III.

PARENTING IN THE CONTEXT OF MIGRATION

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CHILD-CENTRED NARRATIVES OF POLISH MIGRANT MOTHERS: CROSS-GENERATIONAL IDENTITY CONSTRUCTIONS ABROAD

INTRODUCTION

This paper attempts to answer a very basic, yet important question: What types of ethnic identities (if any) can we expect to be adopted among the children of contemporary Polish migrants? In other words, this paper seeks to provide preliminary thoughts on the next generation born and/or raised abroad in a post-2004 European Union, highlighting the possibilities for them to identify as Polish, demonstrate attachment to their destination country, or perhaps delineate a novel approach to belonging and identity construction beyond borders. While for most members of this young generation, either born in Western Europe or having left Poland at the pre-school age, it is still early for investigations of the ethnic component in their identity formation, one can already learn about how their sense of belonging is being actively shaped and envisioned by their mothers. In fact, the maternal stories of the cross-generational visions of national and pan-national identities¹ supplied in this article vary to a great degree. More

¹ ‘Identities’ and ‘ethnic identities’ are understood here in a broad sense as ‘one’s sense of self’ (Marshall 1994:295), becoming reshaped or hybridized in a particular context of ethnicity, (i.e. Gilroy 1991) upon international migration. As this paper focuses on empirical material, theoretical
importantly, they are closely connected to what can be seen as an ‘ideal type’ of a mothering strategy that different women select for managing family lives abroad. As such, this paper details empirical material collected during multiple interviews with Polish migrant mothers in Germany and the United Kingdom, to the extent that it pertains to the cross-generational sense of (non)belonging of both adult parents and migrant children.

In terms of structure, the paper first succinctly outlines relevant scholarly arguments on the topic. Secondly, the findings and discussions are organized into two sections, starting with a brief overview of the four mothering strategies and their connections to the broader discourses and literature, subsequently proceeding with the core arguments on the ethnic and national issues, pinpointing questions of belonging in maternal narratives. Said evidence is used to illuminate diversity found among Polish women parenting abroad. It argues that a hybridized model of the New Migrant Motherhood should be recognized as a prominent strategy. The paper discusses general discourse as well as practicalities, attempting to answer questions on: *How lives of families abroad are constructed in regards to foreign/national components’ presence in the framings of motherhood?* and, *What kinds of ethnic identifications mothers envision for themselves versus those they project onto their children?* The paper closes with a brief summary and hints at broader contributions brought about by the project.

**HOW LITTLE IS KNOWN ABOUT THE CHILDREN OF POLISH MIGRANT FAMILIES?**

Between the discussion of Polish migration as largely economically motivated and labour-driven (see ie. Kaczmarczyk & Lukowski 2005, Fihel & Pietka 2007), and the recent emergence of family-focused small-scale studies and theoretical arguments voicing a necessity for more diversity and transnational approaches (Garapich, ed. 2011, Heath et al. 2012, White 2011, Burrell 2003), there is still very little said about Polish children born and/or raised abroad.

* How little is known about the children of Polish migrant families?

2 This article stems from my doctoral research and is connected to my PhD dissertation „Polish mothers on the move – gendering parenting experiences of Poles raising children in Germany and the UK“, supervised by professor Howard Davis at Bangor University in North Wales, with a planned thesis submission date in 2014.
Post-2004 scholarly research dealing with Polish children abroad has focused on analyzing entireties of families (White 2011a, 2011b), demographic trends and their potential implications (Trevena 2009), and institutional presence of ‘Polish’ children in both foreign schools (Ryan et al. 2004, 2008, 2011), and supplementary Polish education (Praszalowicz et al. 2013). The very question of who we mean once talking about the youngest generation abroad remains unanswered: quantitative measurements can normally delineate Polish out-migrants under 18-years of age, native and/or fluent speakers of Polish language in a certain age-group abroad, or school pupils born in Poland, across those having one or two Polish parents yet born in a destination country. None of these however useful tools can cover the whole range of possible intersections, with a matrix of citizenship, ethnic identity, spoken language(s), place of birth, schooling and many other factors being non-dichotomous and often co-existing in singular biographies of contemporary youths.

Irrevocably, novel approaches to studying family lives are no longer statically functionalist and assuming of co-residential nuclear unit (Chambers 2012). New topics, often stemming from the British Family Studies (ie. Morgan 2011, Allan 1999, May 2012, Chambers 2012), are slowly inspiring ideas about Polish ways of “doing family”. In this context, lives of Polish migrant children are defined as embedded in the dynamically constructed practices of managing ties and kin relationship beyond national borders (Bryceson & Vuorela 2003), signifying a constant interplay of ethnic identity components from the countries of origin, destination and beyond (ie. Goulbourne et al. 2010, Reynolds 2008). One must keep in mind that “children’s identity formation is influenced by at least two distinct, and sometimes contradicting, cultural systems: the home culture and the school culture” (Adams & Kirova 2006:8). Yet, the “studies of the first generation immigrant children’s voices […] are rare, with the exception of some research in the area of refugee children” (Devine 2009: 521). Justifiably concerned with the ethical issues in researching minors, studies that tackle questions about the migrated or the foreign-born youngest questionably ‘Polish’ generation tend to adopt indirect approaches and refrain from granting voice or agency to the children themselves. In migration literature, the paradigm of children’s absence is further supported by their portrayal as vulnerable and left-behind victims of the global mobility (Parrenas 2005: 30–56 on dismal view of transnational families and its reasoning). Additionally, the co-residentiality requirement posed on Western nuclear families operates with an underlying assumption that children “have a natural need for stability and security which can be provided by the domestic and familial context […] [associating]ideal modern childhoods with residential fixity” (Ni Laoire 2010:156; Pustulka 2012). In the Polish context, this is especially visible in regards to poverty, exclusion and behavioural issues.
as negative consequences presumably resulting from migration and raised in pedagogical research (Danilewicz 2008, Walczak 2009). Children’s vulnerability is further fuelled by the moral panics linked with the sensationalized media-hype around euroorphanhood (Walczak 2009, Szczygielska 2013: 129–132, 184–198; critical analysis: Urbanska 2009, White 2011). It is argued here that the applicability of this perspective in the intra-European context cannot be deemed as sufficient for explaining all instances of migratory projects, which may not be normative, economically motivated and/or may position children’s future and happiness at a centre-stage of migratory-projects. Although difficulties stemming from transnational separation and subsequent family reunification should be noted (ie. Pratt 2013, Parrennas 2005), an analysis of double standards and gendered consequences of paternal and maternal absences, always more negatively charged for women (Nicholson 2006, Dreby 2006, Parrenas 2005, Pustulka 2012) should be paired with a continued research interest on the lives of reunited families.

As research into ethnicities and migrant communities has argued for a community-contextualized approach through a transnational optic (Glick Schiller 1977, 1992; Goulbourne et al. 2010), a historical overview of research into Polish migrants can shed some light on this issue. For instance, Polish-American and Polish-Canadian diasporas were exemplary in determined efforts towards preserving national heritage and ethnic identity over decades (see: Borjas 2006, Versteegh 2000). Conversely, in the more local cases of Germany, France or the United Kingdom, post-war research into perseverance of Polishness was less optimistic, for that immigrants remained caught by nation state politics of the integration/assimilation frameworks3, and migration research equated nation with ethnicity in the Polish case (Irek 2012:25). In attempt to escape the deterministic trap, recent studies about Poles in Western Europe employ transnational lenses in discussing conditions for building ties with the destination locale and simultaneous preservation of links with homeland, while also modelling integration and separation in a classic manner (ie. White 2011b:137–195). Polish “family identity beyond borders” was addressed by Danilewicz in a historical and theoretical overview within the transnational social space framework (2008, 2011). Nevertheless, national and ethnic identities were for decades conceptualized as sources of belonging – feeling at home, being alike, and familiar. Consequently, a simple “where are you from?” question usually provided an uncomplicated answer stable in nature, making ethnic and national identifications rather powerful, quite dichotomous, and ultimately – well understood (Glick Schiller 1992, Jasinska-Kania & Marody 2002:282–288,

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3 For an overview of assimilation/integration frameworks, see ie Piore 1979, Borjas 1985; White (2010) for a revised application to the Polish migrants in the UK.
Inglehart & Baker 2000). While Zielinska reminds that research overwhelmingly suggests that Polish national identity is continuously based in the categories of ethnicity and religion (2010:62), Temple stated that migrants’ attachments to Poland are built around emotional aspects of ties with those who remained at what was seen as a ‘Polish way of life’ (2011b:51) in a nostalgic manner.

All in all, changes brought by mass migration, globalization and postmodernity have resulted in a more elaborate matrix of ‘belonging’, which still remains somewhat of a ‘black-box’ in sociological research (Temple 2011b:51). The national and ethnic identities are becoming (to a degree) replaceable by different, more specific or more general identifications (such as Local-Silesian, pan-European, global, transnational, cosmopolitan or Western – taking place of the former ethnic descriptors) (see ie. Castells 2004, Temple 2011b). Indeed, studies of young people’s identities pertaining to third culture kids (TCKs) supply examples of complex nature of youth’s belonging in the global era (ie. Pollock & Van Reken 2009, Kay 1998, Van Reken & Bethel 2006). Similarly, educational arguments for multicultural classrooms and new language politics increasingly argue for the importance of multilingualism and diversity in schooling setting and beyond (Campbell 2010, Nikitrowicz et al. ed 2011). Perhaps it is in the young generation that the term ‘Cosmo-Poles’ (Irek 2012:26) is becoming fully applicable and the sole national patriotic narrative of ‘ethnicity forever’ (Morawska, c.f. Praszalowicz 2010:17) will be replaced by multiple constructions of identities and belonging.

Although the prospects of family migrants returning home are thus far deemed unlikely (White 2011), one shall keep such possibility in mind and wonder about how children could potentially fare. The work of Goulbourne et al. (2010) addresses global trends of recent interest in return migration of born-abroad younger generations searching for identities (ie. Christou 2006, Reynolds 2008), and the authors rightfully argue that this mobility cannot be fully understood as “return”, because “these offspring may not have lived in the country of their parents’ birth” (2010: 125).

Linking the abovementioned research themes, this paper will use the narratives of Polish migrant mothers living in Western Europe4, justifying this approach by reference to literature on mothers as primary agents of the inner-

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4 The empirical data consists of interviews, participant observation and (auto)ethnographic approach used in the research project conducted between 2009 and 2012 in the UK and Germany. A combination of narrative and semi-structured interviews was employed, and a non-probabilistic deliberate participants’ recruitment was chosen, leading to a pool of over 50 interviews, with a core sample of 26 accounts. Demographic variables of age, education, social class, etc. were considered. For the core group, the average age of the interview-partner was 31.7 years; all but one women remained in ethnically homogenous marriages, fertility was at the level of TFR=2 and a mean age
workings of family lives (Parrenas 2005, 2008; O’Reilly 2010), usually operating as sole decision-takers and, particularly in a Polish context, as ‘managerial matriarchs’ (Titkow 2007). Concurring with what research on migrants’ nostalgia for home suggested (i.e. Temple 2011, White 2011), some Polish mothers whose stories are presented here struggle with the permanency of their lives abroad. Others, however, have less difficulty with operating in a more globally-orientated environment. As such, mothers represent a variety of coping strategies and reconciliations (or lack thereof) between the elements that can be assigned to national or foreign belonging. Their reshaped identities have severe yet not unidirectional or easily predictable impact on their children’s projected identities, which might come about in a similar or dissimilar manner. It is important to note that in the case of Polish migration to the West, women are still largely seen as mirroring other non-Western females: aside for being the prime home-makers (Parutis 2006, White 2011a, 2011b), they are the agents of cross-generational cultural transmission, responsible for what global context deems the “production of community identity in foreign lands” (Chambers 2012: 128, see also: Yuval-Davis 1997, Temple 2011a:107).

Conclusively, the four distinctive models of motherhood are validly used as ‘ideal types’ in discussions about configurations of ethnic identifications and belonging of children of Polish mothers abroad, as presented below.

POLISH MOTHERING STRATEGIES: AN OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS & KEY LITERATURE

The context of large-scale West-bound migration should be considered as a potential accelerator of the already observable changes in Polish family lives5. Through its focus on mothers and practices of ‘doing family’ (Morgan 2011), my doctoral research examines how Polish migrant women respond to their foreign, Western surroundings of Germany or Great Britain, respectively.

The analysis of the collected data has resulted in the development of four ‘ideal types’ of mothering practices found among Polish women parenting in Germany and the UK. Firstly, a somewhat expected set of “managerial

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5 The changes referred to mean the general turn to post-modern theories of family and ‘doing family’ approaches (Morgan 2011), inclusive of family forms’ diversity, changing relationships, issues of fatherhood, childhood and consequences of struggles for equality. Chambers (2012) provides a good overview of recent trends, while Slany (1997) or Szlendak (2010) can be used as references for Polish data.
matriarchy” (Titkow 2007) strategies associated with ‘Mother-Pole’ (Matka Polka, MP)\(^6\) has been discovered. It is important to note that, while ‘Mother-Pole’ model is losing its theoretical prominence and analytical value in Poland (see: Sikorska 2009, Korolczuk & Hryciuk eds, 2012, Titkow 2012), this heritage-embedded approach appeared typical for migrants who re-traditionalized upon experiencing Western surroundings. The second model – the intensive mothering (IM) has characteristics largely compatible with ‘Mother-Pole’ practices, yet it is derived from the Western discourses of presumably scientific approach to the tasks of child-rearing (Hays 1996). Being often referred to as ‘New Momism’ in popular literature and fiction (ie. Figes 2008, Asher 2011, in Poland: Woźniczko-Czeczott 2012), intensive motherhood is a costly, laborious, emotionally trying and care-wise excessive practice. Thirdly, a peripheral model of feminist mothering (FM) (O’Reilley 2008, 2010; Kinser 2010) has been noted among women who effectuated (to some degree) an ‘empowered’ approach to their parenting. Finally, the crucial development pertains to the fourth model of New Migrant Motherhood (NMM), an integrative practice of mothering abroad. The women falling into the last category are particular in their attempts to hybridize their practices, rather than choose a pre-existing model. As such, they manage to combine elements found across models in a novel way, while also adding a new dimension of parenting strategies. The four models were found across geographic locations as well as demographic characteristics of the respondents, with the New Migrant Motherhood emerging as a lead approach. While certain factors, such as religiosity or the length of stay abroad have somewhat predicated women to one or the other type of a mothering narrative, the categories were not built in an exclusionary manner, allowing the dynamics and inner-contradictions of individual stories.

The following discussion will attempt to illustrate how mothering and ethnic/national belonging contribute to contextualizing inter-generational differences and the futures envisioned for children: the way of expressing cross-generational identifications – national (local) versus foreign/binational/international/ European/ global is what separates mothers who adopt distinct strategies. Through focusing on children’s centrality in the selected characteristic of mothering\(^7\), this paper uses parenting strategies across the four

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\(^6\) For the sake of brevity, I am using abbreviations for four models when discussing quotes of mothers belonging to given categories. These are MP for ‘Mother-Pole’, IM for intensive motherhood, NMM for New Migrant Mothers and FM for feminist mothering. Analogically, UK and DE are used to indicate the United Kingdom and Germany as respective destination countries of my interview-partner.

\(^7\) It has to be stated that the full list of mothering characteristics examined in the doctoral thesis is much more extensive and considers twelve areas of differences, such as labour market,
categories as means to explain the inner-logic of ethnicity and cross-generational (non)belonging, as well as their potential implications for both generations of those who migrated from Poland in recent years.

CROSS-GENERATIONAL (NON)BELONGING: FINDINGS AND PERSPECTIVES

This section critically covers core findings around identities and the sense of belonging, both as maternal identifications and as projections for their children, organizing the findings on the spectrum of motherhood models enumerated above. The women in the ‘Mother-Pole’ category often exemplify re-traditionalization or enforced ethnic Polishness (actual or imagined) in their lives abroad. Strikingly, many mothers in this group do not anticipate that their children who live and go to school abroad, sometimes having been born there and holding only a non-Polish passport, will potentially not identify themselves as Polish. Situated within a specific and singular national discourse, they locate their own and their children’s identity as solely Polish. A short excerpt from an interview with Beata, who has been UK-based since 2004, and arrived there with a toddler who is now a teenager:

“I will never feel at home here and nor should my daughter – she is not British. We just live here”/Beata, UK, MP/

Despite not having plans to return to Poland, Beata does not expand her networks beyond Polish community, similarly encouraging her daughter to primarily spend time with Polish peers, in the Polish Saturday School and Polish church organizations, mirroring the characteristics of Polish lower-educated migrant parents that Anne White described (2011a:26). Regrettably, this approach often borders on antagonism towards “otherness” (see ie Temple 2011) which, for the sake of protecting one’s own now distant culture, becomes the source of comparatively ‘bad’ influence or one that is not up to par values. Asked about German mothers, Lidia has said:

“We, Polish mothers, sacrifice much more for our children – so that’s probably the main difference I see […] We work harder – compared to other migrants or the locals, we have jobs and take care of the house[…]. Oh and we go to our

religion & religiosity, gender orders, etc. The article gives a snapshot of data related to ethnicity and belonging.
chance, so we have guidance, our children are taught about God and rules, and
morality – they are not like the children here” /Lidia, DE, MP/

Apart from proving a ‘super-womanhood’ orientation of Mother-Poles, this
statement suggests a negative hierarchy which may affect younger generation’s
perceptions of their host society. The logic of needing to protect one’s original
values and culture in the face of no direct spatial embeddedness seems to
differentiate ‘Mother-Poles’ from other strategies:

“It is so hard and so scary! It is all on you to make sense of being a good mother
in the face of their practices here, to stand your ground, to fight for your child” /Patrycja, DE, MP/

The examples appear to clearly indicate that ‘Mother-Pole’ abroad in the
twenty-first century is still the historically familiar figure of a fighter (Hryciuk
& Korolczuk 2012, Zielinska 2010, Graff 2008). The paradox is that the above
quoted Patrycja was unable to clarify her position, struggling to give details of
what this ‘fight’ against local ways entails, ranging from yelling at a German
doctor that she discriminated her Polish child due to his/her ethnic origins, to
making sure that her child (who is now 3-years-old) gets properly married in
a Polish Catholic church. One may rightfully wonder how such maternal beliefs
will affect the future prospects, with a potential danger of Polish migrant children
being isolated or ill-adjusted, struggling to accept their multicultural and multi-
ethnic surroundings in British or German schools. Furthermore, it is argued
here that family members of ‘Mother-Poles’ exemplify cross-generational non-
belonging. While mothers actively act towards preventing children from becoming
citizens or feeling at home in their destination country, it is safe to assume that
both generations will experience consequences of the long period of life abroad.
While for some children, it will become possible to develop new orientations
towards local community, their new identifications will likely become a source of
conflicts at home, as mothers openly argue for remaining, as one of my interview
partners called it, “truly Polish”, preserving a phantasmal notion.

A major difference between ‘Mother-Poles’ and Intensive Mothering is
argued to lay in the above-discussed national component: while the former
appear universalistic in their ideas of Polishness/foreignism, the latter is marked
by certain particularism. Intensive mothering signals a somewhat beyond-
 borders idea of what ‘good’ parenting should consist in. However, since it is
a Western (and ethnocentric) social construct, it does not take into consideration
the differences that may occur among those from different cultural backgrounds
(O’Reilly 2008 & 2010). It might be argued that just like intensive mothering
removes economic differentiation, assuming that all women-mothers have means to afford intensive expert-advised mothering (Hays 1996), it also downplays the impact of ethnicity. Mothers interviewed have indeed referred to the variable of ethnicity in their parenting in a particularistic manner:

„Well, there is probably a difference between ‘mother-Poles’ out there and myself. I mean, obviously, I have a different cultural baggage, different heritage, but I am a mother, just like other mothers from here and from all around the world here” /Magda, IM, UK/

“I don’t know if there is such a thing as Polish mothers… You mean that maybe we are more protective or something, I don’t know… I think it is very individual – there are pathologies and elites in every nationality, every ethnicity, so for me it is about talking to my sons every day, showing them that I love them and having their trust – is it really such a Polish thing? I see other mothers here that try to do this, too” /Karolina, UK, IM/

“I feel like my motherhood is not very Polish – I only want this one child I have, I think that’s uncommon. I treat my daughter as her own person, don’t want to determine that she’s Polish or German – I am supposed to help her become herself” /Ola, DE, IM/

Motherhood here seems to be less bound by national notions, as the interview-partners generally argued for the importance of open-ended cultural identifications. Sadly, while women wanted the children to have certain understanding of their parents’ origins, they were often the ones who severed ties with Poland and lacked significant relationships back home. Intensive Mothers were surprisingly undetermined about children achieving high linguistic competence: reading and writing correctly in Polish was not as important to them as to the women in the ‘Mother-Pole’ group. When asked about the language spoken at home, these mothers offered quite a pragmatic approach, for example stating that using English or German during homework or some forms of untranslatable play was fine, unlike ‘Mother-Poles’ who viewed foreign language usage at home as non-patriotic. Contrasting the two linguistic ideals symptomatic of ideologies embedded in their respective parenting practices, the quotes from interviews with Basia (IM, UK) and Lidia (MP, DE), delineate the difference:
-Is it important to you that your children speak Polish?  

It is the most important thing!  
How else will they remain Polish?  
I would go deaf in an instant if my children started speaking German to me. I already had to do this with them couple of times – ignoring requests until they switched back, so they learned […] I have to go in every now and then when they play because they switch to German – it is horrible! […] It is very difficult for me to correct them all the time but I know I have to” /Lidia, MP, DE/  

Not really. I mean of course we speak Polish at home, so they know it and understand. They actually read Polish books better than English ones […] But we live here and I doubt that my daughters will be fully proficient in Polish – there is no way to overcome the language they use to play, to interact with their peers. I think reading is important but I am not pressuring them too much – it is supposed to be fun […] English is the international language, Polish as the second one is just that extra benefit, nothing too special. /Basia, IM, UK/  

Language politics constitutes an important dimension on the crossroads of ethnic belonging and educational capital development, additionally playing an important role as a function of intra-family communication patterns⁸. As such, it is argued, it should be examined as a very telling feature of mothering’s impact on the next generation. While speaking Polish is a fortress of ethnic identity and national belonging for Mother-Poles, it is above all a utilitarian decision for intensive mothers. In regards to children’s development, if something is seen as beneficial (and research devoted to bilingualism suggests that speaking another language while growing up is⁹), the intensive mothers will attempt to take advantage of their options. This trait is concurrent with a diversity of ethnic and (pan)-national identifications observable in this group across generations. While mothers mostly acknowledge their Polish roots, some of them openly express the need for fully orientating themselves (and their children) towards the Western locale. Justyna, a 29-year old SPA manager living in North-Rhein Westphalia since 2002 said:

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⁸ Results of a study on narratives of language and identity among Polish people in the UK has been published by Temple (2011b) and accounts for generational differences between ‘old’ and ‘new’ migrants’ framings of bilingualism.

⁹ The lack of understanding bilingualism still affects Polish populations abroad, with cases of parents adopting harmful practices of switching to their imperfect English at home, in fear of generating confusion for their children. For more information on this issue in Polish context see: Praszalowicz et al. 2013, Temple 2011b.
“[…] After almost 10 years here, you know how it is, I really have nothing to go back to, not much in common with those who still live there […] Polish politics or problems do not concern me or my family. I am not saying I stopped being Polish, but I am not sure I still feel 100% Polish […] My son told me recently that he is German. It was very strange to hear this, but I understand – he does not know Poland, even if I try to talk to him about it, it is not the same” /Justyna, DE, IM/

The inner-struggles of Justyna are exemplary of other Intensive Mothers, who grew up in Poland but may since acquired foreign citizenship and approved their children’s different ideas about national belonging. It is also in this group that integrational efforts are most visible, with easily understood everyday practices’ examples being Magda who talked about running her home ‘like the British do’, or Bogusia and Basia who both stated that they plan their family weekends by mimicking the locals, preferring activities aligned with their social class rather than ethnicity – in practice it means that a family trip to a local cultural attraction was more likely that spending Saturdays at a Polish school. Being ideologically treated as partners/agents (Hays 1996, Chambers 2012:78–81), children of intensive mothers are generally able to create their own identifications, although in certain cases the Western orientation becomes dominant. This leaves room for the Polish identity being underdeveloped, a missing component of a heritage in children’s later life. Once again, there is a heightened risk of a case of non-belonging, not being able to identify with either home or destination land, as presented by Reynolds (2008) for Caribbean migrant children returning home as adults from Britain and not feeling at home at either destination. On a plus side, with some mothers from this category also identified as Feminist Mothers, examples of pan-national, global and inclusive models of identity formation were also observed and transferred onto one’s children. Still, this type of understanding of transnationalism and globality came through mostly in the reflections of the New Migrant Mothers – a group that will be discussed next.

Arguably, New Migrant Mothers present a level of maturity in grasping differences of mothering across cultural contexts: both cross-/transnationally and in the intra-national cases of social class differences. Being in-between, they might not have the same awareness of ‘equality in diversity’ that Western feminist mothers do, but they are rid of superiority status that the ‘Mother-Poles’ often attributed to their parenting. New Migrant Mothers tend to be good observers of social surroundings and provide interesting evaluations:

“Young mothers in Poland seem to be very isolated. You are in this ‘zone’ of mother-Pole, always super-busy with housework and children, even if food
is cooked and the house is clean, then there is always something else – like comparing prices in store brochures, running to the cemetery with flowers, planning family menu for two weeks ahead. Here priorities change… It is about spending quality time with your children and meeting other mothers, other people. This is much better for you – keeps mothers sane” /Ania, UK, NMM/

On the issue of their own belonging, New Migrant Mothers are similarly reflective, aware of the problematic nature of being migrant themselves, and forecasting what being raised abroad may mean for their children:

“It is a process of adaptation and constant re-adjusting – mostly for me; as a grown-up I have to ensure that my foreign-born children who feel at home here – and that’s a good thing and how it is supposed to be!, But still, I need to know that they have a connection to my heritage, that they know their parents’ language.” /Hanna, UK, NMM/

Hanna’s statement illustrates very well a general goal that the New Migrant Mothers share – maintaining a connection to their homeland, while acknowledging and developing ties to their children’s place of upbringing – the destination country. The results from a study on migrants in Israel by Roer-Strier and Strier (2006) concluded with a statement that “parental social cognition, childrearing ideologies, expectations, norms, rules and beliefs tend to preserve meaningful elements of their original cultures (2006:104–105, c.f. D’Angelo & Ryan 2011:239). This study’s findings similarly indicate a duality of maternal practices that oscillate betwixt and between foreign/local and familiar/distant axes. It is visible in Mariola’s account below, when an interview-partner realizes during the story-telling process that being a migrant mother entails a substantial overhead:

“It is a balancing act – you are Polish but live in Germany, so you must obey their rules – for example know the differences in the laws regarding parental do’s and don’ts or learn to speak German, but I guess you also want to make sure that your kid can communicate with your family at home, so you get Polish television. You made me think that it’s actually a lot of extra work to be a foreign mum” / Mariola, DE, NMM/

As migrant mothers have to quickly educate themselves on the particularities of the local Western context, those in the New Migrant Mothers group benefited most from combining elements of Polish and local resources. A powerful example was that of Ania, who now advises newly arrived women on practical issues and advocates attending Polish Saturday schools, yet also encourages Polish women to attend multicultural mother-toddler groups in order to facilitate adaptation to
the lives in Britain, both for them and their children. In a scheme of everyday examples, this was detailed by Hanna, who said:

“This one baby group I went to was really cool hands-on practical crash-course on best practices – a lady from Africa taught us best ways of handling slings and wraps, one Asian friend did a demo on introducing exotic flavours to your little one’s diet, and a local British mum made little flashcards with medical terminology for non-native-English speakers – all super-useful, right?” /Hanna, NMM, UK/

Benefiting from cultural exchange happens simultaneously to women promoting Polish culture:

“I always volunteer to run a Polish day in my daughter school – it is easy for me to serve Polish dumplings [org. pierogi] and tell stories and legends, like the one about the dragon in Krakow’s castle [Smok Wawelski] – children love it! It makes my kids very proud when we do it, proud to come from Poland […]” /Celina, UK, NMM/

It is quite important to note that Celina was equally excited about multinational and locally British connections that the family has, as she talked about children playing rugby, Asian family friends inviting them over for a meal, or participating in a very local old theatre tradition organized in her English town of residence. Her case illustrates how New Migrant Mothers continue to operate in bi-national or pan-national contexts of family lives and its members’ ethnic identifications by ensuring that cultural diversity is represented but Polishness is not lost. To return to the opening question of who the children born abroad may become, Kaja, parenting two school-aged children, explains:

“It might sound strange but I feel very European, like I have developed this extra-special term to describe that I feel at home here in Germany, but Poland is also my home. And I do not feel like a stranger in France or Netherlands, where we go for vacation. […] We have a lot of [Polish] family here from both mine and my husband’s sides, so the children know that this is where we are all from […] One aunt once asked my son where he’s from and he said he’s a German from Poland, and then my daughter, who just had a lesson at school about European integration said that she is <a citizen of the united Europe> – it was both funny and quite amazingly uplifting, coming from a 9-year-old!” /Kaja, DE, NMM/

While it is impossible to generalize, the accounts of New Migrant Mothers merging or marrying cultures while living abroad paint quite an optimistic
picture. On the one hand, the children raised in these families continue to have
tangible and strong links to Poland in respect to the national heritage, culture,
language and personal networks. On the other hand, said children do not become
alienated or excluded in their new homelands of the Western Europe, being
encouraged in their adaptation and integrative behaviors. Similarly, this particular
strategy appears to be beneficial for mothers, who create spaces of identities for
themselves – as Poles living transnationally abroad.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The paper highlights a fraction of findings of a broader project on migrant
motherhood, focusing on aspects of ethnicity and belonging as predicates for
future orientations of the new generation of children of recent Polish migrants
living abroad, as well as among their mothers. As a broad contribution, it provides
an overview of four mothering strategies, with the New Migrant Motherhood
(NMM) as an analytical framework, potentially able to facilitate future research
into women and children leading family lives abroad.

The discussions on Polish/foreign elements’ presence in mothering practices
as well as the generalized notions of maternal and children’s belonging are
summed up in Table 1 below in a comparative manner.

While some areas of this summary-matrix are rather self-explanatory, many
remain relatively open-ended. Indeed coming from a small-scale qualitative
project, the data allows for a degree of variety in each category, respecting the
individual case-by-case treatment of the interview-partners’ stories (Wengraf
2001). What is crucial is that there is no optimal model and the complexity of
identifications is likely to continuously grow. While New Migrant Motherhood
appears to be rather beneficial (in regards to ethnic identities and belonging), the
multi-faceted familial trajectories of mobility may equally lead women to the
strategies of ‘Mother-Pole’ or ‘Intensive mothering’. At the same time, although
Feminist Mothers constituted a peripheral category and were not discussed in
scope of this paper, the potential for more women identifying with ideals of
empowerment should be acknowledged. As such, a forecast for one strategy
becoming dominant is difficult to put forward. It stands to reason that Polish
narratives of moral and practical discourses of parenting abroad are inter-related,
becoming concatenated at times, while being constantly re-created in a dynamic
setting of ‘doing family’ abroad.
Table 1.

Parenting strategies of Polish mothers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National/foreign elements within motherhood strategy</th>
<th>Mother-Pole (MP)</th>
<th>Intensive mothering (IM)</th>
<th>New Migrant Mothering (NMM)</th>
<th>Feminist mothering (FM)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Superiority of Polish model over local/foreign practices;</td>
<td>Superiority of Polish model over local/foreign practices;</td>
<td>Mothering as beyond-borders somewhat universal (although Western) practice;</td>
<td>Co-existence of Polish and foreign elements within practices;</td>
<td>In general, a pan-national, global and inclusive model;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial and/or a critique of foreign practices paired with a common critique of mothers from different (non-Polish) backgrounds;</td>
<td>Denial and/or a critique of foreign practices paired with a common critique of mothers from different (non-Polish) backgrounds;</td>
<td>In fact, it is a Western (ethnocentric) social construct→ slight superiority of Western practices</td>
<td>Maturity in understanding differences of mothering across cultural context (no superiority), may build on models found across various national/regional/global contexts.</td>
<td>Maturity in understanding differences of mothering across cultural context (no superiority); Largely derived from various feminist ideologies, thus may contain cultural/local elements characteristic of a specific movement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universalism</td>
<td>Particularism</td>
<td>Individualism</td>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers have solely Polish identification, rarely any attempts at integration are made, foreign citizenship was not coveted.</td>
<td>A range of patterns is observed: some women are still connected to Poland, but many orientate themselves towards foreign destination locale.</td>
<td>Mothers identify themselves as Polish but may have acquired foreign citizenship. Thriving towards integrating and benefiting from both foreign and Polish belonging.</td>
<td>Mothers identify themselves as Polish but may have acquired foreign citizenship. Thriving towards integrating and benefiting from both foreign and Polish belonging.</td>
<td>Beyond-national identifications that still value heritage/tradition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children should identify as Polish.</td>
<td>Generally children are allowed to create/choose their own identifications, Western identities might be preferable</td>
<td>Children are encouraged to be European., as in: part-Polish, part-foreign.</td>
<td>Children are allowed to create/choose their own identifications</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Quite evidently, a phrase ‘questionably Polish’ rather than ‘Polish’ next generation was preferred throughout this paper, for the purpose of highlighting the uncertainty and diversity of the migrated children in question. The Polish state’s efforts in the forms of policies concerning youth of Polish descent abroad are thus far absent, while many contemporary Polish parents do not wish to preserve their national identity and/or cultural practices. Consequently, the future of the next generation will require further research, showcasing the diversity of options available in the era of postmodernity and global mobility. It must be underscored that it is no longer a question of being either Polish or British/German, as (1) the national and ethnic identities are constantly reshaped and reconstructed and may, for instance, result in a dual identification, (2) local (regional) and global (pan-national, pan-European, etc.) identities are increasingly becoming.

Methodologically, the paper contributes to an advancement of giving voice to Polish women. While female migrants have been present in a migratory scholarship for several decades, they often fall victim to the dominant labour market paradigm that sees them solely as workers. The article shows that family ties and maternal obligations can be an equal source of knowledge on contemporary intra-European migration of Poles. In addition, the new ‘maternal voice’ provides an important insight to orientations that can be observed in children’s trajectories (see ie: Chase & Rogers 2001 for similar feminist approach). In itself, the article also indirectly tackles a query into who adult migrants are, a discussion potentially valuable for broader debates of womanhood and nationhood as concatenated concepts (Graff 2008, Zielinska 2010), set in a context of engendered migration (Morokvasic 2004).

Finally, the main concern is a pressing need to address family lives of Poles abroad in a more encompassing way, overcoming the economic explanations that largely under- or misrepresent the profound role of women and children in the migratory projects. Furthermore, the deterministic dichotomy that views families of absent parents (especially mothers) as dysfunctional examples of ‘bad parenting/mothering’ placing them in a stark opposition to reunited (be it in Poland or abroad) co-residential proper, functional and ‘good families’ should be abandoned as insufficient and often harmful. The analysis of ethnic identifications material proves that trajectories and lives of family members are much more complex and entangled in a multiplicity of factors, among which a mothering strategy plays a crucial role.
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