation of little time spent with his children (*I didn't spend so much time with my children*). The conclusion may be drawn that the grandfather was aspiring to live with his grandchild the time he could not spare to his children.

I have this association whether you walk as a grandfather with a grandson or as two friends...?

It looks like two friends... I mean, well, he asks questions, now he's at this age, so **he asks about everything. I tell and explain. I didn't spend so much time with my children** when they were growing, so I simply... I couldn't make, because I worked from morning till evening and and... would run everywhere. I couldn't find time. [12:137-138]

The third meaning constructed by grandparents when considering daily life with grandchildren was the role of a grandparent. The narrative segment of grandmother Dana shows that the grandmother did not want to be compared with mother and confronted the comparison of her care with motherhood. The grandmother contradicted at once: '*of course as grandmother*'. It seems that the grandmother thought that if grandchildren considered her as mother, their mother would be betrayed or forgot because she stressed '*they [grandchildren] remember their mother perfectly well*'. After the interviewer specified in the next sentence her personal acceptance of the situation, grandmother Dana started constructing reflection: '*I didn't think about that*'.

How did you feel then? As grandmother or as ...

Mother.

Mother?

Of course, as grandmother. Because she's never called me mom. She couldn't do that. The tip period is too short. **They [grandchildren] remember their mother perfectly well.** <>

But they considered you grandmother, and how did you feel inside? As grandmother or as mother?

Now then, **how could I feel as mother?** At first my ... age is not that. I don't know... What do I know. Those children ... Oh dear, **I really didn't think about that.** This thought has never ... **I didn't give prominence...** How I feel about those kids... <>[2:57-62]

Her reflection is revealed by predominant pauses; and therefore, it seems that the role of mother is not acceptable to her. She responded, '*How could I feel as mother*', and generalized her care (*I didn't give prominence*) as though wishing to explain she did her best to be a good grandmother.

REFLECTING PRESENT. LIFE WHEN GRANDCHILD IS AWAY ON 'HOLIDAY'.

The last coherent meaning constructed about the present was grandparents' temporary parting from grandchildren. The situation emerged when grandchildren temporarily left to visit parents abroad or went on holiday with parents in Lithuania. Not all grandparents experienced the situation, but those who did would stress in their stories often what it meant to be without grandchildren. A temporary separation may be treated as an event in the past, yet grandparents usually used the present tense in their reflection or emphasized that the separation happened recently. Due to these reasons, their experiences are attributed to the group of significant events happening in the present.

The element of the story – *During transitional life situation they have always been together.* One group of grandparents spent all the time of transitional life situation with their grandchildren and did not have experience that would enable them to share the meaning of temporary separation. Despite that, the extract from the conversation with grandmother Asta represents that she felt a need to be alone, without her grandson, for a

while. In her words, a temporary separation (*I will take him there to stay for two weeks*) will serve as a rest for grandmother (*I also need holiday*):

So I lean on him, I tell 'If you don't obey me, I will take you to B.' [name of village]. This B is in the district of Marijampole S. [name of district], there is such a village. My mother came from there. So I keep telling I will take him to B.

To other grandparents?

Yeah. So he says: 'If there are other kids, it's okey with me. But if there are no kids, I don't want'. But still in August ... When? In July. **I will take him there to stay for two weeks.**

You will stay there too?

No. I'll leave him. You know, **I also need holiday.** [3:118-122]

It is interesting that grandmother Asta touched the topic unconsciously when talking about her grandson's upbringing. When the grandmother started talking about one of upbringing means – intimidation – she passed to another topic, i.e. the need to have a rest. The leap in thinking may be explained by the fact that the change of place and grandchild's taking away triggered the need to rest, which is more important to her, and which she has already reflected. It may be assumed that the leap in thoughts is nothing else but situation planning reflected inside.

The element of the story – *Inner or home emptiness*. The majority of grandparents experienced temporary separation from their grandchildren. General meaning constructed in their stories was inner emptiness or the feeling of emptiness at home. To represent the meanings, the extracts from the interviews with grandfather Petras and grandmother Odeta were selected.

When remembering the experiences of his grandson's temporary leaving, grandfather Petras searched for ways to define the situation, so he started the topic with a word '*problem*'. After a short pause and repetitions he identified one of the essential meanings: '*it's empty in the house*'. Recalling a particular example, grandfather Petras discussed that, on one hand, it was a rest to him. In his words, '*you don't have to worry about anything*'.

However, he named the outcomes of the separation at once: *'the lack at home'*, *'something is different'*.

Well, this is also a **problem**... like a **problem**. Until you get used to that ... **it's so empty in the house**, when he's away... well they sometimes take him away. I don't know, after the New Year eve they took him for 5 days, those godparents. Well, R.'s [daughter's] sister. Well and ... to Klaipeda they ...

Well, it's holiday for you.

Year, holiday. In part, it seems good to relax, **you don't have to worry about anything**. But there and then, you feel **the lack at home**, that he's not ... something, **something is different** and you look for it. Sometimes you forget and look for that kid, he's not here...

Do you also get up at night?

Well, yeah, several times... you see, that there is nobody to check on. [pause] **It's in the blood**... [8:146-150]

The construct of grandparent Petras' story segment – pauses and reflective sentences – enabled to understand that the grandfather reflected on the situation during the conversation: he was setting the reasons why the feeling of emptiness appeared and generalized with expression *'it's in the blood'*. In the example, the last interviewer's question expanded the range of actions performed by the grandparent when the grandson was away. The question is related to the earlier extract from the conversation, when the grandfather talked about grandchild's care in case of illness, and he mentioned he got up at night to check how grandson felt.

Grandmother Odeta's story segment revealed a deeper meaning of inner emptiness and another understanding of separation. The grandmother's experience is not only reflected in the sentences she constructed, but also in her emotional status. Odeta talked with tears in her eyes. The extract shows the search for definition of inner state. Grandmother Odeta started her story with a statement *'you lack for something'*. Later she compared the present with situations when the grandchild with her (*you're engaged more*), and, finally, she drew the main conclusion of the personal experience: *'I feel so lonely'*.

When they took him away [talks with tears in her eyes], then ... **you lack for something**. You go from corner to corner... somehow when he's here, **you're engaged more**, and now **I feel so lonely**... my husband, he constantly watches TV, **nothing else is interesting to him**. He closes the door and that's it. And here, somehow. You talk, you go for a walk, somewhere in the town, in the amusement park. So ... so there are people with children so, I don't know, you talk and play. You teach something. Yesterday we played in the sand, made the castle... in the yard. [11:121]

In order to explain the situation, it should be mentioned that grandmother Odetá's daughter left abroad straight after graduation and her younger son was a teenager and was usually out. Grandmother told that she did not have time to experience the feeling of separation from her daughter; and thus, she experienced such an intense feeling of loneliness. Consequently, when comparing her status with that of her husband (grandfather) (*nothing else is interesting to him*) and mentioning her favorite, yet very simple activities with the grandson, the grandmother tried to show that the grandson filled the emptiness she usually felt at home.

The element of the story – *It's good time to do extra work*. In comparison to other interviewed grandparents, grandmother Marija accepted temporary separation from her grandson differently. She worked in arts school, was an active public woman; and therefore, she treated the separation as a possibility to do accumulated works. She told she could participate in 'anniversaries', 'some trip' and go to the 'theatre'.

*How did you spent those three weeks without him. Was it **difficult** or **easy**?*

How to say. Nooo, you know, when you know ... you have various things to do, as when with him I don't have enough time sometimes, so I know, that I'll have some time of my own, haw [laughs], I'll be able to settle my affairs and to be able to read something and ... and more freedom was good because I had two **anniversaries**, **some trip** to Trakai and somewhere else. And then I was so happy these events happened during the time. I could go to the **theatre** ... to see something ... so it wasn't.. **But I usually handle things, you know**. [10:77]

The interviewer's question invited grandmother Marija to reflect or identify two possible extreme experiences of separation (*difficult, easy*). As a result, the grandmother's story was constructed in the manner of consideration. On the other hand, grandmother Marija wanted to emphasize that the time spent without her grandson was only an opportunity to settle some unfinished business as at the end of the story she aspired to confirm the main idea – capability to handle the care. Her words '*but I usually handle things, you know*' revealed she wanted the interviewer to understand that essentially she managed to take care of her grandson and in case of separation from him, she dealt with some insignificant activities.

PROJECTING FUTURE: DESIRES FOR THE FUTURE

When analyzing data how grandparents projected their future experience, a partial mixture of cohesive stories lines emerged. If cohesive story of one line could be discerned in the past and in the present, the situation changed when projecting the future. At first, it seemed that the future narrative segments described were similar to future projections about grandchildren. However, later some essential differences were also found. It was even more difficult for grandparents to conclude and find the meaning of separation, i.e. how grandparents envisaged their future experiences.

The element of the story – *Confident about living together in the future*. Having separated the projections of children and grandchildren, it emerged that one group of grandparents viewed the future with confidence and trust that they would all live together. The extract from the conversation with grandmother Roma expanded the meaning of living together with children. When listing the conditions of living together with daughter (*I'm going to live with my daughter*), she also touched another important meaning, i.e. calmness about her old age and about future difficulties (for example, health) related to aging. Grandmother Roma described that she will '*have to end together*', stating that she will live with her daughter until death:

I'm going to live with my daughter, I've already built the house, I have two rooms furnished and a bathroom. **I have** my corner... **I already have** my corner. **I already have**...

Meaning, you feel that you'll stay together with your granddaughter and daughter...?

We'll stay together, yes. I so so my... old age and I think **I'll have to end together**. Although I have a flat here and everything, but ... still house is nearby, you have to nestle with some child anyway. Somehow ... it's arranged like that, my daughter arranged this... that's it **granny has** her, in the house, has her corner, **her place**... you know.[12:275-277]

The trust may be envisaged in repeated phrase '*I have*' and firm response to the question (*We'll stay together, yes*). It is relevant that grandmother Roma completes her story with a statement '*granny has her place*'. I think grandmother indirectly talks about herself as her main style when constructing meanings was the usage of the first person plural and not singular. This style is caused by creation of narrative interface with other family member; in other words, the meaning of future was developed in interaction with her daughter.

The element of the story – *Unfolded willingness to keep contact in the future*. Another group of grandparents projected the future believing they would be important in grandchildren's lives. This expectation was evidenced in various ways. When sharing about their children's plans, grandparents tentatively mentioned they would keep close contact with grandchildren. When recalling some intensive feelings, for example sadness, which grandparents experienced due to temporary separation from grandchildren, they understood they could not 'chain down' grandchildren to themselves in the future. The segment from grandmother Lina's story reveals that she projected the future and understood '*it'll be sad*' after parting from granddaughter. She also accepted the inevitability of the stage of all life situation, however: daughter must be with granddaughter (mother must be with her child). The grandmother generalized that this knowing would help her to outlive the situation.

Didn't you think how it'll be when K. leaves you?

Oh dear. Of course, I thought. **It'll be sad**, I miss her so quickly. But I understand that **mother must be with her child**. It's the only comfort that mother must be with her child. Not grandmother but mother. And somehow this helps to calm down, of course. It's hard, hard.

Don't you think, that there they have the Internet and for example to see through the computer, well...

For example, I don't have the internet. I even don't know how to use computer. Maybe such a square person, but in the course of time this thing **would be great**. I'll attend some courses, I'll learn and try to get the computer, for something to work out. To have something. If I need in my live. Yeah, computer is necessary. [5:119-122]

It is interesting that interviewer's question about internet and computer helped elaborate the future projection. At the beginning grandmother Lina mentioned the difficulties due to absence of computer and internet and later she projected the help of the means to maintain further contact, in her words it '*would be great*'. This second short segment of the story revealed that grandmother had not thought much and had not projected the situation. She performed the projection at the time of the interview, following the principle of supplement interaction, i.e. after she was induced to think about the circumstances.

The element of the story – *Willingness to work and to take care of another grandchild, who is living abroad*. Grandmother Marija distinguished as the only grandparent who lacked the time to do her works when living with a grandchild, in her words: '*I don't do many things because of him*'. Therefore, she treated the separation from her grandson as a possibility to do the works (*I'll do so many things*), to improve her professional performance.

I think, **I'll do so many things**. I'll start writing some book or something [laughs]... no, I also need, **I don't do many things because of him**. As I also need to improve my qualification and I must, it's time for that. I have to do it until June and I can't finish this because I don't don't have time. [10:180]

When remembering, that in her reflections on the present, grandmother Marija stressed her grandson was not a hindrance to her essential activities, later she as though constructed another meaning of separation: she would be able to deal with accumulated business without grandson. I would think that in the situation, it was more important for the grandmother to emphasize her value, her ability to survive without grandson, her willingness to pursue many activities of self-realization.

During the conversation, the grandmother mentioned that there was uncertain plan to raise another granddaughter in summers. As she says, '*I have another granddaughter <> my dream is that she learned Lithuanian*'. The construct of the story segment revealed that the plans were little likely. Grandmother Marija made many pauses, did not finish her words, which showed her doubts, considerations and finally generalizations that the plans may not be realized, in her words '*these are only plans*'.

You know, **I have another granddaughter**. [10:154] I think, she ... **my dream** is that she **learned Lithuanian**. You know, it's difficult. She talks Thai to her mother, Lithuanian to my son and English in kindergarten. So they they they... I only dream if M. [grandson's name] needs less, so maybe.. if I didn't have to work, I'm such a... probably good grandmother that I ... I care about the grandchildren. Now I think that this girl ... to take her **during summers**. These are only plans, anyhow... 10:164]

The grandmother's desire to teach her second granddaughter Lithuanian repeated the experience with the first grandson she was taking care of at the time of the interview. The grandmother stressed several times that the reason for grandson M.'s care was helping her daughter. Moreover, during one interview, she also emphasized the influence of different languages on her grandson. She recalled the situation when having returned from X country [EU country], grandson forgot how to talk Lithuanian and in the course of time, the skills of the Lithuanian language were regained when being with grandmother. The desire to teach native language shows the predominant cultural narrative. Lithuanian emigrants construct the understanding that it is possible to retain link with native land even living

abroad only when preserving the language of their parents (Kuzmickaitė, 2004). It is possible to assume that grandmother Marija's wish to teach her granddaughter who was born in bilingual family is an aspiration to convey the importance of Lithuanian identity.

In sum, some grandparents were assured that they were going to live together with children and grandchildren in the future; as a result, their narrative segments were more reflected. Another group of grandparents tried to leave the meaning of separation and future open, as I could feel untold hope that specific relations with grandchildren would last.

6.4. Summary

During research data analysis, in order to answer the second research question: *What are cohesion and diversity of reconstructed narratives told by grandparents about transitional life situation?*, I reconstructed and rendered that grandparents perceive changed life situation through transferred experiences or through intertwined experiences and lived events. Accordingly, I reconstructed three narratives: a) 'This Child is Also Mine'; b) 'They Thought to Work, Earn some Money and Return'; and c) 'Friend, Parent or Grandparent'.

To generalize the first narrative, it is possible to state that the meaning of coherent narrative is determined by the social surroundings of grandparents and children working abroad. Different situations that initiated transitional life situation had impact on various experiences and, simultaneously, on various cohesive and diverse stories. This was reflected both in the past and in grandparents' future projections. Similar situation was in the present: grandchildren's care, daily life with grandchildren determined coalescence of various stories into one general cohesive story, i.e. grandparents' worries about grandchildren became alike.

When summarizing the attributes of second coherent narrative and reflecting on the main experiences of grandparents related to their children, I discovered that similar social situations of children caused less dis-

unity in coherent narrative. For instance, almost all children had similar aspirations about leaving to a foreign country; and thus, cohesive story had a common beginning. Various processes of children's assimilation abroad had an impact on different experiences/feelings or worries of grandparents; and, as a result, grandparents constructed different stories. It emerged that it was easier for grandparents to identify intensive (painful) experiences or more reflected significant events than to project future which, according to the majority of grandparents, depended only on children's decisions. Time perspective (the present tense used when talking about past) showed that significant events of the past were empathized during the interview as well.

When generalizing the third coherent narrative about grandparents' personal experiences and comparing it to the coherent narratives about grandchildren and children (see Tables 4, 5 and 6), it emerged that apart from reflections on the factors of social surroundings, there were other factors that had an impact on the flow of personal coherent narrative. I think that grandparents' relationship with grandchildren had a considerable influence on story 'waving' (merging and resolving of story lines). As grandparents often faced difficulties in defining personal experiences, emotions, considerations, they tried to create meaning by comparison of parenthood and grandparenthood. The major meanings of present relationship with grandchildren, which unified the coherent stories, were 'Raising grandchild as their own children' and 'Parent, friend or grandparent'. In the process of focalization, i.e. when experiences were considered from the point of view of grandchildren of children, I think, my questions, which induced grandparents to see the transitional life situation as a personal one, were of great importance. Consequently, some experiences may be assessed as co-constructed at the moment of the interview.

7. Multidimensional nature of narratives of grandparents in transitional life situation

The aim of this chapter is to construct the dialogue between the analyzed theoretical background and empirical results of the research. Meanwhile, it is not proposed that the conclusion and discussion will explain all the possible understandings of narrated nature of people's experiences, i.e. the reality of grandparents' meaningful lived events and experiences during transitional life situation. The conclusion and discussion portray an inherent comprehension how people narrate meaning of lived events and experiences.

The following chapters will firstly focus on the interpretation of findings disclosing how the structure (forms) of narrative helped grandparents verbalize their lived events. Secondly, the content of the results, i.e. the meaning of grandparenthood will be interpreted. Finally, the structure of narrative and the content of results will be discussed together while drawing final conclusions to represent theoretical ideas of my own.

7.1. Significance of the structure of grandparents' narratives

The study employs the understanding that 'persons give meaning to their lives and relationships by storying their experience' (White & Epston, 1990, 13). Predetermined structure of narrative help grandparents raising grandchildren verbalize their experiences and lived events; accordingly, Sarbin (1986, 9) states that 'a human being thinks, perceives, imagines, interacts and makes choices according to narrative structures'. Further, Bruner (1990, 77) explain that narrative itself carries a structure, pre-existing in the nature of narrativity, and help people organize their experiences in a narratable and understandable way. In simple terms, the structure of narrative is a tool kit, which makes it easier for human beings to tell their stories.

The study generates the approach towards narrative structure which echoes Clandinin and Connelly's (2000, 50) standpoint that an entry into

human experiences is through understanding that the nature of narrative and the modes of narrativity consist of *multiple dimensions*. Research analysis revealed that the following multiple dimensions were prominent in grandparents' narratives: *plot*, *time dimension*, *focalization* and *social context*. Subsequently, the interpretation of every form of narrative was presented in following way: (a) first, the *significance* of form was revealed, i.e. how structure or elements of narrative helped grandparents disclose their lived events and experiences; (b) second, the *way* to construct form was interpreted, i.e. how a particular element of structure was generated by grandparents.

Every grandparent tried to compose his/her own *plot*, i.e. the organization of meaningful events was put in a particular mode. Murray (2003, 114) points that a narrator tries to organize and bring order to disordered events of lived situation; whereas Elliot (2005) states that a human being situates meaningful events according to time or in a linear sequence. Interestingly, the result analysis demonstrated different findings. I found that the plot of grandparents' stories was composed according to the *importance* of events. Grandparents were repeatedly telling meaningful events and were coming back to those events at many times during the interview. It was the core story, or according to Payne (2006, 11), a dominant narrative, i.e. people always construct narrative directed towards something, willing to reveal the meaning of a lived situation. It emerged that plot was generated in a manner of *recurrence*. For instance, if a grandparent was telling the story about the difficulties his/her daughter faced while trying to adapt in a foreign country, it was common that the grandparent would recursively come back to this story at any time during the interview, or last minutes of the conversation with the interviewer would be dedicated to this topic.

The findings of research analysis about the second form of narrative – *time dimension*, helped expand the existing dominant understanding of it. Mostly, time dimension has been described as follows: (a) the continuity of a story is established using a past, present and future perspective (Clandinin & Connely, 2000, 50); (b) a linear movement from the past to the

future and the perspective of present situation is a transition between the two (Carr, 2001, 12; Elliot, 2005, 6). In the majority of cases grandparents were telling incoherent stories and, contrary to Carr and Elliot's opinion, time dimension did not always have a linear direction, i.e. stories were not constructed from past to present events. I found that the significance of time dimension revealed the *process* of *outliving* a meaningful event. Time dimension helped discover the process of recognition and reflection of the lived event.

A *way* to compose events according to particular time lies in the nature of narrative construction – the *use* of *grammar tenses*. In some cases, if a situation had been outlived, reflected, interpreted or told to another family member, a grandparent would explicate the narrative according to the event timing, i.e. past events were told using past tense, and similarly, present tense was used for situations occurring at the time of the interview. Yet in other cases, a past event would be constructed using both past and present tenses; for instance, a story about the experience of grandchild separation was begun in past tense and continued in the present tense in order to describe the grandchild's feelings. Consequently, it was understood that the grandparent had not outlived this life event but he/she re-lived it at the moment. Considering untold information (tears, a silent cry, pauses, for instance), it became obvious that during the interview many grandparents were re-living the meaningful events of transitional life situation again and again. Besides, the projection of future revealed that the majority of grandparents had not reflected this forthcoming life situation. Having started with the story about the future, nearly all grandparents would turn back to the present moments of transitional life situation. To sum up, the time dimension helped interpret the process of grandparents' personal reflection on lived events.

Research results on *focalization* (or point of view) showed that grandparents were constructing narrative with reference to other family members. It was common to all grandparents to answer quite a direct interviewer's question, 'How did you personally experience x situation?' with stories

about others. For instance, separation stories were generated according to grandchildren's experiences rather than grandparent's ones. Meanwhile Carr (2001, 19) claims that people constructing narrative may shift an individual point of view to a social perspective. I propose that the significance of narrative does not only lie in the process of shifting, but also in the *segregation of individual or family experiences*. The study demonstrates that the produced narrative about other family members simultaneously involves grandparents' experiences. What is more, grandparents accept themselves expendably; there is less focus on *me*, yet more on *we* and *us*. Therefore, I may define nearly all grandparents' narratives as family narratives because it was common to grandparents to reveal the meaningful events through the eyes of family members. At the same time, a collective story indirectly included grandparents' experiences too.

A way to generate focalization leans on the *application of singular or plural forms or emphasizing the main actor in the story*. When constructing stories, grandparents used the plural *we* or portrayed other (or all) family members as the main actors in the story. In these narratives, not only stories about lived events, but also intertwined relationships with family relatives were mirrored. Considering this approach, it was clear that grandparents were on very good terms with their grandchildren. The deep and fruitful reciprocal relationship was one of the most prominent stories in the narratives about transitional life situation.

The last form of narrative structure to be discussed is *social context*. The research results demonstrated that the significance of social context was revealed through the *emphasis* on a specific family situation or the particularities of intertwined family relationships. This echoes Holma's (1999, 14) ideas that, when producing a narrative, people (and grandparents, too) seek to incorporate social context as a tool to distinguish stable societal or dominant narratives. Grandparents felt their family context was different from that of traditional grandparents; therefore, social context was used to identify and to portray the uniqueness of every grandparent's family.

Data analysis revealed *four main social contexts* of grandparenthood. One of the themes of social context concerned children's lives abroad, i.e. the elements of their migration, the aspects of assimilation, and the quality of lives in foreign countries. Another important theme was relationship with a child (daughter in most cases) or with son-in-law. Third theme, and the most important one, was the social context of grandchildren: their daily behavior, temper (character), or even disorder. Finally, the last theme of social context appeared to be about family as a specific social environment of communication and relationships. In other words, family was depicted as a special space for intertwined relations of three family generations.

Social context was generated in two modes. The first way to generate social context was *elaboration of details*, i.e. the context of social situation was revealed by detailing various specific moments of transitional life situation. Feeling of a puzzle prevailed as small details step by step were put together to create the final picture. The second way to create social context was through the *application of comparison*. For instance, grandparents were comparing grandparenting and parenting (past with present) or peculiarities of life (work) in Lithuania and in a foreign country.

To sum up, I would like to portray the forms of narrative in action. As people use a variety of narrativity modes (Hänninen, 2004) and narrative structure is a tool kit to verbalize lived events and experiences (Brunner, 1990), people do not construct their own narrative passively, yet actively (Holma, 1999). Therefore, I propose that grandparent narratives might have been constructed according to the following process:

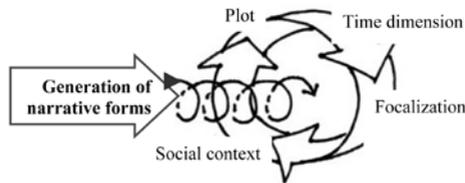


FIGURE 3. A tool kit to construct narrative

Figure 3 portrays the tool kit to construct narrative, where the forms of narrative construction have their particular places and arrows represent their relations. It should not be understood that there is a linear sequence of narrative forms, i.e. starting from plot then moving on to time dimension and etc. Neither should it be understood that plot influences time dimension, later focalization, or social context. With the presented figure, I want to portray that the forms are interdependent and are used *in an elaborative manner*, which different with every grandparent. Therefore, I state that incoherent narratives of grandparents were constructed in an elaborative manner (process), i.e. grandparents used the multiple forms of narrative to construct the meaning of transitional life situation. To recognize this elaborative process, at first I had to analyze the forms separately, and later to interpret the composition of all forms as a unit. This way of interpretation is perceived as the process of narrative cognition, which is presented in the following chapter.

7.2. Narrative cognition of grandparenthood: alternative understanding

The last outcome of narrative analysis deals with the interpretation of meanings of transitional life situations, which were constructed by grandparents. According to Polkinghorne's (1995, 11) approach, there are two types of cognition: paradigmatic and narrative; and the latter process is employed in the study. People perceive life events and experiences in a manner of narrative, i.e. they link separate events into one story, rather than segregate them. As cognition is the process of understanding, I state that grandparents tried to link diverse elements into a coherent story, in which every element is connected to the central coherent narrative action.

Furthermore Bruner (1990, 61) claims that meaning emerges from interpretation. Owing to this, all forms of narrative structure were interpreted with reference to the question: 'How do grandparents make sense of/structure their lived events?' In other words, how forms communicate

and interrelate within the text. After the first evaluation, I thought that grandparents constructed incoherent stories; yet later, in the course of interpretation, I found that grandparents' narratives were constructed *in a particular way*. It echoed Gee's (1991) proposition that it was not a matter of expressing or telling stories, but a matter of the way used to understand other peoples' narratives.

The reconstruction of narrative structure and its interpretation revealed *three coherent narratives* constructed by grandparents: a) experiences transferred towards grandchildren; b) experiences transferred towards adult children; and c) indirect personal experiences. All three coherent narratives consisted of cohesive and simultaneously diverse stories. Coherent narratives about grandchildren and those disclosing personal grandparents' experiences consisted of *three cohesive* stories, which were yet diverse in their content; whereas the narrative about adult children consisted of *two* stories. Consequently, the study demonstrates that transitional life situation of a grandparent cannot consist only of one single story, yet it includes multiple ones. In other words, I found that grandparents lived and handled transitional life situation in multiple ways. I discovered that the flow of cohesive and diverse stories was established according to the following elements: history and social situation of family, relations with family relatives, outliving a life event, and personal reflection on lived events and experiences.

The reconstructed meaning of atypical custodial grandparenthood differs from the approaches introduced in similar studies on custodial grandparenting or traditional grandparenting (grandchildren care in case of coresidence). Undoubtedly, as Ingersoll-Dayton, Neal and Hammer (2001, 262) point, all types of grandparenthood have benefits, such as financial and emotional support, grandchildren care, and household tasks. Yet the meanings of grandparenting phenomenon are different.

Considering grandparenting in case of custody McCallion and Kolomer, (2005); Goodman and Rao, (2007); Hayslip, Baird, Toledo, Toledo and

Emick (2005); Musil (1998), Musil and Ahmad (2002) reported and constructed understanding that raising grandchildren was more stressful than joyful situation of life. Organization of children's daily routines caused anxiety, expenses incurred due to care of grandchild brought a lot of worries, and interaction or confrontation with their adult children or in-law children was difficult. In case of traditional grandparenting (Letiecq, Baird, Toledo, Toledo & Emick, 2008; Musil & Standing, 2006), the understanding that grandparenting was both joyful and stressful life situation had been developed. It was related to losses associated with their life situation or problematic behavior of grandchildren. In comparison, I found that the meaning of grandparenting in transitional life situation was more joyful than stressful life situation, more enriching than limiting experience of life. The results of data analysis revealed that grandparenthood was experienced differently: stressful situations were perceived as temporal; whereas the organization of routines was accepted naturally.

Certainly, social context of atypical custodial grandparenthood and that of custodial/traditional grandparenting are different. Grandparents in custody assume this role out of necessity, usually as a result of psychiatric, drug, or alcohol problems of their children (Jendrek, 1994); raising grandchildren occurs due to adult children's inability to parent (Letiecq, Bailey & Kurtz, 2008). Moreover, in their study, Musil and Standing (2006) concluded that grandmothers in multigeneration households reported stress caused by disagreement over child rearing or due to deeper relational problems. Alternatively, a different meaning of intergeneration relations was found in my study. Firstly, the care of grandchildren did not happen as a result of adult children's individual social problems; on the contrary, adult children wished to increase their family welfare by working in other countries. Secondly, grandparents declared respect to their children or daughters/sons-in-law. Lastly, no matter how disturbing the behavior of grandchildren was, the intertwined relations between grandparents and grandchildren were usually penetrated with unutterable love. Mutual

respect rather than confrontational relationship was found in grandparents narratives.

Capability to manage grandchildren's care was additional meaning to grandparents' narratives. Stigmatized attitude that grandparents were not able to manage the care of small children was evident in the Lithuanian press (see Kučinskaitė, 2006; Valevičienė, 2005). In contrast to the existing dominant narrative in the society, the study demonstrated that *grandparents are able to help small grandchildren* experience the separation, to *handle household and care tasks*.

To sum up, the meaning of grandparenthood was experienced and outlived differently than it was proposed by Kornhaber (1996), who called this stage an aspiration to create the feeling of continuity. On the one hand, it could be evaluated as similar because a look back to past life was prevailing in grandparents' narratives. It was especially obvious if they did not have a possibility to spend enough time with their children because of being 'stuck in work' in the past; in the present, raising grandchildren was as a realization of their desire to experience a communion with small children, to feel the joy of being together and being important in the small human beings' lives. On the other hand, the meaning was different because raising grandchildren when adult children work abroad was accepted as a natural stage of life. The naturalness is established through a *mutual and special relationship* with a grandchild and having a strong or rather *natural wish to help*. Similarly, Hank and Buber (2009) point that acceptance and meaning of grandparenting depends on family culture which exists in the society. It echoes with my study, since I found that the meaning of grandparenthood is rooted in the family culture through willingness to help adult children and acceptance of small grandchildren as their own children. Even though grandparents experienced a lot of worries and concerns, the overall wish to help was stronger. Observation of other family experiences rather their own led to the particular kind of help. If a member of family had troubles,

i.e. suffering because of separation, grandparents wanted to help him/her to outlive the painful emotions as soon and as easy as possible.

The process of narrative cognition, i.e. the reconstruction of meaning of narratives, which involved ‘difficulty’ and ‘easiness’ of handling the situation, helped to create the complete picture of grandparenthood. In summary, I revealed *understanding* and *meaning* of grandparenting in the transitional life situation *different* from those of custodial or traditional grandparenting. I discovered that no matter which generation the family member belonged to (whether it was a person-in-law or a grown child) he/she was accepted as a member of extended family. The rooted family culture helps accept grandparenting in transitional life situation naturally, i.e. grandparents treat the changes in their lives as a normal stage of family cycle. Furthermore, unconditional and natural love to grandchildren ‘breathes’ in the narratives. For instance, grandmother Lina said that ‘*love for a grandchild is different*’ [5:02]. As a result, a grandchild might be accepted as her own child, as grandmother Lina referred to her granddaughter ‘*the child is also mine*’ [5:106].

7.3. Discussion on the process of human narrativity

I want to present the last discussion on grandparents’ way to construct meaning through storytelling by recursion to the main research question of the study: *Why did grandparents tell stories in that way?* It has already been concluded that grandparents’ incoherent narratives might be understood using a multiple design of narrative structure and in the process of reconstruction of coherent narratives. Here I want to answer this research question in a broader context: (a) interlinking social context with the process of grandparents’ aspiration to emphasize the meaning of a significant life situation; (b) discussing the affinities of the processes of human narrativity, which is based on my personal theoretical ideas.

Firstly, the answer to the question is related to study findings that grandparents were constructing narratives not about their personal experi-

ences but about the experiences of all family members, which was naturally overlapping with grandparents' ones. Transitional life situation was not accepted through personal position *me*, yet through the 'lenses' of family members – *we* and *us*. This is related to Murray's (2003, 117) point of view:

<...> narrative is often considered in individual or personal terms, we can also consider group, community or societal narrative. These are the narratives that particular collectives tell about themselves, their histories and their aspiration. In the same way as personal narratives are involved in the creation and re-creation of personal identities, these social narratives define the history of collective and distinguish it from other collectives. Further, these collective narratives overlap with personal narratives such that individuals **can define themselves as part** of the group.

I think that grandparents wanted to define and construct themselves *as being a part of the family*. Similarly, Mishler (1995) maintains that through narratives people try to transmit the message about the world, how the tellers share their lives with other people. In this case, grandparents reflected the situation and did not transmit information about their personal life situations or experiences; yet they explored the meaning of *shared* experiences and *shared* lived events of transitional life situation. It is congruent with Murray's (2003) standpoint that narratives might be a shared mean of making sense of the communal world. The primary focus of the study was put incorrectly and grandparents' stories were misunderstood. My comprehension of incoherent stories was constructed wrongly because the first focus of the study was related to grandparents' personal experience; and only after data analysis, family experiences, as a constituent of grandparenthood, were explored.

Secondly, grandparents were telling inner or core narrative, which *contradicted* the dominant stories in our society. This echoes with Payne (2006, 11), White and Epston's (1990) propositions that people might tell and direct narrative against something, unconsciously willing to uncover deeper or more diverse understanding of a life situation. I state that during interviews grandparents *struggled* with the understanding prevailing in our

society that a temporal separation was a ‘tragedy for small grandchildren’ (see Kučinskaitė, 2006), or that grandparents had difficulties in handling the care of grandchildren (see Valevičienė, 2005). During the interviews, grandparents were willing to reveal that grandchildren experienced the separation not *constantly* but *temporally*, i.e. as normal children yearning for emigrated parents. Moreover, grandparents wanted to *transfer a ‘new’ meaning* of the phenomenon that small grandchildren might accept the separation because: (a) constant communication between grandchildren and their parents was built; (b) grandparents built enriching relationships with grandchildren; (c) grandparents were accepted as a significant object of attachment (as mother or father); (d) grandparents were able to take a ‘good’ care of grandchild. Therefore, I propose that during the interviews, grandparents tried to construct an *understanding alternative to the stigmatic attitude* towards grandchildren being raised by grandparents due to external migration of their parents. The feeling of incoherent stories appeared because the conversation was not constructed according to the open questions of the interview, yet according to the logic of core narrative.

Finally, grandparents’ narrativity depended on the level of interpretation of lived events. This statement accords with Clandinin’s (2006) standpoint that through narrative people enter the world when their experiences or lived events are interpreted and reflected. Research analysis revealed that the *level of grandparents’ interpretation* of transitional life situation *was different*. With reference to Bruner (1990) and White’s (1995) thoughts that meaning appears in the process of interpretation, I propose that sequential and coherence narrative was more reflected and interpreted by some grandparents than the incoherent and divergent one was.

Moreover, the level of interpretation is *interrelated* with the way the meaning of lived events is created and reflected. In the theoretical part, I concluded that there are three ways to reflect and simultaneously interpret life situations: in interaction, through inner reflection, and when adopting/confronting dominant understandings of the society. The research

analysis revealed that grandparents *used all three ways to reflect the meaning* and those *ways were interrelated*. As I wrote earlier in this chapter, narratives of transitional life situation were led by core narrative. According to Hänninen's (2004) ideas this kind of narrative appears when grandparents reflect transitional life events by themselves and, as a result, *inner narratives* are constructed. Some grandparents were reflecting transitional life situation with another family member. For instance, grandmother Lina did with her sister, who had a similar life experience; and, according to Gergen (1997), *interactive narrative* was constructed. Furthermore, the interpretation required active personal reflection; and to minimize the process of reflection, grandparents, as every human being, might adopt a dominant understanding existing in the society (Payne, 2006). The study revealed that grandparents would not adopt dominant understandings, yet would confront the stigmatic attitude towards the phenomenon; thus, a 'new' and *alternative narrative* would be constructed.

To conclude the answer to the main question, I would like to present my own theoretical ideas, which emerged during the analysis of narrative theory and research. My reflection is not only about the modes of grandparents' narativity, but also of all people. My approach is based on the ideas presented by Hänninen (1999, 2004), who proposes that a person actively creates his own narrative, and that the center of telling is a 'flow of narrativity', i.e. dynamic interplay of different narrative forms. As the study explored different forms of narrative and emphasized different ways to create meaning, I want to present how different forms of narrative (structure) appear in the dynamic interplay with narrative modes to create meaning. The process of interrelation between a toolkit to construct narrative and mode to construct meaning is shown in the figure below. The main emphasis is that the two components of the process are not simply correlative, but they are mutually interdependent:

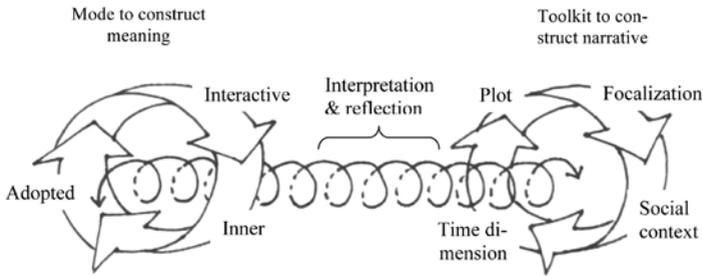


FIGURE 4. The model of narrative creation

The essential theory about the process of narrative creation depicts an overall process of grandparents' narrativity. On the one hand, people have a toolkit to narrate the lived events and experiences: plot, focalization, time dimension and social context. On the other hand, people choose the mode to construct the meaning of lived events through interaction, inner reflection or when adopting/ confronting dominant understandings existing in the society. Accordingly, adopted, interactive or inner narrative might be created. Overall interpretation and reflection represents that narrative is told and constructed by organizing multiple stories in a coherent way; consequently, grandparents' narratives were told in their own particular, but not incoherent way.

In Figure 4, the hypothesized relations between the modes to create meaning or a toolkit to narrate are presented by arrows. They should not be understood as linear causal relationships, yet as the ways in which meanings are transferred from one possible nature of narrative to another. I propose that the circulation of narrative of any human being might be studied considering the *unity* of multiple processes of narrative construction and the mode to accomplish meaning. And in case the question 'How might the circulation of narrative be studied?' arises, I should answer it, as Squire (2005, 98) proposes, through an understanding project. Being interconnected with each other, the processes of narrative circulation should be understood and analyzed in detail, and overall unit should be respected and considered.

8. Reflections on narrative research process

Every research is a mode to generate knowledge where multiple stories and entire understanding about world phenomena are interweaved. Perttula, Väänänen, Godvadas, Malinauskas, and Gudliauskaitė-Godvadė (2009, 55) state that social work research is the interface between two dimensions: knowing (knowledge generated by theory and research) and practice (how the knowledge could be implemented into practice). According to this framework, knowledge generated throughout the study will be reflected critically and its possible implementation in social work practice will be projected.

Since there is a variety of understandings about the types of social work research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Patgett, 2008; Shaw & Gould, 2001; Riessman, 2001), I want to distinguish what particular field of the research my study could be attributed to. I propose that this study is congruent with narrative research in social work, which Shaw and Gould (2001, 37) have defined as a combination of the following characters:

The character of narrative research of study is both methodological and epistemological. <...> narrative inquiry rescues the voice of the service users or those excluded from the margins <...>, narrative method with individuals who had experienced adverse life events to show how narrative identified the strengths and personal resources that they were able to mobilize, in contrast to 'deficit models' which problem-centred approaches tend to produce.

I define the last points of description differently, i.e. narrative represents an alternative understanding to the dominant narrative of our society and problem-saturated approaches (some of them could be studies).

The understanding how narrative research can be related to social practice is mainly build on comprehension about therapeutic intervention, which in most cases is narrative family therapy (Riessman & Quinney, 2005). The research analyses both how effective the therapy is (Besa, 1994) and what elements of narrative therapy might be applied in social work with individuals (Urek, 2005) and families (Heywood, 1999; Malinaus-

kas, 2008). In the Introduction I stated that the research is orientated to knowledge generation but not a case study, which allows a discussion about concrete guidelines of work. Therefore, I will try to reflect how narrative approach might be implemented in the field of social work only on a very general level. As social work field consists of various help modalities (Gvaldaitė & Švedaitė, 2005), my reflection will focus on the help to the families that are affected by problem-saturated stories.

8.1. Reflection on generated knowledge

Knowledge is generated throughout the process of understanding (Burr, 1995); accordingly, the main purpose of this chapter is to explain how the study tried to echo the aims of narrative social work research or how the credibility of the study was realized with reference to social work research. There are *two considerations*: the first one should answer the question ‘Is my study interrelated with the aims of narrative social work research?’; the second one should answer the question ‘What is the contribution of my study to narrative social work research?’. Before answering those questions, the particular approaches of narrative social work research will be distinguished.

Riessman and Quinney (2005, 392) discuss that the concept of narrative in social work research is rarely used systematically (which means a systematic application of narrative method in research). Authors were analyzing English-written articles, and they stated that the majority of social work studies were more practice-orientated. Emphasizing Riessman and Quinney’s study, I propose that narrative social work research is orientated towards three dominant understandings: (a) aspiration to comprehend the lives of people who are stigmatized or on the margins and represent alternative narratives about them (for instance, Poindexter, 2003; Hydén, 1994), (b) political research project which pursues to amplify muted people voices (for instance, Martin, 1998), (c) aspiration to comprehend how inter-dependent professionals construct narratives about help issues and

about clients (see White, 2002). Only some narratives of grandparenthood phenomenon are grounded on stigmatization (for example, that grandparents were not able to handle small grandchildren care), but I propose that my study deals with the first area of narrative social research, i.e. tries to generate alternative narrative.

Additionally, Riessman and Quinney (2005, 392) state there is a limited amount of research where narrative method was used explicitly. The reason for that is that narrative approach is multi-disciplinary, based on diverse epistemologies, theories and methods of analysis (Riessman & Quinney, 2005; Squire, Andrews & Tambouku, 2008). Yet gradually the amount of social work research is increasing and the concept of narrative is emphasized in all his diversity; there is a prevailing understanding that narrative might help to understand the people's lived events and experience (Riessman & Quinney, 2005; Riessman, 2008) or how social context is reflected in client's life (see Hydén & Överlien, 2005; Urek, 2005, 2006). Therefore, I propose that developed narrative approach and presented clear steps of narrative analysis complement the understanding of narrative social work research.

Even though my study focuses on the nature of narrated world of human experience, which is revealed through a particular phenomenon, it also fills the gaps of understanding in our society implicitly. The phenomenon of grandparents raising grandchildren due to external migration of their children receives little attention everywhere; in Lithuania, however, it has already been revealed through a contradictory attitude. If this viewpoint might be considered a dominant narrative of our society (a belief how life should be lived or how people should behave in their lives (Payne, 2006)), the study tried to generate an alternative and all-inclusive understanding of grandparenting in transitional life situation. This is why, in my opinion, the study closely corresponds not only to the aims of narrative research into social work, but also to the objectives of social work research in general.

Nevertheless, I propose that when revealing an alternative understanding, a researcher should *be aware of the following pitfalls*: (a) the constructed understanding should not be based on homogeneous view, and (b) people present in the phenomenon might not be seen as passive actors in life. This is the *third consideration* of my study as social work research. I will explain how the avoidance was realized after the pitfalls had been explored.

Revelation of the *first pitfall – homogenous view* – is detailed in the Introduction and Chapter 1. The phenomenon of atypical custodial grandparenthood caused by adult children's external migration is new in our society. It is grounded on the understanding that separation is a tragedy for grandchildren or that grandparents are not capable of handling the care of grandchildren the way parents are. However, the existing understandings are encouraged by universal narratives of our world (Phoenix, 2008). For instance, the stigmatic attitude might be an outcome of a wider dominant understanding, according to which the mother-child relationship is perceived in the way that 'mother has to be with a child'; or grandparents are portrayed as 'old people who need to be cared'. Those dominant understandings are so common that they might become 'invisible traps' to any researcher.

The second pitfall is grounded on the nature of social work research. Whenever the study of social work research is an attempt to generate understanding about people having problems, a researcher should discuss the need of help (Shaw & Gould, 2001; Parton & O'Byrne, 2000). Riessman (2001) details that social work practice seeks to bring changes on the societal and political level considering the outcomes of social work research:

Social work practice, in all its diversity, is united by a commitment to social and economic justice – decreasing inequalities and increasing life chances of all citizens. Social work research can support these values by documenting inequalities in lives and analyzing precisely how social structures and social policies enhance and restrict opportunities for individual and groups.

However, the assumed stance of advocacy might be a pitfall because the resources of research participants might be under-estimated. As Gould and Shaw (2001) propose, sometimes social work studies, seeking to advocate the needs of respondents and to raise their voice in the society, describe and construct them as *passive prisoners to the life or disable to handle situation*.

In my study, *pitfalls* were surmounted by: (a) narrative cognition process, (b) reflection of personal inner narrative about grandparenting, (c) synergy of theory and qualitative research; (d) insight into grandparenting abilities.

The *first way to avoid the pitfalls* is the application of narrative cognition throughout the study. This approach emphasizes the importance of understanding the complexity of people's experiences and lived events in the context of the phenomenon; and does not focus on a single human action. As Polkinghorne (1995, 11) states:

Narrative reasoning operates by noticing the differences and diversity of people's behavior. It attends to the temporal context and complex interaction of the elements that make each situation remarkable. <...> narrative knowledge is maintained in emplotted stories. Storied memories retain the complexity of the situation in which an action was undertaken and the emotional and motivational meaning connected with it.

While analyzing how grandparents constructed meaning linguistically, (with reference to the Polkinghorne's concept of narrative reasoning) I discovered that every grandparent's social situation was unique. I found, as Riessman (1994) suggests, that multiple stories about lived events and experiences as ability to handle situation cannot be compared using separate variables of the phenomenon as is usual in quantitative research. Similarly, Phoenix (2008, 65) stresses that close attention to what research participants say, how they say it, and the narrative context in which they produce a particular story helps to attend to multiple 'reality' of people's life events and experiences. Moreover, narrative cognition influences a researcher and research data should be presented in a form of story (Polkinghorne, 1995), which is usually a logical sequence; and according to temporality (time

dimension) (Murray, 2005) so that every reader could easily read a natural social construction of our lives – coherent narratives. When applying this approach, I elaborated coherent narratives of grandparenthood, which, in my opinion, are the ‘translation’ of grandparents’ incoherent stories. To put it precisely, narrative cognition suggested me the guidelines how non-congruent grandparents’ narratives might be read.

Mishler (1995, 115) and Riessman (2001, 74) maintain that if a researcher is a re-teller of other narratives, he should be conscious of co-authorship: either directly in the process of interview or indirectly through transformation of other people’s texts. Notwithstanding this inevitability, *as the second way to avoid pitfall*, I was *reflecting my own attitudes* during interviews or research analysis. As it is presented in the chapter on methodology (Chapter 4), I changed my type of interview because grandparents needed to have a supportive, conversational talk with me. Furthermore, during research analysis I was carefully observing how my questions helped grandparents think, reflect and interpret meaningful events. I learned that my questions served as a ‘tool-kit’ for expanded grandparents’ viewpoint of caregiving, their own experiences; for the first time in their lives, they started to interpret the meaningful events. It is perhaps inevitable that qualitative research will influence the research participants or study text. However, I think a researcher should consider what kind of final understanding he generates about people involved in the social phenomenon. In order to avoid one-way attitude, the knowledge of my study was constructed in an elaborative manner. To put it simply, at first I wrote a text, afterwards I revised whether this text was not stigmatizing, whether I represented grandparents’ attitudes or my personal ones. The process of rewriting the text was immeasurable.

I consider the synergy of theory and research data, which is detailed and presented in the Chapter 4, to be *the third way to avoid pitfalls* of the study. In other words, I tried to reflect data and tailor theory until I could understand the stories of all research participants, i.e. the concept of coher-

ent understanding was generated. Therefore, I propose that the study has a holistic attitude towards grandparenthood in transitional life situation: a collection of dominant and alternative understandings how grandparents handle this life stage, how they take care of small grandchildren, or how they support their children in external migration.

The last way to avoid pitfalls was to raise comprehension about the grandparenting abilities. In contrast to Lithuania, similar phenomena – custodial or traditional grandparenting – are more and more recognized as resources of grandchild care in Western countries. Interestingly, even though family culture is strong in Lithuania, the analysis of social system showed that grandparenting as the primary resource to solve children custody had been barely recognized. Apart statistical data presented in *Social Report 2008-2009* (2009), any specific program or help to grandparents has not been mentioned or developed. As a result, the study seeks not only to fill the gap of understanding about this phenomenon, but it also aspires to *raise consciousness* towards grandparenting. Grandparents had to face painful experiences of grandchildren during parents' external migration or solve daily care issues; however I found that all *grandparents had enough abilities to solve difficulties and face challenging care situations*. Consequently, the study as social work research seeks to bring understanding in Lithuania that grandparents might be able to handle the care of children under many social circumstances (migration, custody, etc.).

In sum, the study accomplishes the aims of narrative social work thoroughly. The understanding about grandparenting during adult children's external migration is presented through the social construction of our lives – narratives, which incorporate the dominant and alternative understandings. In a broader context, the study renders the understanding that social context shapes people's lives in many ways, which causes people to construct multiple and diverse stories about similar life situations. The task of narrative researcher is to be not afraid of inevitability of co-authority and to help people expand interpretation about their lived events during inter-

views. I hope, having in mind the possible pitfalls, the study has become holistic narrative about grandparents who take care of grandchildren during parents' external migration.

8.2. Implications for Lithuanian social work with families

Further, the *next-to-last consideration* of the generated knowledge is the reflection on possibilities to implement the study in the field of social work practice. In this chapter, I will reflect more on the possibilities to implement a narrative approach in social work with families, and the developed narrative approach will be used as an example.

In Lithuania, social work practice started in 1992 and still is a new profession (Naujanienė, 2007). An attempt to develop social work as profession tries to incorporate many approaches, and, as everywhere, this profession is becoming a multi-faced activity (Bagdonas, 2001). According to Urek (2004), the applied approaches, usually the conventional ones, present social work as a rational decision-making process and evidence-based practice. To rephrase the author, social work with individuals and families can be seen as 'objective'. Consequently, two major approaches of social work practice in Lithuania appear to be problem-solving and preventive practice (Gudliauskaitė-Godvadė, Godvadas, Malinauskas, Perttula & Väänänen, 2009, 38). My personal experience confirms this proposition. In a more particular area of social work with individuals or families, I found that Lithuanian social workers mainly use the problem-solving model. When analyzing what kind of theories these models were based on, I found that system theory was the main approach (for instance, see Gvaldaitė & Švedaitė, 2005).

Furthermore, Fook (2002) proposes that practitioners of social work often try to grasp practical information from the studies and, I would add, they would almost search for instructions on work with clients and families. Sustaining on Holma's (1999) ideas that every human is an active interpreter of life or work situation, I think every social worker is an active

interpreter of methods and theories too. They organize their work with families individually. Karvinen, Pösö and Satka (1999) state:

The ability to work in a complex, contingent and pluralistic world requires constant reflection on one's relationship with the surrounding reality.

Accordingly, the use of theories in practice depends on a social worker's way to interpret practical information, on the dominant understanding he/she develops about a client and the chosen methods of help. A social worker who actively interprets social construction of client accounts will be involved in 'subjectivity'. Therefore, Hall (1997) stresses that the application of narrative approach in social work not only serves as a framework for interpretation of experience, but also re-states the idea how social work with individuals and families should be organized. As Urek (2004, 237) says:

Within narrative turn, social work accounts become unstable, changeable, temporal meaning-making structures, socially constructed, interpretative, and interactional, their meaning depending on the public they are addressing.

Alternatively the question might arise: 'What kinds of competence are required for social workers if they want to expand their understanding about work with families (for instance, in the framework of narrative approach)?' It is common that there are many discussions what abilities should a social worker have (usually they differ in specific fields of social work) (Corby, 2006), but on a very general level, a social worker's competences might be divided into the following groups: (a) capability to understand a multi-dimensional phenomenon; and (b) an ability to bring changes in the lives of people who experience pressure of social circumstances (Gvaldaitė & Švedaitė, 2005). Accordingly, I want to suggest a few issues for practitioners of social work, which might serve only as guidelines for improving their understanding about help. A social worker who attempts to apply a narrative approach in their work should consider that: (a) the intention to understand should be the primary goal of help; (b)

critical consideration of personal attitude towards a client should be consistent; c) help should be focused on clients' altering stories.

I propose that social work help to families influenced by narrative approach could nurture and increase the possibilities of this practice, where people themselves would 'participate more actively in explicating and reformulating the meaning of the narrated experience' (Nye, 1994, 221). According to White and Epston (1990, 13), if people expand stories about life events, altered narrative might shape their lives and even relationship. During the interviews and research analysis, I discovered that sensitive questions helped grandparents explicate the meaning of lived events from different perspectives, i.e. they became more conscious of personal experiences. For instance, grandparents more consciously understood their involvement in the process of help for their grandchildren or for adult children. Further, questions about the future enabled them to see the need to be prepared for separation from grandchildren better. I claim that during conversation the reflection about meaningful events started and stimulated grandparents to think how particular cases should be handled more often in the future. Therefore, the narrative approach developed in my study has practical implications for social work practice.

A social worker should create his own understanding about the situation of a family (evaluation) and personal attitude towards any phenomenon should be self-reflected day after day or with every new-coming family. Moreover, a social worker should diminish his position in the relationship process. I propose that a social worker with narrative attitude should not plan the help process according to specific social work models/methods (problem solving, solution focus, case management); yet it should be orientated towards the reconstruction of clients' narratives (Payne, 2006; White & Epston 1990). Changes will occur in family's life when the specialist will change family members' dominant narratives about their social life situation or pressure of social circumstances.

Payne (2006) proposes that expanded and re-changed dominant narrative irreversibly changes our lives. As a helpful 'tool-kit' to reconstruct clients' stories, I want to suggest the generated approach to narrative structure: plot, time dimension, focalization and social context. They might be the guidelines of conversation, the way to evaluate family stories or a helpful 'gadget' to accomplish the reconstruction of family members' narratives. If a social worker attentively listens to how narratives are elaborated, how events are put in the plot, how time dimension is used, which point of view is presented in the stories and how social context is emphasized, he/she will be able to help any person alter family's dominant narratives.

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Appendix 1

Outline of semi-structured interview.

Semi-structured interview consisted of open themes concerning situations relevant to the grandparents' transitional life events and time dimension. It is important to mention that the themes comprised open questions, the formulation of which depended on the situation.

1. Life until grandchild's care

Tell me what was your life until the grandchild's care? How did you live (provide as many details as possible)? What did your family consist of? How old were your family members? What was your relation with your children and especially with grandchildren?

2. Assuming care

Tell me how did you prepare for your grandchild's care (describe in detail how preparation and the start of grandchild's care went)? How did your family members prepare? How did you react? What was the separation of grandchild and his/her parents like (provide as many details as possible)? How did you react? What was your experience of this life stage? How did your children react (remember and provide as many examples as possible). After children had left, how did you handle your grandchild's emotions? What was the situation at home? What challenges did you face? What was most difficult at the beginning of grandchild's care? What were joys and worries? How did your grandchild or grown children experience the separation?

3. Being a caregiver

What is your life at the moment like? What do you do everyday (provide as many examples as possible)? What causes worries and what happy moments do you experience while taking care of your grandchild? How do you feel everyday? How has your grandchild accustomed to your home? Little children get sick quite often, how do you handle the situation? What is your way of taking rest from the care? How do your children abroad appreciate the care? You have to represent your grandchild: how do teachers and doctors treat you? Do you experience any troubles? Or maybe they pity you and help you more? What is your relationship with the grandchild? How would you describe it (relationship)? How do your children communicate with you and with their

children? Do you have a possibility to 'take a breath' for some time, i.e. how do you live when your grandchild is spending time with his/her parents?

4. Future plans

How is everything going to be in the future? How long will the care last? What are the plans of your children? Are they going to return to Lithuania or are they going to come back for your grandchild and return to the foreign country? What do you talk about in terms of the future with your children? If you are going to live separately, how do you prepare for the separation, for life without your grandchild? How does your family, your grandchild prepare for the situation? How are you going to communicate in the future?

Appendix 2

Dates when the interviews were conducted (because of anonymity, the concrete names of interview places are not mentioned):

1st interview with Ona – 23/06/2006

2nd interview with Dana – 06/10/2006

3rd interview with Asta – 12/12/2006

4th interview with Rita – 25/01/2007

5th interview with Lina -14/05/2007

6th interview with Birute – 06/12/2007

7th interview with Aldona – 12/02/2008

8th interview with Petras – 12/03/2008

9th interview with Jonas – 17/03/2008

10th interview with Marija – 28/04/2008

11th interview with Odeta – 09/05/2008

12th interview with Roma – 12/05/2008

Appendix 3

Titles for segmented text were created in the following manner (i.e. Text 1_Text 2_Text 3_Text 3):

‘Text 1’ refers to *focalization* point of a story, for instance, a grandchild; or social context within the story; or time dimension.

‘Text 2’ describes a *general* content of a multiple story. For instance, ‘grandchild_behavior-experience’ meant that story went about a grandchild’s behaviour and experience.

‘Text 3’ describes a *particular* content of a multiple story. For instance ‘grandchild_behavior-experience_separation with mother’ meant that story was about a grandchild’s experience during the separation with mother.

‘Text 4’ describes the *interactional or contextual aspect* of a story. For instance, ‘grandchild_behavior-experience_separation with mother_grandchild-child interaction’ meant that in the story the interaction between adult children and a grandchild was more emphasized than a social context and vice versa in case of ‘situation’.

In the first column, 262 titles, which were used in the segmentation process of research data analysis, are presented. In the second column, the frequency of used titles during the segmentation process is shown (see table 7). It is important to mention that the titles are not presented in an alphabetic order. The reason for this is that titles are translated. Originally, the segmentation process was performed in native language and the titles were listed in Lithuanian alphabetic order.

grandchild_description_grandchild-situation	17
grandchild_behavior-experience_separation from mother_grandchild-child_interaction	20
grandchild_behavior-experience_separation from mother_situation	20
grandchild_behavior-experience_separation from grandmother_grand2 interaction	7
grandchild_behavior-experience_meeting with mother_family_interaction	2
grandchild_behavior-experience_grandchild-child interaction	12
grandchild_behavior-experience_grandchild-family_situation	7

grandchild_ behavior-experience_grandchild-other_interaction	1
grandchild_ behavior-experience_grand2_interaction	29
grandchild_ behavior experience_grandchild-other_interaction	8
grandchild_ behavior-experience_grandchild_interaction	33
grandchild_ behavior-experience_return-Lithuania	2
grandchild_ behavior-experience_health_situation	36
grandchild_born in foreign country_situation	1
grandchild_care_meeting social institutions_interaction	5
grandchild_care_meeting social institutions_situation	4
grandchild_experience_ reluctance to be separated from grandparent_interaction	2
grandchild_experience _ reluctance to be separated from grandparent_situation	5
grandchild_brought to foreign country_situation	2
grandchild_way interact with parents_interaction	4
grandchild_waits parents_grandchild-parents_interaction	8
grandchild_parent presents_situation	4
grandchild_preschool context_situation	1
grandchild_understanding of home_situation	4
grandchild_not listen grandparent_grand2-interaction	1
grandchild_ children-sorting in family_situation	1
grandchild_how taken abroad (common situation)_situation	2
grandchild_care-transition_interaction	5
grandchild_care-transition_situation	5
grandchild_adaptation abroad__interaction	1
grandchild_adaptation abroad_situation	3
grandchild_need father_interaction	1
grandchild_relations with grandmother_interaction	2
grandchild_relations with mothe _interaction	4
grandchild_relations with father_interaction	1
grandchild_own home_situation	4
grandchild_family member sorting_situation	4
grandchild_grandparent best friend_situation	3
grandchild_grandparent best friend_interaction	2
grandchild_illness_story_situation	1
grandchild_health_situation	1
grandchild_holidays celebration_interaction	3
grandchild_holidays celebration_situation	3

open home_context_situation	1
context_grandchild experience of other families_situation	1
context_life when parents return_family-situation	6
context_life when parents return family-interaction	13
context_aspects of living together_family-interaction	6
context_aspects of life abroad and Lithuania_situation	13
context_aspects of living together_family-situation	12
context_projected life if grandchild taken abroad_situation	1
context_projected life if they return_situation	1
context_projected life if they return_grandchild father_interaction	1
context_projected life difficulties if they return_situation	1
context_prehistory of emigration_child-other_interaction	3
context_prehistory of emigration_child_situation	13
context_reasons of emigration_elements_interaction	3
context_reasons of emigration_factors_situation	13
context_evaluation of emigration_grandparent-child-interaction	2
context_evaluation of emigration_personal attitude	3
context_old times_grandparent_situation	4
context_other care of grandchildren_interaction	6
context_other care of grandchildren_situation	1
context_Lithuanian life abroad (general view)_situation	10
context_family crisis_situation	5
context_family situation_clearing out family relations_interaction	4
context_family situation_clearing out family relations_situation	23
context_family social rules_situation	1
context_simply one family'	8
context_foreign country context _situation	1
dominant story	7
meaningful words_speak in plural	21
meaningful words_What do I know	6
meaningful words_Well, I don't know	105
meaningful words_Well so what	8
meaningful words_Well don't know how to say_personal	3
meaningful words_So what me	2
grandparent_grandchild remember small child_context	3
grandparent_grandchild_'this child mine'_situation	8
grandparent_grandchild-own child too_situation	6
grandparent_grandchild_love children sorting_situation	3

grandparent_grandchild is joy_situation	3
grandparent_personal-description_situation	1
grandparent_care-limits_situation	11
grandparent_future plans_situation	7
grandparent_holiday with grandchild_situation	2
grandparent_feeling of responsibility_interaction	5
grandparent_feeling of responsibility_situation	6
grandparent_self-devotion_priority to grandchild_situation	4
grandparent_self-devotion_priority to grandchild_grand2_interaction	8
grandparent_work-context_situation	8
grandparent_work-context_interaction	3
grandparent_facilities (without care)_situation	5
grandparent_life-calmer-when child away_situation	1
grandparent_aspects of living together_grand2_interaction	8
grandparent_aspects of living together_grand2_situation	12
grandparent_official care_situation	1
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