

**Mobility and Encounters with Difference:  
The Impact of Migrant Experience on the Circulation  
of Values and Attitudes**

by

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## **Abstract**

European societies have recently witnessed unprecedented rise in mobility, particularly along the East-West axis. In this context, the ability of individual migrants to make sense of and live with difference becomes a key issue for contemporary Europe. In response, this PhD thesis investigates the consequences of migrant encounters with difference in terms of ethnicity, religion, class, sexuality, gender, age and disability. It explores how migration from a postcommunist to a postcolonial state shapes people's values and attitudes towards difference as well as how, against this backdrop, understandings of difference circulate between migrants and their significant others in a sending society. As such, the study focuses on Polish post-2004 migrants in Leeds, UK and their family members and/or friends in Poland.

The thesis is situated within geography and broader social science literatures on mobility/migration, geographies of encounter, whiteness, postcolonialism, the concept of postdependence, values and attitudes towards difference, prejudice, family as well as circulation of ideas. It draws on qualitative empirical material collected through multiple interviews, audio-diaries and supplementary survey conducted with migrant participants in Leeds, and single interviews with their significant others carried out in various locations in Poland. The thesis establishes that migrant encounters may result in development, revision or change of values and attitudes towards difference. This may involve a range of personal stances from rejection or strong negative prejudice, through admitting greater familiarity or understanding of difference, to acceptance, solidarity or engagement. Furthermore, the thesis demonstrates that newly developed, revised or changed values and attitudes are likely to be communicated to significant others in a sending society. This contributes to the cross-border circulation of values, attitudes, beliefs, discourses, language and practices, and may affect not only migrants', but also significant others' capacity to live with difference.



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## List of Abbreviations

**UK:** United Kingdom

**EU:** European Union

**ENG:** English (language)

**PL:** Polish (language)

**WWI:** World War First

**WWII:** World War Second

**A8 countries:** The Central and Eastern European states which collectively entered the European Union in 2004 (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia and Hungary).

**LIVEDIFFERENCE:** “Living with difference in Europe: making communities out of strangers in an era of super-mobility and super-diversity” is a European Research Council funded research programme (grant number: 249658 awarded to Professor Gill Valentine) running between 2010-2014 at the University of Leeds, UK and University of Sheffield, UK respectively. It explores the extent and nature of everyday encounters with difference in two European countries – the UK (a postcolonial state) and Poland (a postcommunist state). This thesis is a part of the programme.

**CBOS:** Centre for Public Opinion Research (*Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej*) is a major opinion polling institute in Poland. It is a non-profit public foundation created by special law and working extensively with the Polish government as well as various public and private organisations. Throughout the thesis I refer to the CBOS findings to provide a broader background for my discussion of social attitudes in the Polish context. While I acknowledge that CBOS analyses may not have been conducted with the same academic rigorousness as university-based research, I consider them most useful in terms of reflecting general social trends. All CBOS studies I quote in this thesis were conducted on representative samples of adults living in Poland.

In the thesis, I use the following abbreviations while quoting the Polish media:

**TVP:** *Telewizja Polska* (Polish Television); public broadcasting corporation

**TOK FM:** private radio and online news service; liberal/centre alignment

**Polityka:** (Politics) weekly magazine; liberal/left alignment

**GW:** *Gazeta Wyborcza* (Electoral Gazette) newspaper; liberal/centre left alignment

**ND:** *Nasz Dziennik* (Our Daily) newspaper; Catholic-nationalist/far-right alignment

## Chapter 1: Introduction

We exchange information, we inspire each other, subconsciously. There's this exchange of information all the time. (...) I'm pretty much influenced by my mum's feminism. And, that's why I cannot understand the situation of women in Asian countries. And, that's also why I always get angry after talking to some girls from those places. I always need my mum to listen to me afterwards.

Dorota (migrant, female, aged 28)

The quote above is an extract of a narrative produced by Dorota - a Polish migrant to the UK. In the narrative, Dorota describes that she and her mother in Poland discuss Dorota's experiences of living in the UK and her perceptions of 'difference'. In the quote, Dorota elaborates on how certain understandings of difference are exchanged between herself and her mother. She speaks here of her 'encounters with difference' (Valentine 2008) and provides an example of what in this thesis I propose to term 'the circulation of values and attitudes towards difference' that occurs between herself and her mother, the UK and Poland.

Dorota's story matters, because it suggests that migrants are likely to encounter ethnic, national, cultural, religious and other forms of difference as an inherent part of their migration experience. Oddly enough, given the substantial literature on living with difference I reflect on in the thesis, this group still seems to be neglected in expanding debates on geographies of encounter. What Dorota's case further illustrates is a cross-border exchange of ideas regarding difference. The understanding of how and in what circumstances ideas travel between migrants and non-migrants (Levitt 1998; Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2011) is of particular significance in both academic as well as policy debates. Nonetheless, while crucial for the challenge of how to live with difference, these issues remain underexplored. What is particularly missing from these debates is the conceptualization of values and attitudes towards difference as mobile constructions, their capacity to travel or circulate between people and places.

In response, in this thesis I explore the consequences of migrant encounters with difference in terms of ethnicity, religion, class, gender, age, sexuality and disability. This study is, therefore, a step towards acknowledging migrant experience of difference and extending the literature on geographies of encounter. I also look into the cross-border circulation of values and attitudes towards difference that occurs between migrants and their significant others in a sending society as in the case of Dorota and her mother above. In doing so, I contribute to academic discussions on migration experience, transnational relations as well as transmission of ideas.

Importantly, I investigate these issues within a distinctive context of East-West mobility between a postcommunist and a postcolonial European state. I focus on Polish post-2004 migrants to Leeds, UK and their family members and/or friends in Poland. In doing so, I criticise the application of a postcolonial lens in conceptualising the positionality of Poland in Europe and globally. Instead, I suggest the employment of a postdependence perspective to tackle this issue. In addition, I situate my discussion within the frames of whiteness studies, so far rarely involved in reflecting on the production of values and attitudes towards difference in the Polish and broader Central and Eastern European context.

In the thesis, I adopt a qualitative multi-participant and multi-method case study approach. In order to investigate complex value/attitude/idea circulation between those who leave a country of origin and those who stay in a sending society, I recognize two types of research participants – post-2004 migrants and their significant others. The methods include multiple in-depth interviews, audio-diaries and a supplementary survey with migrants, and single interviews with their significant others. The research is based on 14 case studies each involving one migrant and from none up to three of his or her significant others in Poland. The overall study sample includes 33 informants. Acknowledging that people construct identities by (re-)telling stories (Aitken 2010), in the study I specifically employ narrative analysis which affords a nuanced examination of lived experience and power relations (Somers 1994).

## 1.1 Situating the research

There are over half a million Polish migrants in the UK at the time of writing of this thesis (ONS 2011b). The majority of these migrants are recent movers who are likely to maintain contact with their relatives or friends in Poland or frequently travel between Poland and the UK (Burrell 2011b). Arguably, many of them negotiate their experiences of what they find ‘new’, ‘unusual’, ‘strange’ or, indeed, different about living in the UK with their significant others in Poland. Some of them possibly impact on their relatives’ or friends’ values and attitudes towards difference. Others, like Dorota, may remain under influence of their significant others.

As such, the Polish minority has been increasingly significant in the UK context. While migration from Poland to the UK dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it was not until World War II (WWII) when a substantial influx of Polish citizens was noted (Burrell 2006; Sword 1996; Zubrzycki 1956). Ever since that time the UK has attracted Poles who settled down in different historical, political and personal circumstances. These migrants constitute now a heterogeneous diaspora that has developed complex, and indeed diverse, understandings of migration experience and Polishness (Fomina 2010; Garapich 2007, 2009; Gill 2010). In 2004, when Poland entered the European Union (EU), we have witnessed an unprecedented influx of Polish people to the UK (Black et al. 2010; Burrell 2009; Grabowska-Lusińska and Okólski 2008; GUS 2010). Ten years later, Polish is the second reported language after English in the UK (ONS 2011a). Poland is also the most common non-UK maternal country of birth (ONS 2012).

Whereas the UK, a postcolonial state, has an uninterrupted tradition of immigration throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century (Vertovec 2007), Poland has been ‘isolated’ from diversity from the 1940s until the late 1980s due to the effects of WWII and the communist regime (Borowik and Szarota 2004). For this reason Polish society is considered relatively homogeneous in terms of ethnicity, nationality and religion (Podemski 2012). In this context, it has been argued that for many Polish migrants to heterogeneous societies such as the UK, the act of migration is followed by the first personal encounter with increased cultural diversity (Jordan 2006). The UK, on the other hand, has been termed as super-diverse (Vertovec 2007) as it embraces wide representations of ethnicities, nationalities, cultures, religions, languages, social classes and complex intersections of these categories. Therefore, the experiences of Poles in the UK are potentially of great importance for the

understanding of migrant encounters with difference. As such, the case of Polish migrants is illustrative of what challenges there are for living together in Europe in diversity, peace and respect.

The choice of Leeds as research site is particularly significant here. Being one of the largest cities in the UK, Leeds has a proportion of minority ethnic population close to the national average (15% against 14% in England according to the 2011 Census). It has been described as diverse in terms of ethnicity, religion and social class (Piekut et al. 2012; Stillwell and Phillips 2006). A crucial aspect of its diversity is the size of the Pakistani and Pakistani-British community which together with Indian, Bangladeshi and other South East Asian groups constitute over a half of the city's non-White population (according to the 2011 Census). Leeds is an important finance and business centre. Although it represents a successful transition from an industrial city into the post-industrial metropolitan location of notable prosperity (Unsworth and Stillwell 2004), the city does nonetheless embrace areas of deprivation and exclusion shaped by ethno-racial and class dynamics as well as immigration (Stillwell and Phillips 2006). As such, Leeds seem to offer a range of possibilities of encounters with difference alongside the axes of ethnicity, nationality, religion, class, gender, sexuality, age and disability. It also has a significant association with Poland that could be traced back to WWII-era settlements (Sword 1996) as well as the establishment of the Polish Catholic parish in 1951<sup>1</sup>. This was further reinforced by the significant wave of Polish immigrants following the 2004 accession of Poland into the EU (Cook et al. 2008).

## **1.2 Research questions and aims**

Acknowledging that migrant encounters are underresearched in disciplinary literatures and the circulation of ideas between migrants and non-migrants remains underexplored, in this thesis I aim to answer the following research questions:

- *What impact do encounters with difference have on Polish migrants' values and attitudes?*
- *How does the circulation of values and attitudes occur between Polish migrants in Leeds and their significant others in Poland?*

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<sup>1</sup> See website of the parish: <http://parafialeeds.org.uk/>



In order to address these questions, I consider the following aims:

- 1) To explore migrants' lived experiences of difference pre- and post-migration.
- 2) To understand whether and - if so - how the experience of international mobility between distinctive geo-historical contexts impacts on attitudes towards difference.
- 3) To investigate how individuals' attitudes and values are possibly shaped through their relationships with significant others who live in a different national context and social setting.

### **1.3 Structure of the thesis**

The thesis is organised into nine chapters. In Chapter 2, I review the literatures my study engages with and demonstrate not only how the thesis is positioned theoretically, but also how it makes original contribution to these key debates. While my research questions are structured around migrant encounters and circulation of values and attitudes towards difference, these issues cannot be explored without acknowledging further insights from other fields. Therefore, in considering the concept of difference, I look into postdependence (and criticise the postcolonial approach in reflecting on the positionality of Poland in Europe and globally), whiteness, values, attitudes, prejudice, mobility/migration experience, family as well as intra-familial and peer circulation of ideas.

In Chapter 3, I discuss my methodological approach and reflect on my complex positionality as a migrant researcher (that researches her own ethnic population) as well as translator researcher (that works with dual-language data). In doing so, I also propose a simple translation procedure which may potentially aid dual-language researchers and research teams that draw on multiple-language data.

Chapters 4 to 8 empirically and analytically inform the research questions and aims. In Chapter 4, I investigate how Polish geo-historical context impacts on the production of values related to difference. In order to do so, I consider the significance of the Polish history, equality polices, Catholicism, family values as well as 'whiteness' of Polish society. In Chapter 5, I continue looking into how people's understandings of difference are situated within distinctive geo-historical

contexts. I explore how particular attitudes towards difference are shaped by distinctive normativities (outlined in Chapter 4), the media, political and cultural discourses as well as (historical) generations. Both Chapter 4 and 5 draw on people's lived experience of difference in the Polish context.

In Chapter 6, I turn to migration experience to understand what may be 'different', 'unusual' or 'strange' in the context of mobility from a postcommunist to a postcolonial society. I focus on how 1) the pre-migratory imaginings of the UK impact on the perception of British society post-migration; 2) migration to the UK frames the perception of Polish society and Polishness; 3) encounters with Polishness and other Polish migrants post-migration affect attitudes towards sameness and difference.

In Chapter 7, I continue investigating pre- and post-migratory encounters as well as how mobility affects values and attitudes towards difference. In particular, I explore in-depth three cases which illustrate the consequences of migrant encounters and a range of stances towards difference that Polish migrants may express (e.g. rejection, prejudice, normalization, familiarity, solidarity, engagement, positive feelings).

Finally, in Chapter 8, I attempt to understand how Polish people's values and attitudes towards difference are shaped through their relationships with significant others in a different national context. In doing so, I look into the circulation of ideas, beliefs, prejudice, discourses and language between Polish migrants in Leeds and their relatives and/or friends in Poland. I specifically explore the nature of migrant contact with their significant others, the importance of significant others' visit to the UK as well as what, how, when and by whom is transferred as the circulation of ideas occurs.

Lastly, in Chapter 9 I bring my key empirical findings together and discuss my theoretical as well as methodological contributions. I finish the thesis by reflecting on policy implications and future directions.

## Chapter 2: Theoretical review

### 2.1 Introduction

In the context of increased East-West migration in Europe, capacity of migrants to live with, and among, difference becomes a key issue for European societies and policy-makers. Arguably, these large-scale migrations open up multiple opportunities for people to encounter ‘the unfamiliar’ or ‘the different’. As such, they are likely to impact socially, culturally and emotionally on the lives of migrants and their significant others. In this chapter, I set out the theoretical background of my research reflecting on key concepts such as postdependence, whiteness, value, attitude, prejudice, mobility and migration experience, family, circulation of ideas, geographies of encounter and migrant encounter. In doing so, I acknowledge that I have drawn upon various perspectives to reflect on the ever more complex lives of migrants and the intricacies of the social relations they are frequently involved in. In outlining these conceptual arguments, I demonstrate how my study informs wider geography and social science literatures on international mobility/migration, encounters with difference and the circulation of values and attitudes. While I draw on geography, sociology and psychology literatures (e.g. with regard to values and attitudes), I recognise that these stem from different disciplinary traditions and philosophies.

Difference is a key concept of this thesis. Throughout the thesis, I aim to explore how it is understood, produced and contested in distinctive socio-historical contexts and how values and attitudes towards difference are prone to circulate between people as a consequence of international mobility between these contexts. While it was originally understood as produced through notions of class and class-consciousness, social theorists and geographers have for decades now explored a wider range of registers (such as ethnicity, nationality, religion, sexuality, gender, age or disability) through which human difference is constructed, lived and mobilised (Jazeel 2009). This broader understanding of difference builds on what Young (1990) recognised as a neutral citizen of modern societies – White, male, heterosexual, able-bodied and bourgeois. Such coding of the neutral or the ‘natural’

marks non-White, female, non-heterosexual or disabled bodies as different. Difference, thus, remains in constant relation (yet open-ended and never complete) to what tends to be conceptualised as ‘normal’. It does not exist as such – rather, it is produced and reproduced through historical and cultural processes as well as geographies (Young 1990).

In academic debates difference has been argued to necessarily require sameness as for every category of identification there must exist a constitutive outside or otherness. Said (2003 [1978]), one of the most influential theoreticians of postcolonialism, has famously conceptualised this relation by claiming that for ‘the Orient’ to be, ‘the Occident’ needs to also exist. In doing so, he developed the concept of ‘othering’ to describe how the Orient was notoriously homogenised (i.e. orientalised) and constructed in binary opposition to the Occident. Although Said’s attachment to binarism has been criticised (McEwan 2009), his study of orientalism has nonetheless drawn attention to the fact that in spite of being discursive productions, ‘the East’ and ‘the West’ are also cultural and geographical imaginations. This has led many scholars to argue that, beyond social understandings, difference is a “fundamentally spatial relationship” (Jazeel 2009: 164). In broad geography literature, national belonging, race, gender, sexuality and disability have been, indeed, argued to be spatially produced (Bell and Valentine 1995; Butler and Bowlby 1997; Jackson and Penrose 1993; Sibley 1995).

Even though difference (and particular axes of difference) has gained much academic attention, we have recently seen new and ever more complex forms of difference to emerge. Accelerated international mobility, new travel and communication technologies appear to facilitate interactions with social diversity to a much greater degree than ever before. Transnationalism and the unprecedented flow of ideas, technologies and finances (Appadurai 1996) inevitably influence global and local power relations, and produce new forms of identification, belonging, sameness and difference. What is more, ideas related to difference, values and attitudes towards the unfamiliar, other or strange appear to be mobile themselves and circulate between people as well as places. Against this backdrop, looking into how the notions of difference (and sameness) change, travel, evolve or get challenged is of particular academic importance. Interestingly however, while understandings of difference in singular contexts and/or places have been widely addressed in broader literature (e.g. Bell and Valentine 1995; Butler and Bowlby 1997; Jackson and

Penrose 1993; Sibley 1995), the mobility of ideas related to difference (including values and attitudes towards difference) has not been given adequate attention.

In this thesis, I attempt to address this issue and look into how difference is historically, socially and spatially constructed in the Polish context, and how distinctive understandings of difference possibly assist Polish migrants when they move to the UK. I furthermore explore how encounters with ‘the unfamiliar’ or ‘the other’ impact on migrants’ values and attitudes towards difference, and how these values and attitudes circulate between Polish migrants and their significant others in Poland. In doing so, I conceptualise difference broadly in terms of ethnicity, religion, social class, sexuality, gender, age and disability. After feminist scholars (Brah and Phoenix 2004; Crenshaw 1989; Valentine 2007), I do, however, recognize that these categories are not distinct or essential identities. Rather, they intersect and are “simultaneously experienced by subjects in specific spatial and temporal moments through the course of everyday life” (Valentine 2007: 18).

I begin this literature review by exploring the concept of postdependence which provides a new and fascinating perspective on how difference may be produced in the Polish socially and historically distinctive context. Then, I look at the developing discussions about the social construction of whiteness as they appear to shed more light onto how sameness and difference are understood and experienced by Polish people, and among Polish migrants in the UK. Next, I investigate the loaded concepts of value and attitude, followed by prejudice as a form of attitude, as they all closely relate to how difference is approached and lived. Further on, I explore how various literatures conceptualise the experience of (transnational) mobility and how migration necessarily disrupts the understanding of difference, normality and sameness. I continue this discussion by considering the significance of family and relationships with significant others. Then, I outline the literature on the circulation of ideas regarding difference as this process is likely to shape relationships between migrants and their relatives and/or friends in sending countries. Finally, I review geographies of encounter and explain how my research is positioned within wider debates about encounters with difference. This is followed by a section on migrant encounters.

## 2.2 Postdependence

As social reading of difference is strongly embedded in distinctive socio-historical contexts and geographies (Young 1990), it is significant to investigate localised power relations before attempting to explore migrant values and attitudes towards what or who is regarded as different. Contemporary European history, and in particular the transition from communism to democracy in Central and Eastern Europe followed by the EU accession of many postsocialist countries, impacted on how difference and sameness are understood and employed in broader social relations. The Polish context is quite unique in this respect and as such requires a closer look.

Polish history encompasses many moments of dependence or (quasi)dependence on external powers including losing sovereignty during the partition period 1772-1918 and being a satellite state of the Soviet Union 1945-1989. This, and especially the experience of 20<sup>th</sup>-century Soviet rule (including closure of the national borders and ‘isolation’ from ethnic, national and religious diversity), had a profound influence on Polish national identity and values (Janion 2011). As such, history is fundamental to understandings of difference and diversity in Poland (Kania 2009). How it has impacted on the national psyche, values and attitudes towards difference is explored in detail in Chapter 4.

Polish society, increasingly mobile ever since the collapse of communism in 1989 and the accession to the EU in 2004, is now facing various challenges related to living with difference that stem from Poland’s distinctive history and positionality in Europe and globally (Borowik and Szarota 2004; Marciniak 2009). Western scholars, supported by a group of Polish academics, have so far addressed these issues largely within the frames of a postcolonial paradigm (Bakuła 2007; Buchowski 2006; Cavanagh 2004; Horolets and Kozłowska 2012; Kania 2009; Kuus 2004; Owczarzak 2009; Pickles 2005; Stenning 2005; Thompson 2010; Verdery 1996). Postcolonialism refers to a body of work that has sought to challenge some of the assumptions underlying theories of modernity (Giddens 1991a), in particular the idea that some places (i.e. Western societies) are modern whilst others are not (Ashcroft et al. 1995; Chakrabarty 2000). Although it has primarily looked into the relations between non-European countries and Western postcolonial states (and many postcolonial scholars never intended to reflect on intra-European power relations), it has been argued to contribute to a greater understanding of postsocialist change in

Central and Eastern Europe (Chari and Verdery 2009; Kuus 2004; Mayblin et al. 2014; Owczarzak 2009; Piekut 2014, forthcoming; Stenning 2005; Verdery 1996).

During the Cold War era, European states internalised the political and economic division into the capitalist West and the communist East (Kuus 2004; Owczarzak 2009). Since the collapse of socialism, and especially during the 1990s transition period, Poles were encouraged by the emerging neoliberal politics to adopt the orientalist gaze which depicted Poland as backward and/or lagging behind Western European states (Mayblin et al. 2014). Against the backdrop of the NATO and EU enlargements, the rhetoric of Poland needing to ‘catch up with the West’ or ‘return to Europe’ was further reinforced by a newly emergent division into the Western European core, the Central European applicants and Eastern peripheral states which are not yet ready to become member states (Kuus 2004; Mayblin et al. 2014). The discursive practices of re-inscribing the colonial relationship between the West and the East, and situating Poland in an obscure position in-between, resulted in what some scholars call ‘inferiority-superiority complex’ (Kurczewska 2003; Zarycki 2004). On the one hand Polish society seems to feel insufficiently modern in comparison to the iconic West, on the other it appears to express high levels of national pride and exceptionality of what is produced as ‘true’ Polishness (Marciniak 2009).

The orientalist perspective which casts Poland as uncivilised, underdeveloped, traditional or backward (and Western European states, by contrast, as powerful, archetypical and economically superior) still seems to resonate in many Polish narratives as well as popular discourses. It is, furthermore, often linked with the construction of normality<sup>2</sup> and abnormality. Galasińska and Kozłowska (2009) and Galasińska (2010b), for example, explore how post-accession Polish migrants to the UK construct the experience of everyday life and work in Britain as ‘normal’ in contrast to the supposedly ‘abnormal’ state of affairs in contemporary Poland. The idea is further developed in studies by Horolets and Kozłowska (2012) and Burrell (2011). By investigating representations of the UK as a receiving society, Horolets and Kozłowska (2012) establish that many Polish migrants associate the UK with high culture, excellence, aristocracy and civilizational development. Burrell (2011a:153), in turn, speaks of “the enchanting powers of western things”.

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<sup>2</sup> The concept of normality is explored further in this chapter; see: Mobility experience.

Whilst postcolonialism may offer a valuable lens to study the identities and experiences of Polish people (migrants in particular), and has been applied by a number of Polish and non-Polish scholars (Bakuła 2007; Buchowski 2006; Cavanagh 2004; Horolets and Kozłowska 2012; Kania 2009; Kuus 2004; Owczarzak 2009; Pickles 2005; Stenning 2005; Thompson 2010; Verdery 1996), I argue that it does not *tell the whole story* about the distinctive national psyche and the sources of values and attitudes towards difference. It does not, for example, aid an understanding of how the interweaving periods of dependence and independence alongside isolation from ethnic, national or religious diversity impacted on the social construction and lived experiences of sameness and difference. It is also not sufficient to fully understand perceptions of ethnicity and whiteness, and attitudes towards ‘visible’ difference that historical, political and social isolation may produce.

Importantly, the capacity of postcolonialism to reflect on the broader Polish context has recently been questioned by some (predominantly Polish) academics (Gosk 2010; Koczanowicz 2011; Kołodziejczyk 2011; Nycz 2011; Snochowska-Gonzalez 2012). Gosk (2010), for instance, argues that despite providing a useful frame for the studies of Polish literature, postcolonialism has its obvious limitation as it does not correspond to the complex positionality of Poland in Europe. Although the country experienced periods of dependence, Gosk continues, it has never been colonised in the traditional meaning of this term. What is more, the Polish state itself remained at certain times a colonising power towards what has been collectively labelled as ‘Eastern borderlands’ (Bakuła 2007). Rather than ‘the colonised’, its intricate position could be better described as a ‘colonising colonised’ (Gosk 2010) or – more broadly – in ‘triple relation’ as former colony, former coloniser and in relation to ‘the Western hegemons’ (Mayblin et al. 2014).

Therefore, instead of drawing on postcolonial theory, in line with these scholars I advocate the application of the so called postdependence framework which offers a wider understanding of the complex situatedness of Poland. As such, the postdependence paradigm is argued to embrace a set of theoretical and methodological approaches which allow the study of broadly conceptualised dependence and oppression (Nycz 2011). Importantly, the ‘dependence’ does not relate here to the existence of an absolute state of independence. It is rather meant to suggest that various forms of dependence and/or relations of co-dependence may open up spaces of control and subordination on one hand, and spaces of choice or



auto-creation on the other (Nycz 2011). Recognising contextualised histories and geographies, the Polish postdependence studies – similarly to postcolonialism – critically engage with various issues including power, identity and the politics of difference. Yet, at the same time, they acknowledge the unique impact of (a particular) geo-historical context on the production of difference in a particular (Polish) society.

By utilising the notion of postdependence in this thesis, I attempt to establish a broader framework for the study of migrant encounters with difference. Although in exploring many aspects of migrant experience I do, throughout this thesis, draw on postcolonial theories and refer predominantly to postcolonial literatures, I argue that with regard to Poland and its positionality, postcolonialism offers a relevant yet limited perspective. It is insufficient to fully reflect on attitudes towards diversity and ‘visual’ or ‘visible’ otherness that the postdependence context may produce. While a small group of (mostly Polish) academics (Gosk 2010; Nycz 2011; Piekut 2014, forthcoming) appear to acknowledge that, the broader geography and social science literatures frequently lack this nuanced approach. By addressing this significant gap, this thesis contributes to a debate on the questionable applicability of postcolonial frames to the relations between Western and Central or Eastern European states (e.g. Kołodziejczyk 2011, Snochowska-Gonzalez 2012) and the broader literatures on dependence and oppression.

### **2.3 Whiteness studies**

While calling for the application of a postdependence lens, in this thesis I also draw upon the concept of whiteness which, I believe, contributes to a greater understanding of values and attitudes towards difference in the postsocialist context. I argue that with regard to Polish society, a postdependence framework needs to include broader whiteness studies in order to fully reflect on how sameness and otherness are produced and experienced by Polish people (and migrants in particular).

Although rejected as a scientific concept long ago, race continues to be deployed as a marker of (visual) difference. While non-White bodies have been heavily researched, whiteness as a racialised category produced through social, political and cultural practices remains relatively underexplored (Bonnett 1996; Fox 2013).

Additionally, academic commentators argue that whiteness has been mostly applied in the context of “the familiar terrain of Britain, North America and Australia” (Bonnett and Nayak 2003: 309). As such, the concept has been so far underexplored, underresearched and undertheorised with regard to postsocialist and postdependence societies such as Poland. The existing literature on whiteness is unhelpfully limited and based mostly on mobility experience of post-2004 Polish migrants in Western societies (van Riemsdijk 2010). Even though it often acknowledges the relative ethnic, national and religious homogeneity of Polish society (Podemski 2012), it rarely refers to postcommunism and the wider postdependence framework. Against this backdrop, this thesis contributes to wider debates on how whiteness is lived, perceived and mobilised by people who live in and migrate from predominantly White Polish society.

Dyer (1988), in his study of ethnic categories in mainstream film, traces the contemporary representations of whiteness. In the Judeo-Christian mythology, he explains, white and black tend to be juxtaposed and commonly used to symbolize good and evil. In Western societies black is also routinely associated with death, darkness, dirt and danger, whereas white with life, lightness, purity and safety. Such conceptualizations of white and non-white are then broadly reflected in arts, popular culture and numerous linguistic expressions (e.g. ‘black magic’/‘white magic’, ‘black character’, ‘the black sheep’). Furthermore, Dyer (1988) argues, while black is always marked as a colour and remains a particularizing quality, white is rather no colour, it can refer to everything and nothing and is, thus, granted the power to represent. The peculiarity of whiteness, Levine (1994) famously claimed, lies in its capacity to embody the standard against which otherness is viewed as inferior, deviant or exotic. This is further explained by Bonnett (1996: 146) who argues that “whiteness has, at least within the modern era and within Western societies, tended to be constructed as a norm, an unchanging and unproblematic location, a position from which all other identities come to be marked by their difference”.

The construction of whiteness as a category of reference has been argued to lead to the normalization of white – wider social processes through which white (e.g. bodies) come to be regarded ‘normal’, ‘natural’ and *taken-for-granted* (Alba 1990). This has been recently described as the ‘invisibility’ of white (van Riemsdijk 2010). Social normalization, in turn, contributes to the lack of acknowledgement (or even denial) of the privilege or the position of power whiteness confers (Alba 1990;

Bonnett 1996; Dyer 1988). Throughout the thesis, I intend to demonstrate how whiteness is prone to be naturalized and constructed in binary opposition to non-whiteness in the Polish context - something that still lacks appropriate attention with regard to postsocialist Central and Eastern Europe.

The broader literature on whiteness suggests that it cannot be essentialised as a uniform strand of identification or position of power. The extent to which white privilege is at work depends on other factors, in particular categories of difference such as ethnicity, nationality, class and gender (McDowell 2009; van Riemsdijk 2010). As I have pointed out earlier in the chapter, these axes of difference are not discrete, but tightly intersected and, thus, produce distinctive individual experiences (Brah and Phoenix 2004; Crenshaw 1989; Levine-Rasky 2011; Valentine 2007). Given this understanding, Garner (2010, 2012, 2013), for example, demonstrates how racialised discourses of entitlement to what is viewed as contemporary England differ depending on class identification, lifestyle and cultural capital. After Colic-Peisker (2005: 622), it could be argued that “clearly whiteness is not just about skin colour, but also about class, status, language and other features of the individual that could be discerned in social interaction”.

As any category of difference (or sameness), whiteness is produced in specific spatio-temporal circumstances. As such, understandings of whiteness are possibly interrupted or altered through and due to (im)migration. So far, scholars have extensively explored how European ethnic groups (e.g. the Irish) were and still are racialised in America and the UK (Ignatiev 1995; Ryan 2007; Walter 2001). In these studies the attention has been drawn to processes through which migrants become included to the majority group (‘become white’) through improving their socio-economic status or raising children that assimilate into hegemonic national cultures. But, alongside the racialised production of migrant bodies in receiving societies, mobility appears to impact on migrant perception and experience of whiteness. Against this backdrop, Central and Eastern European migrants (including Poles) have been, for instance, reported to gain awareness of their whiteness and to be involved in the broader processes of *whitewashing* within Western societies (Cook et al. 2011a; Fortier 2003; Fox 2013; McDowell 2009; Moroşanu and Fox 2013; Parutis 2011; Ryan 2010a; van Riemsdijk 2010). Fox (2013) and van Riemsdijk (2010) notice that migrants may use their whiteness to assert and defend their relatively privileged position in the UK and Norwegian labour markets. Lopez-Rodriguez

(2010) adds that some Polish migrants consider their whiteness as an asset for employability, promotion and fitting in. According to the author, “whiteness is used by them for the construction of the identities of belonging to the UK as they strongly draw a demarcation line between White/non-White migrants and ethnic minorities” (2010: 347). Furthermore, the expectation among Polish labour migrants to the UK that they will not suffer ethnic discrimination in what they conceptualize as largely White society is acknowledged by other authors (Cook et al. 2011b; McDowell 2009).

While bringing many significant insights into how whiteness is produced by migrants, the existent literature does, however, have a few limitations. First of all, it does not explicitly position migrant experience of ‘being white’ in the broader socio-historical circumstances that are crucial for the production of difference, sameness and the understanding of whiteness. In other words, it rarely explores how the localized contexts of home societies shape broader understandings of what it means to ‘be white’. By addressing this issue in the thesis, I attempt to contribute to, and extend, the whiteness literature through exploring how the intricate history of Poland (and the context of postdependence in particular) encourages a certain reading of whiteness and denial of white privilege. Furthermore, although it illustrates how migrants employ whiteness to claim belonging and social status, the whiteness literature, I argue, tends to conceptualize the experience of mobility as detached from broader personal histories, i.e. the pre-migratory values and attitudes towards difference. That said, it conceptualizes migrant experience of whiteness as a product of contact with diversity in a specific receiving society rather than a broader process that is shaped by personal dispositions of the individual migrants. As throughout the thesis I utilize a processual approach and prioritize both the pre- and post-migration, I explore how past experiences prior to the act of migration shape Polish migrants’ perceptions of difference and whiteness in particular.

Although difference (and its positioning within wider debates on postdependence and whiteness) is central to this thesis, my study aims first and foremost to investigate Polish people’s (migrants’) values, attitudes and prejudice towards what or who is regarded different. Throughout my thesis I ask what kind of values and attitudes do people develop towards difference and why? How do they evolve, change or become contested in different geographical locations and through international mobility?

Finally, how are they influenced by people's relationships with significant others? These issues require consideration of how values, attitudes and prejudice are theorized and studied.

## **2.4 Conceptualising values**

Values, attitudes and prejudice are basic concepts in geography and the social sciences. They do, however, tend to be separately theorized and explored. Importantly, they represent distinctive literatures across the disciplines that rarely engage with one another. This poses a great challenge for researching these concepts simultaneously. In this thesis, I undertake a difficult task of putting these concepts and literatures together, and demonstrate how geography and wider social sciences could perhaps benefit from such cross-disciplinary and cross-literature dialogue.

Scholarly interest in values has attracted significant attention from across various disciplines. In these studies, value is commonly defined as importance or worth attached to ideals or, in other words, a slowly developed "guiding principle of thought" (Moor and Asay 2008: 100). Despite the broad theorisation of the concept, the literature concerning values draws largely upon the psychology research of the 1970s. One of the most comprehensive and commonly cited studies of values is, indeed, the seminal work of Rokeach (1973). The author distinguished several basic assumptions about the nature of human values such as the claim that individuals "everywhere possess the same values to different degrees" (Rokeach 1973: 3) or that values are grouped in an overall value system - an enduring organization of beliefs. Moreover, Rokeach suggested, any conception of human values must assume the enduring and at the same time the changing character of values. Apparently, if values were completely stable, no change (either personal or social) would be possible. Logically, if values were entirely unstable, the continuity of human personality and societies would be impossible. As such, human values guide individuals in everyday situations, assist evaluation or judgement and are central to comparison processes (Moor and Asay 2008; Rokeach 1973).

Moral values in particular encompass shared understandings of how individuals ought to live, what is good or bad, right or wrong, just or unjust (Bauman 1995; Philo 1991; Smith 2000). While certain grand moral concepts such as freedom or liberty are universally recognised (MacIntyre 1998), moralities can vary among individuals

and groups, and are prone to change (Smith 2000). Against this backdrop, Sayer (2005b) speaks of the so called ‘ethical dispositions’ to describe personal moral orientations (e.g. being trusting, suspicious). In doing so, he draws attention to the fact that such dispositions are developed through the experiences of daily life and relations with other people.

The relationships with others are most crucial to understanding values (Smith 2000). Indeed, values are shaped or passed in the process of socialisation through which individuals acquire the skills (i.e. norms, practices) to be ‘social beings’ (Smart 2007). While family remains the major agent of socialisation (Morgan 1996, 2011), human values are also shaped by peers and other social institutions including religion, schooling, legal system or the media (Cavalli-Sforza et al. 1982; Giddens 1991b; Maliepaard and Lubbers 2012). In that respect, moralities are closely connected to culture and society, and the assumption that certain values are collectively shared by a group (Kluckhohn 1951). Moor and Asay (2008: 101) stress that “when a group of people embrace a set of understood values, members operate within those beliefs and are judged accordingly”. In this context, values could be defined as a “shared way of life of a group of people” (Berry 2004 cited in Leong and Ward 2006: 801) that provides a wider framework within which attitudes, behaviours, actions, practices and norms are positioned (Evans 2007). This resonates with the conceptualisation of values as negotiable ideals (Rokeach 1973, Smith 2000). As such, it raises a question of how values people are socialised to live with (in certain socio-cultural contexts) become challenged, revised or alter when they move across national and cultural settings.

Importantly, values are not only social and/or cultural phenomena. The geography literature evidences that they are also situated practices. According to Smith (1997: 587), geographers “take up where most philosophers leave off (...) [and] examine the contextual thickening of moral concepts in the particular (local) circumstances of differentiated human being”. In a similar vein, Harvey (1996) draws attention to what he calls a ‘process of valuation’ - the construction of values and their permanence in specific spatiotemporal circumstances. This is further acknowledged by Lee and Smith (2004: 3) who speak of “the existence and constant transformation of geographies and temporalities of moralities”. In doing so, they argue that how individuals understand their lives and what they make of them is a matter of environment, space and time as moral codes may depend on places,

communities and national settings. Accordingly, values are “an important aspect of local culture and group identity” (Smith 1994: 10). In this sense, locality or localised contexts become major forces behind the development of small-scale value systems and thinking about space, place and environment builds into moral assumptions and arguments (Philo 1991).

Although the geography literature has been increasingly preoccupied with how values are culture- and place-bound, it has paid much less attention to how they possibly travel across communities and places. In that respect, the study by Valentine et al. (2013) into the dynamics of sexual prejudice within a transnational religious network is one notable exception. It appears that further empirical research is crucial to better understand how values are mobile themselves – how and to what extent they assist migrants on their move from one national setting to the other. Do they get challenged or cemented? In what circumstances do such processes occur? Furthermore, in the broader context of increased global flow of ideas and people (Appadurai 1996), it is of particular academic importance to look into how values circulate between those who moved out and those who stayed in a specific geographical context. While it is evident that relationships with others are central to moral questions (Smith 2000), there is still little understanding of how relationships with others in a distinctive national, social or geographical setting influence individual perceptions of right and wrong, the acceptable and unacceptable or the just and unjust. Throughout this thesis I address these issues with regard to Polish migrants to the UK and their significant others in Poland and, by doing so, contribute to, and extend, geographical understanding of values as mobile constructs.

## **2.5 Problematising attitudes**

The existing literature concerning attitudes is predominantly psychology-oriented. Whilst values are routinely associated with moralities, attitudes are conceptualized as “positive or negative feeling[s] about some person, object, or issue” (Petty and Cacioppo 1981: 7). Maio and Haddock (2010: 4), for instance, define attitude as “an overall evaluation of an object that is based on cognitive, affective, and behavioural information”. As such, they are said to influence people’s perception, judgement, beliefs, memory and – to a certain degree – behaviour (Aiken 2002; Crano and Prislin 2008; Fazio and Petty 2008; Maio and Haddock 2010).

Scholars argue that attitudes play various roles. They may organise knowledge or serve higher psychological needs (Bohner and Wänke 2002). Alternatively, they may have evaluative or expressive functions (Herek 1986 cited in Maio and Haddock 2010: 38). Through the expression of attitudes that are viewed favourably by his or her peers, for example, an individual can maintain his or her social relationships and use personal attitudes as social identity markers (Bohner and Wänke 2002). It is crucial to acknowledge that the same attitude may serve different functions for different people. Importantly, the same attitude may also serve different functions for the same person in different contexts (Bohner and Wänke 2002).

It is probably important to mention here that although certain characteristics of values and attitudes may suggest partial similarities, there are important distinctions between both concepts. First of all, attitudes have been argued to focus on a particular object, person or a situation while values “transcend objects and situations” (Rokeach 1973: 18). In this respect, values could be (and often are) considered as standards whereas attitudes are not (Rokeach 1973). Secondly, individuals may develop as many attitudes as they have encounters with specific people, objects or situations, while values are only relatively few learnt modes of conduct. Lastly, values are considered to play a central role within a person’s makeup or cognitive system and thus may influence attitudes and behaviour rather than be influenced themselves (Rokeach 1973). Evans (2007), for example, argues that values represent a ‘higher order’ concept that may structure and organise attitudes. This resonates with the former claim that the values individuals possess are organized in an overall *value system* which affects decision-making and provides a moral framework (Rokeach 1973).

Studies across various disciplines (including geography) demonstrate that values are formed through socialisation (intra-familial transmission in particular) as well as contact, conditioning and imitation (Bailey et al. 2013; Carlson and Knoester 2011; Castelli et al. 2009; Gronhoj and Thogersen 2009; Valentine et al. 2010; Valentine et al. 2012; Walther and Langer 2008; Wickrama et al. 1999; Willoughby et al. 2012; Zajonc 1968). I address the issue of socialisation further in this chapter with regard to the circulation of ideas. As long as contact, conditioning and imitation are considered, various psychology research suggest there are certain patterns in how attitudes are constructed. The perceived favourability of attitudes, for instance, is likely to increase as a result of a frequent exposure (Zajonc 1968). People may also



develop a positive/negative attitude towards an object (or a person) when it was originally combined with a positive/negative experience and elicited a positive/negative response (Walther and Langer 2008). In addition, individuals' attitudes tend to be reinforced if they receive a feedback from their environment. This feedback – or in other words: social influence - can assume a form of a reassurance that the individual holds 'correct' attitudes or that his or her attitudes are in agreement with the attitudes of a particular environment. Finally, individuals are likely to develop attitudes by imitating other people's attitudes. Bohner and Wänke (2002: 86) claim that “such role models may be particularly influential the more one identifies with the model and the more one desires to fit into a particular group”.

In spite of their determinist assumptions, these patterns of attitude formation are helpful in attempting to understand people's approaches towards diversity and difference. They raise several crucial questions I address throughout this thesis. Does increased contact with diversity translate, in the context of migration, into more positive attitudes towards difference? Do (and, if so, how) positive/negative experiences that relate to particular axes of difference affect people's attitudes towards them in later life? How does social environment (e.g. relations with significant others) impact on attitudes towards otherness? Finally, how does a shift from one socio-normative setting to the other affect people's feelings and perception of diversity or difference?

There is a significant body of research on personal and social attitudes towards ideas and people (including difference) across various disciplinary literatures. While, in this section, I address these literatures only briefly, I refer to relevant research throughout the thesis. Importantly, what many of these discussions seem to overlook, is a recognition of the capacity of attitudes to travel across social contexts and among people. In this thesis, I demonstrate that attitudes require close attention precisely because they are frequently mobilised within as well as between certain (geographical) contexts. In this respect, the study of international migration opens up opportunities to explore how attitudes are mobile between locations as well as how they alter, evolve or become interrupted.

## **2.6 The concept of prejudice**

A discrete form of attitude is prejudice, routinely understood as a prejudgement formed before relevant pieces of information about a person, object or situation are disclosed (Allport 1979 [1954]). The concept of prejudice provides a useful perspective in a study of how values and attitudes shape perception and experience of difference. Unlike the notion of attitude, however, the contemporary literature regarding prejudice is a diverse body of work embracing not only different disciplinary traditions (i.e. in psychology and geography), but also various subsets structured around particular axes of difference such as ethnicity, nationality, religion, class, gender, age, sexuality or disability.

Similarly to attitudes, the study of prejudice was originally established within the field of psychology. In the psychology literature, prejudice is most often linked to the human tendency to view the social world through the prism of belonging and non-belonging to certain groups or communities. Such groups are commonly believed to be formed alongside various axes of difference including ethnicity, nationality, language, appearance, gender, age, disability, sexuality, religion, social class or other characteristics. Allport (1979 [1954]: 6), for example, one of the founding fathers of prejudice studies, has famously defined prejudice as a “favourable or unfavourable [attitude] toward a person or thing, prior to, or not based on, actual experience”. Whilst such an understanding remains accurate to a certain degree, in this thesis I conceptualise prejudice more broadly as a pre-judgement of not only people or things, but also ideas, situations and objects. Indeed, some people may develop prejudiced views towards, for instance, an ideology and at the same time be non-prejudiced towards members of a group commonly associated with it.

Interestingly, whilst geographers have for many years studied what could be conceptualised as prejudice (e.g. through their interest in geographies of oppression, inequality or exclusion), the term prejudice is rarely employed in geography precisely because it is associated with a particular history of meaning within psychology (Valentine 2010). In her influential paper, Valentine (2010) argues that psychological understandings of prejudice have been challenged by some critical social scientists and this resulted in the neglect of the concept by researchers in disciplines such as geography. However, through her research into prejudice and its tight relationship with geographical inquiries regarding discrimination and oppression, she makes a strong case for why geographers (and perhaps other social

scientists) should recognise the concept. In particular, she suggests, prejudice could be utilised to explore and explain how and in what circumstances negative attitudes are formed, justified and intersect with one another. Throughout this thesis I contribute to this claim and demonstrate that the concept requires close attention within geography.

As I have outlined above, actual or merely ascribed group (non-)belonging remains a core aspect of prejudice in the contemporary world. Homophobia is, for instance, an example of sexual prejudice and relates to (a fear-driven) negative attitude towards an individual (or group) due to his or her sexual orientation (Herek 2000). It has been argued that it embraces a range of stances including hatred, contempt and antipathy (McCormack 2012a). Although it is sometimes linked to religious belief, the relation between religious views and homophobia is a contested one (Andersson et al. 2011; McCormack 2012b). Sexism refers to negative sentiments related to gender (Glick and Fiske 1997). While the development of equality legislation in many (predominantly ‘Western’) societies has significantly reduced the public expression of gender prejudice, recent studies demonstrate that sexism persists and is manifested in less conspicuous ways (Valentine et al. 2014). Racism builds on a false belief that races exist and some characteristics make certain groups superior from others (Blackwell et al. 2008). As such, it is related to the essentialist construction of whiteness and the understanding of non-White bodies as ‘non-normative’ (see section 2.3 in this chapter). Classism involves prejudiced attitudes towards social class (Kadi 1996). Whereas the term embraces prejudiced stances towards a range of class positionings, studies of classism have largely focused on the production of working class identities (Jones 2012; Valentine and Harris 2014b). Ageism and (dis)ablism are age- and (dis)ability-based prejudices respectively (Campbell 2001; Nelson 2004). More recently, Islamophobia has been linked to prejudice towards Muslim people and Islam (Allen 2010). A significant rise of global Islamophobia has been noted within the last decade, in particular after the 9/11 and 7/7 terrorist attacks (Allen 2013; Sheridan 2006).

It needs to be acknowledged here that as all of these forms of prejudice have attracted much academic attention and have been developed in substantial (and rich) separate literatures. While I do not cite these literatures in this chapter, they are recognised throughout the thesis and given closer attention in subsequent chapters. As a consequence of being split across separate bodies of work, various forms of

prejudice have been rarely addressed and explored together. Even though some studies employ a holistic approach to prejudice and evidence how various negative attitudes intersect with one another and form complex relationships (e.g. Valentine 2010), there is a tendency to analyse homophobia, racism, Islamophobia and so on independently. This results in inadequate debate on how, why and in what circumstances various ‘-isms’ and ‘-phobias’ possibly interconnect and how such intricate sets of attitudes contribute to perceptions of diversity and difference. In this thesis, I recognise the complicatedness and situatedness of people’s prejudiced attitudes as they come together, rather than focus on particular axes of difference.

Geography and broader social science literatures illustrate that prejudice is a spatial phenomenon (Begum 2008; Forrest and Dunn 2007; Sibley 1995; Simonsen 2008; Valentine 2010). For example, ‘strange’ or ‘other’ bodies in public spaces, visibility (or invisibility) of difference in certain neighbourhoods or local history may all mobilise prejudiced attitudes. This is very well exemplified by Forrest and Dunn’s (2007) research into racial prejudice in Sydney, Australia. The authors claim that place-based cultures of tolerance and intolerance contribute to the development of personal attitudes and are, therefore, crucial to formulate anti-racist interventions. This raises significant questions for the study of migrant values and attitudes towards difference. What is the link between prejudice and international mobility from a relatively homogeneous to a super-diverse society? How do the necessarily increased presence of ‘other’ bodies, sights, smells or tastes impact on migrant understandings of axes of difference such as ethnicity, nationality or religion? Throughout the thesis, I discuss these issues in depth and shed more light into how prejudice is possibly mobile and circulates between peoples and contexts.

Alongside the significance of place for the production of unfavourable attitudes, the way people understand, mobilise and express prejudice in everyday life is equally crucial. In academic debates a significant discrepancy between denouncing prejudice and expressing prejudiced views has been recently pinpointed (e.g. Valentine 2010). Although people generally consider prejudice as socially or morally unacceptable, they nonetheless do continue to develop and express unfavourable opinions and adapt various strategies to explain or justify their prejudiced views. In other words, they sanction a certain view as rational, understandable and widely acceptable. In sociology and psychology this process is called legitimisation (Jost and Major 2001).

Various geographical studies illustrate that forms of prejudice are commonly legitimised (and thus conceptualised as non-prejudice). In her study of encounters with difference in Copenhagen, Simonsen (2008), for instance, argues that White Danish people expect ethnic and religious minorities to give up their cultural values and assimilate to what is constructed as mainstream Danish identity (implicitly White, secular, heterosexual). The failure to do so serves as a justification of broader prejudice towards, for example, immigrants or asylum seekers. This is further investigated by Valentine (2010) who explores many cases of legitimisation of unfavourable feelings towards difference in three UK locations including London, the West Midlands and the rural South West. In doing so, she claims that “these justifications are rooted in place-specific material and social conditions, and the performance of specific embodied practices in public space and consequently in locales and habitual ways of dealing with the world” (2010: 533). The author also draws attention to the role of emotion such as anger and fear in practices and experiences of prejudice. She suggests that emotional underpinning of many prejudices further reinforces their legitimisation as rational, common or well-funded opinions. These findings seem of particular importance for the study of migrant prejudice and the potential circulation or transmission of prejudice between migrants and their significant others in a sending society. Notably, they suggest that people may not recognise certain ideas, opinions or discourses as prejudice and keep employing or expressing them in their relations with others. Whether and, if so, how this occurs with regard to Polish migrants in the UK is explored further in the thesis.

The above three sections have demonstrated that values, attitudes and prejudice are at the heart of social life and individual experience. They assist evaluation, judgement or comparison and, by doing so, frame individuals’ encounters with objects, places, situations, people and difference. They constitute a broader symbolic baggage (see Chapter 5) that allows to organise knowledge and lived experience. Arguably, they travel with migrants when they move between places and spaces. But, perhaps, they also alter, are revised or contested when people are *on the move*. Migration and international mobility are, indeed, disruptive experiences that affect various aspects of human existence (Silvey 2004). How and to what extent mobility shapes ideas, beliefs, relationships or – simply – lives is further explored in the next section.

## 2.7 Mobility/Migration experience

Mobility has been argued to be “central to what it is to be human” (Cresswell 2006: 1). Sennett (1996 cited in Cresswell 2006: 15) claims that “the modern individual is, above all else, a mobile human being”. While it is usually defined as a condition of being *on the move*, Adey (2010) suggests that mobility is not only about *being mobile*. It is rather a (lived) relation – “an orientation to oneself, to others and to the world (...) - a predominant means by which one engages with the modern world” (Adey 2010: xvii). Cresswell (2006) argues that, although mobility and what it means remains unspecified and elusive, it is most crucial to our understanding of the world. He further conceptualises mobility as a socially produced motion. As such, it can refer either to empirical human mobility which can be measured and processed (e.g. migration, transport), an ideological semiotic representation of ideas about mobility (e.g. film, photography, literature, law) or a practiced, experienced, embodied “way of being in the world” (Cresswell 2006: 3).

Urry (2007) speaks of *mobilities* rather than mobility to emphasize the complexity of its (post)modern condition. The term *mobilities* refers to “the broader project of establishing a movement-driven social science” (Urry 2007: 18) in which movement is understood as constitutive of economic, social and political relations. In order to do so, he distinguishes four types of what he calls ‘different mobilities’. The first relates directly to the state of being mobile, to movement (e.g. mobile phone, mobile person, mobile home). The second captures mobile as a mob, “a rabble or an unruly crowd” (Urry 2007: 8). The third type of mobility is connected with either upward or downward social mobility – a symbolic, in a sense, movement between social strata. Lastly, he refers to mobility as migration or other kinds of semi-permanent geographical movement.

Against this backdrop, mobility has been proposed to provide a suitable framework for exploring what was, until recently, conceptualised as international migration (Wallace 2002). In times of globalisation, politicization, differentiation and acceleration of migratory movements (Castles and Miller 1998), human migration inevitably takes increasingly diverse or new forms. Paradoxically, migration as a concept loses the capacity to reflect on the whole plethora of experiences and identities of contemporary migrants. Especially in the European context, “rather than permanent one-way migration (...) there has been a predominance of short-term, circulatory movements backwards and forwards across

borders. This would be better termed mobility than migration” (Wallace 2002: 604). Wallace’s (2002) argument draws attention to the need to study mobility (rather than migration) experience as a response to the postmodern conditions shaped and reshaped through global processes. This thesis is largely inspired by this understanding. Contemporary migrants are, indeed, a complex and flexible group including people being *on the move* for various reasons, for differing periods of time and with completely different attitudes towards their own supposed ‘migration’. Mobility as a broad and fluid concept seems to comprise all such forms of movement and enables us to analyse change (Krings et al. 2013). As a conceptual framework of this thesis, it allows me to look into migrant identities as constantly produced through the circulation, development and change of values and attitudes towards difference.

The experience of international mobility opens up possibilities to disrupt and negotiate various aspects of identity (Silvey 2004). Contemporary sociological and geographical understandings of identity put an emphasis on the significance of lived experience and encounters with the physical world. Referring to Casey (2001), Easthope (2009: 71) argues that identity is “intrinsically tied to place”, it involves an awareness that “there is no place without self; and no self without place” (Casey 2001: 406). At the same time, Easthope claims, the geographical understanding of identity does not stay in opposition to the sociological paradigm as the significance of spatiality by no means excludes the idea of identity as an open-ended, incomplete, mobile and relational process. Indeed, places are not fixed or static. They are, rather, nodes in networks of relations and, are therefore, also socially constructed.

My study of mobility and encounters with difference is to a great extent informed by such a conceptualisation of identity. I am particularly interested in mutual interconnections among mobility, identity and values as well as attitudes towards difference. Recent migration studies provide some interesting insights in this respect. Siara (2009), for instance, speaks of migration from Poland to the UK as an opportunity to rework values and norms in relation to gender and ethnicity. She establishes that a number of male research participants refer to the patriarchal model of male-female roles (being still quite popular in the Polish context) and thus reaffirm certain ethnic understandings of gender. However, she also notices that there is a group of men who criticize female role expectations and call for equality in terms of social behaviour and sexual activity. Simultaneously, female participants, many of

whom refer to their personal experiences from the UK, advocate “a change in the perception of gender roles of women and more equality for them” (Siara 2009: 180). Furthermore, Siara looks into the relationships between Polish women and men of different ethno-national and/or religious backgrounds. Although some, mainly male, participants tend to stigmatise Polish women involved in such relationships and express racist views, others produce a discourse of ethnic tolerance and openness towards difference. The study demonstrates that the meaning of gender or ethnicity “may be heavily contested once living in a multicultural environment” (Siara 2009: 183).

In a similar vein, Datta (2009b) notices that the sense of self as well as ideas of race, nationhood and gender are constantly reshaped by Polish male migrants, i.e. construction workers. In her own words, “earlier perceptions of difference get translated and transformed (...) as new attitudes towards others are formed in new places, under different structures of power” (2009b: 139). This is further evidenced by many other studies into the mobility experience of recent Polish migrants which I refer to in subsequent chapters of this thesis (e.g. Burrell 2006, 2008, 2009; Datta 2009a; Datta and Brickell 2009; Fomina 2010; Nowicka 2012; Rabikowska and Burrell 2009; Ryan 2010a; Triandafyllidou 2006; White 2010).

As informative as they are, these studies provoke many further questions. If ideas of race, ethnicity, nationality, religion or gender tend to be (re-)shaped by migrants, are there any aspects of migrant lives claimed to remain unaffected by the experience of mobility? Are there, perhaps, any core values that are carefully cultivated across national settings? What values (and why) are prone to be contested in the context of migration? What are the consequences of migrant experience of difference? What, if any, attitudes towards difference do migrants develop in super-diverse societies? Throughout the thesis, I address these issues and extend the existing literature on how the experience of mobility affects migrant identities.

In these discussions, the concept of normality may offer a useful perspective. Broadly theorised in sociology (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Durkheim 1938; Giddens 1987; Goffman 1974), normality is associated with a feeling of security and continuity, hence it relates to both the presence - from which individual’s desires and aspirations emerge, and the future - a projected state to come (Miztal 2001). As such, the sense of normality draws on a necessity to make sense of social situations and social world. It incorporates trust as a shield which is supposed to prevent



societies from disorder and unpredictability by “providing us with feeling of safety, certainty and familiarity” (Misztal 2001: 312).

Although the concept of normality was not originally applied to migration studies, it has been recently argued to be a useful tool to reflect on the complexities of mobility/migrant experience as well as the negotiation of identity in a ‘new’ place (Rabikowska 2010a; Ryan 2010a). Metykova (2010) and Rabikowska (2010b), for example, investigate the processes of re-establishing normality after the experience of international mobility to Britain. Both authors argue that many of their research participants consider migration as a significant as well as disruptive life change. In her study of the Internet users, Metykova (2010) finds out that by engaging with the media (e.g. sustaining control over the choice of content, establishing media-related routines) and regular communication with significant others in sending societies, migrants negotiate their presence in a new environment. Rabikowska (2010b), on the other hand, by looking into food consumption among Polish migrants in the UK, acknowledges the role food rituals play in reconstructing normality within a host culture. It appears that the sense of normality among mobile travellers is strongly influenced by the awareness of ‘the familiar’ and ‘the unknown’, sameness and difference as well as ‘us’ and ‘them’, ‘here’ and ‘there’. In this context, it is of particular interest what and why migrants regard ‘normal’, and how this sense of normality possibly changes over the course of migration.

What it means to be internationally mobile, has been also broadly conceptualised by researchers of transnationalism. Building upon theories of globalisation and a recognition of complex relationships between multiple local systems (Appadurai 1996; Cox 1997), transnationalism has become a major paradigm in migration studies over the past two decades (Boccagni 2012; Glick Schiller et al. 1992; Portes et al. 1999; Vertovec 2009). Glick Schiller et al. (1992: 1) have famously defined transnationalism as “the process by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement”. As such, it acknowledges that while transnational migrants move repeatedly across national borders, ‘here’ and ‘there’ remain for them the elements of the same social field. Effectively, they develop loyalties, and maintain social and economic ties, with two or more countries.

Whilst transnational behaviour is not new (Portes et al. 1999), the scale and intensity of cross-border practices have significantly increased with the widespread

availability of cheap and fast transportation and communications (Nedelcu 2012; Vertovec 2009). These new technological capabilities have been argued to transform the lives of migrants by creating new social and political geographies as well as multiple (and overlapping) spaces of belonging (Nedelcu 2012; Vertovec 2009). But transnationalism does not only refer to mobility of people. Çağlar (2001) suggests that it also needs to be understood in terms of the circulation of objects, discourses and ideas. This is reflected in a recent study by Binnie and Klesse (2013) who explore the connections between migrant flows to and from Poland, and the emergence of transnational activist networks. These voices draw attention to the significance of transnational relationships for the circulation of values and attitudes. In the next section, I address this issue by recognizing family, and transnational family in particular, as a context in which such exchanges of ideas are likely to occur.

## **2.8 The significance of family**

Family has been conceptualised as a complex network of human relations that are central to ‘identity projects’ (Giddens 1991b). As such, family is one of the major spaces of socialisation, a process through which individuals acquire the skills (i.e. norms, values, attitudes, behaviour) necessary to be members of a community or a society (Smart 2007). Importantly, as families spread across generations, they are sites for passing on, reproducing as well as contesting values, attitudes, norms or practices (Morgan 1996, 2011).

Crucially, family (as well as family life and values) is to various degrees imagined (Gillis 1996, 2002; Smith 2011; Valentine et al. 2012). Gillis (1996) famously argued that people live in two families: the idealised vision of family (*the family we live by*) which constitutes a normative framework people aspire to, and *the family we actually live with*. This distinction is particularly significant for the understanding of intra-familial socialisation. Given Gillis’s (1996) claim, being further reinforced by recent findings (e.g. Valentine and Hughes 2012; Valentine et al. 2012), older generations tend to pass onto younger not only what they believe is morally appropriate, but also what Valentine et al. (2012) call the “messiness” of social attitudes and everyday life – practices that contradict norms, inconsistencies or

double standards. I discuss the intergenerational transfer of values and attitudes in the next section of this chapter in which I address the circulation of ideas.

Significantly, the hegemonic understandings of family are embedded in history and (national) culture (Gross 2005). Therefore, in this thesis I recognise that how family is imagined may be culture-specific and, as such, is likely to differ across national contexts (e.g. Poland and the UK). While I acknowledge that there is an extensive body of work on family life, in this thesis I am interested in how the concept of family interplays with the issue of international mobility and the circulation of ideas across national borders. Within migration studies family is conceptualised as a network of relations that spread across generations and locations (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). As such, “families may be split, reunited, and reshaped through the process of migration” (Ryan 2010b: 80).

International migration has been argued to have a profound influence on the nature of relationships, intimacy and care between those family members who move abroad and those who ‘stay’ in sending societies (Baldassar and Baldock 2000; Baldassar et al. 2006; Baldassar and Merla 2013; Brannen et al. 2014; Francisco 2013; Heath et al. 2011; Kilkey 2013; Kilkey et al. 2014; McGhee et al. 2013; Parrenas 2005; Pratt 2012; Pratt and Rosner 2012; Reynolds and Zontini 2013). Pratt (2012), for example, has looked at Filipino families who are separated when mothers move to Canada as labour migrants and children stay in the Philippines. In particular, she has investigated the personal cost, or “the conflicts of labour and love”, involved in the long-distance family making. While the body of work on transnational care-giving has largely focused on female migrants, Kiley et al. (2014) have recently looked at Polish migrant men in the UK who strive to perform their fathering roles across national borders.

In a discussion about family-making and migration, it is important to stress the role that information and communication technologies as well as lower travel costs play in sustaining close ties over long distances (Krings et al. 2013; Levitt 2001; Nedelcu 2012). The affordable cost of air travel in Europe allows people who reside in distant countries to visit each other relatively often (Burrell 2011b), whereas Internet access alongside inexpensive telephone services and satellite television contribute to daily or weekly information exchanges. The rise of what has been termed the network society (Castells 1996), “enabled new forms of migrant transnationalism characterised not only by the growing intensity of transnational

exchanges and activities, but also by a ubiquitous system of communication that allows migrants to connect with multiple, geographically distant and culturally distinct worlds to which they identify and participate on a daily basis” (Nedelcu 2012: 1341). Against the backdrop of time-space compression and ‘liquidity’ of social life (Bauman 2005), migrant contact with their significant others resident in a sending country has become normalised as an inherent element of transnational coexistence. Giddens (1991a:18) claims that the so called ‘absent Other’ – who is “locationally distant from any given situation of face-to-face interaction” – may now be similarly engaged in social and family life as individuals personally present at the heart of action. This is reflected in recent migration studies. Metykova (2010), for instance, quoted earlier in this section, suggests that the usage of various online media among the post-2004 Eastern European migrants to the UK allows them to sustain close Internet contact with their respective home countries as well as relatives. This, as I stressed before, contributes to the gradual establishment of normality after the disruptive experience of migration. Similarly, Francisco (2013: 16) argues that in the context of migration “technology opens up the potential for intimacy and closeness through the visual register of communication technologies like Skype”. She gives many examples of how Filipino migrants in the US take part in their family life away from home by ‘enjoying’ a distant co-presence through the Internet (e.g. eating together, watching children getting ready for school or performing mundane home tasks).

The common attachment to mediated (e.g. telephone, Internet) contact seems to provide a suitable space for cross-border circulations of information, knowledge, values and attitudes. Indeed, although the significance of direct contact between migrants and their significant others is broadly recognized (Mason 2004), some authors argue that the transfer of values and social *habitus* has been increasingly occurring in deterritorialised and/or virtual spaces (Levitt 2001; Levitt and Schiller 2004). In her recent paper, Nedelcu (2012) explores how Romanian skilled migrants ‘study’ Canadian social diversity via the Internet fora and websites prior to the act of migration. In addition, she notes that this cultural knowledge is then passed onto family members who live in Romania during numerous Skype or MSN (Microsoft Network) conversations post-migration. White (2010), on the other hand, investigates the ways in which Polish migrants describe aspects of their everyday life in the UK to their relatives in Poland. While she largely focuses on issues such as

‘improved’ lifestyle or standard of living, she also implies that some migrants are likely to transfer ideas related to diversity and difference back to Poland.

In this context, it is particularly interesting to think about how migrants contact and possibly influence their significant others’ views as well as values and attitudes towards difference. Given that there are two sides of transnational relationships, it is also important to look at how people resident in home countries keep affecting their migrant relatives or friends abroad. In the thesis, I address these issues and explore what ideas, beliefs or discourses, why, and in what circumstances, travel between Polish migrants in Britain and their family members and/or friends in Poland.

## **2.9 Circulation of ideas**

While the term circulation has been rarely employed in geography and the broader social sciences, scholars have increasingly studied what could be conceptualised as (transnational) circulation of ideas through their interest in social remittances and transmission of values, attitudes, behaviour or practices (e.g. Carol 2014; Elrick 2008; Levitt 1998; Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2011; Maliepaard and Lubbers 2012; Scourfield et al. 2012; Valentine et al. 2012; Vedder et al. 2009; Willoughby et al. 2012). In critically engaging with these concepts and acknowledging the insights from the field of transnational care (see the section above), in this thesis I support the usage of the term circulation rather than remittances or transmission. In the context of international mobility, the process of transmitting or remitting may imply a one-way transfer and, as such, may encourage a simplified reading of what (and how) occurs between migrants and their significant others in sending countries. This may, for example, suggest that one side of the transmission process is granted agency (sends out a message) while the other is not (as it only receives and perhaps internalises it). By employing the term circulation to the study of values and attitudes, I emphasize that alongside transmission other processes including confrontation, contestation and proliferation are likely to take place. In addition, I draw attention to the agency of all social actors involved and acknowledge that a transmitted message may or not be accepted, internalized or provoke a response. Having said that, in the thesis I use the terms transmission and social remittances while referring to the instances when the one-way transfer of ideas does, in fact, take place or when discussing other studies that explicitly utilise these concepts.

It has been widely acknowledged that ideas circulate between/among family members, peers and social institutions (Cavalli-Sforza et al. 1982; Maliepaard and Lubbers 2012; Morgan 1996). In particular, family has been increasingly studied as a space of circulation of values, attitudes, behaviours and routines (Carlson and Knoester 2011; Carol 2014; Gronhoj and Thogersen 2009; O'Bryan et al. 2004; Schönplflug 2001; Scourfield et al. 2012; Valentine and Hughes 2012; Valentine et al. 2012; Vedder et al. 2009; Willoughby et al. 2012). Gronhoj and Thogersen (2009), for instance, have investigated how young people's pro-environmental orientations are linked to their parents' pro-environmental values, attitudes and behaviours, and have found that family socialization has a significant influence on young people's perceptions of 'greener' lifestyles. Likewise, by exploring the generational transmission of drinking cultures, Valentine et al. (2012) have recently demonstrated that attitudes towards alcohol consumption are by and large shaped through intra-familial practices and norms that might, furthermore, contradict extra-familial moralities (i.e. about how people ought to behave).

Against this backdrop, it is interesting to investigate how values and attitudes towards difference in terms of ethnicity, religion, class, sexuality, gender, age and disability are shaped, strengthened or challenged through relationships with family members and/or friends. Despite some valuable insights from the field of psychology (e.g. Aboud and Doyle 1996; Castelli et al. 2009; O'Bryan et al. 2004) and a growing geographical interest in the circulation of ideas, this issue has been addressed to a lesser degree (notable exceptions include studies of parenting and ethnicity such as Phoenix and Hussain 2007, Tizard and Phoenix 2002).

In addition, there remains an imbalance in focusing on social actors who are involved in the process of circulation. By looking into what is often argued to be intergenerational, but is in fact mostly parental 'transmission', geography literature has underappreciated the significance of other agents – be it peers, friends, further relatives – and, in particular, children. Although their role in the circulation process is recognized (Cavalli-Sforza et al. 1982; Maliepaard and Lubbers 2012), there is still little understanding of how and in what circumstances such 'transmission' may occur. Furthermore, some family studies (e.g. of family health and lifestyles, alcohol consumption, gambling) suggest that certain orientations and/or behaviour follow generational and/or gender lines (Valentine and Hughes 2012; Valentine et al. 2012; Walters 2001; Wickrama et al. 1999). By demonstrating how prejudice is passed on

from children to parents, between siblings or friends of differing ages and sexes, in this thesis I challenge these (generational and gender) assumptions. In doing so, I emphasize that the sphere of beliefs, views, perceptions and feelings is particularly intricate, highly contextualised and defies classifications.

Finally, whereas the cross-border circulation of care has been increasingly addressed in social sciences (e.g. Baldassar and Merla 2013; Kilkey 2013; Reynolds and Zontini 2013), there have been fewer attempts to investigate the cultural diffusion and circulation of ideas in the context of migration (Elrick 2008; Levitt 1998; Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2011; Maliepaard and Lubbers 2012). Originally, Levitt (1998: 926) spoke of the so called social remittances – “the ideas, behaviours, identities, and social capital that flow from receiving- to sending-country communities”. This issue was further explored by, for example, Elrick (2008) who has studied the impact of Polish outward migration on origin (local) communities. The author has, nonetheless, focused primarily on the socio-economic and lifestyle consequences of migration for the sending communities and hardly addressed the transfer of values and attitudes towards difference. In addition, only a few authors – for example Maliepaard and Lubbers (2012) who have recently looked into migrant parents passing religion (Islam) onto their migrant children – speak of the process of circulation that occurs post-migration. Furthermore, despite a growing interest in the issue most recently<sup>3</sup>, the circulation of ideas between migrants and their family members and/or friends in sending countries remains underexplored. In this respect, in the thesis I provide a significant and unique contribution to literature and knowledge.

## **2.10 Geographies of encounter**

In the context of mobility, individuals seem likely to encounter other people, communities, ideas, normativities and difference. While my thesis builds on diverse conceptual frameworks, it is broadly situated within the emerging field of geographies of encounters (Amin 2002; Cook et al. 2011a, 2011b; Fincher and Iveson 2008; Hemming 2011; Koefoed and Simonsen 2011, 2012; Laurier and Philo

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<sup>3</sup> This is evidenced by a few most recent research projects such as *Transforming Migration: Transnational Transfer of Multicultural Habitus* at Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany or *Diffusion of Culture Through Social Remittances between Poland and The United Kingdom* at the University of Warsaw, Poland.

2006; Leitner 2011; Matejskova and Leitner 2011; Valentine 2008; Valentine and Sadgrove 2012; Wiesel et al. 2013; Wilson 2013a, 2013c).

Although the concept of encounter can be traced back to sociological research of the 1960s, it rather owes its recognition to contemporary geographers who from the early 2000s have increasingly utilised it in the debates over the urban coexistence of social diversity, difference and multiculturalism. Earlier contributions to the geographies of encounters literature focused on urban exchanges between strangers. In doing so, they drew on the conceptualisations of the 21<sup>st</sup> century city as a site of connection (Young 1990) and ‘throwntogetherness’ (Massey 2005). These debates are by and large positioned within wider discussions about public space being presumably open to everybody (Mitchell and Staeheli 2009) and pay attention to the importance of the everyday city experience including commuting, shopping, eating out, passing by or mingling with people (e.g. Bell 2007; Binnie et al. 2007; Watson 2009). Having observed mundane interactions between people in a café, Laurier and Philo (2006), for example, noticed a potential for living with difference in certain types of courteous behaviour performed in public spaces. In a similar vein, Wilson (2011) argues that fleeting encounters between bus passengers can possibly have a prevailing effect on people’s perception of otherness. While these studies highlight the significance of conviviality and urban etiquette, they have nonetheless been criticised for implying that “low-level sociality and banal everyday civilities have enduring effects” (Valentine and Sadgrove 2012: 2050). It has, indeed, been acknowledged that much of urban contact between people and groups hardly count as encounter as it tends to be momentary and insignificant (Amin 2002; Valentine 2008). In her reflections on geographies of encounter, Valentine (2008) argues that a significant part of the literature on cosmopolitanism and urban citizenship romanticizes public interactions and is based on an assumption that contact with difference translates into respect or greater openness towards diversity or otherness. In doing so, Valentine and Sadgrove (2012) suggest that geography literature overlooks personal histories, moral dispositions or nature and durability of encounters. The authors conclude that tolerance of others performed in fleeting and civil encounters in public spaces is not the same as profound personal respect for various forms of difference. Contrary to fleeting encounters that necessarily characterise contemporary cities, the so called meaningful encounters (Hemming



2011; Valentine 2008), have been argued to have a capacity to challenge and transform individual values and attitudes. Such encounters are at heart of this thesis.

Rather than broader urban settings, an ideal space for prosaic, yet meaningful interactions with difference seems to be what Amin (2002) has termed ‘micro-publics’, and recognised as workplaces, schools, colleges, youth centres, sports clubs and other places of association. Therefore, beyond the public sphere, geographers have increasingly looked into other sites of encounters including neighbourhoods and small-town locations (Leitner 2011; Matejskova and Leitner 2011; Watson 2009), schools and university campuses (Andersson et al. 2012; Hemming 2011; Wilson 2013c) or means of transport (Schuermans 2011; Wilson 2011). However, some significant spaces of contact with difference such as family, home, workplace or leisure spaces – although addressed in a few publications (see e.g. Cook et al. 2011b; Harris and Valentine 2014; Schuermans 2011, 2013; Valentine et al. 2014, forthcoming; Wilson 2013a) - remain underexplored and require more scholarly attention, in particular with regard to migrants. For example, there is little research into home or intimate encounters that necessarily occur against the backdrop of inter-ethnic and inter-faith relationships. In line with the recent critique (Schuermans et al. 2013), I also argue that the encounter literature often ignores important interrelations between places. People, for example, may continuously move between sites of encounters with difference and/or comfort zones of familiarity. They can avoid certain sites precisely because they hold a promise of an encounter.

Difference in terms of ethnicity, nationality, religion, class, sexuality, gender age and disability has been central to the geographies of encounter. Various studies illustrate that the presence of difference and/or minority groups initiates negotiations of sameness and otherness, inclusion and exclusion (Amin 2002). By looking into how hetero-normative parishioners and clergy of New York Episcopalian churches narrate their encounters with the city’s LGBTQ population, Andersson et al. (2011) investigated tensions between religion and sexuality. In particular, they explored how certain places (e.g. churches) might serve as spaces of both inclusionary and exclusionary practices. In a more recent study, Wiesel et al. (2013) investigate interactions between people with and without intellectual disability in Melbourne, Australia. The authors propose a typology of urban encounters that involve not only banal exchanges between abled and disabled strangers, but also openly exclusionary interactions, service transactions, encounters within distinctive social spaces (e.g. a

disco for people with disabilities) and unfulfilled encounters (when circumstances for an encounter arise, yet no interaction occurs). The study demonstrates that fleeting as well as meaningful encounters with difference may assume various forms and have more or less exclusionary (or inclusionary) character depending on the context and category of difference engaged. This, in turn, suggests that social reading of particular axes of prejudice (i.e. disability) may produce distinctive types of marginalisation.

Importantly, in the geography literature personal encounters are frequently linked with broader processes involving the development or change of values and attitudes towards difference. In a study of contact between Russian immigrants and local German residents in Eastern Berlin, Matejskova and Leitner (2011) notice that public and quasi-public spaces that produce insignificant encounters tend to reinforce pre-existing stereotypes about national or ethnic otherness. On the other hand, spaces of intense collaboration between individuals (such as community centres), generate closer and more meaningful encounters that engender empathy and positive attitudes towards difference. Interestingly, favourable attitudes towards individual immigrants are rarely scaled up to the whole group. This resonates with Valentine's (2008: 332) argument that "in the context of negative encounters minority individuals are perceived to represent members of a wider social group, but in positive encounters minority individuals tend to be read only as individuals". In other words, negative encounters are more likely to change people's opinions about a whole minority group for the worse, than positive encounters for the better.

As diverse and critically focused as it is, this literature is not free from gaps and inconsistencies. Firstly, there is little reflection onto how discrepancies between values/attitudes and practices are studied and understood (Valentine 2008). In other words, the geography of encounter needs more methodological and empirical insights into tensions between what people believe/say (or how they 're-live' encounters in their narratives) and what they actually do. Although a few authors (e.g. Ahmed 2000; Valentine and Sadgrove 2012) propose a processual approach to the study of encounters and argue that they stretch beyond the present into the past and the future, further research is needed to understand what people bring to encounters of their past. Little attention is also paid into imagined encounters (that might precede the actual moment of interaction) or expectations that may possibly frame future encounters. In addition, I believe, scholars seem not only to

underappreciate the pre-encounter, but also the post-encounter, i.e. the consequences of encounters. This results in a discussion, which is only emerging<sup>4</sup>, about how transformative encounters can be and how positive, negative or neutral attitudes are developed, challenged or reinforced through various forms of encounters. Next, even though encounters with difference are central to the encounter literature, there is relatively little explicit discussion of how encounters with ‘the unfamiliar’ or ‘the strange’ re-define the perception of what has been ‘familiar’ so far. This thesis addresses all these issues and, in doing so, extends the contemporary understanding of encounter.

### **2.11 Migrant encounters<sup>5</sup>**

As I have demonstrated, the notion of encounter has initiated many academic debates on multiculturalism, social diversity and living with difference. While indisputably helpful for the study of international mobility, these debates tend to, oddly enough, overlook migrant populations and what they bring to encounters. In this thesis, I look into these issues and argue that migrant encounters significantly contribute to the broad body of encounter literature.

Given the unprecedented international mobility in Europe, migrant encounters with embodied difference as well as distinctive normativities have not yet been given adequate attention. Whilst geography and the social sciences have been increasingly preoccupied with the everyday-ness of migrant life, much of this literature seems to overestimate the effects of banal and/or fleeting encounters and rarely includes broader discussion on the consequences of meaningful contact. Nowicka (2012), for example, looks into Polish migrants’ transcultural encounters with diversity and Britishness. By exploring the examples of culture-crossings, hybrid language practices or code-switching, she argues that some migrants develop a new self-consciousness with multiple cultural competences. Although this study brings many interesting insights into the transnational practices of Polish migrants, it nonetheless does not discuss the significance of the newly developed cultural competences with regard to core values, beliefs or attitudes towards difference.

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<sup>4</sup> This is evidenced by broader outcomes of the LIVEDIFFERENCE programme this thesis is part of.

<sup>5</sup> I acknowledge that there is substantial literature on refugees and asylum seekers negotiating difference in the context of forced migration (e.g. Colic-Peisker and Walker 2003; Phillimore 2011; Sporton et al. 2006). However, I do not include these discussions here as I am primarily interested in ‘voluntary’ mobility. Also, these debates have been held beyond the field of geographies of encounter.

The migration literature does, nevertheless, confirm some findings of the field of encounters. In a study of neighbourhood and workplace encounters of migrants from Central and Eastern Europe to the UK, Cook et al. (2011b) note that for many newcomers to Britain everyday proximity with difference does not open up spaces for engagement and break down prejudice or barriers of integration. Largely superficial, as the authors claim, “*rubbing-along-together* does not necessarily equate to good relations” (Cook et al. 2011b: 737) between the migrants and host communities which only ‘tolerate’ each other. Elsewhere Cook et al. (2011a) mention, however, that although for some migrants contact with social diversity contributes to the development or reinforcement of prejudice, for others the experience of multiculturalism is not only positive, but also personally enriching. In doing so, the authors draw attention to the fact that migrants (and Central and Eastern European migrants in particular), as well as their experiences in receiving societies, cannot be conceptualised as homogeneous categories.

In the context of East-West migration, the interplay between encounters and, especially, unfavourable and hostile attitudes towards ethnic, national or religious difference appears to gain growing attention (Fox 2013; McDowell 2008, 2009; McDowell et al. 2007, 2009; Moroşanu and Fox 2013). It is important to acknowledge here, however, that these debates draw upon labour migration and, in contrast to non-migrant geographies of encounter, tend to investigate work-related interactions rather than wider relationships with difference. Labour migrants who, for various reasons (e.g. poor language skills), work below their actual qualifications have been reported to feel disadvantaged, devalued and deskilled in the UK (Currie 2008). These sentiments - alongside the precarious positionality of many economic migrants - have been claimed to contribute to the development of less tolerant or even racist attitudes towards difference (Cook et al. 2011a; McDowell 2009; McDowell et al. 2007). While the arguably insecure and/or underprivileged position of some labour migrants might fuel negative perceptions of difference, it is crucial not to overlook the influence of other circumstances on the development of unfavourable attitudes towards the ethnic, national or religious Other. It has, indeed, been suggested that such attitudes may be affected by the conceptualization of whiteness and white privilege (Fox 2013; McDowell 2009). Earlier in this chapter I have argued that the production of whiteness in the postdependence context is far from obvious. In Poland, for example, the postdependence encourages obscure

understandings of what it means to ‘be white’ and how that relates to ‘non-whiteness’. These presumptions need to be written into any study of migrant encounters with difference.

In sum, in this thesis I argue that although some studies provide partial explanations for migrant perception of difference, there remains little understanding into why such perceptions are mobilised. Also, more attention needs to be paid into how, when and in what circumstances encounters with diversity affect non-labour migrants’ values and attitudes. Polish migrants in the UK are, for example, a highly diverse cohort in terms of views, beliefs and approaches towards their own migration (Garapich 2007). This suggests that through encounters with diversity they may possibly develop a wide range of attitudes towards difference rather than similar sets of stances. Finally, there is still little recognition of how values and attitudes towards difference are supposedly encouraged and mediated through other spaces and relationships with non-migrant significant others. Throughout this thesis, I therefore focus on addressing these neglected issues and offer an original contribution to encounter literature and broader knowledge.

## **2.12 Conclusions**

In this chapter, I have outlined various literatures my thesis brings together in order to explore how Polish migrants to the UK develop the capacity to live with difference in terms of ethnicity, religion, class, gender, sexuality, age and disability. Firstly, I have demonstrated that understandings of difference and sameness are place- and culture-bound. They are strongly situated within particular national and geo-historical settings that produce distinctive normativities. With regard to Poland, this involves the postdependence context which encourages certain conceptualisations of ‘us’ and ‘them’, ‘here’ and ‘there’, the similar and other. It, for example, mobilises how people may perceive White and non-White bodies. I have evidenced that, while much of the Western academia is preoccupied with exploring difference through the prism of postcolonialism, the concept of postdependence offers an alternative research perspective. It seems largely useful for the studies of Poland as it assumes a complex positionality of this country in Europe and recognises its unique history embracing the periods of both dependence and independence. I have also suggested that while broadly applied in Western Europe,

North America and Australia to better understand values and attitudes towards difference, whiteness studies are neglected with regard to other locations including Central and Eastern Europe and Poland. The socio-historical context of this area, as I stress throughout the thesis (see also Chapter 4), produces complex perceptions of skin colour and ethnicity. The valuable insights from the field of whiteness studies aid a greater understanding of why and how such perceptions are developed among Polish people and Polish migrants in particular.

Secondly, I have illustrated that human values, attitudes and prejudices are central to the studies of difference. As moralities and normativities change across places and communities, this raises a few significant questions regarding whether and, if so, how values and attitudes get interrupted and revised through international mobility, and how they travel. Given the amount of research on values, attitudes and prejudice from across disciplines, it is surprising that their mobility has been so underappreciated.

Next, throughout a close reading of mobility, migration, transnationalism, family and circulation of ideas literatures, I have evidenced that international mobility may be a disruptive moment for many people and their significant others. I have shown that in the context of migration people are likely to negotiate various aspects of their lives including core values and attitudes they hold. Importantly, I have also drawn attention to the fact that many migrants remain in close relations with their family members and/or friends in the sending country. In this context, it is very likely that they discuss their encounters with difference and communicate favourable and unfavourable attitudes including prejudice. How this affects their significant others in sending countries (and their capacity to live with difference) is one of key interests of this thesis. Also, against the backdrop of unprecedented East-West mobility in Europe, it poses a challenge for European policy makers.

Finally, in the chapter I have stressed that the thesis is situated within geographies of encounter and suggested that encounter literature provides useful lens for exploring and understanding migrant encounters with difference – so far undertheorised and underresearch. I have emphasized that migrants may, and often do, bring to encounters the normativities and distinctive imaginaries regarding difference *taken for granted* in their respective home countries. For this reason, migrant encounters are a particularly sensitive and complex field to study. In this thesis, I attempt to address this sensitivity and complicatedness by conceptualising

encounters as processes that stretch to include the past and the future. Therefore, I firstly look into how difference and sameness are produced in the Polish context (see Chapter 4) and what attitudes towards difference people develop (see Chapter 5). Only then I investigate migrant encounters in the UK and the consequences of these encounters for migrants themselves as well as their significant others in Poland (see Chapter 6, 7 and 8).

Before I discuss the research findings, however, I elaborate on how migrant values and attitudes towards difference can be qualitatively studied. In the next chapter, I outline the methodologies I employed to investigate mobility experience and the circulation of ideas between Polish people in the UK and their significant others in Poland.





## Chapter 3: Methodologies

### 3.1 Introduction

While migration experience has been broadly addressed in disciplinary literatures, the role of family and friendship ties in shaping migrant values and attitudes towards difference is still lacking adequate attention. One of the aims of my study is to address this issue and include the voice of relatives and friends of those who have migrated abroad. In doing so, in this thesis I adopt a multi-participant and multi-method case study approach. I recognize two types of research participants (migrants and their significant others tied by kinship or friendship relations) to investigate a complex circulation of ideas between those who leave a country of origin and those who stay in a sending society. The methods include in-depth interviews (some of which involve time-lines and relative mapping), audio-diaries and a secondary analysis of a supplementary survey in order to gain an understanding of a nuanced mobility/migration experience (Burrell 2011d; Iosifides and Sporton 2009) and a contextualized nature of encounters with difference.

The combination of these methods enabled me to explore verbal accounts of lived experience, organize factual information, reconstruct a chronology of significant moments in migrants' lives and identify an individual's unique position in a broader net of human relations. Furthermore, notes and memos accumulated during the fieldwork in the UK and Poland made it possible to capture the spirit of place (*genius loci*) which influenced the values and attitudes of the migrants prior moving to the UK. The various stages of the study interlinked and impacted on later stages. For example, the fieldwork in Poland depended entirely on the outcomes of the fieldwork in Leeds, UK. The migrants in the study (n=14) indicated and then actively took part in the recruitment of further research participants (n=19). Also, the themes which were only mentioned or implied by the migrants in the first interview, a survey or audio-diaries were then explored in detail during further meetings as well as interviews with significant others. Only by employing such complex methodologies was it possible to analyse how mobility influences people's values and attitudes towards difference and how these ideas circulate between home and host societies.

It has been argued that positionality must always be written into the research process (McDowell 1992). My position of a Polish migrant researcher was unique in this respect and, indeed, complicated. Not only was I assumed to share an experience of migration with my research participants or identification with various aspects of home society (Kim 2012), but also a relationship with the native language. Collecting data entirely in Polish, I was frequently facing moments of profoundly different understandings of language (and language of difference in particular). Moreover, since I was to disseminate my research in English, the implications of collecting data in one language and presenting the findings in another (Müller 2007; Smith 1996) became my true concern. As they remain underresearched in geography and social science literatures, both these issues - the obscure positionality of a migrant researcher and translation challenges - are given close attention in this chapter.

I start the chapter by briefly explaining why I decided to choose case studies as a research strategy. This is followed by elaborating on the data collection process, the appropriateness of each method and the challenges I encountered in working with migrants and their significant others. Then, I discuss in-depth my ambiguous position as a migrant researcher. Next, I closely examine the consequences of translation of research between two languages. Consideration of data analysis and, lastly, ethics complete the chapter.

### **3.2 Case study as research strategy**

In the thesis, I adopt a multi-participant and multi-method case study approach. The research is based on **14 in-depth case studies** - 11 involving a key participant in Leeds and from one up to three of his or her significant others in Poland, and three focusing on a Polish migrant in Leeds only. Case studies are particularly useful when exploring broadly understood notions of life, society or community and, simultaneously, the very context within which they are investigated (Berg 2007). Using case studies made it possible to explore and analyze the multifaceted consequences of mobility for understanding of difference experienced through both direct or mediated encounters. The method allowed me to study these issues in the changing context of mobility as well as differing contexts of Polish and British societies. Yin (2003) argues that boundaries between the case being studied and the

context within which it is scrutinized become blurred and therefore case study strategy becomes a suitable tool for examining the processes being enacted between both. Thus, by employing this method I was also able to examine the significance of a place and emplacement on people's values and attitudes.

In the broad body of the geography and social science literatures the case study is used to uncover or generate theory (Berg 2007; Eisenhardt 1989). Its scientific benefit, as Berg argues (2007: 294), "lies in its ability to open the way for discoveries" and to deeply understand the social world. Adopting this approach enabled me to collect, investigate and present illustrative examples of living with, next to, beyond or without difference which might be compared and contrasted. The cases embrace complexities and contradictions on an individual and family level which, yet, can reflect on broader processes occurring within various groups, communities and societies.

### **3.3 Stages of the research process**

My study involved the recruitment of Polish post-2004 migrants (n=14) residing in Leeds. I call them *key* or *migrant participants* throughout this thesis and conceptualize as the core persons within each case. During the course of the research they were asked to indicate two of their adult *significant others* in Poland (e.g. partners, family members, relatives or friends) who would possibly agree to participate in the research. I understand the term significant other after George Herbert Mead (1934) as any person who has a great importance to and impact on an individual's life, self-evaluation, emotional well-being and his or her reception of values, attitudes and social norms. In short, significant others are these people with whom an individual has a 'significant' and close relationship. Migrant understanding of who significant other may be is also of huge importance here and was written into my research process. During my fieldwork I found out, for instance, that some of my migrant participants considered significant others the people they met, migrated or lived with in Leeds rather than their family and/or friends in Poland. Some other informants had few significant others beyond the UK due to death of the latter, little contact maintained or their migration elsewhere. Therefore, eventually, my significant other sample was smaller than planned and involved 19 people.

The research process started with a pilot study I conducted on-campus (University of Leeds) late spring 2011. Having informally interviewed four Polish students, I selected one who enabled me to verify and improve the methods I was planning to use during the main fieldwork. For example, originally I planned to make two breaks during the life-history interview<sup>6</sup> when an interviewee would be asked to perform relational-mapping and a time-line. After the analysis of the narrative data I collected through piloting, I realized that this might disrupt the interview flow and decided to start each life-history interview with a time-line and finish with relational mapping. The piloting made me also aware of the challenges I was to expect and prepared to handle them. The pilot informant, for instance, failed to use the equipment for audio-diaries I provided her with. She prepared audio-diaries eventually, but utilized her private device to do so.

In recruiting migrant informants for the main fieldwork, I was seeking people of various backgrounds and I tried to diversify the sample in terms of age, gender, sexual orientation, family/marital status, social status (class, education, occupation), religion/belief and length of stay in the UK (post-2004 migrants). Given the small size of the sample (14 in total), I prioritized age, length of stay the UK and gender. Nevertheless, in order to embrace the complexity of people's mobility histories, outlooks and personal views, I was striving to choose the cases I found particularly intriguing in terms of religious views, social status/class, education, family situation and, last but not least, life story. Such an approach allowed me to gather a group of people whose narratives disclosed a broad spectrum of social positionings pre- and post-migration, personal motivations to be mobile, lived experiences of difference and intricacies of relations with significant others in a sending country (for the whole research sample see Appendix 1: Research Sample at the end of this thesis).

The migrant sample is dominated by people in their 20s and early 30s, because it reflects the character of the recent migration from Poland to the UK. The University of Warsaw Centre of Migration Research data stress that the post-2004 migration has involved predominantly young people (Grabowska-Lusińska and Okólski 2008), very often – over 70% of the total migration (Fihel and Kaczmarczyk 2009) - between 20 and 29 years old. This is confirmed by the UK 2011 Census data which states that of the Polish-born residents in the UK late 2010 the vast majority (86%)

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<sup>6</sup> All interviews are described later in this chapter – see: Interviewing migrants and significant others.

were aged 16-64 and almost 85% of these migrants were in employment (ONS 2011b).

To reach key participants, I approached gatekeepers – individuals who are in a position to grant access to a particular community (Reeves 2010; Wanat 2008). In the case of my research, gatekeepers included the owners/employees of Polish shops, employees of companies advertised as Polish and established to serve Poles in the UK, the representatives of the local church or the Polish Catholic Centre and the Polish Society based at the University of Leeds. Such persons often “hold pivotal positions in the hierarchy of the group or organization one seeks to study” (Berg 2007: 185) or might be popular due to the profession and connections they have within the wider community. I also employed *snowballing* and *networking* to extend the pool of informants (Polkinghorne 2005) as well as advertised my study in the Polish media accessible for migrants. Furthermore, as my project is a part of a bigger research programme LIVEDIFFERENCE, I had access to the database of informants who were willing to be interviewed within the related study. As a part of LIVEDIFFERENCE research, a survey was carried out in Leeds in spring 2011 among approximately 1500 residents. Exactly 939 of them gave a written consent to be interviewed in-depth. This group included seven Polish people resident in Leeds. I contacted these persons and two of them agreed to take part in my study.

Even though the recruitment of migrants was relatively easy in terms of engaging a necessary number of participants, I found it quite hard to secure male informants. This was most probably related to the nature of my project (multiple meetings, contacting relatives and friends in Poland) as well as – less likely though - my positionality as a young female researcher. Scholars (Einhorn 1993; Owczarzak 2009; Verdery 1996) argue that in socialist states, such as pre-1989 Poland, women occupied an ambiguous position, because in contrast to the official communist doctrine of gender equality, they were very often excluded from political participation or higher managerial positions and their liberation failed to materialize in the domestic and/or private sphere. This, I believe, contributed to a prevailing (and still existent during the 1990s) conviction that female politicians, managers or academics lacked enough credibility or legitimate skills and were much more vulnerable to being ridiculed than men. It could be one of the reasons why especially middle-aged men might have been discouraged to take part in my study. Having contacted 35-40 Polish migrants (men and women) in Leeds during a five-month

period (late 2011 – early 2012), my sample consisted of 13 informants - nine women and only four men. I realized that if any of the male informants decided to withdraw from the research, there would be a significant gender imbalance within the sample. Thus, in February and March 2012 I re-initiated recruitment and contacted five men via the networks I had already established. One person agreed to participate in the research. The final migrant sample involved nine women and five men.

The recruitment of significant others was entirely dependent on successful cooperation with key participants (migrants in Leeds). During the first interview the key participants were asked to speak about their relatives and friends in Poland (relational mapping), and then to indicate their most significant others. After the interview they were asked if one or two of the relatives and/or friends they mentioned could possibly be interviewed as part of the study. They were, nonetheless, given a proper time to think of their significant others' participation. Repetitive meetings in various settings allowed me to develop relatively strong professional relationships with the Polish migrants in my sample, many of whom supported my project and eagerly encouraged their significant others to take part in it. Over the period of few months, the majority of significant others in Poland were informed about the research by the key participants and asked if they would be willing to take part in the project (19 persons in total were then interviewed: 13 women and 6 men of various ages and in diverse relations to migrants). Nevertheless, a gender imbalance in the sample was again an issue. I noticed that some of my female migrants recruited their female significant others only. Interestingly, I had an impression that a few women in the migrant sample quite consciously prevented me from interviewing their fathers by often saying that they *dislike such things*. Thus, it was very difficult for me to get initial access to the fathers of my female key participants while, at the same time, there was usually no problem with recruiting mothers. Curiously, when already in Poland and while visiting the home places of my female informants, I was often introduced to both parents and immediately a remark was made by a father that he, indeed, was *not into such stuff*. Yet, after a while - having seen me interviewing or having heard bits of the interview - a father would willingly join in a discussion and – in a single case - even interrupt my interview with his wife to present his own opinions. It seems that either my female migrants intentionally excluded their fathers from possibly taking part in the study (based on an assumption they would not appreciate it) or the fathers themselves

automatically rejected the idea of being interviewed. This gendered recruitment could – again – be explained by gendered power relations in socialist and early post-socialist Poland (Einhorn 1993; Owczarzak 2009; Verdery 1996). Indeed, the issue was a problem only with reference to some of the middle-aged and older men.

During the course of the study, I also found out that winning the informants' trust was crucial for successful cooperation and obtaining certain (e.g. sensitive) data (Corbin and Morse 2003). A telling example would be one of my informants whom I had been recruiting for almost five months before she formally agreed to take part in the study. As an introvert, she needed time and opportunities to get to know me first. Such a prolonged recruitment was not the case with other participants. Nevertheless, when possible, I strove to meet with my informants informally first, in a social setting (e.g. over coffee and cake), in order to introduce myself, familiarize them with the project, supply with the research leaflet (either in Polish or English, see Appendix 2: Research leaflet in English), talk about participation and ethical issues. This trust-building approach resulted in them being definitely more relaxed and more open with me during the first interview than the informants I was interviewing during the first face-to-face meeting. Most importantly, the informants I spent more time with were much more willing to cooperate (e.g. engage their significant others) in the longer run.

One of the most challenging aspects of data collection was recruitment of significant others as well as organization of the Polish fieldwork. Having extensively negotiated significant other's availability with the Leeds informants, I planned two trips to different regions of Poland. Before and throughout both fieldtrips I continuously stayed in touch with the significant others I was meant to interview. They were sent an official letter to confirm their participation in the study, contacted by telephone to arrange details of each meeting and reminded about an interview through text messages. Personal recommendation from the migrants together with a rigorous approach and repetitive contact with informants resulted in all the scheduled interviews being conducted.

The research stay in Poland was a challenge also due to its logistics. In a relatively short time I was supposed to reach very distant places across the whole country: travel, commute, yet above all be inevitably and continuously *on the move* (Adey 2010). It required dependence on mobile technologies and means of transport, extensive planning and arrangements with the informants who, in some cases,

offered me to stay overnight in their homes or volunteered to travel themselves and meet me half way. In this respect the methodologies of this study reflect the very nature of *mobilities* (Urry 2007). During my first field trip I managed to reach the participants who resided in Central and Northern Poland. The second trip was a true pilgrimage through Western, Southern and South-Eastern parts of Poland and involved constant moving between and accommodating in numerous places. As such, it was much longer even though a similar number of informants were eventually interviewed.

Both trips were an invaluable research experience in terms of exploring the spirit (*genius loci*) of a place. Having initially analyzed the data collected from migrants I was aware that, in many cases, these places had a significant influence on my Leeds informants, their values and attitudes as well as motivations to migrate. Being in person in these sites allowed me to reconstruct or confront the feelings or impressions some migrants narrated in the interviews. That was, on many occasions, not only interesting in terms of my research, but also quite emotional for myself. Thus, the field/interview notes became valuable data in my study. The extract below presents one such a note in which I describe my first impressions of a home town of one my informants called Iga (migrant, female, aged 25).

X. is a small town and when I step out of the mini-bus at the market square I have an impression that I understand what Iga had in mind when she said everybody could identify/knew everybody else in her home town. The place is tiny and is visibly non-affluent. Every street that goes from the market square reveals quite poor housing. The buildings are all detached houses – one just next to the other - so it seems that neighbours must know one another very well as everything is easy to notice and hear. There must be little privacy in such a neighbourhood. As I get a little lost when I look for the street where Iga's parents live, I have a chance to see that all the neighbouring streets are the same and seem very neglected (at least from the outsider's perspective). And all the time I have these thoughts in my mind: "This is such a small and poor area. Seems really depressing and life-less. Only one place to go out (a traditional Polish *karczma*-restaurant at the market square). I can easily understand that Iga with her rich social activities didn't have a life here. I can understand now what she meant when she spoke of the old ladies who gave her a bad look when she came back in the morning after a night party. I can see what she meant and I can understand that people must be discussing one another's lives here. (...) Now, I feel I can understand that



Iga really wanted to leave such a town, that she didn't see her future here. Field note no. 2/5: 14/07/2012

In her life-history interview Iga conceptualized this town as a deserted place, hardly likable with many young people leaving it in order to live in bigger cities or even abroad. In Iga's words her home town is a place where "very closed people live" who "would know more about you than yourself". She also said: "when I was leaving the bus [in the morning - after a night out] and the old ladies were going to church for a morning mass (...) they always stared at me with contempt". Interestingly, my short stay in this town evoked very similar emotions and feelings to those she described during the interview. As such, it generated a sense of understanding and made me empathise with Iga.

### **3.4 Interviewing migrants and significant others**

In focusing upon lived experiences of mobility and difference, this research employed in-depth interviews as the main data collection technique. Grounded in the case study approach, my project required a method which would effectively combine and link with other methods (Gaskell 2000) – audio-diaries, survey, time-lines and relational mapping. Above all the interview was utilized as it "gives a privileged access to people's basic experience of the lived world" (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009: 29). The types of interviews I used included a *life-history interview* and a *follow-up interview* with the migrant participants as well as semi-structured interview with the significant others. Both life-history and follow-up interviews were, in fact, a combination of unstructured and semi-structured interview and thus allowed my interviewees to produce in-depth and yet thematized accounts (Berg 2007).

The life-history interview - targeted specifically at increased understanding and lifeline between the present and the past (Berg 2007) - explored each participant's life in Poland pre-migration, the migration itself, the first impressions of British society and aspects of the life in the UK post-migration. Moreover, since an emphasis was put on family background, social environment, education, working experience in Poland, experiences and memories of difference and motivations to move to the UK, it investigated the sources of personal values and attitudes as well as migratory context. As such, it addressed what Burrell (2011d: 11) understands as "invisible, unspectacular" yet most crucial aspects of migrant lives.

The importance of exploring individual histories and often obscure human relations in detail made it necessary to employ creative elicitation techniques such as *time-line* and *relational mapping* (Bagnoli 2009; Kinchin et al. 2010; Mason and Davies 2009; Prosser 2008; Prosser and Loxley 2008; Wheeldon and Faubert 2009). I utilized a time-line (for an example see Figure 1), which commenced each life-history interview with the migrants, as a *warming up* task to elicit biographical information (Bagnoli 2009) and identify fateful moments (Giddens 1991b) in each informant's life. Given that fateful moments are these moments when the course of events changes dramatically and affect individuals' life irreversibly (ibid.), time-lines reflected possible turning points referring to lifestyle, attitudes or values. The task performed either by an interviewee or myself allowed me to find out whether migration was such a moment for a participant and what kind of other fateful moments it was preceded and followed by. Interestingly, on many occasions time-lines immediately revealed complexities and various patterns of mobility.

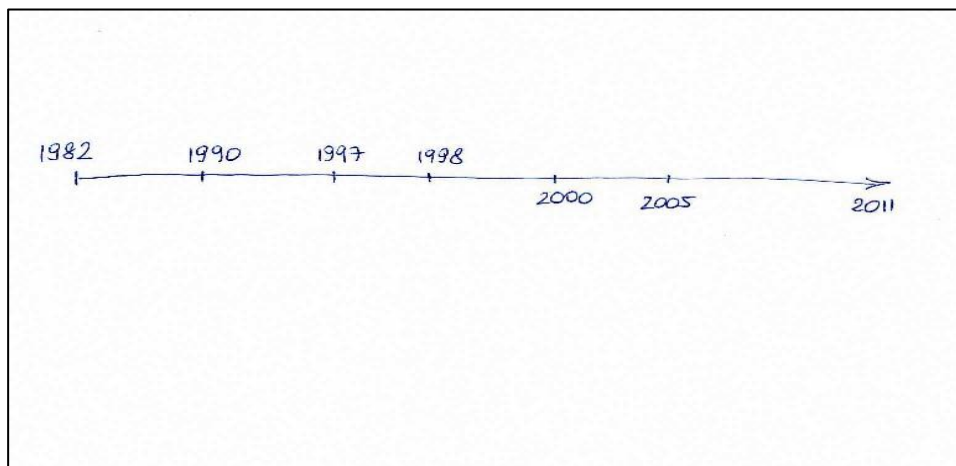


Figure 1: Timeline by Lena (migrant, female, aged 29). Moving to the UK (2005) remains a fateful moment for the informant and is mentioned among other significant events such as divorce of parents (1998), transition to adulthood (2000) and marriage (2011).

However, in some cases, there was an unsatisfactory response to the task. A few interviewees preferred to provide me with a general and selective life-history narrative rather than a full time-line. This resulted in some vital data (e.g. previous marriage and subsequent divorce) left unsaid and only slightly referred to during the interview. I believe this can be a trust issue on one hand and culture specific behaviour on the other. Although I employed a trust-building approach, a few informants insisted on limiting the number of meetings due to their time

commitments. Therefore I had to interview them during our first face-to-face meeting while still being, in fact, a stranger to them. Traumatic contemporary history (e.g. the presence of the secret police in communist Poland) influenced many Poles' capacity to open up during initial contact with strangers (Czapliński and Panek 2011; Marciniak 2009). Such an attitude tends to be passed on from older to younger generations. This may explain the initial reluctance to discuss personal details. In order to obtain lacking information, I decided to start follow-up interviews with specific questions referring to the gaps in the time-lines or even do the exercise again. This proved very effective as informants seemed much more willing to discuss such issues during the second interview.

Another prompt I used as a part of the life-history interview – relational mapping (for an example see Figure 2) - is a visual data collection method during which “participants are asked to construct a map of their relationships (...) placing people in order of importance” (Bagnoli 2009: 555). Such drawings indicate the individuals with whom the interviewee may have most meaningful relationships. This task served as a tool to identify the significant others who would be most suitable to take part in the research. In most cases, with the participant's consent, one or two of them (excluding minors) were then chosen to participate in the study.

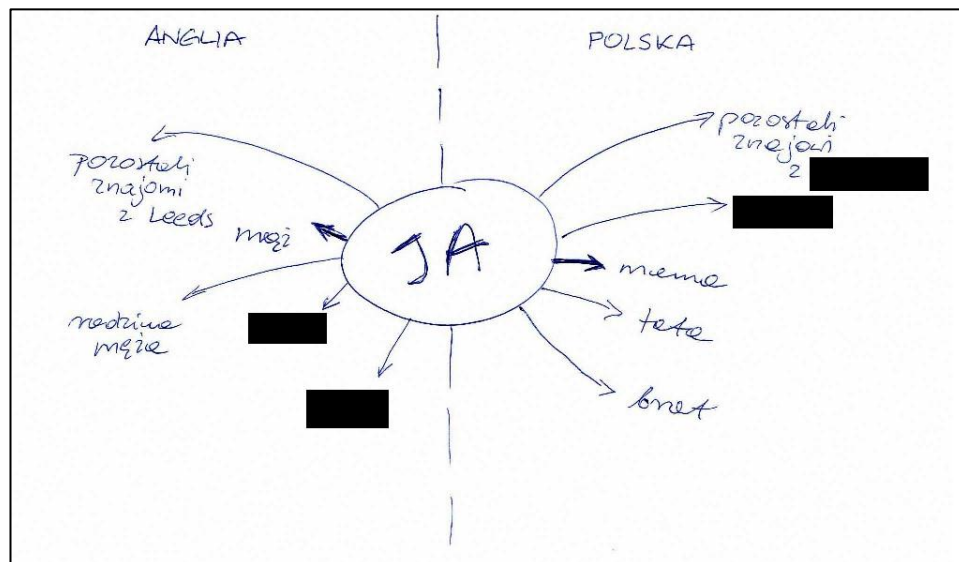


Figure 2: Relational map by Lena (migrant, female, aged 29). Black rectangular bars were added for anonymisation purposes. Bolded arrows indicate the closest relationship (with Lena's husband and her mother). The capitalised word "JA" means "I" in Polish. "Anglia" and "Polska" stand for "England" and "Poland" respectively. Other Polish words designate a type of kinship/friendship relations.

Having transcribed the life-history interviews, audio-diaries and having collected the survey, I initially analysed the data in order to prepare individualized questions for follow-up interviews. Each follow-up interview was carefully designed in order to address the themes missing in a life-history interview and cover the themes related to the lived experience of the UK diversity. More specifically, this interview allowed me to explore: encounters with difference in the UK; changes in individual attitudes towards difference; experience of discrimination; the role of significant others in shaping and re-shaping values and attitudes towards difference; and negotiation of values with significant others. As some of my informants developed long and nuanced narratives of mobility or their lives in the UK, if possible, I broke follow-up interviews into two (or more) meetings.

In the next step, in order to investigate the two-sided process of circulation of ideas, I interviewed the significant others recognized during the first interview with each key participant. Significant others were asked about: their own ideas of Britain prior to the key participant's migration; the key participant's values and attitudes pre-migration; feelings and emotions related to his or her move to the UK; and the influence migration had on him or her. Then, they were encouraged to discuss their personal values and attitudes towards difference and the role of key participant in shaping them post-migration. Although these interviews were mostly semi-standardized, their design allowed to tackle the issues which arose during the interviews with the key participants and further explore relationships, mutual influences and tensions between the migrants and their relatives and/or friends in Poland. Naturally, some of the themes varied to a minor degree depending on the type of person being questioned (parent, sibling, other relative, friend). The interviews with the immediate family members were often more family- and home-related while the interviews with friends explored social relationships to a greater extent.

In order to empower interviewees and make sure they feel comfortable, all the interviews were conducted in a place of an informant's choosing. In case of key participants that involved several types of places: university campus (either a pre-booked room or a café), spots in a broadly understood social setting (a café or a pub) and informants' homes. Similarly, significant others were interviewed either at their homes or in cafés. The only difference was I was meeting them in various locations in Poland.

A few significant others whom I visited at their homes strongly wished to be interviewed together with their spouses. Although reluctant, I felt I was not empowered to object. In case of two such couples, there was one leading interviewee and the other only jumped in several times. In case of the third couple, both interviewees were equally engaged and extensively negotiated their views often challenging each other's responses which profoundly enriched the case being investigated.

As one of the significant others was not available during any of my trips to Poland, she offered to be interviewed via Skype (Deakin and Wakefield 2013). She stressed she worked from home a lot and was very familiar with using this technology. Prior to the interview I made sure she had a good Internet connection and a proven video camera in order to avoid possible technical problems such as poor vision or audio. For the interview itself, I arranged the table in my apartment, so as my interviewee would not see much apart from myself and the wall behind me (and, thus her attention would not be diverted). I decided not to use any online recording software (only the traditional voice recorder placed near my computer speakers), which, I believe, empowered her as an online informant and let her feel equal to the other interviewees in my study. I made the interviewee aware of that by simply showing her the voice recorder and indicating the moment I put it on. The consent form stating her willingness to take part in the research was e-mailed to the interviewee during the interview and re-sent to me later when she signed and scanned it. Although I had some initial worries about the possible limitations of interviewing online, i.e. implications of technology changing human interrelations (Bertrand and Bourdeau 2010; Deakin and Wakefield 2013), I was surprised to find that the interview resembled a traditional person-to-person interview to a great extent.

### **3.5 Interview linking survey**

Even though the study was meant to be purely qualitative, I utilised a slightly adjusted Polish version of the LIVEDIFFERENCE survey to make sure I did not miss any relevant data and identify possible themes for a follow-up interview with the migrants. The survey was not intended to be used as a tool for any quantitative analyses or summaries. It provided me with information about the simple demographics and profile of the neighbourhoods the Leeds informants lived in.

Interestingly, it also allowed me to *have a look* at my migrant informants from a different perspective and investigate how they evaluated their own attitudes towards various social groups. As such, it also revealed some attitudes which could be easily omitted in a regular interview. Filip, for example, one of my male informants in his late 20s – describing himself as very tolerant and non-prejudiced – stated in the survey that even though his feelings towards almost all social groups were the same (that is ‘neutral’), they were nonetheless slightly warmer towards White people. This response aroused my interest and was discussed in-depth during a follow-up interview. The narrative revealed the intricacies of an attitude towards White people which would probably be never expressed in such detail if it was not for the survey.

Particularly useful was also an exercise in which respondents were supposed to say to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a given statement such as: “I would be comfortable if my child’s teacher was Asian” or “Minority groups have too many rights nowadays”. These statements prompted interesting responses while the survey was conducted, some of which were investigated either immediately or later - during a follow-up interview. Thus, the survey was also employed as a specific elicitation method. Piotr, one of my male informants in his early 40s, for example, laughed when I read the statement “I would be uncomfortable if my GP or doctor was lesbian or gay” and exclaimed that he would not mind to be examined by a lesbian, but he could not stand “to be touched by a gay man”. This was followed by a longer semi-humorous (yet, sexist and homophobic) narrative about how pleasant it may be to watch a lesbian sexual act for a man. This behaviour and comments revealed the informant’s gendered homophobia which was then explored during the follow-up interview.

### **3.6 Confronting audio-diaries**

Diaries are believed to be a unique source of tacit knowledge inaccessible in any other way, such as taken-for-granted activities, interactions, perceptions as well as interpretations of various situations (Alaszewski 2006; Plummer 2001). They empower research participants by allowing them to control the data included and, in doing so, to provide a variety of contextualized details which might be addressed and developed during the interviews. Since keeping a traditional diary might evoke too formalized and structured responses, is time-consuming and, thus, discouraging for

the potential research participants, I employed an audio-diary (Monrouxe 2009; Worth 2009). The task was primarily designed to allow the migrant participants to produce unconstrained narratives of their day-to-day encounters with difference. In order to do so, each key participant was supplied with a simple Dictaphone and an instruction leaflet either in English or Polish (see Appendix 3: Audio-diary Leaflet in English), and asked to record his or her impressions, feelings and emotions over a period of one 'typical' week - a time which they would expect to be representative of their life in Leeds as well as professional and social interactions.

Surprisingly, a half of the participants returned the Dictaphones empty. As this method was supplementary to interviews and a survey, the lack of audio-diaries was not critical for case studies. The participants who did not prepare audio-diaries were asked more questions about their everyday encounters with difference during a follow-up interview. Nevertheless, the issue of low completion rate remains crucial and requires attention here. My study suggests that, even though the method is praised by many researchers as creative, innovative and generating streams of consciousness, emotional and 'messy' narratives (Monrouxe 2009; Worth 2009), it can be problematic. The informants who did not prepare any audio-diaries in my study either claimed to be paralyzed by the idea of self-recording or admitted that - despite the fact they were given a written instruction (e.g. specific questions to address) - they had no idea what to record or they had no thoughts related to encounters with difference. This feedback suggests that the act of self-recording may be quite stressful for some individuals and cause mind blockages. Migrant participants also admitted to be irritated or embarrassed by the sound of their voice and by the fact that while listening to their recordings they hear only the pauses or *umm*'s. Few informants - mainly 'older' migrants in the sample, but also employed full-time - openly said they forgot about the task as they were too busy with their commitments. Other people stressed they failed to use the equipment properly. This may suggest the method is more suitable for relatively younger participants and/or people familiar with mobile technologies who particularly enjoy reflecting on their experiences in various forms (such as MMS, text messages, photos, blog, facebook, twitter, etc.). There are also other 'risks' related to employing audio-diaries. Notably, they may be 'kept' long by research participants or get lost as well as turn out costly for the researcher i.e. buying devices, batteries, delivery and picking-up trips or

postage (Worth 2009). As such, audio-diaries may be at times ineffective and therefore require careful consideration before being applied.

### **3.7 The obscure position of migrant researcher**

While studying migrants and their significant others in a sending country as a migrant researcher, I found it crucial to consider my position in relation to the research participants as well as any possible influence of this position on outcomes of the study. In particular, I needed to be reflexive of how my nationality, first language and migrant status structured my contacts with the research participants and contributed to negotiating sameness and difference in the research process (e.g. Kobayashi 2003; McDowell 1992; Rose 1997; Stanley and Wise 1983; Valentine 2002).

International migration has encouraged large numbers of academics to conduct research projects abroad and various legal solutions have for years tempted researchers from all over the world to work within particularly the Anglo-American zone. However, there is still little academic discussion about the challenges related to the positionality of migrant researchers studying their compatriot migrant communities (Ganga and Scott 2006; Garg 2005; Nowicka and Cieřlik 2014). The geographical and social science literatures have so far tended to view the relationship between the migrant researcher and the migrant researched as “limited to the relationship between the researcher and the researched only” (Kim 2012: 131). In this section, I show that a research encounter involving a migrant interviewer of the same background as his or her (migrant) interviewees raises positionality issues that regard not only the ‘classic’ axes of difference (ethnicity, class, gender etc.), but also a set of features distinctive to migration experience (e.g. migrant status, transnationality, bilingualism).

In any discussion of a researcher’s positionality it is important to emphasize that the last three decades have brought a revolutionary turn in how the production of knowledge is understood. The previously dominant paradigm, which conceptualised knowledge as universal and value-free and researchers as objective experts who “remain detached and neutral from their subjects” (Kobayashi 2003: 346), was challenged by a severe feminist critique (Oakley 1981; Stanley and Wise 1983). Haraway (1988) in her highly influential paper argued that assumptions about the



alleged researcher's ability to see everything from nowhere is simply an illusion, a 'god-trick'. Recognition of knowledge filtered through individual biographies and 'embedded' in social life (Moss 1995), has drawn increased academic attention to the meaning of the 'position' or 'positionality' of the researcher (Ley and Mountz 2001; McDowell 1992; Rose 1997).

In these debates, a complex positionality of a migrant researcher researching his or her own migrant population has been so far underexplored and discussed largely with reference to the researcher's insider/outsider status (Ganga and Scott 2006; Nowicka and Cieřlik 2014). A telling example here is Mohammad's (2001) research experience of the Pakistani community in the south of England. This British (Pakistani by birth as she explains) female researcher noticed that due to her ascribed ethnic identity she was automatically positioned as an insider by her informants. This positioning determined the interactions with her research participants as well as the data she collected. The author admits, "I was seen to be an 'insider', as someone who was from and hence 'belonged' to the local Pakistani 'community'. (...) This belonging was seen to endow me with a superior, almost organic knowledge of the 'community' not accessible to 'outsiders'" (Mohammad 2001: 101).

While still frequently recalled in migration studies, the insider/outsider binary is, nonetheless, a contested one as it inevitably simplifies the intricate and flexible nature of relationship between the migrant researcher and the migrant researched (Carling et al. 2014; Ergun and Erdemir 2010; Matejskova 2014; Merriam et al. 2001; Nowicka and Cieřlik 2014). Drawing on my own fieldwork experiences, the fact that I am Polish and I speak Polish definitely helped me gain 'insider' access to some people (e.g. people with poorer English) and made it easier to establish contacts during the initial stage of my fieldwork (e.g. simply because some people were interested in their compatriot doing research about the Polish community). Nevertheless, what became meaningful during the further stages were precisely those of my features that differentiated me from my research participants (e.g. my complex migration history, middle-class family background, higher education, the intersection of my gender and relatively young age, my relaxed approach to religion/belief, the values I live with or personal experiences). During my fieldwork I had many opportunities to find out that a presumption that individuals of the same ethno-national background have a greater understanding of each other's experience or views is based on a false premise that a single 'truth' or 'reality' shapes human

reception of the outside world (Kim 2012; Rhodes 1994; Twine 2000). Based on my research experience, I agree with Valentine (2002) who suggests that the assumption that people perceived as insiders can interpret informants' stories more correctly is a dangerous form of essentialism. It (re)produces binary categorizations which do not capture the intersections - complexity and diversity of experiences and views – within as well as between various groups.

My research encounters with Polish migrants in Leeds and their significant others in Poland made me experience many moments of assumed similarity and difference between the research participants and myself. On many occasions, I felt that shared nationality, language and migrant status stimulated communication (Temple and Young 2004) and encouraged the informants to 'open up' as they felt a symbolic bond between us. Additionally, there were many situations when this assumed sameness constrained narrative accounts the informants produced as they believed I would easily pick up some cultural nuances. The research participants, for example, rarely spoke of Poland/England/the UK and Polish/English/British people. Many of them would rather speak of 'our country'/'our place' (Poland) versus 'this country'/'here' (England or the UK) and how things are done by 'them' (English people or British people). I deliberately mention 'English or British' (people) as in most cases my Polish informants used these terms interchangeably. The usage of the pronouns 'we/us' and 'they/them' is recognized to be a verbal expression of mutual, the researcher's and the researched, (non-)belonging to home and host societies (e.g. Kim 2012; Temple 2011). In my study, the usage of the pronoun 'us' was particularly interesting. This term was meant to designate - depending on the context - either the Polish migrants in the UK or Polish society (in Poland). This suggests that my informants not only assumed I shared a sense of belonging to the Polish nation or Poland, but also the same migration experience. In other words, I was assumed to share a *we-image* (Mennell 1994) with the research participants and be a member of the same imagined community (Anderson 1991).

In his study of Welsh people in London, Segrott (2001) found out that a shared language is an important element of an assumption of a common identity and values. Curiously, in the case of my research, (un)conscious banal expressions of shared national identity and migrant status were sometimes accompanied by an assumption of a shared religious identity. Such an assumption was most probably made due to the fact that Poland is predominantly Roman-Catholic (Eberts 1998). Even though

there is a number of religious minorities and an amount of declared atheists and agnostics in Poland, I noticed that the majority of the Polish migrants in my sample (no matter whether believer, non-believer, practicing religion or non-practicing) assumed that their migrant compatriots were Catholic. This is exemplified in the extract below in which one of my interviewees Magda, a Roman-Catholic married to a Muslim person, describes how she realized there were many commonalities between Christianity and Islam. In the quote, she speaks of ‘our religion’ meaning Christianity or Catholicism specifically.

The story from the Old Testament is the same in *our religion* and *theirs*. I mean, in his [her husband’s] religion and Judaism as well. At the beginning he had no idea of my religion. I also knew nothing about his. So, at first we were both very surprised because we realized that we both knew Abraham, Moses... that we both knew all these stories. We had thought we came from two completely different worlds and it turned out that we had the same bases. And, for example, in *our religion*, the most important person was Jesus. In *their religion* it was Mohammed. I knew nothing or very little about Mohammed whereas he knew a lot about Jesus from his religion.

Magda (migrant, female, aged 28)

The pronoun ‘our’ may in fact indicate two interconnected assumptions Magda makes. The first one is an assumption of religion shared by the interviewer (myself) and the interviewee. The other is an assumption of Polish society being ‘originally’ Christian/Catholic. In case of the latter, the interviewee may not assume that that I am Catholic myself, but since I am Polish I must be familiar with what she calls ‘our religion’ and must consider this religion as an element of my Polishness. Moreover, the pronoun also plays an ‘othering’ function – the interviewee opposes ‘us’ (Christians) with the imagined ‘them’ (people attached to Islam). This extract illustrates that an assumption of shared language constitutes the assumption of a shared identity and values (Temple 2011).

During my study I observed that the presumptions research participants tend to make are in the first place related to nationality, language and migrant status. This is not to say migrant informants never made assumptions due to my gender, age, appearance or any other visible, guessable or simply ascribed features (e.g. education, sexuality, marital status) as well as intersections of a few of these categories. Indeed, a few of my female informants spoke of ‘our bodies’ meaning

women while discussing gendered upbringing or certain professions dominated by men. Some other interviewees would repeat ‘you don’t remember how it was’ referring to the communist regime in Poland and thus making age-based assumptions about me. Nevertheless, I felt these features were less frequently subject to various presumptions in comparison to my nationality, mother tongue and migrant status. On many occasions, the research participants assumed that since I am a Polish migrant resident in England, I would easily *read between the lines* and immediately understand their own experience of migration. That was particularly noticeable in the way I was provided with research information. Some of my interviewees spared me certain context- or culture-specific explanations by simply saying: ‘we both know what I mean’ and giving me a knowing look. In such moments I felt these informants strongly believed in a symbolic spiritual alliance between the two persons who were both raised in the same country, with the same language and now share all pros and cons of the migrant life.

Below, for example, one of my male informants Marek describes his experience of Bradford which is home to a substantial Pakistani community. After mentioning Bradford he just says: ‘so - you know’ implying that Bradford is for whatever reason a specific place. In doing so, the interviewee assumes I share his understanding of Bradford and all the personal connotations this name carries for him.

We went to a playground – it was in Bradford, so - you know [*gives a knowing look*]. So, we went there and there were hell knows how many of these women in letter-boxes [he means burqas/abayas here] – and we both know what that is... plus, [women] in scarves only – typical Muslims with their children.

Marek (migrant, male, aged 32)

This extract is interesting for several reasons. The speaker, for instance, does not say ‘women in’ burqas or abayas, but uses a discriminatory semi-grotesque expression ‘women in letter-boxes’. I remember thinking for a while before I realized to what he referred. This is explained in the sentences that follow as he speaks of women in scarves and ‘typical Muslims’. Even though the informant used what might be interpreted as a discriminatory language, I could tell from the context and the tone of his voice that he did not intend to explicitly offend Muslim people. Indeed, this expression was used in the context of a bigger story about the interviewee’s sister teaching her young children tolerant attitudes in an ethnically and religiously diverse

neighbourhood. Yet, he took the liberty to express a stigmatising comment with a racist undertone because he was there sharing a moment with me - another Pole in exile who furthermore expressed a deep interest in his personal experience of difference. This unfortunate linguistic construction seems here much more a verbal form of normalizing a cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957) that may come with an encounter with difference than an expression of explicit racism. Moreover, it demonstrates that in a pseudo-intimate company of a fellow national who *will obviously get the joke* specific data are (re-)produced as a result of the assumptions of a shared language and migration experience. This is not to infer that my informant does not use a certain rhetoric apart from the interview situation or a Pole-to-Pole situation. My point here is, assumptions of shared language and migration experience affect power relations between the migrant researcher and the migrant researched. In line with the (feminist) positionality debate referring to the issue of power and production of situated knowledge in a research encounter (e.g. Katz 1996; McDowell 1992; Moss 2002; *The Professional Geographer* 1994), this results in highly specific research data being generated.

It is also worth mentioning that the migrant researcher versus the migrant researched situation generated specific rhetoric on my (the researcher) side. That said the interview situation forced me to use a language I would not use otherwise. In the extract below Marek, quoted earlier, explains how the media influenced his attitude towards German people and Roma people.

Marek (M): What is presented in the media [in Poland] is ideas about German people or Gypsies – so that, you have a negative attitude towards the latter especially. (...)

Interviewer: You've just mentioned that Polish people have negative feelings towards Germans and Gypsies. Do you have negative feelings towards these groups?

M: Yes. I think so. It's not something that makes you terribly revengeful, but it influences your views. For example, Gypsies are not to be trusted. Marek (migrant, male, aged 32)

The extract above is a part of a longer discussion Marek and I had about Roma people. My intention was to explore the interviewee's prejudices and the ambivalent feelings he had towards the whole ethnic group including Polish Roma and the UK/Irish Roma he became familiar with during his life in the UK. Initially, I used the expression 'Roma people' to ask further probing questions. However, I noticed that

the interviewee misinterpreted this expression and took it for the people of Romania. It was only later when he switched to the word ‘Gypsies’ when he started to speak of the whole ethnic group. For this interviewee the word ‘Gypsies’ did not have a possibly pejorative and derogatory meaning. He was not aware it could be viewed this way, even though he had numerous negative and stereotypical associations with the ethnic group itself. His misinterpretation made me switch to the rhetoric he used and continue using it during the whole interview and our subsequent meetings, simply in order to be properly understood. Such a take-over of a certain rhetoric – a situation when I was forced to start using the language or expressions I would not use otherwise due to my personal beliefs or values I live with – occurred a few times during my fieldwork. Surprisingly, in most cases the informants seemed truly unaware the language they were using was inappropriate, not to say racist.

In this section, I have argued that (in line with recent studies e.g. Kim 2012) migrant researcher’s positioning is highly specific and prone to multiple (mis)identifications. As such, it goes way beyond the contested insider/outsider binary (cf. Nowicka and Cieřlik 2014) and involves consideration of a set of features distinctive to migration experience (e.g. migrant status, trans-nationality, bilingualism). Importantly, the challenges that come with such positioning are of a different nature than the challenges related to the relationship between the researcher and the researched *per se*. This finding contributes to the positionality literature by *adding an extra layer* to the debate on reflexivity and sameness and difference in the research process.

### **3.8 Translator researcher**

One of the greatest challenges I encountered while collecting data was the issue of translation. The cross-cultural nature of my project as well as my obscure positionality as a migrant researcher studying one’s own national group resulted in practically all the recruitment process as well as interactions with research participants being in Polish. Although the migrant informants had a chance to choose their language of preference (either English or Polish), everybody found it most ‘natural’ to communicate in his or her mother tongue with the researcher of the same nationality. For this reason, the data was entirely gathered in Polish and thus had to be translated into English.

The translation was undertaken by myself. I am a native Polish speaker, *born and bred* in Poland during the period of transition from communist rule to a liberal democratic political system. Thus, I believe I am knowledgeable of the recent changes in Polish language as well as phrases, folk sayings or idiomatic expressions which have been transferred to the everyday tongue from the realms of politics, arts and popular culture. I rejected the idea of commissioning the translation of the data to professional Polish-English translators due to a strong conviction that for the sake of the project, a potential translator apart from the perfect language skills needs to be familiar with the migration experience as well as research practice. In other words, I believed it was necessary to combine language skills with strong research-oriented competencies, the awareness of the cultural capital transnational migrants collect and a profound knowledge of socio-cultural circumstances in both the UK and Poland. This is also the reason why, in this thesis, I argue for a recognition of a translator researcher (often linked with a migrant researcher) and support a conceptual distinction between a migrant/translator researcher and a researcher *per se*.

Not many voices encourage researchers to consider language and contextualized translation within a research process. Scholars (Fathi 2013; Smith 2009; Temple and Koterba 2009) confirm that even though translators inherently are a part of the knowledge production process, their role in shaping data tends to be underappreciated, not to say ignored. Temple (2008: 362) calls for what Venuti (1998) has described as an ethics of translation – an awareness of a translator researcher of having “responsibilities to research participants regarding the way [he or she] represents them in writing”. This refers to the Simon’s (1996 cited in Temple and Koterba 2009: 3) argument that translators are inherently involved in making choices about how to represent people. But representation of others is not the only ethical problem involved in translation. Equally important is the awareness of possible change in meaning or potential construction of new meanings (Claramonte 2009; Fathi 2013; Kim 2012). Therefore, the discussion often concentrates on the notion of quality of translation and translator’s skills. Birbili (2000: 1) claims that the quality of translation tends to be affected by “the linguistic competence of the translator/s; the translator’s knowledge of the culture of the people under study; the autobiography of those involved in the translation’ and the circumstances in which the translation takes place”. All these factors, as this thesis suggests, are even more evident in case of migrant researchers.

While I believe that data transcriptions in the language of an interview represent the actual utterances most accurately, given the circumstances in which I did my research (e.g. the fact that I was a member of a larger English speaking team and a PhD student in a British institution), it was necessary for me to translate data from the original language. The undeniable problem of doing so is a risk of getting *lost in translation*. Indeed, the translation process is a hybrid cultural production (Smith 1996) and “involves translating lives rather than simply words” (Temple and Koterba 2009: 2). This is a matter of the so called conceptual equivalence (Birbili 2000; Temple 1997) or – in other words - comparability of meanings between the original utterance and the translated transcription. In this thesis, I would like to argue that if translation is prepared with extra care so as conceptual equivalence is maintained, the quality of transcribed (and translated) data can be very high and fully appropriate for further analysis.

To the best of my knowledge, hardly any social scientist speaks of a purely practical side of translating data as a part of a research process. In this chapter, I attempt to address this problem by presenting a fairly simple procedure I developed through the course of my research and as a result of my ongoing translating and language dilemmas. This procedure allowed me to gain conceptual equivalence which is so necessary to produce valid knowledge (Birbili 2000; Temple 1997). I achieved this by including in every translated transcription detailed notes clarifying the context and supplementing them with the original utterance. This was rigorously repeated whenever an interviewee a) left a message unsaid, b) his or her utterance carried emotional connotations, set of cultural or personal assumptions and/or values impossible to translate, c) he or she used a grammar form and/or an expression which was hardly translatable into English. These notes were introduced in square brackets and included my comments related to the usage of particular language-specific expressions, grammar forms, indirect translation or an interviewee’s behaviour as well as the assumptions he or she made. They also contained the word/phrase/utterance in the Polish language. This procedure proved to provide me with a translated transcription yet very close to the linguistically nuanced record in the original language. Having in mind entirely justified warnings of much more experienced researchers (Erickson 1998; Temple 1997, 2008), I tried to be most careful when transcribing and simultaneously translating, and repeatedly compared my transcription with the original recording.



Below are two extracts from my transcripts which shed light on the logic of the translation procedure. I do realize that the bits of utterances in original language are only useful for the people who speak Polish. However, my aim is simply to show the results of the procedure. Getting familiar with it does not require the knowledge of any particular language. In the extract the interviewee, Ela, speaks of her group of Polish friends.

So, I have a few friends... Generally, we're all more less – how to say this – we're all the same/similar story [PL: *Generalnie, wszyscy jesteśmy mniej więcej – jakby to powiedzieć – z tej samej półki*]. All girls, all after *ogólniak* [general profile secondary school – ENG: high school/grammar school], the same age more less, 28-34 years old. Most of us with families, married, kids, no kids. Ela (migrant, female, aged 31)

After saying that she has “a few friends” which was literally translated into English and did not require any comments on language, the interviewee tries to describe this group. In doing so, she uses a colloquial expression which would not make much sense if translated from Polish in a direct way. In order to gain conceptual equivalence the part of the sentence was translated into: ‘we’re all the same story’ whereas in direct (literal!) translation it would rather mean: ‘we’re all from the same shelf’. Since the translation is not a direct one, there is a line in the original language - in italics and in square brackets. The previous line did not require to be supplemented with an original utterance as it was directly translated. Similarly, the subsequent lines are not supplemented with original utterances. However, as the interviewee uses a colloquial name for a type of secondary school in Poland – *ogólniak* – this is also explained in square brackets and supported with the closest equivalent in English – ‘high school/grammar school’. The Polish term *ogólniak* is left in the quote to indicate that the interviewee’s group of friends comprises of individuals with specific general secondary education which in Poland is perceived as more prestigious than the vocational education for instance. This way the whole quote captures all personal and social assumptions the speaker leaves unsaid about her group of friends.

Another extract I explore is a short story of moving out from a Northern English town. The name of the town is exchanged with an X due to anonymization procedures. The interviewee, Marek, speaks of some minor problems he encountered in his neighbourhood and refers to the people who live in council accommodation.

He borrows an English word ‘council’ which is then inflected (declension) and used in Polish fifth grammatical case (instrumental case)<sup>7</sup>. It is impossible to express such a language structure in an English translation. Thus, the phrase is simply translated into ‘council-flat people’ and requires an original line which carries a set of unique meanings. Sticking to the procedure allowed me, in the next step, to analyse this data and consider it a good example of flexibility of native language in transnational settings. Moreover, as I was above all interested in difference and ‘othering’ it enabled me to notice how my migrant informant conceptualized people of different social status in the host society (Temple 2011).

We lived in X because my company paid for my accommodation there. I mean, when I moved to England my company rented a flat for us – so, we lived there. But, we didn’t stay long there because there was a situation with council-flat people [PL: *zaistniała sytuacja z councilami*]. Because, we lived in this neighbourhood with many young Brits [PL: *Angolami*]. They knew we were Polish and they were a pain in the neck for us [PL: *uprzykrzali nam życie*]. There always were some minor tensions. So, there was no point in staying there.

Marek (migrant, male, aged 32)

In the quote, the interviewee uses another interesting expression *Angole* which derives from a Polish word *Anglia* – meaning: England - and refers to English people. Yet, due to its slightly pejorative meaning the word was translated into ‘Brits’ which embraces this deeper sense much better, but refers to a much broader group - British people. Since there is a risk of change in meaning the original expression in square bracket and italics was included. In case of the last square bracket a Polish rather colloquial expression was exchanged with an English idiom which stresses the specific bitter-sarcastic undertone of the whole sentence.

These two examples demonstrate that a nuanced translation of data is relatively easy achievable provided that a translator researcher is highly sensitive to maintaining conceptual equivalence and supplementing a translated transcription with additional descriptive and/or explanatory notes. Such comments introduce among other things further contexts data refer to. However, on a critical side, there is

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<sup>7</sup> Similarly to many Indo-European languages (e.g. Latin or German), Polish is characterized by noun/pronoun declension. There are seven grammatical cases: nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, instrumental, locative and vocative. The instrumental case indicates that a specific noun/pronoun is the means (the *instrument*, thus the instrumental case) with or by which an action takes place.

an obvious limitation of this translation procedure. Kim (2012: 140) argues that “translation is a job that involves a speaker, a translator, and listeners (audience)”. That said, a translator - as an author - should also keep his or her potential audience in mind. These readers according to Kim (2012) cannot be perceived as a homogeneous group as they possibly come from various cultural, social and linguistic backgrounds. In this respect my procedure is only a partial solution since it can be fully appreciated only by the readers fluent in both used languages. Nonetheless, I believe it serves a very useful purpose especially for lone researchers expected to work with and disseminate data in a language different from the language of its collection. It can be also beneficial for big international projects involving several multi-language scholars working together in a selected language (e.g. English), some of whom collect data in other language(s).

It is important to stress here that while I advocate for the application of translation procedure to any dual-language study, throughout the thesis I display sequences of translated narratives with lines in original language (Polish) and notes on context, behaviour and cultural assumptions removed. Although such pieces of information are invaluable for any bi-lingual (Polish-English) researcher, they make the readability of quotes rather difficult for readers non-fluent in both languages. However, I contextualise each quote and refer to any significant pieces of data *lost in translation*, should that be significant to the analysis of a particular citation.

Another language and translation challenge I would like to elaborate in this chapter was the translation as well as interpretation of the ambivalent language of difference I faced while interviewing my informants. I felt completely confused when, for example, some of the most open-minded and respectful migrants in my sample would all of a sudden use such expressions as for example ‘Pakole’, ‘ciapki’, ‘ciapaci’ or ‘ciapasy’ describing Pakistani people. The closest translation of all the four words would perhaps be the highly offensive term ‘Pakis’ – however, this word was definitely too strong for the neutral or even positive tone of some of the utterances. I also struggled trying to distinguish between them. Whereas ‘Pakole’ is closest to ‘Pakis’ and is definitely very negative, needless to say racist, ‘ciapki’, ‘ciapaci’ or ‘ciapasy’ is much more *urban-slangish*, quite pejorative yet not as strongly derogatory as ‘Pakole’. I believed that if I stick to a fixed dictionary and translate ‘ciapaci’ into ‘Pakis’ each time, I would misrepresent some of my informants in writing and that it would be ethically wrong. Therefore, every time I

had to make a separate and independent translation decision based on a specific context (Simon 1996 cited in Temple and Koterba 2009: 3). On most occasions though, I would leave the original word ‘ciapaci’ and supplement it with an explanatory comment describing the context as I felt I was not empowered to make any choices related to the translation of these terms. As they open up a discussion on language of difference being one of the consequences of migrant encounters with super-diversity (Vertovec 2007), I elaborate on genealogy and the usage of these words later in the thesis (see Chapter 8).

I had a similar dilemma with another word - ‘Murzyn’ - indicating a Black person. According to Siuciak (2004), this word appeared in the Polish language in the 14<sup>th</sup> century as a linguistic borrowing coming from the Latin *maurus* meaning black. The word has been used ever since with reference to a person with dark skin colour, however in contemporary Polish language it introduces a specific ambivalent context. First of all, it has negative social connotations as many folk sayings or idiomatic expressions involving it refer to a situation in which somebody is a servant, a slave, a cheap work force or a representative of a population believed to be ‘backward’ (Ząbek 2007). Moreover, these sayings address racist stereotypes (ibid.). An interesting case here might be a small poem/rhyme written by an interwar-period Polish poet Julian Tuwim. The poem titled ‘Murzynek Bambo’ used to be learnt by heart by many Polish children during the transition period. The title of the poem could be translated into ‘Bambo the little Black boy’ or, more accurately, into ‘Bambo the Nigrette’. Moskalewicz (2005) argues that the rhyme has a strong colonial undertone and refers to simplistic and essentialist representations of people of African-Caribbean descent. The Bambo boy is indeed a joyful little savage-kid who is a diligent pupil in a school somewhere in Africa; a prankster who climbs a tree when he wants to run away from his mother; or a funny exotic figure who is afraid his skin will become white while bathing.

A 2007 survey on a representative sample of adult Polish people, reveals that almost 20% of Poles (including the author) regard the expression ‘Murzyn’ insulting and another 12% - sometimes offensive and sometimes not (CBOS 2007b; n=937). There is also an ongoing discussion in some daily newspapers which seems to explore this language problem (GW: Bąbol 26.01.2012; GW: Karpieszuk 28.11.2009; GW: Tymowski 10.06.2010). Nevertheless, a substantial part of the society considers the word inoffensive and uses it simply to describe a Black person.

The Polish-English PWN-Oxford dictionary (2004) mentions few possible English equivalents of the word: ‘a Black(man)’ (sic!), ‘a person of African/Caribbean descent’ and ‘Negro’. Nevertheless, considering the associations the word ‘Murzyn’ may evoke and the historical translations, the closest or most traditional equivalent would be ‘Negro’ or a more contemporary-*slangish*, yet highly offensive and prejudice loaded term ‘Nigger’ (Asim 2007; Rahman 2012).

The translation of the word was a tough task indeed. Quite interestingly, my sample involved a few types of linguistically (un)aware informants. The first cluster were the interviewees who did not use the word ‘Murzyn’ at all as they were aware of its racist undertone. The second cluster embraced the people who would use the word ‘Murzyn’ in a neutral/positive (unprejudiced) context being unaware of its negative connotations. The last cluster were the informants who would use it in the context of their prejudice either being aware of the word having pejorative meaning or not. Whereas the first usage of the word is beyond the interest of this chapter, the other two became subject of my great ethics-versus-good-translation dilemma. Initially, I thought I should stress the context and translate the word in two different ways choosing between the words ‘a Black person’ and ‘Negro’/‘Nigger’. However, I abandoned this idea promptly as I realized that even though I could define the context (neutral or positive attitude, unfavourable attitude, racism, etc.), as a translator I was simply not empowered to make such choices due to ethical reasons. This is why, unlike the ‘Pakole’/‘ciapaci’/‘ciapasy’ dilemma, I decided to translate the word ‘Murzyn’ into ‘a Black person’ every time. Naturally, each usage of the term was supplemented with the original Polish word and, if necessary, additional comments on context.

As I have mentioned, the most intriguing was the limited awareness of the discriminatory undertone all the described words do introduce. Even though some of my informants were fully aware of this rhetoric being inappropriate, not to say racist, others seemed to have no sense of that at all. More interestingly, from the context I could tell that many individuals from the latter group used the language of prejudice unintentionally while not being prejudiced themselves. This contradiction (which also contributes to my previous discussion about positionality and the assumptions of sameness) suggests that migrants who share a language can have extremely diverse awareness and understanding of this language.

While perhaps uncomfortable in the British context (given the extent of British equality legislation and its colonial history), the usage of prejudiced language by some Poles (or Polish migrants) should be explored and understood here first and foremost through the postdependence lens. As I have argued earlier in this thesis (see Chapter 2), it is crucial to consider that how Polish people conceptualise, describe and relate to difference is a consequence of localised power relations, history and social construction of ‘otherness’ (for details of how difference is constructed in the Polish context see Chapter 4 and 5). What is commonly regarded discriminatory and/or racist in the British context, may not be recognised so by some people in Poland (despite the fact that it does, indeed, convey prejudiced attitude). In addition, the debate on the ambivalent language of difference is inevitably entangled in how the issue of equality and diversity is understood in Poland. Although equality is rather broadly addressed legally and institutionally, equality legislation in the Polish context has its social limitations driven by, for example, low level of legal awareness or passive attitude to seeking institutional help (this is further explored in Chapter 4 of this thesis as well as in Bojarski 2011; Gołębiowska 2009). As a result, social censure and consequently the penalizing of abusive and discriminatory language is relatively low. This partly explains the limited awareness of prejudiced language among my informants. As such, it also suggests that broader equality and social inclusion policies necessarily need to be context-sensitive (see Chapter 9).

### **3.9 Narrative analysis and integration of data**

The process of data analysis started immediately after I began my fieldwork and was spread across all the research stages, including the writing of this thesis. Soon after having transcribed the first interviews and audio-diaries, I started rigorous coding. In order to explore the data in-depth and to avoid decontextualizing of the quotations, I conducted two-cycle manual coding. While I appreciate the support of qualitative data analysis software (e.g. NVivo), I am also aware of its limitations and decided not to risk restricting the analytical process (Basit 2003; Blismas and Dainty 2003). Naturally, the overall analysis included coding of not only the interviews or audio-diaries, but also field notes, memos, survey results and other unobtrusive data I collected.

Acknowledging that “people construct identities (however multiple, intersecting and changing) by locating themselves or being located within a repertoire of emplotted stories” (Somers and Gibson 1998: 38-39), in the thesis I pay particular attention to the ‘narratives’ produced by research informants. From an empirical point of view narratives are mostly first-person forms of talk or writing that aim to tell a story (Earthy and Cronin 2008). They are social products and/or social constructions created from, within or against diverse culturally and historically specific stories and contexts (hegemonic narratives) which delimit what can be said and what shall count as meaningful or nonsensical (Lawler 2001; Maynes et al. 2008). Through narration individuals reflect on their environment, culture and the whole social context they are engaged into. Given that social life is continuously storied (Somers and Gibson 1998), yet it is not the actual reconstruction that matters (Lawler 2001), narrative interprets rather than recreates, it provides meaning to the facts and feelings, rather than presents them. Stories and recollections organize the sense of self, one’s life and place within specific space (Brockmeier and Carbaugh 2001); they connect together past and present, self and other (Lawler 2001). In doing so, they are “a central hinge between culture and mind” (Brockmeier and Carbaugh 2001: 11).

By employing narrative analysis I was able to explore relationships, interconnections and socially constructed understandings that commonly occur within narrative accounts (Creswell 2007; Kvale and Brinkmann 2009; Maxwell 2005). I strove to understand “how and why people talk about their lives as a story or series of stories” (Earthy and Cronin 2008: 424). Thus, I focused on both content as well as form of an account. This approach let me examine “varieties of individual selfhood and agency ‘from below’ and in practice, as constructed in peoples articulated self-understandings” (Maynes et al. 2008: 1).

As my study was based on various data collection techniques, involved many case studies and two different types of research participants, I considered the issue of data integration a priority. I started by identifying three major stages: 1) integration of data obtained from key participants by means of various methods, 2) integration of data obtained from key participants with the data collected from their significant others, and 3) integration of data gathered from various cases.

With reference to the key participants, I considered interviews as a leading method. They were significantly enriched by time-lines, relational-maps and audio-

diaries which allowed me to collect the data otherwise hardly obtainable or neglected. A time-line and relational mapping were integral parts of a life-history interview. As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, they played a role of a prompt and were supposed to make it easier for the interviewees to organize information about fateful moments (Giddens 1991b) in their lives or their relations with relatives and friends. They enriched the interview by framing the data chronologically and structuring respondents' accounts. When performing both tasks, informants focused on recalling memories or telling stories of their significant others while putting these information on a piece of paper. This allowed them to produce a fairly uncontrolled flow of oral narration. As these narratives were recorded and transcribed as a natural course of an interview, it was possible to analyse them (narrative analysis) in exactly the same way as regular interview narrative.

Audio-diaries, on the other hand aimed at encouraging key participants to produce a spontaneous, uncontrolled, unrestrained and uninterrupted flow of oral narration. Whereas interviews are always framed and influenced to some degree by the interviewer, audio-diaries allow collecting data structured mainly by the author of the diary (Monrouxe 2009; Worth 2009). Consequently, they provided me with a different yet complementary type of data/narrative. Thus, the transcribed audio-diaries were analysed along with the transcribed life-history interview and follow-up interview – through coding and narrative analysis - that is by means of identifying common, recurring or supplementing themes and their in-depth exploration (Gibbs 2007).

As long as the integration of data obtained from key participants with data gathered from their significant others is considered, I conceptualised each pool of such data a complete case. Having transcribed, coded and narratively analysed each interview (and audio-diary in the case of a key participant), I identified common, recurring or supplementing themes which occurred in the data collected from different informants. Then, I compared and contrasted these themes in order to find similarities and/or contradictions between the narratives provided by the two groups of informants (i.e. comparative analysis see Gibbs 2007). I also focused on how the same topics were developed by different persons involved in each case. Lastly, I explored in-depth the themes framed by my research questions.

Putting together the data from different cases was the most challenging part of the overall research analysis. First of all, as described above, I explored each case in-



depth. Then, I identified the themes, patterns, relationships which were common for various cases – I specifically looked for differences, similarities and contradictions across the cases. Finally, I compared and contrasted them (comparative analysis) or, in other words, I recognised leading stories behind the data coming from various cases. By doing so I could offer explanations and reasons for the patterns (Gibbs 2007) as well as uncover and/or generate theory (Berg 2007).

### **3.10 Ethical considerations**

While my research was approved by the University Ethics Committee, there are several ethical issues regarding human participation and methodology that require closer attention here. First of all, I had to make sure that each informant participated in the study voluntarily and key participants were recruited from wide Polish community in Leeds based on the criteria that did not exclude any potential adult person (mentally and emotionally able to partake in an academic research). In order to do so, I not only tried to reach informants through human gatekeepers, networking or snowballing, but also advertised the project in the local Polish press, Polish Sunday school, Polish shops believed to be popular among Polish migrants in Leeds as well as online on the University of Leeds Polish Society facebook board. Secondly, I strove to carefully protect all participant identities by employing rigorous anonymisation procedures and not disclosing participant information to any third parties. In addition, I erased audio data from recording devices after each interview and on completion of an audio-diary. I encrypted such data to ensure electronic security and kept on a password protected computer. Furthermore, I stored all the printed transcripts in a locked cabinet.

For full disclosure purposes, I supplied each participant with a research leaflet either in English or Polish (for research leaflet in English see Appendix 2) and provided with sufficient information about their (and their significant others) participation in the study. I assured each participant that he or she could withdraw from the research any time without giving any reason and any uncomfortable questions or issues would be omitted during the interviews. In addition, I asked each participant to give me a written consent to participate in the research and record the interviews (for consent form in English see Appendix 4).

Migrant participants were informed that due to a small migrant sample in my study there was a possibility that, even though rigorous anonymisation I was to utilize, they might recognize themselves in the narratives presented either in this thesis or published in journal articles or other research reports. All of them gave me an oral assurance they did not mind that. Interestingly, although the majority of them stressed that it was very important for them that no other person was to identify them, a few informants went so far as to say that they did not care about anonymisation as in the interviews they would discuss the views they would like to be openly identified with.

With reference to the sensitive nature of the participation of individuals and their relatives and friends, I assured all the informants that any information concerning their significant others disclosed during the research would never be divulged, discussed with or passed on to the significant others as well as other family members or friends. Again, in a few cases such an assurance was welcomed with a statement that a person had nothing to hide from his or her significant others (which required further explanations related to my policy). Importantly, on some occasions during the interviews a respondent would discuss personal issues that were kept secret from their significant others. For example, Lena, one of my migrant informants, never told her parents and brother about her relationship with a Pakistani Muslim, because, as she explained, she feared for their reactions. Another migrant participant, Ela, never disclosed to her grandparents in Poland that she gave up Catholicism post-migration and became a Buddhist. Both these issues are addressed later in the thesis. While some informants automatically claimed that they had nothing to hide from family members and/or friends in Poland, such secrets, white lies or unmentioned stories inevitably appeared and required to be dealt with extra attention and sensitivity.

In addition, during the interviews I asked research participants to discuss very personal – sometimes intimate - issues. Quite unexpectedly, this was received very well on average. I noted just a few ‘difficult’ moments that would include emotionally loaded responses such as crying or anger. In such a case, I would put the speaker at his or her ease by showing empathy and/or changing the topic. However, it was never necessary to stop an interview and, on many occasions, the participants commented that the interview was a very enjoyable experience for them. I also paid increased attention to being non-judgemental of any extreme views or opinions my interviewees discussed during the research. This was sometimes *intellectually*

exhausting as I was exposed to actively processing information and ideas I personally found unthinkable, not to say profoundly unacceptable (e.g. explicitly racist or homophobic views). Thus, after some interviews I needed extra time to emotionally *recover* in order to be able to perform in a satisfactory and professional way. Apart from such moments, the cooperation with the migrants and their significant others was pleasant and rewarding (no participant did ever do or disclose anything that required e.g. legal or institutional action). I especially got to know the migrant informants very well and occasionally met a few of them in more sociable circumstances. Nonetheless, I made sure I kept a professional distance and did not get emotionally engaged as this could possibly compromise my analytical assessment.

Naturally, I had to consider my safety during both the Leeds and Polish fieldwork. To do so, I employed a 'buddy' system. Where and when necessary, I produced a timetable of arranged interviews with names, addresses and phone numbers. This was always given to my trusted buddy. During fieldwork I had a mobile phone at all times with me and made sure my buddy was informed about my whereabouts and expected travel or return-home times. On completion of each interview, returning home or reaching my destination while travelling in Poland, I phoned my buddy to confirm my location.

### **3.11 Conclusion**

In designing the research methodologies I focused on the necessity to explore mobility, transition, change, influence and circulation of ideas. By giving voice not only to migrants but also their significant others, combining various methods within each case study and conducting a comparative case analysis, I believe, I managed to enable both methodological and data triangulation (Gibbs 2007). Acknowledgement of the role of family and friends in shaping people's views and life stances is crucial for studying perceptions, values and attitudes, yet it is often omitted in migration studies. The methodologies I employed allowed me to capture the intricate nature of human relations and explore indirect and contradictory influences. However, not all data collection techniques I utilised were entirely successful. Audio-diaries were particularly challenging due to a low completion rate. This has led me to suggest that while useful in obtaining unconstrained narratives, audio-diaries are only suitable for

certain types of research participants. My discussion on the intentional use of this method in the chapter contributes to and extends the literature on qualitative data collection techniques.

During the research process I also strove to be reflexive (England 1994; Temple 2008) about my position as a migrant researcher and a migrant translator. As both these issues (and especially the latter) still tend to lack adequate academic attention, I believe my findings provide a contribution to translation, positionality and migration literatures as well as research practice. Throughout the chapter, I have evidenced how the complicated positionality of a migrant researcher researching his or her own migrant community is entangled in production and interpretation of research data. I have also demonstrated that the challenges that come with such a research relationship are different from the challenges that stem from a 'conventional' relationship between the researcher and the researched. With regard to translator researcher, I have shown how translation from the language of fieldwork to the language of dissemination inevitably affects the data and, thus, the whole process of building up theory. As a result of my ongoing language dilemmas, I have proposed a simple translation procedure which offers a nuanced translation of data and provides a researcher with a transcription conceptually equivalent to the original record. The challenges I have described will, I hope, be of interest to other migrant and translator researchers or those who intend to utilise a dual- or multi-language research projects.

Having considered methodologies and the practice of *doing research* in this chapter, I focus on exploring and analysing the pool of empirical data I have collected. In the next chapter I look into the production of core values in the Polish context in order to understand what Polish migrants possibly bring to their encounters with difference in the British context.

## **Chapter 4: (Re-)production of values in post-communist Poland**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The understanding of difference that people bring to encounters with ‘the new’ or ‘the unfamiliar’ in the context of international mobility is one of the main interests of this thesis. Values and attitudes that frame such understandings have been argued to be profoundly influenced by national histories and cultures as well as localised power relations (Anderson 1991; Billig 1995; Edensor 2006; Glick Schiller et al. 2006). By looking into Poland’s historical background, its national context and what is socially believed to be core ‘Polish values’, in this chapter I explore the production of normative frameworks that shape people’s lived experiences of difference. The term ‘normative framework(s)’ I employ throughout the thesis refers to the concept of normativity and, as such, designates a set of the socially produced and/or assumed ‘norms’ (i.e. socially acceptable and desirable standards) that permeate and regulate all aspects of social life (Sayer 2005a, 2009).

In this chapter, I look into how the consequence of the complex nexus of history, policy, religion and power relations is the understanding of difference and sameness through the lens of national mythology, dominance of Catholicism, sanctity of family and whiteness. While the narratives of Polish migrants in the UK and their significant others in Poland confirm the significance of geo-historical context in producing and shaping people’s values (as well as attitudes which I address in Chapter 5), they are not devoid of contradictions and complexities. These are closely analysed throughout the chapter and enrich a complex story of what and why may be regarded ‘different’ for Polish people (and migrants in particular).

I begin with an insight into modern Polish history which, as I demonstrate, is necessary to understand what and why has shaped Polish people’s values and attitudes towards difference. Then, I focus on how equality policies developed and changed post World War II (WWII), including the influence of the communist regime and the accession to the European Union more recently. After that, I look into

Catholicism as a dominant doctrine which has continuously affected Polish family and social lives, and has traditionally been a major ideology of reference in production of values within both Catholic or non-Catholic environments. I then explore family as core Polish value and investigate how it is manifested, passed on by generations and contested through certain normativity including family model, gender relations, sexuality or traditions. Lastly, I focus on the discourse of the homogeneity and whiteness of Polish society.

Given the extensive literature and research data I draw on, the chapter is designed twofold. First, each issue is introduced descriptively based on existent scholarly and social debates, and then explored analytically by showing how the collected research data (i.e. informant's narratives) are primarily embedded in prevailing hegemonic discourses.

#### **4.2 Significance of Polish history**

Although the territorial, cultural, political and social nature of many Central and Eastern European states have changed through the vicissitudes of history, ethnically and religiously mixed communities were for a long time present in this region and a unique melting pot of cultures and nations was until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century its distinctive feature. Presence (not always peaceful though) of such cultural diversity had profound consequences for people as various ethnic groups laid claims to the territories, identified with them and considered them as their homelands (Snyder 2003).

Whilst many modern states were emerging in 16<sup>th</sup>-century Europe, Poland after a series of wars and alliances became an integral part of a dual state called the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (see Figure 3). As such, it was the largest and one of the most ethnically and religiously diverse countries of 16<sup>th</sup>- and 17<sup>th</sup>-century Europe (Davies 1981, 1996). Importantly, it was characterized by significant (varying in scope though) religious tolerance and rather broad political and civil liberties offered to its nobility<sup>8</sup> (ibid.). Religious tolerance in particular was believed to define the area. The Polish kings allowed, for instance, the cohorts of European Jews to settle down and openly practice their faith as early as in 13<sup>th</sup> century which was precisely

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<sup>8</sup> Polish nobility was, nonetheless, significantly advantaged (Snochowska-Gonzalez 2012).

the moment when some other countries (e.g. England, France, Spain or Germany) expelled them (Borzymińska et al. 1995; Buchowski and Chlewińska 2010).



Figure 3: Territory of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Source: Snyder 2003: xiii.

In 1795 the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Kingdom of Prussia and the Russian Empire finally partitioned<sup>9</sup> the area of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and annexed its vast territories into their respective state structures. From that time on, for the next almost 120 years, Poland disappeared from the map of Europe and only regained independence as the Second Republic in 1918 after World War I (WWI). The intensified policies of ‘Germanisation’ and ‘Russification’ of the newly gained territories in the Kingdom of Prussia and the Russian Empire<sup>10</sup> aimed at limiting the Polish ethnic and cultural presence fuelled patriotisms and nationalist sentiments (Davies 1981). These were broadly expressed both explicitly, in the form of uprisings (e.g. the November Uprising in 1830-1831 and the January Uprising in 1863-1865 against the Russian rule), and in a more veiled way via the artistic and especially literary production of the so called Great Emigration writers and poets. The term Great Emigration embraces a significant wave of migration of the Polish

<sup>9</sup> The first two partitions took place in 1772 and 1793 (the latter did not involve the Austro-Hungarian Empire).

<sup>10</sup> The territories annexed to the Austro-Hungarian Empire were not subjected to such an intense assimilation policy as those governed by the Kingdom of Prussia and the Russian Empire. They were quasi-autonomous, offered a range of national liberties and relative ethnic and religious tolerance (Chojnowski and Bruski 2006).

intelligentsia and political elites from the partitioned areas between 1830s and early 1870s – particularly to France and Great Britain (ibid.).

The Polish Romantic-era and pre-WWI artistic production requires further attention here due to its capacity to shape and evoke national values and the sense of Polishness (Janion 2011). The literary writings of the era are, indeed, saturated with stories of martyrdom, messianism and a bitter-end fight for nationhood (Janion 2011; Olszewska 2007; Zubrzycki 2011). They include poetic narratives of a lost home, sanctity of family or idyllic Polish countryside as well as references to a mythic figure of Mother Pole/*Matka Polka* - a guard of national identity (Fidelis 2010; Jolluck 2002; Titkow 1993; Trzebiatowska 2009). Crucially, as Poland was strongly associated with Roman-Catholic Christianity ever since the nation was symbolically christened in 966 (Davies 1981, 1996), they are furthermore embedded in religious symbolism and recognize Catholicism as a source of national power in the times of oppression (Porter 2001). In spite of evolving over time and history, this national mythology still resonates in people's narratives (i.e. the research participants' stories) as well as historical, political, religious and media discourses. These founding elements of Polishness, as Janion calls them (2011), are further explored throughout the chapter.

Importantly, the shape and the social structure of the Second Polish Republic significantly differed from those of post-1945 or contemporary Poland (see Figure 4). The pre-WWII Polish territories had a long history of diversity (Podemski 2012; Snyder 2003). According to the 1931 Census ethnic and national minorities constituted as much as 31% of inhabitants of Poland (Davies 1981). Furthermore, for example the present Polish-Ukrainian-Slovakian borderland (which belonged to Austrian-Hungarian Empire pre-1918) was (apart from Polish people) inhabited by Ukrainian, German, Jewish, Belarusian, Lithuanian, Czech, Armenian, Hungarian, Slovakian, Romanian and other minorities (Snyder 2003). Multiethnic families, as Snyder (2003) argues, were a common practice and the idea of belonging to a particular nation was often more than complicated. Simultaneously, the late 1920s and 1930s were times of intensifying nationalist movements which, as Davies (1981) suggests, were fueled by the existence of numerous minorities within the Second Republic's new borders and a desire to re-establish strong Polish identity after the times of partitions.



The outbreak of WWII brought an unexpected division of Poland between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union and not only led to significant territorial and demographic changes, but also to a shift in social perception of difference. As a result of the Holocaust itself, 90% of Polish Jews were killed together with thousands of Roma and other minorities making many regions of Poland relatively homogeneous in terms of ethnicity, nationality and religion. Unsurprisingly, WWII reinforced feelings of resentment towards German and Russian people dating back to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and the partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Moreover, it strengthened the social construction of Germans and Russians as archenemies of Poland (Kępiński 1990; Król 2007; Tazbir 1991) and the stereotype of an ever threatening Russia (Janion 2011).

After the war, at the conference in Yalta in 1945 the United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and the Soviet Union General Secretary of the Communist Party Joseph Stalin agreed to redesign the shape of Poland (see Figure 5). The pre-WWII border was moved 200 km west resulting in eastern territories being incorporated into the USSR (Davies 1981). As a compensation Poland was offered former German provinces in the west. This was followed by the Soviet policy of deportation of Polish people from the new Soviet areas to Poland and relocation of national minorities outside the newly established Polish borders and resulted in an even more ethnically and religiously uniform society (*ibid.*).



Figure 4: Territories of Poland pre-WWII. Source: Snyder 2003: xiv.



Figure 5: Territories of Poland post-WWII. Source: Snyder 2003: xv.

Importantly, after the war Poland became a part of the Eastern bloc and one of the Soviet satellite states isolated from other parts of Europe by the Iron Curtain. Over the two decades post WWII (late 1940s – late 1960s), the Polish communist governments, heavily influenced by the USSR, introduced what could be described as a highly questionable policy of social homogenization and the expulsion of difference. Certain ethnic, national and religious minorities were either relocated within Poland in order to assimilate with the Polish culture (as in the case of Ukrainians and an ethnic minority called Lemkos<sup>11</sup>) or forced to migrate abroad (as in the case of the Polish Jews who survived the war). As a consequence Polish society became yet more homogeneous - ethnically, nationally, linguistically Polish and religiously Roman-Catholic.

Given that all histories are socially constructed (Hobsbawm 1998, 2007), the role of the communist authorities in reworking of certain visions of history must be acknowledged here. The so called Katyń massacre may be a telling example. Until as long ago as 1990 the communist authorities officially blamed Nazi Germany (and by doing so fuelled anti-German sentiments) for the 1940 mass execution of over 20.000 Polish citizens carried out in fact by the Soviet secret police. The communist influence (i.e. propaganda) on people's perceptions of other nations, and/or

<sup>11</sup> Lemkos (*Lemkowie*) is an ethnic minority which used to live in what are today South-Eastern parts of Poland and Northern Slovakia. The minority developed its own language, rich culture and strong ethnic identity.

difference as such, was highly significant. Copsey (2008) for example mentions the policy of defaming Ukrainians in Poland and Poles in Ukraine which echoes in collective memories of Poles and Ukrainians, and frames a mutual dislike until the present time. He argues that the mass media created the stereotype of “a bad Ukrainian” – the nationalist, the ally of the Nazis fighting against Poles coming from Western Ukraine (in contrast to “good Ukrainians”, USSR-enthusiasts from Eastern Ukraine). At the same time, the Soviet propaganda in Ukraine portrayed Poles as ‘lords’ - land owners who abused Ukrainian peasants (Copsey 2008).

Furthermore, the five decades of the communist rule succeeding the end of WWII had a substantial impact on the perceptions of gender, sexuality, religion, ethnicity, class and other axes of difference (e.g. Borowik 1996; Kulpa 2009; Owczarzak 2009; Selinger 2008). Importantly, however, while the communist ideology and the socialist propaganda permeated many spheres of everyday life, many imposed policies were often contested and re-negotiated in private (Heinen 1997). Religion, for instance, although politically a ‘taboo’ was, commonly practiced (Bliska-Wodecka 2006). The Catholic Church as a religious community, a *we-group* (Mennell 1994), although having a complicated relationship with the communist regime, was often opposed to the Communist Party and the oppressive system (Borowik 1996). The significance and role of Catholicism and the Church in shaping Polish people’s morality and notion of normativity in Polish society is explored later in this chapter. Gender relations also had a truly ambivalent position. Publically and ideologically equal, gender inequalities were commonly (re-) produced in private spheres (Owczarzak 2009). Whereas a man was traditionally viewed and approached as a regular bread-winner, a woman often experienced a multiple burden as mother, homemaker, caretaker, ‘reproducer of the nation’ as well as employee (Marody and Giza-Poleszczuk 2000; Owczarzak 2009). Gender issues in socialist and post-socialist contexts are also investigated later with regard to equality legislation and the family model. Homosexuality, while officially advocated as a ‘Western depravity’ or a psychological disease (Selinger 2008), was indeed present in the Polish cultural and social awareness, yet even privately holding a status of the ‘unspoken’ and the unnamed (Kulpa 2009).

It seems that in contrast to a public homogenising discourse and the socialist propaganda, differences in terms of religion, gender and sexuality were highly privatized. This is interestingly discussed in Drakulić’s (1996) self-narrative of life

after communism. The author says that this profound division into public and private was practically (re-)produced by the common usage of the anonymous and safe pronouns ‘we’ or ‘us’ – which offered an escape into a “warm crowd” (1996: 4) or a homogeneous mass – rather than ‘I’ which was associated with individuality and democracy.

The consequences of socialism in Poland for gender, sexuality, religion, class and everyday routines are widely discussed in geography and social science literatures (e.g. Bliska-Wodecka 2006; Borowik 1996; Drakulić 1993, 1996; Eberts 1998; Fidelis 2010; Fuszara 1993; Jolluck 2002; Kulpa 2009; Owczarzak 2009; Selinger 2008; Titkow 1993; Zielińska 2000). However, the issues related to the communist-era perceptions of race and ethnicity seem somewhat undertheorised (Imre 2005 is an interesting exception, yet not directly linked to the Polish context). This may be related to an *obvious whiteness* of the post-war Polish society being the consequence of WWII and, to a greater extent, the communist policy of expelling ‘undesired’ subjects (e.g. Polish Jews). The communist Poland was, indeed, one of the most ethnically, culturally and religiously homogeneous countries in the world with 97.6% of the population being Polish according to the 1950 Census (Brzoza and Sowa 2007).

The late 1980s marked the end of the communist regime, Poland’s severe isolation from Western Europe, widespread political repressions, shortage economy and most significantly, strong dependency on the USSR. However, the post-1989 transition into parliamentary democracy and capitalist economy, led not only to the opening of borders and a myriad of other positive political and social changes, but also to huge unemployment, increasing social stratification and the salience of class difference (Polityka: Bendyk 2013). This contributed to the social atmosphere of uncertainty and, similarly to other post-communist countries like East Germany, resulted in nostalgia over the socialist ‘predictability’ e.g. stability of jobs (Cooke 2005; Heinen 1997).

Early 21<sup>st</sup> century Poland remains one of the most ethnically, nationally and religiously homogeneous countries in the world (Podemski 2012) with 94% of the population being Polish (GUS 2012) and 93% declaring Catholicism (CBOS 2012c). In 2004 the country became a European Union member state and, consequently, entered the Schengen free movement zone in 2007. The obligation to fulfill the pre-accessory legislative and economic requirements as well as the post-2004

incorporation of the EU laws was followed by a gradual introduction of bills and directives embracing actual protection of various axes of difference as well as putting such issues as discrimination, civil partnerships or reproductive rights on the social agenda. Importantly, an immediate reaction to the EU accession was an unprecedented migration of Poles to Great Britain and Ireland (Krings et al. 2013), as these were among the very few countries which opened their respective labour markets to the so called A8 citizens. For the majority of predominantly young Polish migrants (Grabowska-Lusińska and Okólski 2008) coming from the relatively homogeneous Polish society moving, particularly to the UK, involved many first encounters with national, ethnic, cultural and religious difference (Jordan 2006). Such encounters are at the heart of this thesis and are discussed in the subsequent chapters.

### **4.3 The narratives of socialist production of sameness**

Unsurprisingly, given the capacity of histories to shape people's values and attitudes, the data I have collected throughout the study suggests that the Polish history (and/or certain reading of it) has impacted on how many of my informants understand sameness and difference. Although remote history (i.e. partitions, WWII) was, indeed, frequently referred to, it is by and large contemporary history that has been implicitly discussed by the majority of the study participants. In particular, the socialist production of sameness and social conformity was commonly addressed in my study.

While advocating for classless and moneyless society of no divisions, the communist ideology introduced Poland to a centrally-planned economy, common ownership, governmental abuses, chronic shortages and widespread social propaganda (Davies 1981, 1996). This had a profound influence on Polish society and the social production of values towards difference (Kania 2009; Marciniak 2009). The everyday life in the socialist system contributed, for example, to the reinforcement of scepticism towards institutions (Mishler and Rose 1997) and common distrust in human relations (Czapliński and Panek 2011; Marciniak 2009). This is very well reflected in the narratives of one of my migrant informants, Marek. Although quite young in late socialism, Marek extensively spoke of how consequential the socialist-era political and social atmosphere was for the lives of

Poles. This resonates with the findings of other studies into childhood and adolescence in socialist Poland (e.g. Burrell 2011a, 2011c).

Socialism. Russians had control over us so, people just assumed – and that’s an automatic assumption – that every form of standing out from normality – and nobody never defined normality – every form of standing out was just bad. And that it should have been fought. Marek (migrant, male, aged 32)

In the narrative, Marek suggests that the socialist-era production of difference was strongly affected by the common distrust towards any counter-normativity or otherness. Indeed, he argues that what could be described as *standing-out-ness* as wrong and problematic. Interestingly, no fixed conceptualization (apart from propaganda) of normativity (Sayer 2005a, 2009) or normality (Miztal 2001) was ever officially or explicitly framed. In his story, socialism or what he calls a “Russian control” produced a uniform society which ostracized any form of difference. This is further reflected in the narratives of other informants. Irena, for example, who due to her older age remembers not only growing up but also being an adult in a socialist state, emphasized that any form of difference – either sexual, religious, ethnic or status-related – was simply absent from public and media discourses. Throughout the interviews she kept using a Russian phrase *unirawniłowka* (meaning levelling, homogenising) every time I asked about communism and difference. When prompted to explain how she understood it, Irena focused on non-hetero-normativity which in the socialist Poland held a status of the ‘unspoken’ and was a particularly sensitive issue (Kulpa 2009). With regard to homosexuality *unirawniłowka* meant that:

Nobody spoke of that. (...) Not at all! When I was young, I didn’t even know something like this [homosexuality] existed. I mean, when I was a teenager. I didn’t know. (...) There was a scheme: mother, father, children, house, grandma, grandpa, aunt and uncle and further family. That was it. There was nothing on TV as well. Nobody spoke of it on TV. The TV was a national television, so it’s even hard to think such a topic would appear. (...) And speaking of difference (...), do you know, there was no homelessness during the socialism? I must tell you this – homelessness existed somewhere there. But it wasn’t present in my environment for example. And sexuality, skin colour, faiths – no, no! There was nothing like this during my times – I tell you this. Irena (migrant, female, aged 50)

In the eyes of this informant, the single word *uniowniłowka* embraces the widespread experience of lived (but not necessarily actual) social sameness. Irena's implies that the sense of collectivism was imposed by various agents exemplified in her account by the media - television in particular. Indeed, the "national television", heavily influenced by the communist authorities, seemed to broadcast largely the programmes which presented the society with a certain ideologically desired normativity. This is frequently addressed by scholars and literary authors as a "homogenisation that did not permit any difference, any individualism" (Drakulić 1996: 3) as, to put it bluntly, "under communism individualism was punished" (ibid.).

But difference was also invisible in Irena's own local environment as people strove to conform to what she calls "a scheme" – a family model which completely excluded a non-heteronormative sexuality. As a result, until she grew up she was unaware of the existence of homosexuality. Interestingly, the absence of difference from public spaces had more far-reaching consequences. Namely, it made Irena deny that any difference existed in her community (and the whole Polish pre-1989 society). In the narrative below she explicitly says that issues related to difference (homosexuality specifically) started to emerge only after the fall of the Iron Curtain.

It wasn't until 1989 when people started to talk a little about it. And, at that time I was already a grown-up. Until 1989 – people say Poland was behind the Iron Curtain. (...) The same way, many topics were behind the iron curtain. If you brought... I didn't do it myself but, I know that some people did it when I was a kid... Some people would bring porn magazines from the West – it was a complete shock to see such a thing.

Irena (migrant, female, aged 50)

Irena's narratives are particularly powerful as they capture the sense of isolation of the socialist Poland. This is not to say difference did not exist in the socialist Polish society - quite the contrary – it was there, yet similarly to individualism "was exiled from public and political life and exercised in private" (Drakulić 1996: 4). This is well exemplified by the single porn magazines brought supposedly from "the West" Irena refers to in her story. My study confirms that even though forms of difference or diversity were present under socialism, they were widely privatized – pushed to the private spheres and acknowledged within the concrete walls of people's homes (Heinen 1997).

While focusing on the socialist production of conformity and sameness, in this section I have explored how geo-historical context contributes to the distinctive understanding of difference in Poland. It is important to acknowledge here, however, that alongside the historical dimension this context has been significantly shaped by other factors such as equality legislation, religion, traditional values or visible structure of Polish society. Therefore, in the next two sections, I look into equality legislation in order to showcase how certain policies inevitably impact on values and attitudes of individual Poles.

#### **4.4 Equality policies**

While in many Western European states (and the UK in particular) equality legislation has been gradually developed in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the relative ethnic and religious homogeneity in Poland post-WWII as well as political dependence on the USSR did not contribute to the enforcement of extensive equality and anti-discrimination policies (Bojarski 2011). Even though the progressive Constitutions of 1947 and 1952 as well as further provisions (e.g. the 1976 provision) envisaged equality of all citizens irrespective of their nationality, race, belief, gender, social origin/status, education and occupation, the actual implications of formal protection were, as Zysk (2006) argues, extremely narrow. Importantly, formal equality during the socialist era was underpinned by the communist ideology (i.e. elimination of class divisions), rather than a desire to protect human rights (Zysk 2006). Therefore, “the only situation in which the constitutional equality provisions could actually be applied was when they conveyed the interests of the class of workers (Communist ideology)” (Zysk 2006: 372). As a result, by privileging those citizens who belonged to the Communist Party (and had to be declared atheists to do so), the socialist state itself produced inequalities and discriminated against a substantial part of the society. Moreover, due to the institutional abnegation of issues related to gender, sexuality and religion (or difference as such), there was a striking absence of equality and diversity discourses which only strengthened the society in the conviction that these matters were beyond the state’s interest.

The post-1989 equality legislation included the 1974 Labour Code (with subsequent amendments) and the 1997 Constitution. Although it was structured primarily around employment (i.e. employees’ and employers’ rights and duties) and



offered rather questionable protection for ethnic, religious or sexual minorities, the Labour Code paradoxically remained the main element of the Polish anti-discrimination law until recently (Bojarski 2011). The Polish Constitution contains very general anti-discrimination clauses such as gender equality, equality before the law, the right to equal treatment by public authorities or the right not to be discriminated against due to political, societal and economic reasons. Nevertheless, even though it emphasizes human dignity, citizen rights and freedom of beliefs, it plays an ambivalent role in strengthening actual equality. The Constitution, for instance, defines marriage as a heterosexual relationship. It also implies a unique status of the Catholic Church in Poland by explicitly mentioning a separate agreement (the so called 1997 Concordat agreement) which specifies the mutual state-church relations. The Concordat agreement between the Holy See of the Catholic Church and Poland, indeed, strengthens the position of the Church by setting out its rights and duties (e.g. guarantees religious education as a part of school curricula and equal status of a church marriage and civil/ordinary marriage). In doing so, it “ensure[s] and reinforce[s] the privileged status of the Church, and substantially blur[s] the line of Church-state separation” (Eberts 1998: 832).

The process leading to the accession to the European Union and the accession itself marked a significant formal enhancement of the equality legislation in Poland. Nevertheless, following the expertise of the European Network of Legal Experts in the Non-Discrimination Field (see ENLENDF), it needs to be acknowledged that the primary rationale for improving equality laws was the necessity to fulfil the conditions of the EU membership, not the genuine desire to strengthen anti-discrimination legislation or to ease social pressures. As a consequence of the 2004-accession, the Polish legal system implemented among other things the EU anti-discrimination directives (e.g. 2000/43/EC or 2000/73/EC<sup>12</sup>) as well as introduced, most recently (in 2011), the so called Act on Equal Treatment. The document designates the existing Ombudsperson office as an equality body<sup>13</sup>, contains an exhaustive list of grounds of discrimination and provides formal protection in all fields, yet only in relation to race, ethnicity, nationality and partly gender (Bojarski 2011). Importantly, sexuality and age are to varying extents left under- or

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<sup>12</sup> Directive 2000/43/EC implements the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin while 2002/73/EC deals with equal treatment of men and women in accessing employment, promotion and working conditions.

<sup>13</sup> Poland was the only EU member state without equality body until recently (Bojarski 2011).

unaddressed – the Act refers to the prohibition of discrimination due to sexual orientation and age mostly in employment (equal treatment in other spheres of life is not mentioned). As a result, sexual minorities in Poland, often have to frame their claims via informal channels (e.g. protests, NGOs). This puts them in a highly disadvantaged position (Binnie and Klesse 2012; Gruszczynska 2009). As such, they can seek legal support only in the Polish Ombudsman office or by the European Court of Human Rights. The formal marginalization of sexual minority rights appears largely the result of the Catholic dominance in Poland and the persistent hegemony of heteronormativity. This issue is addressed further in the thesis (see Chapter 5).

Interestingly, the process of institutional and legal adjustments to EU law was not free from tensions and ignited widespread public negotiation of the boundaries of protection of difference. A good example of such social debate was the partial opt-out protocol included to the Polish version of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. The Charter, enshrining political, social and economic rights for the EU citizens (embracing widely understood rights such as the right to live, freedom of speech or the prohibition of the reproductive cloning), belongs now to one of the fundamental equality achievements in the EU. As it was included into the so called Lisbon Treaty, the Charter was meant to enter into force in 2009 in all EU member states. However, in 2007 it was criticized by the conservative Polish government which openly advocated the “necessity to prevent any European Court of Human Rights interpretations which would lead to the change of definition of family and enforce the Polish state to recognize homosexual marriages” (statement made by a spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs quoted in GW: Pszczółkowska 2007). This resonates with the definition of marriage outlined in the Polish 1997 Constitution and could be explained by the prevailing hegemony of (heterosexual) family as national *sacrum*<sup>14</sup> addressed later in this chapter. Yet, above all, it discloses the political and institutional legitimization of heteronormativity in Poland and a scarce legal recognition (not to say protection) of sexual minorities (Binnie and Klesse 2013).

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<sup>14</sup> Interestingly, the same argument (i.e. family protection) was recalled few years later during the 2013 public dispute over the rejected civil partnership bill (e.g. GW: Kościński 2013; GW: Siedlecka 2013; ND: Kowalski 2013; TOK FM: Rogal 2013).

Curiously, while in Western European states such as the UK the equality legislation has been argued to have an increasing influence on social life and behaviour (Valentine and Harris 2014a), the situation in Poland remains quite distinctive. Even though most of equality strands seem to be addressed on the legal and institutional level and numerous NGOs actively support various minorities, a very low level of legal awareness in Polish society and passive attitudes to seek legal help, prevent many people from attempting to claim their rights and enforcing the existent laws (Bojarski 2011). The main problem with tackling discrimination issues in Poland seems to be related to the fact that equality legislation (despite its limitations) tends neither to be executed (Binnie and Klesse 2013) nor enforced on the individual level (Gołębiowska 2009).

#### **4.5 The narratives of gender inequality**

Gender, although decreasingly addressed in Western scholarship due to ever more expanding equality legislation (Harris et al. 2014), was one of the issues most frequently discussed in my study in relation to equality and diversity policies in Poland. In particular, the participants draw attention to the ambivalent gender dynamics which appear to prevent a meaningful implementation (i.e. not only legal but also practical) of what Gerber (2010) would call the EU gender equality agenda. Gerber (2010) argues that in order to understand the intricate gender dynamics in Poland, it is necessary to follow how the concept of gender (womanhood) evolved throughout Polish history.

The production of gender/womanhood and gender inequalities in Poland has for long been inseparable from the concept of Polish nation and nationalism. In her seminal work, Yuval-Davies (1993), explains how women are socially constructed as reproducers of national/ethnic groups (and their boundaries), signifiers of national/ethnic differences and transmitters of national values, cultures and belonging. They are thus believed to play a unique, somewhat subordinate, role and are socially expected to accept this role. In the Polish context this conceptual framework is particularly relevant. In order to understand the position of a Polish woman within public and private spheres Gerber (2010) suggests juxtaposing a few most prevailing artistic and cultural images.

The first and the oldest would be the image of Christian Virgin Mary symbolically crowned the Queen of Poland as early as 1656 by the Polish King Jan Kazimierz during the Second Northern War with Sweden. By doing so, the King entrusted the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to the Virgin Mary's protection. Strongly embedded in religious mythology, Virgin Mary is an embodiment of purity, dignity, obedience and pride and is thus the ultimate female example to follow in a predominantly Catholic country such as Poland (Eberts 1998). The next image dates back to the partition times and the production of *Matka Polka*/Mother Pole. She is entirely committed to family and nation, primarily protecting *hearth and home* while the Polish men fight for the country's independence – yet, ready to take up arms if necessary. Then, there is the ambiguous socialist 'emancipated though discriminated' female-comrade. She is a humble incarnation of a superwoman - multiply burdened as mother, caretaker, homemaker as well as employee (Owczarzak 2009). In being an employee, she must accept commonplace inequalities (Marody and Giza-Poleszczuk 2000; Owczarzak 2009). During the communist period women, indeed, earned on average 20-40% less than men working in the same positions; they were also hardly ever promoted or given leadership positions (Marody and Giza-Poleszczuk 2000). Importantly, they had very restricted access to the 'global' feminist politics that started to emerge in 1960s.

Most recently, there is also the image of the post-1989 Polish woman facing what could be described as a return to patriarchal society. According to Graff, "transition to democracy has established itself in collective consciousness as the re-masculinization of national culture, supposedly feminized by the state socialism" (2005: 5). Moreover, the transition reinforced the position of the Catholic Church in Poland which led to significant changes in legislation - i.e. introduction of the restrictive abortion law severely affecting reproductive rights (Fuszara 1993). The consequence of the resuscitating of traditional gender roles and the Church influence was the saliency of gender inequalities. They have been challenged only recently by the EU legislation and the emergence of various EU-driven initiatives (Gerber 2010).

Unsurprisingly, considering the vivid images of womanhood in the Polish context, gender and discriminatory practices towards women were often addressed by my research participants. Iga, for example, one of my migrant informants, draws attention to a discrepancy between the formal (legal) and the practical (societal) implementation of gender equality in Poland. She implies that although many

equality laws were introduced into the Polish legal system, they tend not to be executed or enforced on the individual level (Gołębiowska 2009). Moreover, she argues, the core governmental body itself (i.e. the Parliament) by involving few female MPs does not seem to send the right message to the society.

Equal rights of women seem to be there – on paper. But, in reality they're not. (...) I think that men in Poland think they are somewhat “higher” than women. I know there are many women like some writers or journalists who succeeded and have highest positions, but they had to sacrifice everything, everything – I mean family, time with family, well – life generally speaking... to achieve a high position. And they cannot afford a child before they are for example 40-something. (...) There are so many men holding power... the whole Parliament – men in practice. There's only very few women. Iga (migrant, female, aged 30)

In her narrative, Iga refers to a certain “hierarchy” between genders in the Polish context. It can be traced back to the pre-war and socialist-era construction of womanhood (i.e. *Matka Polka* and duty-burdened, professionally ‘inferior’ superwoman) and the culture-specific position of a woman strongly influenced by the Catholic doctrine (Gerber 2010; Zubrzycki 2011). In her eyes, the gender-based discrimination is not explicit though. Indeed, Iga is aware of many professionally successful women who achieved a broad recognition. However, she believes the consequences of investing into one's professional career seem much more far-reaching for women than for men. Namely, Iga suggests that in Poland in order to achieve success (e.g. a high professional position) women need to “sacrifice” far more than men. In her narrative women have to give up “family, time with family” which Iga conceptualizes as “everything”/“life”. She seems to imply that family life is an ultimate goal of every woman – a way to achieve the state of happiness and satisfaction. In doing so, she does not acknowledge the diversity of lifestyles, viewpoints, motivations and experiences women may have. Interestingly, in being critical of gender dynamics in the Polish context, Iga makes an essentialist assumption of similarity/sameness of women (Valentine 2007).

Iga's parents, Krystyna and Andrzej, are also well aware of unequal gender relations – especially, in the context of a small provincial town in Southern Poland where they live. They were particularly eager to explore the topic during the interview due to Krystyna's own workplace experiences. Krystyna was repetitively

discriminated against at her previous post based on the intersection of her age, gender and health condition. Powerless and exhausted, she give up her job.

There's a stereotype in Poland - it's still quite present. Women, who work more on many occasions, are treated worse. Because, a man has always earned more money. And, women still earn less. So, they're treated worse. (...) It's not as evident now, because, there are many women who are very high in [corporate] hierarchy. Many women also have their own companies. But, there's still such thinking. And especially women who are in their 50s or 60s are treated badly. Because (...) in many cases they don't have higher education – so, they're always lower in hierarchy and they're treated worse.                      Andrzej (significant other, in his 50s)

Krystyna's husband refers to gender/age discrimination resulting in lower salaries and "worse" treatment. In doing so, he recalls the socialist-period employment inequalities. Andrzej seems to compare this situation with contemporary Poland implying, similarly to his daughter Iga, that the formal introduction of equality policies, was not followed by a meaningful change in perception of gender equality. Furthermore, his narrative suggests that the transition period not only resuscitated traditional gender roles (Graff 2005), but redefined them and ascribed an inferior position to older women (ironically enough, those who had already experienced the inequalities within the socialist society). All in all, the "women who have their own companies" are unlikely to be socially marginalised. Andrzej's as well as Iga's narratives are particularly valuable as they seem to capture quite complex relation between the changing equality policies in Poland and the reproduction or rather redefinition of difference.

Whilst investigating the implications of equality policies in the Polish context in this as well as the previous section, I have pinpointed that religion may assist in mobilising gendered discourses. In the next two sections, I look into this issue in depth and explore Catholicism as a dominant religious doctrine alongside its capacity to shape Polish people's values and lives.

#### **4.6 Catholicism as a dominant doctrine**

By referring to cardinal Stefan Wyszyński's words "Next to God, our first love is Poland" Trzebiatowska (2010) draws attention to a complicated connection between religion and national identity in the Polish context. Indeed, for many Polish people

religion symbolizes their national culture and belonging, and achieved a status of their integral element (Borowik 2002; Janion 2011). According to 2012 Global Index of Religiosity and Atheism (WIN-Gallup) Poland is the 19<sup>th</sup> most religious country in the world. This is further reflected in a recent Polish CBOS<sup>15</sup> research (n=1015) which shows that 93% of the respondents formally consider themselves Catholic whereas 54% practice religion on a regular basis (CBOS 2012d).

Yet, these numbers are far from capturing the intricate nature of contemporary Polish Catholicism. Various studies evidence that Poles hold substantially diverse views on religious practice and understandings of what ‘being a Catholic’ entails. The more nuanced CBOS surveys are particularly illustrative of discrepancies and contradictions. For instance, considering the religiously-sensitive sphere of sexuality, 44% of respondents (n=977) appear to accept living together without a marriage (as opposed to 38% who do not accept that), 53% approve of having pre-marital sex (as opposed to 26%), 55% support the usage of contraceptives (as opposed to 25%) (CBOS 2010a). In the case of the religiously-controversial abortion, 45% (n=977) believe it should be legalized (as opposed to 50%) (CBOS 2010b). Furthermore, not long ago, 50% of adult Poles surveyed (n=1036) would support introduction of legislation enabling euthanasia (CBOS 2001), 42% (n=1055) would accept euthanasia whereas only 40% were against it (CBOS 1999). There seems to be a significant difference between declaring religious attachment and bringing the Church’s rules into effect.

Even more striking is the discrepancy between the scripture (i.e. the Church’s faith) and the people’s faith in purely theological issues. Of those respondents (n=1015) who attend the Sunday mass regularly (once a week), 28% admit that they either do not know if God exists or have moments of doubt (CBOS 2012d). Almost 50% of all respondents do not believe or cannot tell whether a human soul is immortal (the soul immortality is one of the basic Catholic/Christian principles), 19% does not believe in the Final Judgement, 68% believe in heaven and only 56% in hell whereas over a quarter (26%) does not believe in the afterlife at all (ibid.). The overall survey data suggest Polish people’s Catholicism is not only selective, but syncretic in a sense that it tends to embrace the elements of various religious

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<sup>15</sup> CBOS stands for Centre for Public Opinion Research (for details see List of Abbreviations p.vi).

traditions (including non-Christian e.g. 29% believe in reincarnation and 36% in animals having souls) (CBOS 2012d).

In a similar vein, despite being relatively small, my study sample included participants whose religious attachments, interpretations of scripture and personal approaches to (non-)practicing religion varied significantly. This astonishing *complicated-ness* of the Polish religious *psyche* has been recently debated in the Polish press which attempted to explain it as the *Zeitgeist* of the post-modern era and the post-transition Poland (e.g. Polityka: Żakowski 2013). In any respect, religion has always been at the heart of national mythology, belonging and the formation of the Polish state (Janion 2011; Zubrzycki 2011). The very foundation of Poland had a profound religious aspect (establishing Poland through the act of christening in 966). Ten centuries later, during the communist regime, opposition to the oppressive political system was supported by the Catholic Church which became associated with prodemocracy movement and such values as freedom or defense of human rights (Gautier 1998). In the post-1989-era this heritage is still acknowledged and the Church plays a role of not only the political actor, but also of the co-creator of the civil society (Borowik 2002).

Nonetheless, the position of the Church in contemporary Poland is far from obvious. Especially, the 1990s transformation resulted in a significant shift in the Church's role and policy. Formerly a space of intellectual asylum and solidarity, the post-1989 Church has been claimed to become a guardian of hard-core Catholicism as well as a space of radicalizing religious ideology (Zięba and Nosowski 2012). One of the most controversial sphere of the Church's involvement in post-communist politics and public affairs was, for example, the issue of abortion, namely, the anti-abortion bill (introduced in 1993) and a large-scale anti-abortion social campaign initiated straight after the fall of the communist regime (Eberts 1998). The Church's powerful position was further reinforced by the 1997 Concordat agreement ensuring wide privileges and liberties to participate in Polish social policy. At that time the Church also became responsible for the religious education in public schools. In doing so, it was given absolute freedom in preparing the programmes of religious education, textbooks and appointing teachers (although their professional qualifications must be regulated between the Church authorities and the Polish government) (Eberts 1998). Against this backdrop, Zięba (2012) has recently argued that the post-communist images of the Catholic Church have become predominantly



negative (including e.g. a belief that the Church influences the country's politics, indoctrinates youth, appropriates national treasure or imposes new forms of censorship). In addition, with no obvious common enemy to oppose (embodied previously by the communist authorities or ideology), the Church started to experience internal divisions which contributed to growing social distrust (Zięba and Nosowski 2012).

Despite the increasing distrust towards the Church, it remains one of the most opinion-forming institutions in Poland (Pietrzak and Mikołajczak 2011; Środa 2007). This is clearly reflected in the public opinion surveys. In the 2007 national survey, for example, 62% of respondents (n=922) stated that the Church influenced various events in Poland and almost a half agreed that politics and social life should be based around religious values (CBOS 2007a). This is especially important for the study of difference. It is acknowledged that, for example, the Church reinforces traditional gender roles and by maintaining a discourse of family and family roles participates in the reproduction of gender inequalities in Poland (Pietrzak and Mikołajczak 2011). Indeed, transmission of religious values in Poland is constructed above all as an integral part of motherhood. This echoes the process of production of gendered identity (Yuval-Davis 1993) and is an element of the aforementioned historical construction of *Matka Polka*/Mother Pole (Fidelis 2010; Jolluck 2002; Marody and Giza-Poleszczuk 2000; Owczarzak 2009; Titkow 1993). Moreover, the recent research confirm that Catholicism tends to support the so called 'benevolent sexism' (Pietrzak and Mikołajczak 2011). In contrast to hostile sexism, benevolent sexism is often expressed in a chivalrous behaviour or attitude towards women (e.g. being over-protective towards women or favouring them) which reinforces the production of women as weak and dependant on men (Glick and Fiske 1997). Interestingly, the level of benevolent sexism in Poland is argued to be higher among religious women who are encouraged by the Church to believe that their efforts as caretakers and homemakers will be rewarded after their death (Pietrzak and Mikołajczak 2011). Also, the Church's discourse of family is structured in Poland largely (if not exclusively) around heterosexual family and heterosexuality as such. The scholars (e.g. Gruszczynska 2009; Kulpa 2009) studying the perception of the LGBTQ movement emphasize that perception of and prejudice towards homosexuality is strongly affected by the ideological dominance of the Church.

#### **4.7 The narratives of the “Catholic nation”**

The complexities of the Polish Catholicism I have outlined above are reflected in the structure of my research sample. All informants but one received a Catholic upbringing and come from Catholic families. Six out of 14 migrants in the sample practice Catholicism on a regular basis. A further six define themselves as rarely or non-practicing Catholics or agnostics. One is an atheist, another one a Buddhist. The significant other sample (n=19) is dominated by declared Catholics (practicing and non-practicing to various degrees), yet it also includes people of different denominations or beliefs and one atheist.

Unsurprisingly, religion as a value shaping people’s lives and opinions was one of the strongest and most recurrent themes in the narratives of Polish migrants in Leeds and their significant others in Poland. The informants, regardless of their own faith and (non-)religiousness, became very engaged in describing their personal experiences of the “Catholic nation” – as one of the informants put it - and the powerful position of the Catholic Church in Poland.

First of all, and in line with the previous studies (Bliska-Wodecka 2006; Eberts 1998), many respondents unanimously note that Catholicism is, indeed, a leading religious doctrine in Poland. This seems to have numerous consequences for the society and especially values and attitudes towards difference. For example, Marek, quoted earlier in this chapter, stresses that any person of differing religious belief and/or practice would find himself or herself in what he calls a “bad” position. An agnostic himself, he explains there is a persistent social expectation to “practice” Catholicism.

Speaking of religion – absolutely – it has to be Catholicism. If it’s not Catholicism – it’s bad. That’s how I’d describe the situation. We are a society hidden beneath a thick Catholic shade. And it will probably never disappear.

Marek (migrant, male, aged 32)

The simple good-bad dichotomy Marek refers to goes back to the communist times when ‘bad’ was associated with the Communist Party and ‘good’ with the Polish traditionally Roman-Catholic patriots (Borowik 2002). Opposition to the ‘bad’ oppressive system was broadly supported by the Church which earned the opinion of the ‘good’. Further in his narrative, Marek continues to say that since Catholicism is “absolutely” the dominant religious ideology of an undoubtedly powerful position,

other religions tend to be socially “not tolerated”. His explanation of this situation is quite interesting as he implies that the Catholic Church itself implicitly accepts the persecution and stigmatization of difference.

I think that it's mostly the Church's work. (...) Having a huge power in a Polish state, the [Catholic] Church did for a very long time persecute every other religion, every other religious behaviour. There's always been... I remember when I was little, there's always been this talk about *kocia wiara* [literally: cat's faith – an expression frequently used to describe Jehovah's Witnesses to stress that their faith is not the 'true' faith, see Chapter 5]. (...) I've never been introduced to various religions, they were never described, spoken about. I've never been introduced to the differences between religions. I was only told – by some priests, during religion [classes] which was a compulsory module [at school] – that they [Jehovah's Witnesses] are evil. That they go from door to door and try to impose their views. That it was an evil religion. So, I think it was all inculcated by the Church itself. And then... Older people who are mostly Catholic. Older people – they show off their... not really hatred, but a lack of acceptance of other religions... They showed it to me. If you tell them you're an atheist, you're automatically persecuted by older people... for being an atheist. They say: “So, what does it mean! Don't you believe in the Church! Don't you believe in God! How can you live like this!” That's why everybody follows this well-known path which is “being a Catholic” – because, it's much easier. Easier. And, I did follow this path myself so as it'd be easier for me.

Marek (migrant, male, aged 32)

In his narratives, Marek is highly critical of the position of the Church in Poland. He blames it for monopolizing religious education (Eberts 1998) which did not introduce him to other religions and beliefs. This argument is repeated by some other informants such as Lena (female, migrant, aged 29) who during the interview told me that religion classes are “all about converting you, putting you into the box, making you religious rather than knowledgeable”. Marek also seems to suggest that the education he received encouraged him to accept prejudiced views about religious difference (Jehovah's Witnesses). In addition, he refers to the role of older generations in shaping people's religious views and routines in Poland. Further in his story, he openly admitted his church wedding was performed not because of his and/or his partner's desire or personal belief, but simply to fulfill family (especially the older family members') and social expectations. Both Marek's and his partner's

families are religious and largely practicing. Marek was anxious that a decision to have an ordinary marriage rather than the church one would arouse many questions, possibly tensions and – most of all - “sadden all the grandpas and grandmas” as he put it. Thus, he felt the pressure to conform to what is considered to be a norm in his environment in Poland. His story demonstrates the extent to which individual Poles may agree to adapt their lives to the existent nexus of a dominant religion and generational power-relations. It also explains the complexities of societal and environmental transfer of attitudes towards difference in terms of religious views. In doing so, it captures the simultaneous operation of many agents (religion and the Church, education system, family and wider society) which influence continuously interconnect and intersect.

Furthermore, many interviewees, like Piotr, Iga and her younger sister Ola stress that religion is passed on in Poland from generation to generation as one of the core Polish values. In line with the literature about nationalism and the production of gender (e.g. Yuval-Davis 1993), the person directly transferring this value in my informants’ stories was always a mother. In the extract below, Piotr explains the mechanism of such gendered transfer of religious practice. Interestingly, his mother seems to prioritise what she believes is her duty as a mother in a Catholic family over her personal approach to practicing religion.

Piotr (P): Mum asked us to go to church. She didn’t go herself. So, I don’t know if she was religious. She believed [in God], but she didn’t practice religion. Yet we went to church because we had to.

Interviewer (I): So, you say your mum made you go to church?

P: Naturally.

I: Why did she do it then and didn’t go to church herself?

P: Because, she was a mother. (...) So, she had to do it. (...)

Nobody would think of not going to church. Sure, we avoided the church sometimes you know, we went on walks and came back after 50 minutes.

Piotr (migrant, male, aged 40)

Iga and Ola also admit secretly avoiding Sunday mass in the past. Their mother Krystyna, similarly to Piotr’s mother, paid much attention to the girls attending Catholic events. She was taking this tradition for granted because, in her own words, “you’d just go to church in the past”. As she explained when I interviewed her, there was no religious difference in her environment until she became adult and that was the reason she found practicing religion most, as she put it, “natural”. This was

additionally reinforced by the fact that the majority of people in her neighbourhood followed a similar pattern. Thus, Krystyna is convinced that by making Sunday mass, as she repeatedly stressed, “obligatory”, she fulfilled her parental duty as a ‘proper’ mother. Her daughters, on the other hand, viewed it a compulsory element of their family lives which only strengthened their desire to avoid it.

My dad follows traditions, but he never forced me to go to church. My mum would push me to do that.

Iga (migrant, female, aged 30)

There was no Sunday our mum wouldn’t push us to go to church. Even if we didn’t want to go. She’d push us by force because it was something that was inculcated into her at her own home. Now, I live in a different place. My grandma and my aunt are my neighbours and my aunt’s kids also live there. There is no Sunday they wouldn’t go to church. So, it was similar at our home. Even if we didn’t want to go, mum would push us. And honestly – it was very discouraging. You didn’t feel like going [to church] – you went there and stood there in a church because you were made to do that. Ola (significant other, in her 20s)

The necessity to pass on religion in Piotr’s, Iga’s and Ola’s narratives is constructed above all as an integral part of motherhood. This can be traced back to the aforementioned historical construction of a mother in the Polish culture reinforced by the communist-era largely unequal gender relations in private spheres (Fidelis 2010; Jolluck 2002; Marody and Giza-Poleszczuk 2000; Owczarzak 2009; Titkow 1993). The extracts above emphasize, first of all, the role of motherhood in the transfer of values (Yuval-Davis 1993) and the production of religious belonging (e.g. Owczarzak 2009; Titkow 1993). Secondly, they draw attention to the practice of ‘forced’ transfer of religious values performed by my participants’ mothers. Indeed, Iga, Ola and Piotr “had to”, “were pushed” or “forced” to go to church regardless their willingness to do so. The enforcement of religious practice made them passively oppose their mothers’ efforts (by secretly avoiding Sunday mass). Ironically, these efforts were sometimes in stark contrast with their mothers’ personal attitude towards practicing religion (Piotr’s case).

By looking into discrepancies and contradictions in (non-)practicing Catholicism, I have evidenced that religion continues to shape beliefs and everyday routines of Polish people. Importantly, in the stories of research participants their mothers, and family background more broadly, frequently appeared to play a significant role.

Family has been, indeed, argued by my respondents to be a ‘core’ Polish value. It is also claimed to be so by the commentators of contemporary Polish society (Jasińska-Kania 2012). As such, it is further explored in the next two sections of this chapter.

#### **4.8 Family as core Polish value**

Family is believed to be one of the core elements of Polishness (Dyczewski and Jedynak 1993; Jasińska-Kania 2012; Sikorska 2009). As such, it seems strongly embedded in historical discourses and remains inseparable from other values such as patriotism and religiosity (Cieniuch 2007). The significance of family is above all reflected in public opinion polls (e.g. CBOS 2010a). According to a recent CBOS (2013b) survey on a representative sample of adult Poles, 78% of respondents (n=1111) consider happy family life as the most significant value in their lives. Furthermore, the vast majority (85%) believe family is a source of personal happiness and only 12% think that a person can be happy without it. The study also reveals that 55% of surveyed Poles consider a nuclear family (i.e. married couple with children) the most appealing family model. In fact, practically all adult participants state they would like to have children. Curiously, a significant 29% would like to live in a multigenerational family. This appears to echo the results of other studies. In the Polish context, grandparents often play a vital role as they tend to take care of children, may actively participate in the transfer of values and influence younger generation’s opinions (CBOS 2010a). A similar pattern is also reflected in research with Polish migrants in the UK. It has been noted, for example, that the migrants with children often encourage their parents to join them in Britain and help with childcare commitments (Moskal 2010; Ryan 2010b).

It is important to stress here that the timing of the survey I have quoted above is particularly interesting. Namely, it was conducted after a comeback of family discourse during the social debate over the rejection of the Polish civil partnership bill in January 2013. The rejection encouraged practically all of the most popular daily/weekly magazines as well as other media (of various political and social stances) to take sides (e.g. GW: Kościński 2013; GW: Siedlecka 2013; ND: Kowalski 2013; TOK FM: Rogal 2013). Unexpectedly, the argument of family protection – i.e. the nuclear and heteronormative family – entirely dominated the discussion. Whereas the nationalist-Catholic parties and newspapers openly feared

“the sneaky attempts of the homosexuality propagators to make homosexual relationships equal to the heterosexual ones” (ND: Kowalski 2013) and stressed the Church authorities’ relief to learn about the rejection of the bill (ND: Pabis 2013), the centre- and left-wing publications emphasized that “civil partnerships do not destroy family” (GW: Siedlecka 2013) and “heterosexual families (also) fight for the civil partnership” (GW: Kościński 2013). The heated debate was investigated by social scientists, for instance Janusz Czapiński who suggested that it was fuelled by the centrality of family to Polish society and the conviction that traditional family values might be threatened by the introduction of the institution of civil partnership (TOK FM: Rogal 2013).

Nonetheless, although a certain family model seems to exist in the Polish collective consciousness, very diverse families are lived in practice. Particularly interesting in this respect may be the study of Polish lesbians and bisexual women in rural areas (Struzik 2012). The authors argue that even though non-heterosexual people, couples or families remain, as they put it, “invisible” to the society, various family practices and family models are present even in small rural communities and the so called ‘traditional family’ is rarely the case. This suggests that nuclear family model remains hegemonic and powerful largely on a discursive level (ibid.).

The process of the broadening of the understanding of family is also reflected in the findings of recent public opinion polls. According to the 2013 survey quoted earlier in this section, over the last several years the percentage of people who consider family a non-married couple increased from 26% to 33% (n=1111) and the percentage of those who define so a non-married couple raising their child or children rose from 71% to 78% (CBOS 2013b). Importantly, the amount of people who conceptualize as family a same-sex relationship and gay or lesbian couple raising children - more than doubled (from 6% to 14% and from 9% to 23% respectively) (ibid.).

The social surveys also seem to illustrate the gradual process of rejecting the ‘traditional’ patriarchal model in favour of the egalitarian one. In another survey conducted in 2013 on a representative sample of adult Poles (n=1227), almost a half (46%) of respondents approved of the latter (CBOS 2013a). In comparison to a similar study early 2000s, there also is a decreasing percentage of respondents who declare that various housework is done solely by women. Nonetheless, some findings are still striking – it seems that in the majority of Polish homes it is the woman only

who does ironing (82%), washing (81%), cooking (67%) and routine cleaning (58%) (CBOS 2013a). This clearly echoes the pre-war and socialist-era production of woman as major (and often the only) homemaker and caretaker (Fidelis 2010; Jolluck 2002; Marody and Giza-Poleszczuk 2000; Owczarzak 2009; Titkow 1993).

#### **4.9 The narratives of Polish family model**

Unsurprisingly, the notion of family was in my study automatically mentioned as a core Polish value. Often idealized, family was discursively constructed as a warm community of strongly tied people who in the words of Julia (migrant, female, aged 27) “stick together and stay in touch”. According to many of my informants, the dominant family model in Poland – a “typical Polish family” as some of them would put it - is a heterosexual family often extended to include grandparents and further relatives. In addition, respect to older people or older generations is traditionally viewed as one of most significant values transferred onto children. Family is furthermore often associated with certain normativity involving celebration of home, religious practice and tradition. In the extract below, one of my female informants, Maja, describes how the concept of family inevitably intersects with the notion of home, Catholicism and behavioural normativity.

Family's very important, family and home. (...) I guess, in Poland everybody attaches greater importance to home – home is something most significant. If you live in one place, it's usually for life. (...) In my village [in Poland] it's very important to have a garden in front of a house which would be neat and tidy, and look nice. On the other hand, this might be a little hypocritical... because everything seems so nice from the outside, but it's not necessarily on the inside. (...) So, I think that home and family are most important. People value family meetings, dinners and so on. (...) [Religion] has been transforming into a sort of set of traditions rather than being faith. It's about celebrating holidays or such things. (...) But still – in my tiny place you can still see that during holidays people dress up nicely - for example people put on their Sunday best and go to church every day [during few-day holiday like e.g. Christmas]. But, I cannot tell to what extent it is a tradition and to what this is faith. Maja (female, migrant, aged 21)

As I have argued earlier in the chapter, the perception of family roles in Poland is largely gendered. This was reiterated by my study participants, many of whom



furthermore stressed that they understood family as a relationship of a man and a woman striving to have children. In these narratives, womanhood and especially motherhood was strongly tied to reproduction of values and beliefs (e.g. Gerber 2010; Titkow 1993) whereas fatherhood was structured around authoritarianism, power or being, as one of my informant put it, “a herd leader”.

Even though a nuclear and patriarchal family model seems to be reproduced in many narratives, some of my interviewees claim that significant changes or contestation of family normativity have been continuously taking place. My younger informants, for instance, often spoke of, what they framed “modern” Polish family model opposing it to the model dominant in their parents’ generation. In the quotes below two of my migrant participants Filip and Iga explain how understandings of family and gender roles have evolved or become challenged over generations.

Our parents had their kids when they were 23 or so. The age of starting a family [having children] is increasing now. Our acquaintances are usually 28 when they start a family. We [himself and his wife] are 28 and we still don’t think about that. And, well, it’s usually one child. It’s a marriage, church wedding, then, children, house, work. I consciously don’t mention the Church, because, I think, it’s been changing, although, not always and not everywhere.

Filip (migrant, male, aged 28)

My mum got married quite early. And, to be true she’s been taking care of home and working all her life. And, speaking of myself – I’ve never wanted, and that’s why I still don’t have kids, I’ve never wanted to follow her footsteps. Because, I think getting married when you’re 18 or 19 is definitely too early. (...) More and more people reject this model according to which a woman stays at home. As for now both spouses work in most families and the one who earns more is expected to be most careful about his or her job. So, more and more often, men stay at home and raise children.

Iga (migrant, female, aged 30)

Both Filip and Iga indicate intergenerational differences in conceptualizations of family life concerning average age of starting a family and having children as well as home and childcare commitments. This echoes the findings of the scholars who acknowledge the role of family as a space of value development, enactment and contestation (e.g. Valentine and Hughes 2012; Valentine and Sadgrove 2012). Filip, a practicing Catholic himself, personally assumes church marriage to form a family.

Nevertheless, he claims this is not necessarily the case for many Polish couples any more. Furthermore, the “modern” model is, in Iga’s view, based on gender equality which is different from how her own mother has been living her family life. Iga’s mother, Krystyna already mentioned in this chapter, is in this context a very interesting case. She admits she used to think she would gather a multi-generational family under one roof. When Iga was thinking of migration to the UK several years ago Krystyna strongly opposed fearing that her dream would not come true. Yet, Iga left her family home which was followed by Krystyna’s other daughter (Ola) moving to a different part of Poland. This forced Krystyna to challenge and redefine her idea of family previously based on idyllic cultural and/or religious representations. As a result, she is now happy with her children living independent lives.

Across my study, I found it quite striking how the values believed to define Polishness were linked one to the other and structured around the central notion of family. All of the values mentioned by my informants, such as Catholicism, patriotism, respect towards older generations, tradition, education, were understood and explained through the lens of family as a figure of speech (e.g. a family obligation to provide education and pass on religious values). It seems that a concept of family embracing further values is strongly embedded in the Polish collective consciousness. Interestingly, the pure notion of family, although framed through gendered, heterosexual and Catholicism-based power relations, remains largely vague and prone to be contested and redefined. This is particularly well reflected among Polish migrant families in the UK and is explored further in the thesis (see Chapter 6).

In this chapter, I have so far looked into history, policy, religion and core values as social constructions which by continuously developing and intersecting shape Polish people’s understandings of sameness and difference. In the final part, in turn, I explore the implications of the ethnic and racial homogeneity of Polish society for the production of otherness.

#### 4.10 'Homogeneity' of Polish society

Paradoxically, in the era of globalisation, increased social diversity and international mobility, Poland remains one of the most ethnically, culturally and religiously homogeneous countries in the world (Podemski 2012). According to the 2011 Census almost 94% of the country's inhabitants are ethnically and nationally Polish, 2.2% declare mixed Polish and non-Polish ethno-national belonging and only 1.5% state to be non-Polish (GUS 2012). While these numbers may appear relatively small in comparison to Western European states such as the UK (e.g. England's ethnic minority population accounts for as much as 14% according to the 2011 Census), the assumed homogeneity of Polish society must be contested here. As I have demonstrated earlier in this chapter, social difference has always been present in the Polish context one way or the other. The pre-WWII diversity embraced 'visible' ethnic, national or religious communities (e.g. Jewish culture) whereas the communist-era uniformity included, often hidden, privatized and 'the unspoken' differences (e.g. gender inequalities, sexuality). Contemporary Poland, although statistically homogeneous, hosts a number of ethnic (e.g. Roma, Lemkos, Tatars), national (e.g. German, Belarusian, Ukrainian), language (e.g. Silesians, Kashubians) and religious (e.g. Orthodox, Jehovah's Witnesses, Protestant Evangelical) minorities (GUS 2012) as well as growing numbers of immigrants (Piekut 2013; Piekut et al. 2012).

Importantly, most of these groups, are socially read as White and thus 'racially' invisible. For these reasons, they are assumed be the element of the Polish historically white landscape and its racial non-diversity. Against this backdrop, it is important to acknowledge that it is either the awareness of difference (in terms of e.g. nationality, ethnicity, religion, sexuality) or its visible and/or phenotypical *standing-out-ness* (e.g. following certain fashion or subculture trends, having ginger hair) that initiates the process of othering.

As I have argued earlier in this thesis (see Chapter 2), in the societies which have historically and socially been constructed as White (such as Poland), whiteness and the privileges it confers have often been naturalized, taken for granted, assumed 'normal' and thus never explicitly discussed (Alba 1990). Furthermore, I have stressed that the position of power in racially White communities tends to be unacknowledged and/or denied (e.g. Bonnett 1996; Dyer 1988). It may be one of the reasons why the issue of whiteness (and white privilege) is rarely addressed in the

Polish context and scholarly studies concerning Poland. Arguably, it is by and large the researchers of Polish migration (e.g. Lopez Rodriguez 2010; Ryan 2010a; van Riemsdijk 2010) that draw attention to the necessity of studying whiteness with regard to Polishness. In this thesis, I follow these calls and argue that whiteness remains a crucial aspect of Polish society and broader imaginary of sameness and difference. Particularly interesting is, in this respect, looking into what I call *standing-out-ness* in the Polish context – an exploration of what, who and why ‘stands out’, is different, other or strange in the light of the hegemonic discourse of the homogeneous Polish society.

#### **4.11 The narratives of *standing-out-ness***

It comes with no surprise that the narratives of a ‘homogeneous’ society, “Catholic, White, Polish, heterosexual” as one of my informants would put it, were evident across my study. More or less accustomed to difference in terms of gender, age, social status or disability, many interviewees spoke of a complete lack or a very rare, and, indeed, fleeting contact with ethnic, national, religious or sexual difference in their environments in Poland. Magda, for example, despite her studies in a big city in Southern Poland, cannot recall any encounter with ethnic, cultural or religious difference apart from meeting “an Italian boy” and going to secondary school with an atheist girl.

I met only one [such a] person in Poland – an Italian boy. Well, actually two persons – the other asked me something on a street [*she laughs*]. So, really, I don’t have a huge experience. (...) It was an element of something exotic. (...) I didn’t really have much contact with different people. I don’t think I ever met somebody of a different religion. I met a girl - in my secondary school there was a girl who was an atheist.

Magda (migrant, female, aged 28)

Singular encounters with difference many of my informants recalled do not seem to contribute to the elimination of the assumptions of whiteness, national, religious or even sexual sameness in the Polish context. In addition, it needs to be recognized here that such a fleeting contact may often result in an automatic (and, indeed, uncritical) *exoticization* of diversity. Julia, for example, reports how against the

backdrop of regular invisibility of ethnic difference “one Black person” was extra visible in her town in Northern Poland.

In X. [name of town] there was nobody [different]. No-bo-dy. No foreigners. There was only one Black person. One girl with a dark skin and that was it. And, I remember it was always... Even though she was born in Poland and spoke Polish and so on – everything normal. It was always – well, everybody in X. knew her. Because, she was just the only such a person. And, this would be very striking/visible.

Julia (migrant, female, aged 27)

In the interview, Julia used an interesting idiomatic expression *rzucalo się w oczy* (literally meaning: it was eye-catching, striking, standing out) to describe visibility of non-whiteness in the Polish context. Such *hyper-visibility* of difference, as Ghorashi (2010) would put it, contributes to its increased noticeability in the public space. It may also encourage stigmatising and/or discriminatory behaviour (Goffman 1990 [1963]). Indeed, even though the Black girl Julia refers to was Polish-born, spoke Polish and could easily be described as a local person, her presence in a racially homogeneous environment was always spotted and aroused common interest (e.g. everybody in town knew her by sight). Such inevitable conspicuousness of difference in the Polish context was addressed by many other informants some of whom produced extraordinary interpretations of it. Filip, for instance, quoted earlier in this chapter for his understanding of ‘modern’ Polish family, explained this *standing-out-ness* of non-White bodies as in his own words “a curiosity”, “a provocation” and thus a threat the fixed social order.

In Poland we don’t encounter such difference (...). So, if somebody is different, if somebody is atypical, he or she is a curiosity - this person is found to be a provocation.

Filip (migrant, male, aged 28)

My study further evidences that ‘invisibility of difference’ in the Polish context, enhanced by, as some participants emphasized, a common practice of concealing sexual or even religious preferences, often translates into expressions of overt surprise or attention in encounters with difference. Many older informants in my sample stressed that the post-WWII isolation from ethnic difference (which was only challenged by single often orientalist literary and/or film representations) resulted in an experience of profound surprise or shock to encounter, for example, a Black

person in the Polish socialist or even early-transition setting. Irena, one of my migrant participants in her 50s, spoke of children exclaiming “Wow, *Murzyn*<sup>16</sup>! Look!” when spotting such an individual in a public place. Radosław, the father of migrant Maja, recalled a few moments when he saw people turning their heads in disbelief when passing a Black person in smaller Polish towns.

Some time ago everybody would turn around if a Black person showed up. (...) I guess this behaviour is normal in any place. If a White person goes to Africa, to a place where people hardly ever see a White person or person of any other skin colour or any other behaviour... people will have a look at such person as well. People consider it a curiosity or something interesting. (...) It doesn't mean people are deeply racist or are racists at all. I wouldn't say so. No. If we [Polish people] had an opportunity to see more such people round... if we saw people of different skin colour more often, everybody would get used to it.

Radosław (significant other, in his 50s)

Radosław's common-sense understanding echoes the assumption of whiteness and a widespread normalization of white skin colour (Alba 1990; Bonnett 1996) in the Polish context. This partly explains the vivid expression of a genuine surprise to see a non-White person in an environment assumed to be White. What I have found across my fieldwork, suggests further that such a situated expression of racism seems to be a consequence of the communist-era isolation from diversity and an assumption of sameness or whiteness rather than a form of actual prejudice.

Interestingly, some of my respondents seemed to understand such behaviour as an implication of moral judgement. In their narratives, Poland was often referred to as “a judgemental society” and the tendency to express judgement was considered culture-specific. The adjective ‘judgemental’, rather than highlighting the feature itself, appears to be associated with behavioural expressions of shock, attention, hostility, criticism or general disapproval of various forms of the alleged *standing-out-ness*. Geographers conceptualize such embodied expressions of judgement as moral emotions (Sayer 2005b; Valentine and Sadgrove 2012). Maja, for instance, the daughter of Radosław cited earlier, went as far as to say that if somebody behaves even in a little uncommon way in the Polish context (e.g. by following a different fashion trends) he or she may experience a soft form of stigmatization, namely a bad

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<sup>16</sup> Meaning ‘Negro’ - translatable into ‘Black person’. For a discussion about the usage of the word *Murzyn* in the Polish context see Chapter 3: Translator researcher.

look. While in the interviews Maja (as well as a few other respondents) used a popular Polish expression *krzywe spojrzenie* (literally meaning: a crooked, twisted look), in this thesis I translate it into ‘a bad look’ to maintain comparability of meaning. Maja was particularly surprised that in the British context people in public spaces do not observe and pay attention to one another in such a “perfidious” way as in Poland.

Maja (M): My observation would be: here [in UK], you can literally put everything on and nobody will give you a bad look. Really, people look so strange sometimes. In comparison to Polish society... in Poland people would give you a bad look.

Interviewer: People would let you feel...

M: Yes, just by looking at you.

Maja (migrant, female, aged 21)

In her narratives, Maja also recalled not hanging out in her garden any washing on Sundays, so that her neighbours would not see she had worked on a day considered sacred in her religious environment. Otherwise, they would apparently not only pay attention, but also make some comments about that. Another migrant informant, Iga, extensively narrated her personal experience of being given what she termed a “strange” or a “contemptuous” look when coming back from a night party in the morning and passing on her way home some older ladies heading to the local church. She found it discriminatory in terms of age and gender, and interpreted it as a silent message that in her own words “a girl from a good family shouldn’t come back home at such a time”. Many other interviewees pointed out that what I conceptualise here as a ‘bad look’ is specific to the Polish context. It may thus be a form of the so called cultural script (Goddard and Wierzbicka 2004) and epitomize a judgemental reaction to difference in a space of the assumed sameness. Yet, above all, it is a form of social othering and exclusion – an open act of drawing moral boundaries between oneself and the demonised others. Geographers and social scientists argue that such seemingly banal moral judgements are particularly consequential for societies as they may contribute to regulation of certain social groups and production of inequalities (Lee and Smith 2004; Smith 1994).

Across the final two sections I have demonstrated that the consequence of relative ethnic, national, cultural and religious homogeneity in the Polish context is the understanding of whiteness as a social norm and non-whiteness as difference. I

have evidenced that against the backdrop of predominantly White Polish society, non-White bodies ‘stand out’ and tend to be *hyper-visible* (Ghorashi 2010). My findings furthermore suggest that in public encounters such visible difference is likely to arouse increased attention and may encourage a culture-specific reaction of stigmatizing nature (e.g. surprised gaze or a bad look). Importantly however, while discriminatory or conveying a moral judgement, this response may not be an expression of actual negative attitude. This is of particular significance in the context of mobility from a relatively homogeneous society (Poland) to a diverse one (the UK).

#### **4.12 Conclusions**

In this chapter, I have looked into a normative framework that explains the socially constructed understandings of difference in the Polish context. First of all, I have demonstrated how the consequence of Polish history is the production of national values structured around nationalism, religion and family. In doing so, I have drawn attention to the communist-era production of sameness and heteronormativity. Secondly, I have looked into the changing policies of equality and specifically explored the legitimization of gender inequalities. Then, I have outlined the consequences of the dominance of the Catholic doctrine. These include among other things institutional reinforcement of heteronormativity, family values and gender roles. I have also analysed the perception of the Catholic Church as a social authority and a mediator in developing ideas about difference. Specifically, I have acknowledged the role of gendered reproduction of religious practice. Further in the chapter, I have explored the notion of family as a core Polish value. Interestingly, although a single family image (i.e. heteronormative family with traditional gender roles) seems to exist in the Polish popular consciousness, quite diverse family models are lived in practice. Lastly, I investigated the understandings of the Polish social homogeneity, mainly in the context of whiteness and *standing-out-ness*.

By exploring the historical, political, religious and everyday production of sameness and difference, in the chapter I have outlined the complexity of a hegemonic normativity in the Polish context. In this thesis, I argue that the acknowledgement of this framework is necessary for the understanding of the processes which occur as a result of migration to diverse societies and confrontation



with their distinctive cultures and normativities. Although often contested in real life such normative frameworks are indeed primary systems of reference and necessarily shape images of normality and otherness. They also seem to affect individual attitudes towards ethnicity, religion, gender, age, sexuality, class and disability. I closely explore this issue in the next chapter in which I focus on attitudes towards difference in the Polish context.



## Chapter 5: Attitudes towards difference in the Polish context

### 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I explain how the normative framework outlined in Chapter 4 mediates attitudes towards difference in contemporary Poland. In doing so, I discuss imaginaries of difference as well as personal stances towards otherness constituting a *symbolic baggage* that migrants carry when they move to receiving societies. On their journey abroad, migrants are believed to be often accompanied by what has been termed ‘physical containers’ of their home - small banal objects or talismanic possessions which gain a special meaning and work as a link between the present and the past, the reality and the memory (Morley 2000). In this chapter, I am interested in the symbolic baggage mobile individuals may or not be conscious of bearing. While exploring the notion of attachment and belonging to a group of people, the social anthropologist Anthony Cohen (1985: 118) famously argued that “people construct community symbolically, making it a resource and repository of meaning, and a referent of their identity”. In claiming so, he suggested that what people who form communities may have in common is a certain understanding of the social and physical world, a community of meaning. Although Cohen spoke of communities rather than societies or nations, his claim, I believe, can be extended to include the notion of society. In the previous chapter I have, indeed, evidenced that distinctive conceptualisations of sameness and difference are produced in specific national and geo-historical contexts. Inspired by Cohen’s conceptualisation, in this thesis, I utilise a concept of symbolic baggage to refer to a socio-cultural normativity that concerns difference and is likely to assist migrants on their journey between home and host societies. In this chapter, I thus focus on socially transferred attitudes, codes of conduct, tacit understandings, manifestations, discourses or language of sameness and difference which may be saturated with meanings of symbolic home community (Cohen 1985).

Throughout the chapter, I reflect on various processes which have led to the stigmatization, demonization or orientalizing of Others in the Polish context. It is crucial to explain that I do not address all axes of difference. Whilst attitudes towards difference in terms of ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender and sexuality were extensively discussed by my research participants, approaches towards class, age and disability were articulated to a much lesser degree. In this respect, each section of this chapter reflects the discursive saliency of certain topics. In addition, given the normative framework I have outlined in the previous chapter, such issues as ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender and sexuality are, indeed, the predominant axes of difference in the Polish context. As I have explored the production of gender and the attitudes towards gender equality in Poland earlier in this thesis (see Chapter 4), I do not look into this issue here in order to avoid repetition.

I begin the chapter with looking into attitudes towards nationality (Germans and Russians), followed by attitudes towards religion (Jewish people, Jehovah's Witnesses and Muslim people). I then focus on approaches towards sexuality (non-hetero-normativity) and perceptions of race and ethnicity (Black people). Throughout the chapter, I demonstrate how attitudes towards these categories are influenced, interrupted or framed by not only Polish history, Catholicism, family values and whiteness, but also older generations, the media as well as cultural and political discourses.

## **5.2 Historically-driven attitudes towards Germans and Russians**

History is one of the most powerful sources of attitudes towards people and groups. In particular, national history and the way it is re-told tends to impact on opinions and views of individuals who consider themselves members of a nation as an imagined community (Anderson 1991) or a *we-group* (Mennell 1994) tied by collective emotional belonging (Wood 2007, 2012). The Polish traumatic history is no exception in this respect. In the previous chapter, I illustrated that it has the capacity to shape the normative framework of reference which is reproduced and contested in everyday life. But, history has also been argued to mediate attitudes towards the representatives of nations and religious or ethnic groups which were directly involved particularly in the 20<sup>th</sup>-century events (Bilewicz and Jaworska 2011; Janion 2011) such as Germans, Russians or Jewish people. Bilewicz and

Jaworska (2011) claim that history can be a serious threat for positive relations between groups and societies as it releases a multitude of moral emotions such as shame, regret, anger or a sense of guilt. These emotions are often linked with specific stories or myths which serve as explanations or justifications for certain events and are constructed as axes of (dis-)identification. Moreover, such understandings tend to be passed on from generation to generation and assume the role of the ingredients of national mythology or sensorium (Zubrzycki 2011). As such, they permeate social life including arts and popular culture, school curricula or media coverage. They are, therefore, likely to shape people's attitudes towards difference.

In the Polish context two imagined Others are traditionally drawn on while discussing the influence of history on people's attitudes – the Germans and the Russians. Because of history (e.g. partition period, WWII, communism) both nations have tended to be socially viewed as colonisers (Mayblin et al. 2014) and archenemies of Poland (Kępiński 1990; Tazbir 1991). In addition, in Polish literature (including compulsory school readings) and popular culture they have until recently been constructed almost exclusively as negative characters, brutal soldiers or oppressors (Janion 2011; Król 2007; Masłowska 2005). The feelings towards both nations are reflected in Polish public opinion polls. Although decreasing significantly over the last 15 years, there still persists a certain socially acceptable resentment towards German and Russian people (CBOS 2012b). Moreover, for the majority of Poles surveyed (72%, n=1041) WWII is still a vivid element of contemporary national history rather than a distant past event (CBOS 2009a). Interestingly, the same percentage of young adults (aged 18) and middle-aged Poles (aged 40) believe so (68% in both cases). This view is even more popular among older respondents (CBOS 2009a) which suggests that the intergenerational transfer of attitudes may be quite relevant. It seems that the war is conceptualized by Polish people as a profound event requiring constant remembrance (Zubrzycki 2011). This may be the reason why the WWII-era figures of Germans and Russians still affect the public imaginary.

Nonetheless, the present-day attitudes towards both nations are very complex. The contemporary perception of the German people in Poland appears only partly affected by the WWII events and, as recent research shows (see e.g. Bukowski and Cichocka 2009), increasingly tends to be conceptualized in terms of admiration of the progressive post-war 'West'. At the same time, the negative attitudes towards Russians seem more persistent as they are enhanced by the vivid memory of the

communist regime which lasted almost 50 years. Polish-German political relations are also evaluated as more positive than the Polish-Russian ones (CBOS 2009b). As such, Russian people together with the nationals of former Soviet states play, due to the experience of the communist dependence, a significant role in the construction of Polish national identity (Janion 2011; Mayblin et al. 2014). As I evidence later in the chapter, the so called *Ruscy* (a derogatory term translated into English as Russkis) exist in the Polish collective consciousness as a symbolic Other. Although there is no fixed understanding of the term and no clear link with the present Russia, *Ruscy* frequently epitomize the Great Oppressor as in Masłowska's (2005) fiction "Snow White and Russian Red". They are often associated with a nondescript threat or enemy which derives from the (post-)communist 'East' (Janion 2011).

Unsurprisingly, the historical production of attitudes towards German and Russian people was a common theme across my study. The majority of research participants agreed that their perception of both neighbouring countries is largely affected by historical events and the way these events were discussed during their socialisation. Against this backdrop, the term *banal xenophobia* could be employed to describe historically-driven unfavourable attitudes towards national Others. The term 'banal' refers here to the concept of banal nationalism and everyday discourses which shape national identity, sense of solidarity as well as belonging (Billig 1995). While I acknowledge the complexities of contemporary attitudes towards both nations, I argue that banal xenophobia towards the German or Russian Other remains an aspect of Polish banal nationalism. This is reflected in the narratives of respondents such as Marek who suggests that the Polish history, alongside the way it is passed on by older generations and taught as a part of compulsory education, has a profound impact on Polish people's prejudiced attitudes towards Germans and Russians.

Marek (M): It [history] has a great influence on how we perceive other nations - Germans or Russians especially. The history and whatever was passed on by grandmothers, by the previous generations which experienced all these miseries. They transmitted this hatred, this dislike, this thinking that certain people and certain nations are such and such. And, I think that definitely – yes - the attitudes of the majority of people [in Poland] are influenced by the history – that's how we [Polish people] evaluate others. (...) I think that, similarly to what I've been told, Russians are worse than Germans because they did

more harm entering our land. They are more insincere, because they stabbed scythes in our backs. In the media some parties still say that we should dislike Russkis. Sure, they had Stalin and it was him and his people who organized a beautiful purge of the Polish intelligentsia. And history lessons - they teach us such things during the history lessons – they inculcate such things into us, they tell that these were facts and that it all, well – happened. The funniest thing is that I’ve been learning that Polish people also weren’t saints, that they also committed crimes. But, we’re not presented with such things during the history lessons. Somehow, the general conclusion of all history lessons always was that we were this lamb which fur was terribly shaved either from one side or the other. I’m not trying to make excuses here – the fact is: we were taught that whatever’s Soviet isn’t good.

Interviewer: Do you think you may be prejudiced towards Russians now?

M: Yes, of course! I think I am.

Marek (migrant, male, aged 32)

This quote is valuable for several reasons. First of all, Marek acknowledges the role of older generations in the transfer of negative attitudes towards the two generalized figures – Germans and Russians – socially and culturally constructed as eternal enemies and oppressors of Poland (Kępiński 1990; Król 2007; Tazbir 1991). This was commonly highlighted in the interviews with other informants aged 20-40. Such intergenerational transfer of values and attitudes seems somewhat inevitable in the Polish context. It was, indeed, a common rhetoric for my interviewees to conclude that, as one of my informant put it, “two generations still need to pass away and it will be fine”, meaning that the society would become less influenced by the historical events. Secondly, Marek is reflective about the significance of education in reproduction of, as he implies, nationalistically biased perception of history. Moreover, the narrative captures the impact of historical discourse on the attitudes of a young Polish person (Marek) who for no rational reason, but the *word of mouth* or popular culture representations, differentiates between both nations conceptualizing one of them as more harmful and “insincere”. Lastly, the story grasps a popular analogy in the Polish media and everyday discourses of Poland as a passive victim of history. As such, it evidences that banal xenophobia towards the German or Russian Other is likely to permeate everyday social life and contribute to the production of Polish national identity (Janion 2011).

Building on from the idea that WWII-era images shaped the attitudes of many Poles, an interview with a mother of one of the key participants draws attention to an interesting discrepancy between a prejudice towards German people as nation (the generalised Other) and a non-prejudiced actual reception of individual Germans. This discrepancy between the perception of an individual and a group may be partly explained by the recent claims that encounter-driven positive attitudes towards difference do not necessarily influence perception of the whole group (Matejskova and Leitner 2011; Valentine 2008).

We are an early post-war generation, right? So, the memory of war was very fresh in our families. (...) And, the funniest thing is (...) my general opinion about German people. When I have a contact with them individually, I don't really have a problem – either a person is decent or not. (...) My prejudice comes of fear. I do feel it towards Germans. Their motives... Their way of viewing the world which I learnt from the stories of people who took part in the war and then worked in Germany, from the press opinions. (...) This attitude was transmitted onto me. All these things – their motives, their behaviour [during the WWII] - are completely non-understandable to me. And, when I don't understand something, I'm afraid of it, because I'm not able to predict reactions. Barbara (significant other, in her 50s)

To further understand the source of Barbara's prejudice, it is particularly important to acknowledge that generations are likely to negotiate their own understandings of the past and history (Mannheim 1952; Pilcher 1994). In, what is now acknowledged as a classic theory of generations, Mannheim argued that individuals experiencing the same meaningful historical events tend to develop a collective consciousness and share a similar vision of the world (Pilcher 1994). He linked the formation of generations to social change and therefore spoke of 'historical generations'.

In the narrative, Barbara stresses that her belonging to 'historical' post-war generation strongly influenced by the common, at that time, remembrance of the Nazi occupation. She admits that she was exposed to negative opinions about German people and, as she grew up with these views, she internalized them. This resulted in a fearful conceptualization of a German imagined Other as a discursive construction. While Barbara's fear is genuine, the source of this emotion rather than being experience- is history-based. Indeed, in a real-life situation, when facing German people, Barbara does not seem to be prejudiced. Nevertheless, despite these singular encounters, her, as she puts it, "general opinion" remains unchallenged.



Importantly, generations (as well as intergenerational transfer of attitudes) are not only conceptualised in historical terms. Alongside historical, intra-familial generations (i.e. grandparents, parents and children) have been argued to have a significant influence on people's values, attitudes, beliefs and practices (see Chapter 2 and e.g. Morgan 1996; O'Bryan et al. 2004; Schönplflug 2001; Valentine et al. 2010; Valentine et al. 2012; Willoughby et al. 2012). Given this understanding, it is intriguing whether Barbara's prejudice has an influence on her children. In the interview, Barbara told me that she had to put a lot of conscious effort into not transferring her unfavourable attitude towards the generalised German Other onto her daughters. As much as she tried, the negative imaginary regarding Polish-German relations has been leaking out over years in everyday seemingly unrelated conversations or commentaries on social issues. Crucially, however, Barbara's negative attitude is not instilled in her children. Although both her daughters claim they are familiar with their mother's view, they did not express prejudice towards German people themselves. In the quote below, one of Barbara's daughters, Natalia, reflects on her mother's attitude towards Germans as well as her own understanding of how contemporary young Poles perceive German people.

Natalia (N): I suspect that my mum is influenced by one of the family friends who has very extreme views. He's unfortunately quite racist. But, this is an elderly person. He dislikes Germans really much. And, he often expresses his dislike. (...) To be true, my mum is very tolerant. But, sometimes when we have guests... sometimes I feel that she's showing off a bit and makes such comments about Germans. Because, I believe she's tolerant and she has nothing against Germans... apart from some history-related issues.

Interviewer: Do you think history is very significant for Poles?

N: I'm sure it's influenced my parents' generation. There's an influence on my generation, but it's much smaller. There are a lot of student exchanges with Germany now and I think such events change the mutual perception.

Natalia (migrant, female, aged 21)

Although Natalia seems to idealize her mother (by repeating that Barbara is a tolerant person, stressing that she must be influenced by a family friend and explaining that her mother is only "showing off"), she is aware of Barbara's attitude being shaped by history. At the same time, she distances herself from her mother's prejudice. She also challenges Barbara's understanding of the generalised German Other by saying that

she and her peers tend to develop their attitudes via direct encounters (student exchange programmes) rather than depending on the older generations' views. Interestingly, a similar approach was narrated by another relatively young informant in my sample, Maja. This respondent has argued that her generation considers historically-driven attitudes, as she put it, “granny talk” and – since “we’re far away from what happened” – younger Poles tend to identify with the “unified Europe” rather than the war-era divisions or stereotypes.

All these narratives exemplify a complex intergenerational travel of history-rooted attitudes. They suggest that despite being communicated, negative attitudes towards the national Other held by the generations directly affected by particular historical events, are re-negotiated by the younger generations whose social experience of international relations is substantially different. This partly resonates with the findings of other studies into historical consciousness and prejudice. Nasalska (2000), for instance, has evidenced that while Polish youth may be aware of memories of or actual prejudices towards Germans, this is not unconditionally connected with their own negative attitudes. Barbara and her daughter’s case further evidences that while prejudice is likely to travel in time and across generations, it is nonetheless prone to dilute and whether it materialises or not is perhaps dependent on other circumstances.

Another interesting aspect of a discussion about the historical production of attitudes towards difference and their influence on the contemporary society is the figure of *Ruscy* I have mentioned earlier in this chapter. Surprisingly, given the vivid conceptualization of Russia as an invader from the ‘East’ or the eternal enemy of Poland (e.g. Janion 2011), the majority of the research informants did not understand *Russkis* in such terms. For these respondents, *Ruscy* were rather a homogeneous and featureless group of people coming from the former Soviet Union’s republics such as Russia, Ukraine, Belarus or Lithuania. The striking discursive essentialisation of this multinational and multi-ethnic population seems to reflect the socialist tendency to unify and homogenise rather than diversify and individualise (Drakulić 1996). It is illustrated in the narrative below:

The question is – who’s *Ruski*? Is a Chechen person *Ruski*? I don’t know. It is for me, because it used to be one huge federation before. *Ruski* was *Ruski* – yet, the fact is – these are completely different nationalities. But, they all were part of this

federation and that's how we viewed *Ruskich*. Whoever lives east from our eastern border is *Ruski* for me. Because, that's how it used to be... and that's what has been put into our heads. Ukrainian person, Lithuanian person – this was still *Ruski*. Sure, they have different nationality and we shouldn't put them into the same box – but, still they are *Ruscy*. That's what people believe in. I think the next generation won't think this way – but, I guess my generation still thinks so. Because, we still remember the USSR period – the whole Soviet Union and all these republics that were part of it. And, that's what was put into our heads. I guess, still the majority of people view it this way.

Marek (migrant, male, aged 32)

Marek, a respondent quoted earlier for his perception of Germans and Russians, attempts to explain that the vague image of Russkis was instilled in many Poles in late socialist and early post-socialist Poland. Although hardly any person can tell who the Russkis exactly are and where they come from, they definitely became part of the collective identity - an imagined group of reference for Polish people (Janion 2011; Mayblin et al. 2014). In addition, as the figure of *Ruscy* seems to encompass people from many Eastern European countries, but none in particular, it highlights the extent to which the homogenisation of societies, communities and nations was an element of a socialist Polish reality.

Following this understanding, the contemporary perception of Russkis is a complex one. Below Ela reports how, in her view, this group is conceptualized in everyday encounters.

Generally, we [Polish people] don't like *Ruscy*. (...) But, well, it's different. Because you do business with them. And when you get to know them closer, you know – these are nice, those are not. But, there's always been this [thinking] that *Ruscy* are worse. People looked at them with contempt. Because, they were always poorer, they always had worse clothes, always dressed in grey, did trading in winter. They stood there [outside]. Always, always. Like a sub-category [of people], you know.

Ela (migrant, female, aged 31)

Having lived in a big city in North-Eastern Poland, situated close to the Belarusian border, Ela views Russkis as recent cross-border petty traders “standing there” at local bazaars. Visibly non-affluent, they have gained a reputation of “poorer” or even “worse” – the people who may be given, as Ela suggests, a stigmatising look for their underprivileged status. This echoes the orientalist images of *Ruscy* discussed in a

recent study of Polish people's understandings of Russia and the East more broadly (Mayblin et al. 2014). Ela, indeed, implies that Russkis are commonly perceived as inferior. However, what she further adds complicates the social attitude she describes. Even though Polish people may have a general unfavourable attitude towards *Ruscy* as a symbolic Other, via closer contact, she says, they "get to know them" and "it's different" – their attitudes towards individual *Ruscy* may change. This resonates with a recent study of Matejskova and Leitner (2011) who have looked into perceptions of Russian *Aussiedler* (minority from the former Soviet Union) in Berlin, Germany. The authors have noticed that despite empathy and positive attitudes local Germans develop towards individual *Aussiedler*, negative stereotypes of the minority remains unchallenged. In her narrative above, Ela seems to refer to a similar situation. It appears that even though transactional relations between some Poles and Russkis generate positive feelings towards individual Russkis, the negative image of the whole group nonetheless persists.

The empirical evidence presented in this section advances discussions regarding historically-driven attitudes towards difference in contemporary Poland. It suggests that, although certain prejudices dilute over time, across generations and via positive encounters, the Polish history remains vivid in the popular consciousness and historically constructed stereotypes may circulate in the society. As such, history is likely to shape the symbolic baggage of many (migrant) Poles. This argument is also relevant in the case of the attitudes towards Jewish people which are explored below. As the nature of anti-Semitism in the Polish context is a complex one, it is investigated in a separate section.

### **5.3 Anti-Semitism in the Polish context**

The image of Jewish Other and the belief in Jewish threat have been argued to shape the Polish national identity for the last few centuries (Janion 2011; Michlic 2006). Although attitudes towards Jewish people are believed to have a significant historical background, the nature of anti-Semitism in Poland has a highly complex and multi-layered structure (Bilewicz and Krzeminski 2010; Bilewicz et al. 2013; Bilewicz et al. in press; Kofta and Sedek 2005; Krzeminski 1993; Wójcik et al. 2010). Drawing on the work of Fein (1987), Bilewicz et al. define anti-Semitism as "a culturally transmitted system of hostile beliefs about Jews as a collective that is objectified in

specific anti-Jewish attitudes at an individual level” (Bilewicz et al. 2013: 15). Despite the tiny Jewish minority in Poland – of round 7000 people according to the recent Census (GUS 2012) - anti-Semitism seems to remain a persistent problem in the contemporary Polish context (Bilewicz and Wójcik 2010). This situation, observed in many Central and Eastern European countries, was described as “anti-Semitism without Jews” (Lendvai 1971) and has led some scholars to claim that prejudices towards Jewish people may have a purely cognitive and/or affective nature (Bilewicz et al. 2013). As such, they are not necessarily translated into real-life behaviour towards Jewish individuals (ibid.).

In sociological studies anti-Semitism in Poland has been argued to assume two distinct forms: traditional, stemming from historical anti-Judaism, and the so called ‘modern’ based on secular stereotypes and Polish nationalism (Krzeminski 1993). Following these conceptualisations, Bilewicz et al. (2013) explain that traditional anti-Semitism is rooted in religious understandings (i.e. early Christian concept of deicide - the killing of Jesus Christ as God) as well as the so called blood libel (the false accusation of the usage of blood for rituals). According to recent studies such religion-based anti-Semitism (anti-Judaism) is quite rare in Poland (Bilewicz et al. 2011). Moreover, as Krzeminski (2002) claims, it occurs mostly in rural areas among less educated and older Poles. On the other hand, ‘modern’ forms of anti-Semitism include non-religious stereotypes such as the belief in Jewish conspiracy, also noted beyond the Polish context (Bilewicz and Krzeminski 2010; Werbner 2012). In addition, they may assume the form of the so called secondary anti-Semitism (Imhoff and Banse 2009) which can be framed by diminishing the significance of the Holocaust, self-distancing from it or a willingness to *leave the past behind* (Bilewicz et al. 2011). In contrast to traditional anti-Semitism, these beliefs are argued to be non-dependent on place, education or age (Krzeminski 2002), but are more likely among the people who feel economically deprived (Bilewicz et al. 2013). Anti-Semitic beliefs seem also linked with the so called competition of victimhood, a desire to establish that a certain group suffered more in violent conflict or during a war than the other (Noor et al. 2012). In a recent study on collective narcissism in Poland (a belief in greatness and uniqueness of Polish nation) it has been argued that an ‘obsession’ with victimhood (e.g. the Polish WWII-era martyrdom) leads to a prejudice towards Jewish people (Golec de Zavala and Cichocka 2012).

Reflecting on my research data, I was surprised by the striking absence of the ‘Jewish issue’ or the discourse of Holocaust in the informants’ stories. On most occasions, I had to actively elicit responses related to Jewish people. The absence of the Holocaust may be viewed as a symptom of the secondary anti-Semitism (Imhoff and Banse 2009) framed by a refusal or unwillingness to discuss the major Jewish narrative as unworthy elaboration. However, considering the nature of my study (i.e. small sample enabling an in-depth exploration of personal dispositions and prejudices), I am very reluctant to say this was the case with my research participants. Rather, it may possibly be interpreted as a consequence of a lack of exposure to the post-Holocaust discourse and encounters with Jewish people or, simply, ignorance. Nonetheless, several informants reflected on their attitudes towards Jewish people while speaking of difference. Irena, for example, was among very few who articulated prejudice.

Irena (I): I haven’t heard... Among my friends - and I don’t mean now - I mean earlier, some decades ago. I haven’t heard any good opinion about Jewish people. I haven’t. And, I guess I took it for granted.

Interviewer: And, you took over this opinion so to speak?

I: Yes, yes, because personally, I’ve never met a Jewish person.

Irena (migrant, female, aged 50)

Although somewhat simplistic, this quote is a good exemplar of an implicit “anti-Semitism without Jews” (Lendvai 1971). Irena has never had any direct contact with Jewish people, yet there seems to be a negative attitude underlying her statements. It appears she internalized the prejudice that was present among the people with whom she used to socialise as further in the interview she could not explain or justify it.

Unlike Irena, Katarzyna and Wojciech, the parents of one of migrant participants in my study, were very reflective about their understanding of anti-Semitism in Poland. What is more, during the interview they challenged each other’s responses providing richness and detail to the story.

Katarzyna (K): I don’t know why Polish people are prejudiced towards Jews. I’m guessing – because they crucified [Jesus] Christ. And, such a belief exists in the Church. That’s why Jews are generally disliked.

Wojciech (W): No, religion has little to do with this.

K: How come? That’s the basic understanding.

W: It's more than that - it's related to this old saying "Your tenement, our street".

K: There was always envy, because they [Jewish people] were wealthy community.

W: They were always professionally and financially active.

K: They were more resourceful. And, it was always because of this envy, jealousy... that this group was disliked. But, this problem [of jealousy] was solved during the war [*bitter irony*], so this group is not big now and it is not discriminated in any way at the moment – yet, there is some witch-hunt in the media sometimes.

W: Not only in the media. In some block-of-flats neighbourhoods [wall-]inscriptions can be found. The question is what's followed by such an inscription. If it's only a teenage idiot fooling around – well, this is not extremely bad. Worse, if this is followed by some acts or these [Jewish] people actually live in such neighbourhoods.

Katarzyna and Wojciech (significant others, in their 50s)

In the quote above Katarzyna and Wojciech discuss the sources of unfavourable attitudes towards Jewish people. Katarzyna refers to anti-Judaism (Krzeminski 1996; Tokarska-Bakir 2008). In the discussion above it is epitomized by the scapegoating of Jewish people for the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Interestingly, in line with research on the nature of anti-Semitism in Poland (i.e. little presence of anti-Judaism), Wojciech challenges this conceptualization. He draws attention to the social context in the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Poland when Jewish communities were often associated with affluence, resourcefulness and power (Bilewicz et al. 2013). The saying "Your estate, our street" is crucial here. Being perceived as powerful (which in practice could translate into dwelling in affluent residential neighbourhoods, having a profession believed to be prestigious or owning a tenement house), Jewish people were prone to be stigmatized as Others by those who felt relatively deprived. Their co-presence was interpreted as endangering the traditionally Polish-Christian territory and state (exemplified by the "street" in the saying). This echoes the image of a Jewish threat to social system which is popular in many, particularly Eastern European, countries (Bilewicz et al. 2013; Michlic 2006) as well as the stereotypical vision of Jewish conspiracy (Bilewicz and Krzeminski 2010; Bilewicz et al. 2011). The interviewees also refer to the power of the media in shaping unfavourable attitudes and manifestations of prejudice noticeable in certain urban areas (i.e. large housing estates). The narrative is particularly telling as by encompassing its diverse

forms (both traditional and ‘modern’) it illustrates the intricate nature of anti-Semitism the Polish context.

While in this section I have focused on the attitudes towards Jewish people being entwined with history and national mythology, I have drawn attention to the social perception of ‘a different’ religion in the Polish context. To further understand the complexities and contradictions of my participants’ attitudes towards religion and belief, in the next section I explore the perception of the established and the new ‘folk devils’ – Jehovah’s Witnesses and Muslim people.

#### **5.4 Jehovah’s Witnesses and Muslims as ‘folk devils’**

Whilst religion (Catholicism) is socially constructed as one of the founding elements of Polishness (see Chapter 4), the Catholic Church – despite increasing social distrust towards its policies - remains a leading institution in forming public opinion in Poland (Pietrzak and Mikołajczak 2011; Środa 2007). Apart from affecting people’s attitudes towards for instance gender or sexuality, Catholicism seems to frame the perception of different religions or belief. In a recent quantitative study in Poland (CBOS 2012a), the majority of the respondents (n=960) stated they had the most favourable attitudes towards the established Christian denominations such as Orthodox Christians and Protestants. Simultaneously, they had much less favourable feelings towards the representatives of different monotheistic religions or new churches - Muslims and Jehovah’s Witnesses in particular. The study, in addition, demonstrates, that Polish people personally know very few or no individuals of different religion or belief. Approximately one third of the respondents had a contact with Orthodox Christians and one fifth with Protestants who belong to the biggest religious minorities in Poland, yet tend to cluster in certain areas of the country (Orthodox Christians in the North-East while Protestants in the South). Unsurprisingly, given the tiny Muslim community in Poland, only a small percentage of the respondents admitted to knowing a Muslim person (approximately 13%). Interestingly, the only religious community which members are personally known to the majority of Poles (round 60%) are Jehovah’s Witnesses. This community has been growing ever since the end of the communist regime and now makes up 0.36% of Polish society being the third largest religious minority in Poland (CBOS 2012a).



Notwithstanding the scope of this contact, the social perception of Jehovah's Witnesses is predominantly negative. Building upon his study of hostility towards religious groups, Doktor (2002) argues that although not heavily stigmatized, Jehovah's Witnesses in Poland are often involved in public controversies. He argues that they tend to be perceived as 'a sect' and are thus believed to be a threat to the society. This echoes the aforementioned perception of Jewish people as endangering the Polish political and social system (Bilewicz et al. 2013). Furthermore, as Jehovah's Witnesses explicitly identify with conservative set of values regarding marriage and family life, and follow strict religious discipline (e.g. reject blood transfusions, often avoid alcohol) the group is paradoxically associated with dishonesty and intolerance (Doktor 2002).

Whereas Jehovah's Witnesses could be considered an established 'folk devil' in a predominantly Catholic Poland, Muslims are definitely a new one (Pędziwiatr 2010). This is particularly interesting in the light of extremely small numbers of Muslim people in Poland who make up only 0.06% of the entire population (ibid.). The situation is further complicated by the fact that this group is quite diverse and embraces the autochthonous Muslim-*Tatars* as well as 'Muslim newcomers' from various countries (Buchowski and Chlewińska 2010; Pędziwiatr 2011). Small *Tatar* communities, originating from what has once been the Ottoman Empire (the predecessor of the contemporary Turkey), have been present in Poland for the last 600 years (Włoch 2009). However, since they are considered an ethnic rather than religious minority, *Tatars* are perceived as an element of folklore rather than Islamic tradition (Górak-Sosnowska 2012). They are therefore, despite being in fact Muslim, excluded from the Islamophobic and anti-Muslim sentiments which have been increasing for the last decades - in particular, after the 9/11 and 7/7 terrorist attacks (ibid.).

This relatively recent prejudice is to a great degree reinforced by the selective media representations stressing the alleged Muslim 'otherness' and propensity towards violence (Buchowski and Chlewińska 2010; Pędziwiatr 2010). It is further reinforced by questionable educational aids (e.g. school textbooks) which tend to include distorted images of Islam (Górak-Sosnowska 2006). Drawing on European Values Survey results, Pędziwiatr (2010: 89) notes that "the anti-Muslim sentiment among Poles is much stronger than amongst other European nations where Muslims make up significantly larger groups within the total populations". This situation has

led some scholars to speak of the so called “platonic Islamophobia” (Górak-Sosnowska 2006) or “Islamophobia without Muslims” (Włoch 2009) – a prejudice towards Muslim people in the context of actual absence of a significant Muslim minority in Poland. Clearly, the concept resonates with “anti-Semitism without Jews” (Lendvai 1971) I have explored earlier in this chapter. As such, it suggests that the social transfer of religious prejudice detached from any personal experience may be very relevant in the Polish context.

Drawing on my empirical material, the attitudes towards Jehovah’s Witnesses and Muslim people are quite complex reflecting the intricate nature of social life and human relations. One case is particularly telling while discussing the social perception of Jehovah’s Witnesses – the story of Ola. Ola is a younger sister of one of my migrant participants. Being a Catholic herself, Ola is married to a former Jehovah’s Witness and has been living with him and his mother, who is a practicing Jehovah’s Witness, in a small village in central Poland for a few years now. The couple has an eight-year-old son who is being raised in Catholic faith which is very significant for Ola. Ola’s grandmother also lives nearby. Ever since getting married and moving into the village, Ola has been stigmatized by her grandmother and some people in the village for being in a relationship and sharing a house with Jehovah’s Witnesses. None of Ola’s explanations made her grandmother believe Ola has not given up Catholicism.

She [grandmother] was shouting at me that I converted into my husband’s faith. She was screaming – how could I possibly do that, that they raised me to live with a different faith and how possibly I could do it. And, she wouldn’t listen to me when I said that I wasn’t changing my religion. She wouldn’t believe.

Ola (significant other, in her 20s)

Moreover, despite attending religious classes and preparing himself to have his First Communion (which is one of the main Catholic sacraments), Ola’s son was bullied at school for being “a Jehovah”. In the past, Ola’s husband also experienced discrimination based on his previous religious attachment – his friends rejected him for fear of being converted. Ola recalls being defamed and avoided particularly during her first year in the village. She says that the Catholic people in her neighbourhood and in her son’s school assume(d) that she automatically converted and would together with her young son actively try to convert others. They are

suspicious when she says she has always been a Catholic because she shares a house “where Jehovah’s live”. Most peculiarly, Ola admits she experienced a similar fear of conversion when moving in with her mother-in-law for the first time.

When I was about to move into my mother-in-law’s house I explicitly said I would be doing it only if my mother-in-law wouldn’t inculcate their [sic!] religion into me - in any way. Because, well, I just didn’t want to change my religion and I wanted to raise my child in Catholicism. And somewhere there - people’s attitudes - the environment influenced me and I (...) told her [mother-in-law] not to tell me anything about this faith [Jehovah’s Witnesses]. Even if she spoke of her faith, I wouldn’t have to convert – yet, I was afraid that I would [convert].

Ola (significant other, in her 20s)

In this thesis, I employ the term *conversion hysteria* and use it to refer to an irrational fear of conversion to a different religion that occurs supposedly beyond an individual’s control. Religious conversion is argued to be a profound human experience and often result in life transforming changes (Paloutzian et al. 1999). Heirich (1977) claims that new religious movements (such as Jehovah’s Witnesses) are particularly interesting in this respect as they frequently recruit from among individuals who are already religiously oriented. This partly explains the fear of contact with religious difference and hypothetical ‘contagion’ (Valentine et al. 2013) within the established religious communities (such as Catholics). According to my research data, conversion hysteria (together with the assumed importunity of Jehovah’s Witnesses in trying to obtain new believers) is one of the main sources of prejudice towards Jehovah’s Witnesses in the Polish context. Ola’s story suggests that hypothetical conversion is viewed as being unavoidable and occurring in a magical way as a consequence of pure contact rather than a result of a conscious individual decision. Such possible conversion is further conceptualized as a highly blasphemous act of disowning the religion of ancestors. In this context, Catholicism is believed to be the only true faith in contrast to Jehovah’s Witnesses’ untrue faith popularly referred to as *kocia wiara* [literally: a cat’s faith]. Ontologically, conversion hysteria seems to stem from the very perception of Jehovah’s Witnesses as a dangerous sect (Doktór 2002) rather than religion or church. Such an understanding of this minority allows to view it through the prism of the irrational or the evil and associate it with ‘black magic’ – something Catholic Poles are

dogmatically warned of and reminded to beware of. It is also prone to be fuelled by the sensationalist media images of Jehovah's Witnesses (Holden 2002).

Fear has been argued to be a major source of exclusion and negative attitudes towards minorities (Sibley 1995). Whilst the discussion above employs the fear of conversion, the attitudes towards Muslim people in Poland also seem largely fear-driven. In contrast to the case of attitudes towards Jewish people outlined earlier in the chapter, research participants frequently expressed their opinions and feelings related to Muslims. Moreover, speaking of attitudes towards difference in the Polish context, no other group (apart from LGBTQ), elicited such unexpected and emotional responses as Muslim people.

A good exemplar of fear-driven attitude is the narrative provided by Barbara who was previously quoted for her selective prejudice towards German people. In the quote below, Barbara explains why her previously unprejudiced attitude has changed recently. In doing so, she speaks of the global events being the sources of her ideas about the imagined fearful Muslims. Interestingly, Barbara has a relatively frequent direct contact with Islam as one of her relatives, with whom she is in very good terms, is a Polish Muslim-*Tatar*.

My attitude towards Muslim people has changed. I used to treat them just as everybody. But due to these terrorist attacks, I wouldn't wish a greater community to live in my area. I wouldn't feel safe. (...) As individuals they are human beings, but (...) if for the sake of my tolerance or acceptance of difference, I'd have to risk the safety of my family – no! There's no such an option. I believe that if somebody arrives to my home, he or she is a guest here. This person should live according to my rules. (...) If he or she comes from Egypt and doesn't want to live like a European... I'm not saying this person should believe in what I believe... but, if he or she tries to re-create Egypt here – he or she should go home. (...) I do believe there's place for diversity here. But, they [Muslim people] don't seem to be willing to be among us [as guests]. They have these tiny Turkeys in Germany, right? Small Turkeys in Great Britain, right? They don't seem to be attracted by our country – thank God. But, if they were – we'd have small Turkeys in Poland. And, I just don't wish them to be here. Because, this is my country. (...) In the light of the events which happened not long ago - take France for example. Young Muslim men rioting in France. And 9/11, all these attacks after the 9/11. In the UK, in Spain. It isn't far away. This could include the whole Europe. So, I wouldn't like to have a Muslim community nearby. I'd never be sure there wouldn't be a person

who'd like to blow himself or herself up together with me and  
my family. Barbara (significant other, in her 50s)

This prejudiced narrative is particularly interesting as it grasps a multitude of stereotypical portrayals of Muslim people such as Muslim terrorist, alleged Muslim propensity to violence, lack of will to integrate, urban ghettoization, a desire to impose Sharia law or take over traditionally Christian Europe (Døving 2010). Evidently, Barbara excludes her *Tatar* relative from her vision of culturally distant generalized Muslims (Górak-Sosnowska 2012). Even though earlier in the interview she praised the religious diversity of her family, while discussing her attitudes towards particular groups it never crossed her mind that her relative was Muslim. In other words, Barbara assumed that he was inherently familiar and disassociated him from the global Islamic tradition (Górak-Sosnowska 2012; Włoch 2009). In addition, the sentiment Barbara expresses in the quotation builds not only on a simple we-them dichotomy, but also host-guest power relations (Rosello 2002). Muslim communities in Great Britain, Spain or France Barbara refers to are viewed here as guest minorities which must adhere to the fixed normativities or else they will be unwelcome. This understanding echoes the concept of hospitality and social control of the Other (Bell 2007; Derrida 1998; Lynch et al. 2011). It furthermore draws on conceptions of nation, community and place to racialize Muslim people as out of place in Europe and/or Poland (Leitner 2011). Crucially, Barbara adds that she has recently developed a negative opinion about the generalized Muslim Other by attempting to comprehend certain traumatic and turbulent events (terrorist attacks, riots). These events made Barbara doubt her and her family's security as well as her sense of tolerance. Most importantly, they became the source of her fear which is projected subsequently onto the whole group (Valentine 2008).

It is also important to acknowledge the role of the media in shaping attitudes towards and opinions about Islam in Poland. In the literature, the media is often referred to as a major social institution which affects people's perceptions (Brewer et al. 2003; Slater 2007) including attitudes towards Muslims (Aly 2007). Unsurprisingly, in my study, the media was most commonly cited as a source of ideas about difference. In particular, one of my migrant participants, Lena, spoke of the role of the media in influencing the opinions of the Polish people who have little or no lived experience of ethnic or religious diversity. The example she provides is of her mother who developed her idea of Muslim people based exclusively on media

representations. According to Lena, after the 9/11 events the Polish media presented Muslim people mainly in the context of Islamic fundamentalism and terrorist activity. Lena's mother had never had a contact with any Muslim person before. Having been exposed to negative on average media representations, she started to have quite unfavourable attitudes towards this group and for instance to associate people dressed in certain way with terrorism.

I think that people who live in Poland and never lived abroad, [who] have never had any contact with other nations, they may build their knowledge and images of them from the TV, the media generally. (...) My mum, I know she takes over examples and opinions from the media. Last 10 years for instance when there was a lot about terrorists in the media. 9/11. Twin towers. And this witch-hunt for Muslims. Her ideas are - when she sees somebody dressed like that or she learns somebody's Muslim she has this association that this person has to be a terrorist. (...) So, if it's being presented in the media in such a way, how can she have a different opinion about it? (...) In Poland - this witch-hunt for gays and so on. Speaking about the right to abortion and euthanasia - some opinions are just very specific and very extreme. All these extremes are presented in the media, exaggerated and it has an impact on how people perceive things.

Lena (migrant, female, aged 29)

In her narrative Lena speaks of how powerful the media can be in affecting people's views in Poland. Extreme opinions transmitted via various media referring not only to Muslim people, but also homosexuality or abortion can, in her view, generate more extreme perceptions of these phenomena. This common sense presumption is broadly explored in various literatures on Islamophobia and the media (e.g. Aly 2007; Byng 2010; Saeed 2007; Slone 2000). In her study of the media discourse on terrorism in Australia, Aly (2007: 27), for instance, argues that since the 9/11 attacks the Australian media played a significant role in shaping the discourse on terrorism and, as such, implied that Muslims are "secular resistant and at odds with the values of the liberal democratic state". In doing so, the author suggests, the media influenced not only the non-Muslim Australian public opinion, but also the construction of Australian Muslim identity. Similar claims regarding media-fuelled Islamophobia are reiterated with regard to European societies such as the UK (Frost 2008; Saeed 2007) and Poland (Pędziwiatr 2010).

Notwithstanding this recognized role of television, press and radio, it is crucial to reflect on the distinctive nature of the Polish media. It has been argued that the right wing and Christian radio and press have been particularly influential in the Polish context (Marciniak 2009; Pobłocki 2011). A good example would be an ultra-Catholic broadcaster and institution called *Radio Maryja* advocating often openly nationalist, Eurosceptic, anti-Semitic, homophobic, sexist and anti-establishment views reaching – as it boasts – round two million listeners (Pobłocki 2011). Its fundamentalist stance, despite being criticized by the Holy See and liberal Polish media, is further expressed via private TV station, daily newspaper, university complex and own pilgrimage sites (Marciniak 2009).

Importantly, evidence supporting the argument about the opinion-forming role of the Polish media can be found in my research data – interestingly, in an interview with Lena’s mother, Maria. In the quote below, Maria elaborates on how her attitude towards Muslim people is constantly re-shaped by what she learns from television, particularly fiction-like documentaries being supposedly more credible. Curiously, Maria’s narrative is primarily structured around the discourse of the sexualized Muslim man (Døving 2010) rather than the terrorist as Lena inferred.

I don’t know such people [Muslims]. I only know about things from the television. There are various documentaries. There’s for example “*Ekspres reporterów*” [ENG: “Reporters’ express”], they speak about such drastic examples. Or, there are some detectives. But, I don’t know any people. So, I know these stories from the media, these fiction-like programmes about a threat from these people [Muslim men]. That they only enchant you now, but it will be so different later. (...) I think that in case of such [inter-faith] relationships there’s mainly a problem of pressure from the man’s family. And, I also think that a woman doesn’t think much about that, she’s not very interested in such cases and what happened to other women. Because, some of these women had these experiences and other women don’t think of it – they are so blind with their love that they don’t want to believe in such stories. So, somebody needs to get burnt.

Maria (significant other, in her 50s)

Maria confirms Lena’s assumption about the influential nature of the media. In addition, she voices her unease about the relationships with Muslim men who supposedly seduce naïve women and then, as Maria seems to imply, tend to oppress them. This understanding of gendered inter-faith relations resonates with a popular

discourse of the dominant and sexually abusive Muslim men (Døving 2010) which derives from the orientalist constructions of the Middle East (Said 2003 [1978]). Hall (1995 cited in Døving 2010: 66) argues that the use of such gender stereotypes of the Other is widespread. Alongside sexualisation of Black masculinity (Dines 2006; Nagel 2000), Muslim and/or Arab men are often eroticised and portrayed as overly masculine, lustful and despotic (Døving 2010; van Dijk 2002).

By exploring the attitudes towards Jehovah's Witnesses and Muslims in the Polish context, in this section I have looked into the popular imaginary about religious difference and acknowledged the significance of social institutions in framing these attitudes. In doing so, I have recognized the role of the media in a society that remains relatively non-diverse in terms of ethnicity and religion. Having extensively studied the relationship between discourse and racism, van Dijk (2002: 152) claims that in the countries or regions inhabited by few minorities "the mass media are today the primary source of 'ethnic' knowledge and opinion in society" and "virtually all beliefs about the Others come from mass media discourse, literature, textbooks, studies, or other forms of elite discourse". Given the relative ethnic, national and religious homogeneity of Polish society (Podemski 2012), this appears particularly relevant to the Polish context being broadly reflected in my empirical data. Against this backdrop, it also needs to be acknowledged that some of the Polish media tend to be influenced by the nationalist and/or Catholic rhetoric. This is, in various ways, the implication of the hegemony of Catholicism in Poland as well as social production of implicitly White, hetero-normative and Catholic Polishness (see Chapter 4).

This section contributes to and advances the conceptualisation of fear-driven and media-influenced attitudes towards difference. The data I have collected suggest that the media are capable of generating a space of remote, and indeed, 'mediated' encounters with the Other. Media representations of difference are therefore likely to be incorporated into the symbolic baggage of (migrant) Poles. The significance of television and press for Polish people's views is further explored in the next section which focuses on attitudes towards non-hetero-normativity.



## **5.5 The nature of moral panic around non-hetero-normativity**

According to a recent representative study (n=1111) a quarter of Polish adults know a gay person (CBOS 2013c). It is worth noting that this percentage increased significantly after 2005 when only round 15-16% of respondents (n=1056) admitted to have such contact (CBOS 2010c). This growth is mostly related to the 2004 accession of Poland to the EU. The accession has been argued to be critical for the visibility of the LGBTQ in the Polish public sphere and the escalation of homophobia (Binnie and Klesse 2012; Graff 2006, 2010). In this context, it is striking that only 12% of the 2013 survey respondents find homosexuality 'normal'. The vast majority (83%) consider it as - what has been vaguely described in the survey report - "a departure/deviation from a norm" (CBOS 2013c: 2). Interestingly, over a half of the latter believe homosexuality should be tolerated and a significant one fourth view it as entirely unacceptable (CBOS 2013c). While it is not my intention to elaborate on rhetoric here, I would like to emphasize that the phrase employed in the survey is representative of the popular political, social and media discourses concerning LGBTQ in Poland (Binnie and Klesse 2012). In this respect, particularly the elected in 2005 government under the presidency of the right-wing Lech Kaczyński utilised excessively homophobic rhetoric (Binnie and Klesse 2012) and accustomed public opinion to the social acceptance of prejudiced speech (Graff 2010). It is argued that homophobic hate speech in the public space in Poland appeared only after 1989 when Poland became an independent state (see Biedroń 2009). In accordance with the pre-1989 socialist propaganda homosexuality was virtually 'non-existent' in Poland and recalled only in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic or criminal activity (ibid.).

The above mentioned survey was a direct response to the early 2013 heated media debate after the rejection of the civil partnership bill in Poland and the increased coverage around the introduction of same-sex marriage in France. Similarly to the case of Muslim presence in Poland, the media seem to have a significant impact on Polish people's attitudes towards gays and lesbians. Whereas the 1990s media representations openly criminalised gay people (by e.g. covering their eyes with a black bar and distorting their voices on TV), the early 2000s television and press presented them as 'weirdoes' that occasionally experience discrimination (Oliwa 2012). As such, particularly gay men were sexualized in a way that was meant to shock and disgust (Graff 2006). In addition, the terms gay, lesbian

or bisexual were used mostly with regard to social problems (Oliwa 2012) while the term homophobia, closet or coming out were simply absent from social vocabulary (Graff 2006). The change, or what Oliwa (2012: 108) calls a “breakthrough”, came only recently with a prominent example of a recognized gay couple hitting the covers of magazines and TV screens after becoming the “Beautiful Couple of the Year” in 2008 in a celebrity contest conducted by a popular glossy magazine (Graff 2010). Oliwa (2012) argues that since that time the media started to present gay people as regular ‘humans’ on the same principle as the heterosexual majority. Importantly, openly gay (positive and likable) characters started to appear in popular Polish soap operas (such as e.g. “*M jak Miłość*” [L for Love] or “*Barwy szczęścia*” [Colours of happiness]).

Despite the shift in the media discourse and growth of LGBTQ activism in Poland (Binnie and Kleese 2012; Gruszczynska 2009), the level of homophobic attitudes in the Polish context is still reported to be quite high. Following the 2013 survey (n=1111) quoted earlier in this section, 63% of the respondents state that gay couples should not have a right to express their sexual identity in public, 68% oppose same-sex marriages and 87% are strongly against children being adopted by gay couples (CBOS 2013c). These numbers are unsurprising given the orthodox (discursive) understanding of family and the hegemony of Catholic doctrine as well as heterosexual normativity in Poland (see Chapter 4). In the literature, the homophobic beliefs in the Polish context are claimed to be linked to a few persistent stereotypes. The first one is a direct continuation of the socialist-era conceptualization of non-hetero-normativity as a mental illness or Western deprivation (Czarnecki 2007). It tends to be employed by the right-wing Catholic political parties and media (Graff 2006; Gruszczynska 2007). It is also used during far-right anti-LGBTQ demonstrations (Binnie and Kleese 2012; Binnie and Klesse 2012; Gruszczynska 2009). The second and probably less conspicuous stereotype stems from a construction of homosexuality as a threat to the (Polish) nation and traditional family values (Czarnecki 2007). This form of homophobia is argued to be articulated in other Central and European countries of a communist past which seem to seek ontological security in a discourse of traditionally heterosexual citizenship (Mole 2011; Waitt 2005). Following these understandings, Czarnecki (2007) speaks of the analogies of pre-war anti-Semitism and the present-day homophobia in Poland. Graff (2006, 2010) adds that what has been labelled in Poland “a

homosexual lobby” could be associated with the phrase “Jewish lobby” that refers to the deep-seated stereotype of a Jewish conspiracy (Bilewicz and Krzeminski 2010).

A telling illustration of the complexities of social attitudes towards homosexuality could be the turmoil around the infamous statement made by the Solidarity Movement icon, the first democratic-era president of Poland and a Nobel Peace Prize winner Lech Wałęsa. In a television interview early March 2013 Wałęsa said that he believed gay people – as a minority - had no right to sit at the front benches in the Polish parliament and should rather occupy back seats or, in his own words, “[stay] even behind the wall”. This homophobic comment prompted an outrage in some of the Polish (e.g. “*Tomasz Lis na żywo*” [Tomasz Lis live] 2013) as well as foreign media (e.g. The Guardian, The Independent 2013). Interestingly, despite being openly condemned by various politicians, artists and celebrities the statement was welcomed by many people who expressed their support on the anonymous Internet fora as well as in public (TVP.pl 2013). The mechanism of open or public admittance to homophobic views (Valentine et al. 2013) is crucial here. Graff (2006, 2010) links it to the expression of national pride (mobilised in response to the post-2004 EU interventions into various state policies including equality laws) and speaks of ‘homophobe’ as identity. The author argues that the term homophobe has in the Polish context become interpreted “a sort of Orwellian device aimed to deprive ‘normal people’ of the right to their gut responses” (Graff 2006: 447). For this reason, the right to be homophobic has become a matter of citizenship and belonging, and has been appropriated as an identity by ‘proud’ Polish patriots (Graff 2010).

Noting the compelling nature of the quoted literature, it is important to draw on the research data and investigate personal narratives of and attitudes towards non-hetero-normativity. Similarly to the case of Muslims explored in the previous section, interview questions related to LGBTQ people prompted excessive and often emotional responses. Whilst I would like to stress that research participants included many respectful informants, it was the prejudiced understandings as well as openly homophobic views that were most intriguing and casting light on the intricacies of attitudes towards sexuality. Probably the most frequent stance represented by the respondents was – what I have termed – the *let them be* attitude exemplified in Radosław’s narrative below. Radosław is the father of one of my migrant participants. He considers himself a ‘tolerant’ person, pro-civil partnerships, pro-

individual choice in the majority of ideological discussions (e.g. religion, abortion or in vitro fertilisation). Importantly, he used to have a gay acquaintance in Poland. All this has nonetheless not challenged his prejudiced understanding of homosexuality as deviation (Czarnecki 2007).

This [sexuality] is an individual thing. And, oh boy – I had a friend who was of different [sexual] orientation and when we visited him he'd knit for example. That was his issue, his business. So, I believe that for sure this is a sort of aberration but, well, human beings are very complex machines. (...) I don't understand it but, well, I've never thought in terms of – sorry for the expression – faggots and them being such and such – that's how some people approach it, name it and this is unacceptable. For sure I wouldn't look for close friendships among such persons but, I wouldn't also reject them. (...) It's their [gay people] problem. For me this is a sort of illness, a sort of disability. But, this is their problem. It doesn't apply to me. If you want to be there – just be there.

Radosław (significant other, in his 50s)

Although he admits he cannot “understand” non-hetero-normativity and perceives it in terms of “aberration”, “disability” and “illness”, which echoes a popular socialist-era propaganda-image (Czarnecki 2007), Radosław *lets gay people be* and strongly opposes stigmatization and discrimination of them. However, in doing so, he distances himself from this group and justifies his approach by explaining that it does not apply to his life situation. Furthermore, the narrative conceals Radosław's conceptualization of sexuality as very personal and thus private - beyond social interest. Following the psychology of legitimacy (Jost and Major 2001), it seems that privatization of sexuality becomes a discursive device for sanctioning articulations of his prejudice (Valentine 2010).

Even though a similar *let them be* rationale was mobilised by many other research participants, it appears that this attitude may have its limitations. In a narrative below, a migrant participant, Natalia, portraying herself as very tolerant and respectful of difference, reflects on her understanding of social attitudes towards LGTBQ people in Poland.

I guess, people are more and more tolerant, but to a certain degree. People have this attitude: “This is your life – do what you want”. But, as long as such issues as adoption of children by homosexual couples or marriages are considered, we are

as nation very careful. There's a boundary of our tolerance. So, for example, if adoption of children is considered – no. People believe a child should be raised in a normal, traditional family. I think that partly there are biological bases for such a model. Because, it's about a survival of a species. (...) I do believe we shouldn't tell people whom they're supposed to love and whom not. Even if gender is involved. (...) It sounds a bit hypocritical but – to be truly honest – it would be difficult for me to accept that homosexual couples adopt kids. (...) Party – yes, it's related to religion for sure. But, it's also about my own thinking. When I think of it, it seems wrong to me. I don't find it bad because the Church says so or somebody else says so. That's how I feel in my head. Natalia (migrant, female, aged 21)

Natalia's negotiations of the (non-)acceptable reflect the results of public opinion polls outlined earlier in this section in which the vast majority of the Poles surveyed oppose the adoption of children by same-sex couples (CBOS 2013c). In the eyes of this respondent, a normative framework building on what are assumed to be shared values, such as traditional heterosexual family, nationalism or religion, defines clear boundaries of people's tolerance. By employing a powerful discourse of a nation as an imagined community (Anderson 1991), Natalia voices her own unease about the rights of LGTBQ people to adopt and raise children. Although not explicitly, this narrative is informed by the construction of homosexuality as a threat to the (Polish) family values (Czarnecki 2007). Despite expressing overall positive attitudes towards gay people, when discussing the family domain as an element of Polishness, Natalia was incapable of transcending the essentialist imaginary.

Whereas the *let them be* stance was often expressed while discussing neutral or negative personal attitudes, a subtle *benevolent homophobia* was a few times articulated with reference to positive attitudes. I employ the term benevolent homophobia being inspired by the theory of benevolent sexism<sup>17</sup> (Glick and Fiske 1997) and understand it as a prejudice stemming from the generalized 'positive' beliefs or stereotypes. Such 'positively' prejudiced responses included for instance a repeatedly expressed statement made by Natalia's sister – Alina:

I'd like to have a gay friend. Because a gay man is a woman's best friend. Alina (significant other, in her 20s)

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<sup>17</sup> For details see Chapter 4: Catholicism as a dominant doctrine.

There is a stereotypical image of non-heterosexual men having allegedly a greater capacity for understanding of women underlying Alina's account. This resonates with the essentialist construction of gay men as non-masculine (Kite and Deaux 1987) and reveals the unwillingness of participants to acknowledge diversity and difference among LGBTQ people and women (Peel 2001). A somewhat similar, yet negative, image of homosexuality is portrayed in Tomek's criticism of what he labels "everyday homophobia" in the Polish context. Tomek recalls a story of his teenage cousin who was forbidden to join dancing classes by his father on the grounds that dancing was "so gay".

He [his cousin] wanted to start dancing classes. And my uncle said that he wouldn't enrol him, because it was so gay. It was very ridiculous for me. (...) This is the everyday homophobia in Poland. It is present everywhere or almost everywhere. And it shows that many people don't accept homosexuality. And, they don't even try to hide it. They don't think they could possibly harm somebody. It may be because they don't know anybody [gay]. (...) When I was at school, dancing classes were believed to be a non-masculine activity. And, apparently many older people [still] think so. My cousin is much younger than me, he's 15 now. So, this issue with dancing classes came out when he was 11-12 or so. He really wanted to dance.

Tomek (migrant, male, aged 26)

Tomek's narrative and what he terms "everyday homophobia" is in fact a good example of mundane heterosexism which refers to subtle, seemingly banal, incidents of heterosexism that remain largely unnoticed as they are regarded as socially normative (Peel 2001). Although Tomek himself seems fully aware of the discriminatory nature of his uncle's reaction and seems to challenge gendered discourses (exemplified in the narrative by the concept of "non-masculine activity"), he claims such behaviour is representative of Polish society. Later in the interview he tried to link this reaction with fear and implied that by forbidding his son to attend dancing classes his uncle was trying to protect his male child from failing to fit the normative expectations present in the Polish context.

The notion of fear was evident and widespread in research participants' narratives. While elaborating on the situation of LGBTQ people in Poland, many interviewees referred to the fear of coming out and the fear of being rejected by family members. In addition, several participants spoke of an irrational fear of

becoming non-hetero-sexual through the pure contact with gays or lesbians. This resonates with the *conversion hysteria* – a fear of being ‘converted’ or ‘contaminated’ against one’s will (Valentine et al. 2013) – I have explored earlier in this chapter. Such discourse of fear is well illustrated in Zofia’s narrative below. The respondent is a sister of Piotr, a migrant participant who expressed very homophobic views throughout the interviews.

Zofia (Z): I don’t know any person of a different sexual orientation. I’m sure such people are there but, we-Poles, I guess we still don’t come out. So, such things like sexual orientation for example are not made public. Maybe, in this celebrity world... Maybe, there’s more discussion about such issues. But, in a regular society, like the people here [in her village] or X. [small town nearby] or my family areas. No. No.

Interviewer (I): Why not?

Z: Because, we’re not a tolerant society. Such people would be discriminated. If you told your family you’re a lesbian or if you told - after 20 years of marriage and having two children – if you told you’re a lesbian, I’m sure some people would reject you, leave you and so on.

I: Why would some people do that?

Z: I don’t know – maybe, they’d feel afraid that you’d encourage them to be like this as well. That you’d encourage them to have such a lifestyle. I think so. I guess, we are closed, we’re hermetic in our thinking so we believe, there should be a husband, a wife and children and not such different sexualities, right?

Zofia (significant other, in her 40s)

Zofia conceptualizes Polish society as intolerant and thus stigmatizing sexual difference. This lack of tolerance in her opinion translates into familial rejection of gay people and a general secrecy around sexual orientation which is only broken down outside the environment of what Zofia constructs as ordinary Poles (i.e. the “celebrity world”). By using this rhetoric, she seems to draw attention to a discrepancy between how social and personal attitudes towards sexuality differ in various contexts and places. Indeed, Zofia lives in a tiny village nearby a small town in Northern Poland. This echoes the findings of quantitative studies in which Polish rural areas tend to be correlated with little diversity and predominantly conservative values and attitudes towards sexuality (CBOS 2013c).

As I have argued earlier in this chapter, media representations of difference have a significant influence on personal attitudes. Whilst Zofia only partly refers to the media image of LGBTQ, another informant, Maria, is particularly reflective about

the role the media play in shaping Polish people's ideas about homosexuality. Maria, formerly cited for her prejudiced perception of Muslim people being fuelled by the media, was in a discussion about non-heterosexual people much more open and positive. This may be related to the profound difference in the nature of the sources she adopts her ideas from. Whereas Maria's prejudice towards Muslim people was framed by mostly sensationalist documentaries, her perception of gay people is largely shaped by one of her favourite Polish soap operas "*Barwy szczęścia*" [Colours of happiness] which has for years now followed the stories of various characters one could easily identify with.

We need to learn how to live with this [sexual difference]. These topics are quite present in Poland now. There's this TV series which shows that... It's about a neighbourhood - and there's a family, a husband and a wife - sort of older than me. And their son shows up all of a sudden. He used to live in another place and he shows up at this neighbourhood, rents a house nearby and moves in with his partner. (...) Anyway, when people learned about him [being gay], they started to point a finger at him. It was to show us - Poles - how it is. That such things happen here as well. So, it is shown for example that their windows get broken, that people don't tolerate it [homosexuality]. So, such films also make us more familiar with these problems. Such films sort of say: "Listen people, don't worry about that. Such people [gay] may live next to you and be your neighbours or even your children".

Maria (significant other, in her 50s)

It appears that by exploring cases of discrimination against a likable gay character, the soap opera enabled Maria to develop a greater understanding for the LGBTQ lives. In the eyes of this respondent, the series plays a pedagogical role as it facilitates remote engagement with difference and, by doing so, gradually erodes prejudices and stereotypical imaginary. This seems contrary to the mostly negative media representations of Muslim people many of my informants recalled. It appears that such 'mediated' encounters with difference, depending on the nature and the role of particular media (i.e. sensationalist documentaries versus popular soap opera), are capable of engendering both favourable and unfavourable attitudes.

In this section, I have investigated the complex nature of prejudiced beliefs about sexuality in the Polish context. Whilst focusing on the persistence and contradictions of the *let them be* attitude, the significance of fear and *benevolent homophobia*, I contribute to the discussion about the role of the media in forming Polish people's



attitudes towards non-hetero-normativity as well as the significance of the media more broadly. In the next section, I turn to the issue of race and ethnicity and study the intricacies of the social production of the Black Other in Poland.

## **5.6 Black as racial/ethnic Other**

Since I have discussed the ‘obvious whiteness’ of Polish society and its implications for the social life earlier in this thesis (see Chapter 4), in this section I rather concentrate on the contents of the attitudes towards racial/ethnic Others. In doing so, I explore the approaches towards Black people as the exemplars of demonization and orientalizing of the Other or the Stranger. While different racial/ethnic Others (such as e.g. Roma people, the Chinese) were also addressed by some of my informants, Black people were discussed much more extensively and, as such, appear to embody an ultimate racial/ethnic difference in the Polish context.

The Polish anthropologist Maciej Ząbek (2007: 8) begins his seminal study of the attitudes of Poles towards Black people of African descent by arguing that “Poles are still unprepared for a dialogue with Africans”. In saying so, he does not intend to generalize and claim Polish people’s intolerance or racism. Rather, he attempts to point out that the issue of non-white skin colour has in the Polish context a highly intricate nature and is permeated with the historical imaginaries, colonial narratives or false understandings. Indeed, many ideas about race in Poland – from transmitted ‘folk knowledge’, through artistic and media representations, ending with linguistic expressions<sup>18</sup> - seem to be based on essentialist conceptualizations and questionably ‘blissful ignorance’ (ibid.). This is by and large related to the scarce connections with the Afro-Caribbean countries (e.g. lack of colonial legacy).

Racial stereotypes in the Polish context are believed to play an ambivalent role (Ząbek and Bartoszyńska 2009). On one hand, they are destructive and lead to xenophobia or racism, yet on the other, they also tend to evoke interest and encourage greater awareness of diversity. Drawing on the work of Ząbek (2007), the attitudes and prejudiced beliefs about Black people could be divided into traditional and more contemporary ones. Certain traditional stereotypes stem from primitive folk understandings and could be explained by a psychological process called

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<sup>18</sup> For the discussion about the common usage of ‘racist’ rhetoric concerning Black people see Chapter 3: Translator researcher.

dehumanization - a discursive, symbolic or physical denial of 'humanness' of the Other (Haslam 2006). These images include the belief in a Black person being an incarnation of a devil, a demon or an animal and are argued to be relatively rare in the Polish context (Ząbek 2007). Other persistent traditional stereotypes build on colonial power relations and were introduced into the Polish culture via an extensive body of Romantic-era and pre-war literary writings or arts. In this respect, they are similar to the colonial European imaginary and tendency to exoticise or orientalise racial difference (Said 2003 [1978]). This reservoir of prejudiced beliefs embraces the alleged laziness of Black people, their immaturity as well as the conviction in their civilizational inferiority further reinforced by the media which have tended to focus on the portrayals of the 'poor' or 'wild Africa' (Ząbek 2007). In addition, many of these stereotypes employ the visual and the sensual. They assume dirtiness, unpleasant smell or Black people's propensity to develop certain illnesses. This echoes the constructions of contaminating, dirty and repulsive Black bodies explored in broader literatures (e.g. Bennett and Dickerson 2001; Mellinger and Beaulieu 1997; Sibley 1995; Yancy 2008). The contemporary prejudices, on the other hand, seem rather based on superficial direct or indirect contact as well as popular discursive, social, educational and media representations (e.g. Jasińska-Kania 1999; Zarzycka 2008). Ząbek (2007) claims that in the Polish context, they are exemplified by racist jokes, banal fascination with the 'exotic', 'beautiful' or 'sexually extravagant' Africans as well as a sense of compassion towards 'the abused and suffering' Black people.

Surprisingly, given the nature and scope of prejudice towards non-White people, the quantitative data concerning social attitudes towards race are scarce in Poland. Drawing on the representative LIVEDIFFERENCE 2012 survey (n=1499) on attitudes towards difference in Warsaw, almost 14% of respondents have unfavourable feelings towards Black people. In comparison, in the same survey conducted in Leeds, UK only round 4% state to have such attitudes. These findings seem to correlate with the results of the other quantitative studies. According to the World Value Survey 2005-2008<sup>19</sup>, almost 14% of Poles would not want to have a neighbour of a different race while only 5% of British respondents admit to have similar feelings. At the same time, in a different representative survey, 40% of adult

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<sup>19</sup> The data were generated online via the World Value Survey Online Data Analysis software available at: [www.worldvaluessurvey.org](http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org)

Polish respondents (n=937) claim to have come across verbal discrimination of people different in terms of race, religion, nationality or sexuality (CBOS 2007b). Interestingly, in the majority of cases (60%), the discrimination was aimed at people of a different skin colour.

Following on my empirical data, the narratives of the research participants suggest that even though Polish people usually have little contact with racial/ethnic diversity, their perceptions of such difference tends to be framed by common distrust and caution. This is illustrated in the quote below in which Marek, cited earlier in this chapter, interprets how what he calls “people of colour” were socially perceived in the Polish context when he was a young boy:

People of colour. By assumption they were just bad. And because they had a different skin colour they were treated with a sort of uncertainty. So, I think that that’s the reason. People have a limited trust towards different people and believe it’s better to be positively surprised rather than have troubles. So, a limited trust.  
Marek (migrant, male, aged 32)

The narrative captures the notion of a “limited trust” towards the Other who is racialized and demonized due to a visible difference (see Chapter 4). Reflecting on his environment in Poland, Marek speaks of a simplistic dichotomy employed to draw a clear boundary between ‘us’ – the ‘normal’, the good, and ‘them’ – the different and the bad. In the eyes of this respondent, such an approach is an element of a coping strategy. Indeed, in a society assumed to be White and homogeneous a sporadic racial Other embodies not only curiosity and fascination, but also a threat (Ząbek 2007).

Nevertheless, curiosity, fascination and a sense of threat are hardly ever unconditionally evoked. These feelings and emotions are frequently direct responses to the socially constructed and transferred images of difference. Through the story outlined below, Lena critically reflects on the nature of the attitudes towards Black people shaped not only by the lack of knowledge, but also false colonial understandings (Said 2003 [1978]). In doing so, she refers (again) to the case of her mother.

There was this hotel in X. [her home town] which employed four Black guys once. (...) One of them got a job as a DJ in a well-known club in X. I mentioned it to my mum once. I told

her I met this DJ. And my mum was... I don't want to say she wasn't glad. But, she was... It's like this thinking – do you remember this little poem about *Murzynek Bambo* [ENG: Bambo Little Negro/Bambo the Nigrette]? So, that was my mum's thinking. She'd still believe people in Africa live in small sheds, made of hay or whatever, on some deserts, that they don't have houses. That Africa is a one big continent without asphalt. That people live in some tiny communities. That they cook their dinners over a fire. And, I remember being in a shock to learn her views. Lena (migrant, female, aged 29)

In the narrative, Lena deplors the negative racial stereotyping by her mother who seems to conceptualize Black people through the prism of the popular imaginary of the inferior and uncivilized Africa (Ząbek 2007). The social circulation of such orientalist discourses is very interesting given Poland's non-colonial history. Importantly, in order to voice her unease about such an essentialist perception, Lena utilizes a poem/rhyme<sup>20</sup> titled “*Murzynek Bambo*” [ENG: Bambo Little Negro/Bambo the Nigrette] which has a strong colonial undertone and refers to essentialist representations of people of the Afro-Caribbean descent (Moskalewicz 2005; Ząbek 2007). It appears that such banal rhymes, popular writings or folk sayings, which strengthen false understandings of difference in a subtle and implicit way, are particularly difficult to eradicate.

Whereas Lena refers to a stereotypical image of the generalized Africans, my other informant Alina, quoted earlier for her benevolent heterosexism, expresses her utmost consternation with the primitive folk beliefs dehumanizing non-White people (Haslam 2006; Ząbek 2007).

Take X. [bigger town in North Eastern Poland], for example, there might be no more than five mixed Black and White families. So, if people see a Black child, everybody turns their head and make big eyes, and old ladies make a sign of cross in front of a church, right? And, it's absolutely normal there. [*she laughs*] Good Lord, I've really witnessed it. They think it's an incarnation of devil. (...) They think that since the skin's darker it must come from Satan. It must be a demon and so on. (...) This is Middle Ages! That's it. It makes me really upset, because I do realize these people [of different skin colour] do notice that. They do. Nobody's blind and deaf, right? (...) You know, you may lose a chance of getting to know a great person just because your grandma kept telling you that a Black person is a devil and stinks. Alina (significant other, in her 20)

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<sup>20</sup> For a discussion see Chapter 3: Translator researcher.

Alina's narrative is particularly intriguing in the context of perception of Black people. First of all, Alina mentions the peculiar behaviour of local people who "turn their heads" to see a non-White person. This was explored earlier in this thesis (see Chapter 4), and could be linked with the cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957) stemming from the encounter with the unfamiliar in the space assumed to be familiar. Secondly, Alina speaks of the "old ladies" whose perception of Black people is embedded in simplistic folk understandings of non-white skin colour as non-human, being a feature of a demon (Ząbek 2007). Interestingly, during the interview Alina produced what could be described as contradictory data. On the one hand, she provided me with the narratives such as the one above. On the other, she spoke of a Black student she went to high school with who was commonly accepted and popular among his White fellow students. This suggests that there may be a discrepancy in how racial difference is viewed and approached by older and younger generations. Indeed, at the end of the quote, Alina refers to the figure of grandmother who supposedly transfers such prejudiced beliefs onto the young.

Most surprisingly, given their personal dispositions and the critical tone of their narratives above, both Alina and Lena used in the interviews what could be interpreted as racist rhetoric. Namely, both respondents employed the word *Murzyn* (literally 'Negro', translatable into 'Black person') and both seemed entirely unaware of its derogatory connotations as well as colonial undertone (Moskalewicz 2005; Ząbek 2007). The usage of racist language in unprejudiced contexts is further discussed in Chapter 3. In sum, such a discursive racism could be explained by the complexities of the Polish language, high level of social unawareness of racist speech in Poland and relatively considerable social acceptance for such rhetoric (CBOS 2007b; Ząbek 2007).

Throughout this section, I have explored the processes of orientalization and demonization of racial/ethnic Other in the Polish context. In doing so, I have drawn attention to the prevalence of essentialist folk understandings as well as the existence of what has been termed as 'postcolonial gaze' (Said 2003 [1978]) in the social construction of Black people. This is particularly intriguing given Poland's non-colonial history and the whiteness of Polish society. The tendency to conceptualize embodied difference that is rarely encountered resonates here with what have been described (with regard to Poland) as "anti-Semitism without Jews" (Lendvai 1971) or "Islamophobia without Muslims" (Włoch 2009). The pervasiveness of prejudiced

attitudes towards the absent Other in the Polish context suggests that, rather than being encounter-driven, the attitudes of many Poles towards small minority groups are likely to be shaped by religious, political, media and cultural discourses as well as other people (be it family members and/or peers).

## 5.7 Conclusions

By addressing attitudes towards difference in the Polish context, in this chapter I have looked into the broader *symbolic luggage* that people may refer to while moving across borders and national settings. I have focused on prejudiced attitudes that were most commonly articulated by my research participants (i.e. towards ethnicity, nationality, religion and sexuality). As such, they are likely to be mobilised against the backdrop of migration to a diverse society. While throughout the chapter I have left class, age and disability unaddressed (gender was discussed in Chapter 4), I do not intend to imply that these social categories were unexplored. Rather, my intention was to stress the dominant attitudes in my study. This is significant because, in line with my discussion about the normative framework in the Polish context (see Chapter 4), it suggests that ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender and sexuality are main axes of difference for many Polish people.

In the chapter, I have demonstrated that attitudes towards difference in the Polish context tend to be influenced by the national history, the Catholic doctrine, heteronormativity, family values as well as whiteness of Polish society. In addition, I have argued that they are likely to be affected by the media, political and cultural discourses as well as (historical) generations. Beyond reflecting on various forms of prejudice towards difference, I have employed the concept of *banal xenophobia* (Billig 1995) to describe historically-driven unfavourable attitudes towards the ‘arch-enemies’ of Poland - Germans and Russians. I have suggested the term *conversion hysteria* to explain negative social perception of the religious Others and non-heteronormativity. Furthermore, I have recognised the *let them be* attitude together with *benevolent homophobia* as significant contributors to the range of homophobic beliefs in Poland. Finally, I have discussed demonization, exoticization or orientalizing of racial otherness with regard to Black people. Importantly, I have linked the prejudiced and stereotypical perception of Black people to the established understanding of negative attitudes towards Jewish people (“anti-Semitism without

Jews”) as well as Muslims (“Islamophobia without Muslims”) in the Polish context. In doing so, I have suggested that attitudes towards the absent Other are likely to be influenced by social institutions, popular discourses and other people.

The extensive empirical material I have drawn upon evidences interruptions and contradictions in the attitudes of my informants and, as such, reflects on the complicatedness of social and personal attitudes. In advancing the understanding of how and why certain prejudices and essentialist imaginaries are developed and shaped, the chapter contributes to and extends the literature on social attitudes towards difference in Poland as well as more broadly.

Having explored normative framework in the Polish context (see Chapter 4) as well as symbolic luggage Polish people are likely to refer to, in the subsequent chapters I focus on (the consequences of) encounters with difference outside the ‘native realm’. The next chapter looks into migrant encounters with British society and distinctive British normativity as well as migrant contact with difference more broadly.





## Chapter 6: Mobility and encounters with difference I

### 6.1 Introduction

By exploring encounters with difference in terms of ethnicity, religion, class, sexuality, gender, age and disability, this chapter attempts to look at how people's values and attitudes towards social diversity are developed, revised or interrupted through international mobility or migration. While the previous chapters investigated the construction of a normative framework (see Chapter 4) and social attitudes towards otherness (see Chapter 5) which impact on personal values and attitudes in the Polish context, this chapter focuses on what happens when people move from Poland to the UK and confront British society.

Earlier in this thesis (see Chapter 2) I have suggested that some aspects of geographies of encounter remain insufficiently discussed. I have, for example, argued that relatively little attention has been paid to pre- and post-encounter (imagined encounters on one hand and the consequences of actual encounters on the other). I have also argued that, even though encounters with difference are central to encounter literature, there is rather little discussion of how they possibly re-define the perception of what has been conceptualised as 'sameness' so far. Finally, I have stressed that in spite of an increased academic interest in encounters recently, migrant encounters with a few notable exceptions (e.g. Cook et al. 2011b) have not yet been adequately considered. In this chapter, I address all these issues and, in doing so, contribute to the understanding of encounter as a process which, beyond the present, engages the past and the future (Valentine and Sadgrove 2012).

International mobility is a profound experience that influences most aspects of everyday life (O'Reilly and Benson 2009). As I have emphasized earlier in the thesis (see Chapter 2), by moving across national borders and cultural settings, migrants are frequently exposed to distinctive normativities, competing values, different lifestyles and unfamiliar cultural scripts. The normative framework they were socialised to live with in their home societies, alongside the symbolic baggage they bear, are therefore particularly prone to be contested, reshaped or enhanced. Against this backdrop, the

chapter discusses why, how and in what circumstances such changes may (or not) occur.

I begin the chapter with the examination of how Polish people's ideas of the UK pre-migration differ from their lived experience of British society post-migration. In doing so, I recognize the role of the media, arts, educational aids as well as *word-of-mouth* knowledge in affecting people's perceptions that precede any personal encounter with difference. Secondly, I investigate a simultaneous process regarding the re-construction of Poland 'from abroad' and look into how negotiation of values involves (re-)apprising Polish values in light of migration and assessing UK values. In particular, I look into how the notion of Polishness is redefined by migrants with regard to social diversity and tolerance. I then focus on the influence of migration on personal values by discussing how encounters with the UK society contribute to the understandings of family earlier argued to be the core Polish value (see Chapter 4). Finally, given the saliency of this theme across all the interviews as well as the unprecedented scale of Polish migration after 2004 (Garapich 2007; Grabowska-Lusińska and Okólski 2008; ONS 2011b), I explore Polish migrants' encounters with other Polish people in the UK. Here, I consider how fellow nationals embody otherness in the context of migration and (re-)apprising of personal values.

## **6.2 Imaginings versus reality: confronting ideas of UK society pre- and post-migration**

International migration has been argued to be "undoubtedly a massive upheaval, bringing about many transformations in the migrants' lives" (O'Reilly and Benson 2009: 7). As such, it has been extensively explored (e.g. Butcher 2009; Delanty et al. 2008; Ehrkamp 2005; Ghosh and Wang 2003; Gustafson 2009; Kershen 2002; Kofman 2005; Levitt 1998; Nagel and Staeheli 2008; Rapport and Dawson 1998). Surprisingly, relatively little attention has been paid to the discrepancy between the socially constructed ideas, imaginings or expectations of host societies being held prior to the act of migration and the experience of post-migration. In fact, notwithstanding a diverse literature regarding motivations to leave a country of origin, migration studies tend to focus primarily on lives after migration and neglect experiences pre-migration.

This is not to say such issues are absent from the existent scholarly research, however. Hopes and expectations regarding host societies have been central to the so called ‘lifestyle migration’ which is driven by a strong belief that there is a *better life* elsewhere (Benson 2012; Benson and O’Reilly 2009; Thomas-Hope 1980). They have, nonetheless, been conceptualized in general and mostly positive terms, and focused on anticipations of easier, nicer, more affluent or simply an improved life abroad.

Representations of the receiving Western societies have also been increasingly explored within the frames of postcolonial studies paradigm. In this context, a recent study by Horolets and Kozłowska (2012) is particularly insightful. The authors argue that given the ambiguous position of Poland in Europe and the country’s history of (quasi)colonial dependence, it is unsurprising that many iconic representations of ‘the West’, and the UK in particular, associated with high culture, excellence, aristocracy and civilizational development persist in the Polish context. This is further explored in Mayblin’s et al. (2014) reflections arising from a comparative study of responses to difference between Poland and the UK, and many other publications looking into the myths of ‘underdeveloped’ or ‘backward’ East and the ‘civilized’ West (e.g. Kania 2009; Kuus 2004; Owczarzak 2009).

Against this backdrop, the narratives of my migrant participants suggest that ideas about receiving societies are much more complex than their representations and the clash of such imaginings with ‘reality’ may involve a profound cultural shock and negotiations of the everyday life in the new environment. This section addresses these issues with regard to social diversity and thereby contributes to the undertheorised, yet significant connection between the pre- and the post-migration, the imagined and the real encounters.

Interestingly, the deep-seated ideas of the UK pre-migration were initially quite difficult to explore in my study. When asked about such imaginings or expectations for the first time, the majority of my informants automatically (and uncritically) replied that they did not have any. This repeated discursive practice was quite perplexing. Some participants, like Magda below, were nonetheless more reflexive and seemed to imply that there might be more to the story.

When I already came here [to the UK] I was surprised to find out how few Englishmen lived here - especially in London. So, it was pretty shocking for me. But, I had never thought about

English people and how they'd be before I came here. Yet, when I came here I felt surprised. So, it wasn't until I came here when I started to recall some memories related to the people... Some stories, some anecdotes, some TV programmes, films... where this Englishness had been sort of stressed. For example - English [5 o'clock] tea. Magda (migrant, female aged 28)

A few similar responses encouraged me to tackle this issue again during subsequent interviews<sup>21</sup> when my respondents were generally more willing to open up (see Chapter 3). This proved successful as I was supplied with many complex narratives of the imagined pre- and the experienced post-migration British society. These stories revealed that even though many Polish people seem to be unaware of the social diversity in the British context before they personally encounter it (Spencer et al. 2007; Temple 2011), there are some *migrants to be* who are 'prepared' for a shift from a relatively homogeneous to a diverse environment.

Filip, for instance, was among those informants who arrived to the UK being convinced of its social and racial homogeneity. Despite having visited London as a child, he imagined British society as racially White based on the essentialist representations of Britishness he found in an old English textbook. Below are extracts from two separate interviews with him.

It was just a surprise – because, I realized that there are no Londoners in London, so to speak. There are no British people. For me, a British person is - I had this image of a British person as a figure from the colonial times. White male, middle-aged, with a pipe in his mouth and a funny cap who hunts for elephants. Filip (migrant, male, aged 28)

[Before moving to the UK] I thought Great Britain was a country where White British people lived. What I'm trying to say is I imagined a British person as a White person. When I came here, I was surprised to meet so many people who didn't fit the traditional image of a British person transmitted by such textbooks as "English is fun". In this book there's not a single person who wouldn't be White or who would speak Hindi. So, there was this surprise when I came: "How come?! There was nothing like this in my book!" And, it is offensive to call a non-White person a non-British person because they have been here for two generations or so. So, they are British - they were born

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<sup>21</sup> I did it in a slightly different way, though. I rephrased some of my initial questions and asked more explicitly about popular culture representations (such as literature, films, anecdotes, popular jokes) which might have shaped interviewees' ideas of the UK.

here! (...) It's such a small thing – an English text book – yet, it can entirely change your idea about the world.

Filip (migrant, male, aged 28)

Clearly, Filip was unaware of how diverse British society was prior to his move to the UK (Spencer et al. 2007; Temple 2011). It appears that he internalized the images of Britishness embodied in a figure of White male traveller “with a pipe in his mouth” that has a strong colonial undertone (Said 2003 [1978]). This might have been reinforced by him taking for granted the ‘obvious whiteness’ of Polish society (see Chapter 4). As a result, Filip experienced a profound surprise upon his arrival to the UK. Interestingly, his conviction about the supposed whiteness of British society seems so strongly rooted, that despite his sensitivity and respectful approach towards non-White Britons, by saying that “there are no Londoners in London” he still implies that the what he constructs as true inhabitants of the British capital would be White. Filip’s narratives are also quite telling for another reason. Namely, they stress the role of educational aids in shaping people’s ideas of difference. Whilst in the previous chapter school textbooks including prejudiced images of Islam were mentioned to affect attitudes towards Muslims in Poland, Filip’s case suggests that educational aids may also contribute to the understanding of British society and affect its reception by the Polish migrants.

Similarly to Filip, another informant, Irena, also used to hold a set of beliefs about the UK that proved untrue after moving to Britain.

I love books and I’ve read a lot in my life. I’ve also read English literature. So, my idea about English people was... I imagined there weren’t normal people in England. I imagined there were only princesses and counts in England, only residences and palaces and so on. And, when I came here and saw that a Brit can also be vulgar [while] working at the production line, this idea of a high social class... It became sort of lower - my own level so to speak.

Irena (female, migrant, aged 50)

Whereas Filip used to view British society as racially White, Irena conceptualized it as an upper-class, aristocracy-based community. This echoes the construction of the UK as the ‘civilized’ Western empire (Horolets and Kozłowska 2012; Mayblin et al. 2014). Importantly, in Irena’s case this image was mostly influenced by classic English literature rather than popular post-colonial discourses. As a labour migrant with poor English skills, Irena has worked in the UK beyond her real competences in

mostly low-paid jobs including restaurant kitchen or production-line staff. For this reason, she has had a limited contact with the broader British society and has often been exposed to selective normativities. Facing English co-workers, who might have not minced their words, she was utterly surprised as this image contrasted with the one she knew from, for example, Jane Austen's novels. These workplace encounters entirely redefined her perception of the UK society which she now conceptualises as ordinary and predominantly working-class.

Irena's case draws attention to the significance of arts and media representations for the perception of national difference and the expectations regarding migrant encounters. In fact, English literature and British films were most often recalled in my study as the major sources of tacit knowledge about UK society. Curiously, the same titles were repeatedly mentioned revealing quite a narrow reservoir of cultural images. With regard to British television and cinema, for instance, the popular titles included the 1970s till early 1990s sitcoms such as "Fawlty Towers", "Mr. Bean", "Monty Python's Flying Circus" as well as Sherlock Holmes, James Bond or Bridget Jones films. These films are, as Creeber (2004) put it, "hideously White" as they star mostly White, middle-class characters without acknowledging social diversity in the UK. Such mundane television or cinema representations are particularly powerful and have been argued to naturalize racial differences (Park et al. 2006).

It is important to view the demand for such popular culture in Polish society in the context of post-1989 opening of Poland on 'Western' influences (Burrell 2011a; Stenning 2005), Anglo-American in particular. Griffin (1997: 34), in an article on the excessive use of English in press marketing in Poland mid-1990s, notes that "the Iron Curtain was an unnatural barrier that kept global English at bay". The consequence of this was, as the author puts it, an "invasion" of English (and Anglo-American popular culture more broadly). This explains the increased appeal of the British films and TV series as well as their power in shaping Polish people's imaginations and expectations of the UK.

In contrast to evidence that suggests the lack of people's awareness of diversity pre-migration, several research participants admitted being aware of multiculturalism in the UK before moving there. In these cases, however, the awareness of ethnic and social diversity was reported to have been influenced either by the knowledge transfer from other people who travelled/migrated to the UK themselves or the media coverage of the most recent global events. Considering the latter, Ela, for instance,

recalled that her idea of the British multicultural society stemmed from her devotion to sports and following global sport events such as the Olympic games:

Ela (E): [Before moving to the UK] I thought: “Oh, God. There’s this cultural mix over there. So, I may actually work with some Black people there and it will be so obvious and normal. (...)

Interviewer: How did you know British society was diverse?

E: Because, I used to watch the Olympic games. And I could see people of various nations being part of the UK.

Ela (female, migrant, aged 31)

Sports events, and the Olympic games in particular, have been argued to have a significant impact on audiences, their sense of national pride and belonging (van Hilvoorde et al. 2010). With regard to difference, the literature has focused mostly on how it may be misrepresented in television coverage of global sport events (Billings and Eastman 2002; Daddario and Wigley 2007; Higgs et al. 2003). In this context, Billings and Eastman (2002: 352) have claimed that “viewer’s perceptions of such characteristics as gender, ethnicity, and nationality are shaped by television’s selection, narration, and description of the events”. It appears, then, that the way media represent difference (or diversity) is likely to impact on people’s understanding of it. Interestingly, however, positive effects of broadcasting of sport events are discussed to a much lesser degree. Ela’s account is quite unique in this respect and has, thus, a potential to extend the current understanding of the media influence (Slater 2007) on awareness of difference. Above all, it evidences that transmission of global events has a capacity to mediate remote encounters with diversity which is then fully acknowledged upon migration.

Unlike Ela, who sought ideas of British society in the media, Iga relied upon day-to-day oral reports from her husband who migrated to England slightly earlier than herself.

When my husband came here [to the UK], he told me everything about this place. He told me all about Leeds, the people he met at work or worked with: English people, Russians and Latvians. So, there was this mix of nationalities in one place and well – in one country. And, he presented it in a very positive way. (...) He spoke so warmly about it that I couldn’t think of anything negative about coming here. (...) He worked with English people, [but] there were also two girls from India. He spoke especially of these “scarf-women”, so the woman who cover

their faces. (...) His emotions about the move to the UK were very positive and he sort of shed these positive emotions on me – because, he was really delighted with it: with the diversity of women, their beauty. Iga (migrant, female, aged 30)

In spite of assuming various forms (and including diverse personal motivations), the post-2004 influx of Poles to the UK has been largely described in terms of network, chain or family migration (Elrick 2009; Garapich 2008; Gill and Bialski 2011; Ryan 2010b; Ryan et al. 2008; White 2010, 2011a; White and Ryan 2008). When Iga was following her husband a few months after his move to the UK, she knew a lot about her final destination as well as the ethnically, nationally and religiously diverse society she was about to confront. In fact, she was already holding a specific attitude towards social diversity in the UK context. This knowledge was, nonetheless, entirely passed on by her partner and profoundly shaped by his individual reception of British society. Significantly, a few other research participants claimed to be similarly influenced pre-migration by either their family members or friends who moved to the UK first. In this context, it is particularly interesting to what extent the attitudes towards a host society pre-migration are mediated by other migrants and their subjective perceptions of difference. With regard to the decision to follow up a (Polish) migrant relative, White (2010: 574) has spoken of what she has described as “socialisation into migration”. In doing so, she has implied that when Polish migrants encourage family members to join them in the UK, they may refer to the diversity in the British context and transfer certain ideas of difference. Such influence remains, nevertheless, underestimated in the migration literature (see Chapter 2 and Levitt 1998 in particular). Against this backdrop, my analysis of pre-encounter ideas and attitudes towards multiculturalism in the UK context contributes to the understanding of follow-up migration as a process initiated, imagined and possibly rehearsed prior to the actual move abroad.

As I have argued earlier in this chapter, the clash of pre-migration imaginings with ‘reality’ may involve a cultural shock as well as redefinition of a host society. Building on from this idea, a major shift from the Polish to the British context also tends to be followed by negotiations of social diversity which is a noted feature of the UK society (Vertovec 2007), but is rarely encountered in Poland (see Chapter 4).

Some scholars have argued that migrants from the East and Central Europe tend to be preoccupied with difference in terms of ethnicity and skin colour due to the



relative lack of such difference in their home societies (Fox 2013; McDowell et al. 2009; Parutis 2011; Ryan 2010a). Furthermore, for these migrants moving to a diverse society is often followed by gaining awareness of their whiteness as well as white privilege it confers (Lopez Rodriguez 2010; Ryan 2010a; van Riemsdijk 2010). Needless to say, this may result in mundane uses of racism and the so called *whitewashing* (stressing the alleged superiority of whiteness) in the context of multicultural and multi-ethnic society (Fox 2013).

Importantly, in my study the migrant participants were not only preoccupied with ethnicity or skin colour, but also religious difference. This is unsurprising given the hegemony of Catholicism in Poland (see Chapter 4). Moreover, the informants frequently engaged in juxtaposing the advantages and disadvantages of living in what some of them termed “White, Polish, Catholic” society and the British one renowned for its diversity. Against this backdrop, a few respondents structured the whole interview around, in particular, the issue of boundaries of acceptance of difference. One such respondent was Artur who, notwithstanding his general appreciation of the diversity in the UK context, kept arguing that the presence of Muslim people undermines the British traditions and values.

Each nation has its tradition, some values which should be preserved. In England I'm pretty annoyed with – well, I'm not a racist but I think that if somebody comes to somebody else's home this person should adjust somehow, because this person is a guest. There was this event in X. [the neighbourhood in Leeds] one day and there was police taking care of everything and I saw a policeperson who had a helmet in a shape of a turban. It's just an exaggeration for me. An exaggeration! Tolerance is ok. But, at some point the British people start to feel discriminated in their own country. This is bad and it goes in a very bad direction. I saw an article in a newspaper: a woman was very indignant. She wanted to breastfeed her baby somewhere in a public place. And another English person came to her – it wasn't a Pakistani person, a Pole or whoever else - it was a native Englishman. And he admonished her that (...) she should go to a toilet, because her behaviour could be misunderstood by the Pakistanis, Muslim people in general and they may feel offended by that. This is sick for me. Honestly. (...) If we start to identify with the newcomers, if we let them do more and more, worst case scenario, their traditions can squeeze out our own.

Artur (migrant, male, aged 35)

Interestingly, in his narrative Artur uses the same host-guest analogy that was previously argued to dominate the discussion about the presence of Muslim people in Poland (see Chapter 5). As I have explained, this understanding builds on the concept of hospitality and conceptualisation of the Other as undeserving of full citizenship and the right to make legitimate claims on that basis (Derrida 1998; Lynch et al. 2011; Rosello 2002). Failing to acknowledge that many Muslims or people of Asian ethnicity may, in fact, be British, Artur racializes them as out of place in the UK (Leitner 2011). This is evident in his rhetoric of “a native Englishman” who “admonishes” most probably a White British woman for trying to breastfeed her baby in a public place. It seems that he conceptualises himself (and Poles more broadly) as having the same values as White British people. Polish society is, indeed, commonly produced as predominantly White (see Chapter 4). In addition, Artur appears to perform a role of *devil’s advocate* by voicing his unease about British people being supposedly “discriminated in their own country”. In doing so, he mobilises the rationale of what could be described as ‘reverse discrimination’ - a discrimination against members of a majority population (Sowell 1990).

The rhetoric of reverse discrimination is frequently discussed in the literature regarding attitudes towards difference held by the members of dominant groups (e.g. Garner 2010, 2012; Harris et al. 2014; Harris and Valentine 2014; Kofman 1995). A similar rationale employed by migrants with reference to other ethnic and religious minorities has been noted with regard to Eastern European newcomers to Bradford (Phillips 2012). A notable feature of Bradford is its Asian and/or British Asian Muslim community (Phillips et al. 2010). Crucially, the city has recently experienced an influx of White A8 migrants who have started to claim urban citizenship to ‘traditionally’ Muslim places and neighbourhoods (Phillips 2012). Artur’s case is situated within these identity negotiations and, in particular, contributes the emerging discussion about *whitewashing* Eastern Europeans in the UK (Fox 2013; McDowell et al. 2009; Ryan 2010a).

Similarly to Artur, Marek also finds the increased visibility of Muslim people or Asians/British-Asians quite disturbing. Importantly, Marek used to live in Bradford. His main concern with the diversity in the UK context regards Islam which, in his opinion, “destroys” British society by reinforcing segregation and societal divisions.

There are many Pakistanis here. Very many. Or Indians, Muslims. If there's too big influx, the particular social group destroys the society, some values. And there's no assimilation, no full assimilation at all. (...) Well, it's hard to say what they destroy exactly. First of all, religion – it is as it is – they come from a different religious background. They don't impose it on us, we don't need to accept it. It doesn't mean they'll destroy the society as such. They'll destroy the society with trying to impose some behaviours. By doing so, they'll divide the society. (...) They won't influence the people's sense of religiousness, you'll probably stay who you are and who you were brought up to be. It's hardly possible. But, they can make the people feel divided, fighting against each other. (...) And it destroys the integrity of a society. The society starts to dislike them for that and some tensions arise. Marek (migrant, male, aged 32)

In the narrative above, Marek appears to suggest that by exercising or claiming rights Muslims “impose behaviours” which supposedly affect the whole UK society. In the eyes of this respondent, the society is then forced to either opt for or against certain changes and such a situation is not conducive to social coherence. Marek's narrative, which echoes some of the claims made by Artur above, is an example of assimilationist discourse that tends to be mobilized in broader debates on multiculturalism, immigration and the issue of citizenship (cf. Allen 2004; Ehrkamp 2006; Kofman 1995; Kymlicka 2012; Vasta 2007). There is an underlying assumption that certain religions, ethnicities and sets of traditions are inherently non-British. Evidently, by using the same we-them dichotomy as Artur above, Marek portrays Muslim people as outsiders - religious and ethnic Others (see Chapter 5). At the same time, he seems to assume that the British tradition is flexible enough to embrace other forms of difference such as Polish migrants. In this context, it seems that despite his migrant status, Marek excludes himself (and Polish migrants more broadly) from the debate on the ‘necessity’ to assimilate he engages in. In doing so, he appears to identify with the imagined majority and, as such, adopts this discourse of hierarchy and power (Allen 2004).

Interestingly, in the narrative Marek refers to social tensions that may potentially arise when the majority population starts to feel affected in some ways by the minority. This resonates with what Kofman (1995: 134) has described as “NIMBY philosophy (not in my back yard)” with regard to majority and minority populations and their citizenship claims. The author has argued that minority difference is accepted as long as it does not influence majority rights. However, as soon as

majority becomes directly affected by the minority, exclusion and marginalisation of the latter is likely to take place. This finding has been reiterated in a recent study on workplace encounters with difference (Harris and Valentine 2014). Likewise, in the case of Marek expectations of hierarchy and power (that stem from his self-positioning within an imagined majority) seems to produce an assumption that a minority should adjust to the norms of the majority and not the other way round.

While in this section I have primarily focused on the clash between the ideas of the UK pre-migration and the actual experience of diversity in the British context, I have nonetheless recognized the (re-)construction of (essentialised) Britishness by Polish migrant respondents. Against this backdrop, it is particularly interesting whether migration from a relatively homogeneous to a diverse social space mobilizes any parallel process regarding home society. Therefore, in the next section, I explore how migrant ideas of Polish society possibly change as a result of encounters with the multicultural in the UK context.

### **6.3 (Re)shaping perception of home society post-migration**

It has been acknowledged that “the changing relationship between migrants and their ‘homes’ is held to be an almost quintessential characteristic of transnational migration” (Al-Ali and Koser 2002: 1). Although the ‘home’ Al-Ali and Koser refer to may, in fact, involve various concepts beyond nationality and nation (e.g. space, place, identity) (Massey 1994), the sending society remains for many migrants an embodiment of home (Armbruster 2002). Notwithstanding the ubiquity of the notion of home in migration literature (Christou 2011; Christou and King 2010; Mavroudi 2008, 2010; Smith and Jackson 1999), the changing perceptions of home society in terms of diversity and equality have not received much academic attention yet. This section addresses the issue by investigating how mobility and encounters with difference in the British context (re)shape Polish migrants’ ideas of a home community and influence the extent to which they (dis-)identify with it.

In a recent discussion of responses to diversity in postsocialist Poland, quoted earlier in this chapter, the authors note that “the orientalist perspective which casts Poland as traditional and behind the West” (Mayblin et al. 2014: 13) still resonates in many Polish narratives as well as popular discourses. They explain that during the 1990s transition period from the communist rule to a liberal democratic political

system Poles were encouraged by the emerging neoliberal politics to internalize the orientalist gaze which depicted Poland as ‘backward’ and/or ‘lagging behind’ Western Europe. The consequence of this is what has been termed ‘inferiority-superiority complex’ (Kurczewska 2003; Zarycki 2004) – self-positioning of Polish society as insufficiently progressive in comparison to the iconic West on one hand and exceptional in terms of national values on the other.

As I have explained earlier in this thesis (see Chapter 2), the production of Polish society as inferior towards the iconic West has been broadly investigated by a range of researchers across various disciplines including geography (e.g. Burrell 2011a; Chari and Verdery 2009; Horolets and Kozłowska 2012; Kuus 2004; Marciniak 2009; Mayblin et al. 2014; Owczarzak 2009; Stenning 2005; Verdery 1996). By exploring Polish migrant narratives of childhood in late socialist Poland, Burrell has, for example, looked into “why west was often considered best” (2011a: 143). In doing so, she has noted a tendency to self-orientalise and self-occidentalise among Polish children and migrants to the UK respectively. While referring to how migrants recall their past material encounters with ‘western’ things (e.g. toys, sweets or clothes), she has drawn attention to “a binary divide between colourful, fashionable and good-smelling west and a grey, overtly standardised east” (Burrell 2011a: 153). The persistence of such orientalisng binarism (Said 2003 [1978]) has been, as I have suggested in Chapter 2, furthermore linked with the construction of normality and abnormality (e.g. Galasińska 2010b; Galasińska and Kozłowska 2009; Horolets and Kozłowska 2012).

The discursive construction of home and host societies in binary oppositions was striking across interviews with my research participants. Interestingly, this seemed to be the case regardless of the extent of their encounters with difference in the UK. In comparison to the experience (if fleeting or superficial) of the diversity in the British context, many of my respondents constructed Poland as homogeneous in terms of ethnicity, nationality and religion. Furthermore, while difference in the British context was by many of my informants articulated as “obvious” and/or “normal”, it was simultaneously “unimaginable” in Poland. This is reflected in the quote below in which one of my female participants, Natalia, says:

There [in the UK] is this mixture of nationalities, religions. You have a Catholic church and a Sikh temple nearby and an Orthodox church just next to them, and a Buddhist temple. Such

a mixture. I cannot imagine this in Poland. I remember how it was... They're building this mosque in Warsaw – it's such a controversy. There were protests. And here [in the UK] it's no problem.  
Natalia (migrant, female, aged 21)

In a similar vein, another informant, Lena, speculates in her audio-diaries whether such a super-diverse city as London (Vertovec 2007) could possibly exist in the Polish context.

I think sometimes if it would be possible - city like London - if it would be possible for such a city to exist in Poland. So many nationalities... And, if it would be possible that everybody lives together. I think it would be difficult, hard. People in Poland wouldn't be as open and tolerant. And, it wouldn't work. Maybe that's the reason Poland still is as it is, especially small towns where people who have a different skin colour or nationality are not really seen. Audio-diary: Lena (migrant, female aged 29)

Evidently, Lena implies that the main reason for the 'impossibility' of diversity in the Polish context is the supposed intolerance of Polish society. In one of the interviews she went so far as to claim that Polish people were "narrow-minded" in terms of acceptance of difference. Most curiously, a similar view was uncritically expressed by many other informants who repeatedly constructed the essentialist image of the "backward/parochial" or the "closed" Polish society. In doing so, they not only mobilized the popular postsocialist discourse of lagging behind the West (Kuus 2004; Mayblin et al. 2014; Owczarzak 2009), but also extended this orientalist perspective onto capacity of Polish society to be tolerant and/or welcoming to difference.

I think that we [Polish people] are, let's call it, backward in terms of tolerance. We are backward. We try, as a society, we try hard not to let any outsider in.  
Marek (migrant, male, aged 32)

Poland is a more closed country [than the UK]. There's less diversity. And here [in the UK] – you have lots of various nations and, I don't know, cultures. And in Poland the majority is White, right? Heterosexual. (...) Everybody tries to be the same. And difference is noticed. Poland is just more closed.  
Tomek (migrant, male, aged 26)

The supposed intolerance of Polish society was, furthermore, often discussed in the context of presence and/or visibility of Muslim people in the public space. As argued in the previous chapter, despite the existence of native *Tatar* community, Muslim people evoke largely unfavourable attitudes in Poland being socially regarded as *folk devil* (Pędziwiatr 2010). For some research participants, who admitted having increased contact with Muslims in the UK, this figure of religious Other has become a *litmus test* for social attitudes towards difference. This may be one of the reasons why one of my migrant participants, Ela, links the supposed “backwardness/parochialism” of Polish society with its alleged social incapacity to be welcoming towards Muslims. It is crucial to mention that the Polish adjective she uses to describe the society (*zaściankowe*) does not have a literal English equivalent. It has neither as negative undertone as the English term “backward” nor as neutral as “parochial”. Thus, my decision to use both in the quote below.

It's [Polish society] backward/parochial. (...) This strive for Polishness. It would be very difficult for Muslims to settle down. People would just oppress them and, and squeeze them.  
Ela (migrant, female, aged 31)

The tendency to contrast the alleged Polish homogeneity/intolerance with the assumed diversity/tolerance of the British was particularly intriguing during my fieldwork and requires a closer look here. It is necessary to explain that alongside the construction of Poland as non-diverse and “backward”, I noted a similar process regarding encounters with difference in the Polish context. Namely, despite being reminded that difference is a broad term including social status, class, age, gender, sexuality and disability, the majority of migrant and non-migrant research participants automatically assumed that Poland was a place of scarce encounters with difference. Oddly enough, many of the very same respondents admitted later in the interview(s) that they did, in fact, have a repeated contact with various differences. What is more, numerous migrant and non-migrant informants spoke of encounters in Poland that deeply influenced their personal values and attitudes. The analysis of these inconsistencies in respondents’ stories has led me to argue that the construction of Poland as a homogeneous space of little contact with otherness is merely a discursive practice rather than a reflection of actual social relations. As such, it appears to be a consequence of the relative invisibility of ethnic, religious or cultural

difference as well as a ‘closeting’ of sexual difference in the Polish context (see Chapters 4 and 5). This, in turn, has allowed me to suggest that the post-migratory production of Poland as non-diverse/backward is also a discursive tendency reflecting the essentialist and orientalist assumptions many informants make, rather than the expression of their judgment based on actual experience. While they are not narratives of lived experience or power relations, such assumptions require, I believe, in-depth analysis as they reflect not only the changing migrant relationship with the sending society (Al-Ali and Koser 2002), but also the process of constant (re-) production of home and host countries.

Importantly, the assumed intolerance of Polish society was argued in my study to be one of the major reasons why some migrant participants dis-identified with their home society post-migration. The politics of identity could be linked here with the notion of memory and imagining home society based on how it was ‘remembered’. While research into permanent (or long-lasting) migration draw attention to the fact that what some migrants ‘remember’ may no longer exist (e.g. Christou and King 2010; Garapich 2007; Smith and Jackson 1999), I would like to stress that in my study I have focused on recent migrants who have been in the UK no longer than ten years. Furthermore, given that many of them tend to frequently travel between Poland and Britain (Burrell 2011b) or maintain strong ties with Polish society (Bielewska 2012; Burrell 2003; Rabikowska and Burrell 2009), it is unlikely that their understanding of home country is shaped only by the memories of pre-migration. Rather, it is a result of (re-)apprising Polishness in the context of migration and assessing the normativities in UK society.

Quite intriguing in this respect is Tomek’s account in which he speaks of how easier and more comfortable it is for him to express personal views about difference in Britain. In the interview, Tomek admitted that while living in Poland he was afraid to openly express his opinions about religion or sexuality to his acquaintances largely due to the nexus of the powerful position of Catholicism and media-infused heteronormativity (see Chapter 4 and 5). Apparently, he feared being stigmatized and ridiculed or as he put it: “having everybody against you”. This has changed after he moved to the UK where he has not only gained confidence about his views on many social issues, but – as he argues below – realized that many people in his environment shared his attitudes towards difference.



It's just easier here, in the UK. (...) I don't know whether, if I lived in Poland, I'd openly say that I'm pro-gay, pro-whatever and an atheist. I guess, it would be more difficult. (...) When I lived there and met with people the majority would have similar views and it was difficult for me to say anything... because if there are ten people against one person, it's difficult to make statements, right? (...) I consider myself very tolerant [now]. And, I guess this is due to the fact that I can [be tolerant], I can talk about stuff [in the UK]... I think I wouldn't be as tolerant in Poland if I was sticking to some groups. (...) My acquaintances from elementary and secondary school... well, I don't know. They are less educated, some of them didn't study. (...) And, here [in the UK] - I could be tolerant here, so it encouraged me, it motivated me. Tomek (migrant, male, aged 26)

In the eyes of this informant, social pressure in Poland is limiting people's willingness to be openly tolerant. The UK, on the other hand, seems to offer more freedom of opinion and speech. Indeed, Tomek constructs the UK as a place where one "can be tolerant". It appears that Tomek distances himself from his home society, and his groups of Polish acquaintances in particular, as – in his view - it is impossible to express less popular views in Poland. Interestingly, the respondent never reflects on the instances of racism or intolerance in the British context. This is surprising given the findings of other studies into experiences of discrimination of A8 migrants to the UK (e.g. Cook et al. 2011a; McDowell et al. 2009; Svašek 2009; Temple 2011; White 2011b). As such, Tomek's narrative is a telling illustration of essentialising both Poland and the UK, the home and the host society.

In this section, I have continued the discussion about imagining home and host societies in the context of international mobility initiated earlier in this chapter. The striking tendency to discursively construct the national and the foreign, the Polish and the British, in binary oppositions suggests that encounters with diversity and difference in the UK affect migrants' perceptions of Polish society and reinforce the orientalist gaze (Burrell 2011a; Chari and Verdery 2009; Horolets and Kozłowska 2012; Kuus 2004; Mayblin et al. 2014; Verdery 1996). In migrant stories, Poland and Polish society are, indeed, assumed to be in my informants' words "backward", "homogeneous" and "intolerant", while the UK by implication "developed", "diverse" and "tolerant". While noted elsewhere (Burrell 2011a; Horolets and Kozłowska 2012), the tendency among my informants to construct the home and host societies in simplistic terms was strong enough to affect their (dis-)identification with the set of values and attitudes each society was believed to convey. This suggests that

migration and migrant encounters with diversity in particular have a capacity to re-define the national. Despite the ubiquity of the notion of home in disciplinary literatures on migration, diaspora and transnationalism (see e.g. Christou 2011; Christou and King 2010; Mavroudi 2008, 2010; Smith and Jackson 1999), the changing migrant relationship with the national and the host that engages discourses of diversity is explored less. Therefore, the discussion here hopefully aids a greater understanding of the consequence of a major shift from a relatively homogeneous to a diverse social space.

Importantly, as diversity was not constructed by the research participants as the element of Polish national identity, it appears worthy of a greater consideration of how values particularly associated with Polishness are understood in relation to Britishness. In the next section, I discuss negotiation of the national or the familiar post-migration by looking into family life socially constructed as a core Polish value (see Chapter 4).

#### **6.4 Family values: encounters with UK society and re-defining the national**

Alongside the discursive construction of Poland as non-diverse and intolerant, numerous attempts to compare and morally evaluate concepts such as Polishness and Englishness and/or Britishness were quite salient in my study. In these migrant negotiations, family values including the nature of human relationships, gender roles, lifestyle and mundane practices were most frequently recalled. This is unsurprising given the significance of family for many Polish people (see Chapter 4).

Earlier in this thesis I have drawn attention to the fact that family and family values may be to a certain degree imagined (Gillis 1996, Smith 2011, Valentine et al. 2012). In particular, I have discussed Gillis's (1996) claim that people live in two families: the idealised vision of family (*the family we live by*) and *the family we actually live with* which embraces the "messiness" of everyday life (Valentine et al. 2012). In this section, I focus largely on the migrant narratives of the imagined *family we live by*. In doing so, I look at how research participants compare what is understood as Polish family values with what they construct as British values.

While migration seems for many research participants to reinforce the essentialist construction of home society as inferior compared with the Western world, it also appears to cement a reverse tendency to view what are considered Polish values as

morally superior to the Western ones. Indeed, “a Polish family”, as my participants would often put it, was repetitively assumed to be more authentic and preferable to what has been termed “a British” or “an English family”. Ela, for instance, quoted earlier for her perception of Polish society as intolerant, argued that family values are more significant for Polish people who strive to structure their lives around the routines of home-making such as cooking and eating together.

I think family's more important for Poles than for English people. English people are more shallow in this respect. Yes, they do love their wives, mothers and fathers but this is different - like if somebody imposed some frames on them. They just do what they have to do. (...) On one hand, they are more relaxed and there are less tensions in their families – like you-don't-do-such-things tensions, but... the simple fact - they don't eat at home, they don't cook. That's different. We [her family] have dinner together every day. (...) This single meal makes a difference. We eat in the kitchen, no TV, and we simply talk. And, English people go out very often. And, if adultery happens – this is more [socially] accepted than in Poland. In Poland adultery is more stigmatized. I think that Englishmen respect their girlfriends less. Sure – not everybody.

Ela (migrant, female, aged 31)

Although Ela never says it in an explicit way, she seems to imply that in relation to family values British people have lower moral standards than their Polish counterparts. There appears to be a strong moral judgement in Ela's narrative. In somewhat similar vein, a younger respondent Natalia, also cited earlier, elaborates on the supposedly different approach to getting married in Poland and in the UK.

Family values are definitely more present and cultivated there [in Poland] than here [in the UK]. In Poland people still (...) – when they decide to get married, they usually... They don't usually get married with this assumption that they can always get a divorce; they don't have this option in mind. If they get married they really think it's for life. If, later on, something just doesn't work out, they, well they actually get a divorce, sadly. But, it's not like here [in the UK]. People get married here, it's often in a rush. People just assume, that well, that a divorce can occur in the future.

Natalia (migrant, female, aged 21)

Again, Natalia's narrative appears to include a moral judgement. The respondent seems to portray British people as somewhat opportunistic and lacking what Natalia recognises as family values. Indeed, in her story they seem more hedonistic, less

willing to care, not to say self-centred. Many other informants in the study would similarly compare and contrast what they viewed as “Polish” and “English family life”. Curiously, despite being on many occasions truly reflexive about the senselessness of such comparisons, they would still construct the British/English family values as morally inferior to what they believed were Polish values.

Significantly, in the stories of migrant participants the “Polish family” embraced not only a set of family but also religious values. These values, including Catholic practices, traditions and beliefs, were by some interviewees argued to be consciously reproduced in the British context. In addition, a decision to have and raise a child in the UK became a fateful moment (Giddens 1991b) for several respondents as it forced them to rethink their own life stances and in particular to reconsider what values they would like to pass onto their children in the future. For Artur this situation became a source of a huge dilemma. He moved to the UK together with his wife several years ago and they have a 3-year-old son now. Despite his reservations regarding the boundaries of tolerance in the UK discussed earlier in the chapter, he truly admires and enjoys the fact that people of various ethnicities, religions and sexualities can work together as a team. For a while now Artur has been thinking of achieving greater stability. This, similarly to many migrant stories noted elsewhere (see e.g. Ehrkamp 2005), requires buying a house. Yet, Artur and his wife cannot make a decision whether to buy a house in the UK, stay there and raise his son within British society or move back to Poland. Artur is particularly worried that raising children in the British context may have - as he told me - a negative influence on them. He criticizes, for example, the way some values (such as religion) are socially constructed in the UK.

In Poland people live more traditionally. (...) The majority of people I know go to church. And, here – it’s quite the opposite. (...) We try to raise our son the way we were raised. We just feel such a need. We feel a need to go to church or the Catholic centre in Leeds. We feel the need to have Christmas the way they should be. There’s this holiday called Assumption of Mary. When I was younger I didn’t feel a need to make a garland and now I do. I’d love to go out with my kid, pick up some flowers and make a garland. (...) I pay more attention to such things now. When I was in Poland - sure, I noticed that - but, I didn’t feel the need to do anything. (...) This Polishness. It might be related to the fact that I’m living abroad. I kind of started to emphasize my values, right?      Artur (migrant, male, aged 34)

This quote is interesting because it demonstrates that certain elements of Polishness become much more significant for Polish migrants after they migrate to the UK. Catholicism is particularly prone to be such an element as it is believed to symbolize home and national culture (Trzebiatowska 2010). A desire to emphasize ethnic and religious belonging post-migration is a recognized issue in migration studies (Christou 2011; Christou and King 2010; Mavroudi 2008, 2010; Peek 2005). A turn to religion or increased religious practices are argued to be the means of making *home from home* and assuring a sense of security in an unfamiliar new society (Connor 2008; Kinnvall 2004). An increased religiosity post-migration may also be viewed as a way of mitigating the sense of feeling different and, needless to say, of being excluded from the mainstream or local society (Ehrkamp 2005). Foner and Alba (2008: 373), for example, argue that for many Muslim migrants a turn to Islam is “seen as providing a way to claim dignity in the face of the bitterness of exclusion”. Whilst Artur does not seem to feel excluded in the UK, in the interviews he admitted feeling lost and confused with certain normativities he encountered there. His increased religiosity and a desire to pass onto his son strong Catholic values is a consequence of this normative confusion on one hand and a conviction of the superiority of Polish moral values on the other.

Although my migrant respondents largely approved of the “Polish family” model and often distanced themselves from what they considered British or English family values, some have nonetheless started to challenge these concepts and negotiate a family life that would contain the elements of both Polishness and Britishness. Marek, for example, noticed that family dynamics and power relations differ in Poland and the UK. Whereas Polish people tend, in his opinion, to develop their relationships with children based on parental authority and the assumption of child’s obedience, British parents are apparently more relaxed and partnership-focused. They also seem, as Marek continues, to pay much more attention to such values as equality or tolerance, but fail to pass on a sense of respect towards older generations.

I don’t like the way family works [in the UK]. But, there are some nice solutions here which I’m sure I’ll adopt. (...) This sense of partnership [between a parent and a child]. (...) This openness towards various people for sure. So, that he or she [his kid] doesn’t feel shocked or becomes prejudiced when he or she sees a person of a different skin colour for example. And doesn’t

have [these associations] that a [skin] colour indicates something bad. Here, you live among other people and it all becomes natural for a child. (...) [Thinking of] Poland – definitely various traditions and upbringing – this respect for people first of all, good behaviour, being polite and kind. I’m sure I’ll inculcate such things into my child. (...) What’s bad about raising children here is the fact that they are not taught to respect older people – that’s very bad.

Marek (migrant, male, aged 32)

Various studies demonstrate that parenting strategies are prone to be shaped by the experience of migration (Cieslik 2013; de Haan 2011; Kilkey 2013; Kilkey et al. 2014; Lopez Rodriguez 2010; Renzaho et al. 2011; Ryan 2010b; Sims and Omaji 1999). While there is evidence that some parents may, like Artur, turn to what they understand to be ‘home culture’ infused child rearing (cf. Cieslik 2013; Renzaho et al. 2011), de Haan (2011) argues that parenting styles may become very complex when various cultural traditions come into contact with each other. Despite his general scepticism towards British/English family life, Marek is convinced that certain values that are recognised in the UK context could improve the way he will raise his child. At the same time, he feels that some elements of what is regarded as Polish upbringing would be very beneficial too. Unlike Artur’s, his parenting style appears to be hybrid and include what Marek claims is best of both cultures.

By exploring family values, in this section I have attempted to examine how encounters with the UK society affect core elements of Polishness post-migration. In particular, I have acknowledged the tendency to make moral judgements about social normativities. Evidently, the migrant participants construct what they assume to be “a Polish family” as morally superior and more authentic to what they view as the British/English family model. As a consequence, family (and frequently religion) is involved in the re-making of the national outside home society. Alongside the unchallenged reproduction of Polishness, however, some migrants appear to combine both Polish and British/English normativities. This is reflected in, for instance, parenting styles.

The majority of the post-2004 Polish migrants to the UK were reported to be in their 20s (Fihel and Kaczmarczyk 2009; Grabowska-Lusińska and Okólski 2008). It is precisely now – ten years later – that they have often started their own families and are having children. The number of childbearing Polish women in the UK has been increasing rapidly. As I mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, Poland is now

the most common non-UK maternal country of birth in the UK (ONS 2012). Against this backdrop, the study of family values, and raising children within British society in particular, is of a great academic importance. This issue has, nonetheless, only started to emerge in broader scholarly debates that predominantly focus on transnational family-making rather than family values *per se* (e.g. Cieslik 2013; Heath et al. 2011; Kilkey 2013; Kilkey et al. 2014; Lopez Rodriguez 2010; Ryan 2010b; White 2011a). Therefore, while it draws on geographies of encounter, this section contributes to and extends the discussion about how international mobility shapes the understanding of family and the perception of family values.

I have so far focused on how the familiar (Polishness) is re-defined through encounters with the unfamiliar (Britishness). In the next section, I continue this issue by looking into how Polishness may, in the context of international mobility, become for Polish migrants an axis of difference. In order to do so, in the following section I explore Polish migrants' encounters with their (migrant) fellow nationals.

### **6.5 Encounters with Polishness and other Polish migrants post-migration**

Given the scale of Polish migration to the UK post 2004 (Garapich 2007; Grabowska-Lusińska and Okólski 2008; ONS 2011b), it is unsurprising that many Polish migrants encounter their fellow nationals in the British context. In Polish migration literature the attitudes towards fellow nationals are discussed predominantly with reference to negative feelings and emotions. Distrust and discursive hostility, in particular, are frequently addressed (Andrejuk 2011; Burrell 2011d; Eade et al. 2006; Garapich 2012; Gill 2010; Grzymała-Kazłowska 2005; Jordan 1999; Pietka 2011; Rabikowska and Burrell 2009; Ryan et al. 2009; Svašek 2009). Although they were earlier suggested to be the result of competition for the same (and limited) economic resources (e.g. Ryan et al. 2009), Garapich (2012) argues that they are rather the consequence of dominant cultural norms as well as the history of Polish nationalism and/or migration. The author notes that the nature of Polish migration (e.g. dependence on Polish networks, sustaining strong ties with co-nationals) proves contradictory to its discursive construction in which fellow Poles are portrayed as conmen or petty criminals whom one should always avoid. Therefore, he argues, mutual suspicion may be regarded a form of a cultural script and coping strategy that evolved in the context of relatively large outward migration

from Poland within the last few centuries. Apparently, distrust plays a role of a socially transmitted “reminder that ethnic links do not have to (by definition) lead to enhanced cooperation and higher level of trust” (Garapich 2012: 41).

As much as I agree with this understanding, I also recognize its limitations. While useful in exploring discursive ‘declarations’ about fellow migrant Poles, this conceptualisation carries a risk of simplifying the discussion on intra-diasporic relations shaped by ethnic, religious, class, sexual, gender and age dynamics. Indeed, it may imply that prejudice expressed by Polish migrants towards their fellow nationals could be explained by and large in national terms. This may lead to overlooking the significance of other social categories in forming negative attitudes towards fellow Poles and neglecting the complex nature of prejudice (Valentine 2010). This understanding does not, for example, explain the tensions between Polish migrants and Polish Roma in the UK (Staniewicz 2011). Likewise, it is insufficient to reflect on the frictions between various ‘generations’ of Polish migrants who settled in the UK in different historical and personal circumstances (Galasińska 2010a; Garapich 2007).

In my study, I have noticed that although some research participants expressed unease about other Polish migrants that could be explained in terms of distrust and hostility towards the imagined co-nationals (Garapich 2012), many framed prejudices through their assumptions regarding other axes of difference. In doing so, they expressed prejudices towards the intersections of Polish nationality and other social categories such as ethnicity (other than White-Polish), religion, age, gender, class or sexuality. This is reflected in the quotes below in which Iga and Ela narrate their encounters with Polish Roma and Jehovah’s Witnesses respectively.

It happened twice. It was in a bank. It wasn’t really avoiding [people] – I just avoided speaking. (...) There were Polish Roma. (...) And, to be true I was a little scared of them because you keep hearing that they come here [to the UK] from Poland and have no jobs, no money, so they organize for other people to come and they take their passports and make them work. I’ve heard so many negative opinions about these people that I just didn’t speak... because I had this cooler attitude towards them.

Audio-diaries: Iga (migrant, female, aged 32)

Jehovah’s Witnesses paid me a visit just recently – [they were] Polish people. So, I ask them where they have my address from and how come they know I am Polish. Because, they said “Good



morning” in Polish when I opened the door. They said that they had it from the English Jehovah’s Witnesses who visited me formerly. (...) This is intruding upon people and that’s what I don’t like about them. The fact that they come and try to convince people to follow them. They receive some points for such an activity. I don’t like it. But, otherwise, I treat them with a pinch of salt. Ela (migrant, female, age 31)

Apart from revealing a complex and contextualised nature of negative attitudes towards migrant co-nationals, these examples suggest that Polish migrants acknowledge the diversity of their migrant compatriots beyond the national lens. Interestingly, however, as long as sexuality was considered some participants appeared to make a reverse assumption. Artur, for example, was very surprised when his Polish female acquaintance admitted being a lesbian.

One of my female acquaintances – a Polish woman – almost killed me with some news recently. She said: “I live with my female partner”. Well, not really killed me with such news, but... Well, I did react normally – and she did as well. It’s just – you don’t hear such confessions very often, right? And, to be true – I’ve never heard such a confession from a Polish woman here. [*pause*] And, she has a kid – so, it’s interesting. She must have had different relationships earlier [he means hetero-normative here]. Artur (male, migrant, aged 34)

A similar surprise in relation to a Polish friend’s or acquaintance’s coming out was expressed by several other informants. Although it was often argued that the surprise stemmed from the nature of the topic itself rather than the expectations of hetero-normativity, it is hard, but not to conclude that the underlying assumption of many migrant narratives is that other Polish migrants are heterosexual. This is not unexpected, though, given the hegemony of hetero-normativity in the Polish context (see Chapter 4).

Religion, ethnic origin and sexuality were not the only axes of difference that were coupled with Polish nationality in my study. Many respondents mentioned, for example, the time of arrival to the UK and political or personal views as othering factors. With regard to the latter, Tomek, quoted earlier in this chapter for his lack of identification with the supposedly intolerant Polish society, felt particularly different having encountered a group of young Poles who were establishing a student club.

During the first meeting [of the club] there was this topic about Black people being so and so straight away. And, the boys would say racist things. And, I said to one of them: “Sorry, mate I’m not racist.” And, he replied: “I’m not as well – but asphalt is asphalt.” Oh boy! A young person, I don’t know, 18-20 years old. The other boy said: “Well, yes, yes. I also believe Black people have their place [in a hierarchy]”. Oh boy! Really?! I was kind of shocked. (...) I also remember such a situation – there were two Black boys approaching a [Polish] group I was with... And, when they passed there were some comments immediately. I was very surprised. Young people in England, in this country, and such a racism again. (...) One of the boys [in the group] was from college, the other worked in a warehouse - yet, he finished sociology in Poland! Sociology! My age. 26 years old. I was very surprised.

Tomek (migrant, male, aged 26)

It is important to mention here that the word “asphalt” (*asfalt* in Polish) the interviewee’s acquaintance was meant to use is a very offensive, yet relatively popular in the Polish context, racist label for Black people. This narrative is an extract from a longer discussion which started by me asking what Tomek found different in the UK society. Quite surprisingly, he replied by multiplying examples of his encounters with other Polish migrants such as the one above. Interestingly, in these stories, Polish migrants were, in most cases, hostile towards otherness and openly prejudiced. Paradoxically, although Tomek appears very respectful of various differences, he has quite negative attitudes towards his migrant co-nationals whose views on social diversity he considers unacceptable and distinctive from his own. Clearly, he draws moral boundaries and dis-identifies with other Polish migrants whom he, in addition, seems to demonize.

Whilst ethnicity (other than White-Polish), religion, sexuality and personal views are rarely mentioned in the literature about Polish people’s encounters with their co-nationals, belonging to different generations of migrants (e.g. the post-1945, the post-1989 or post-2004 waves) is often emphasized as a differentiating feature (Bielewska 2012; Fomina 2010; Galasińska 2010a; Garapich 2007; Rabikowska 2010a). This is exemplified in Filip’s narrative below which reveals a profound dissonance he experienced when encountering Polish post-1945 migrants in London.

The old [Polish] migrants who stayed abroad and their perceptions of Polishness and Polish people... I was very surprised by the language they use – it’s a sort of old-Polish language, if I could say so, that comes from the interwar period or post-war times. It’s very dignified, elegant, well-groomed,

but archaic. The people who use it would be round 75-80 years old and they retain this image of Poland which is completely different. They never visited the country [Poland] and kept this image of Poland as they left it. They maintained this image among themselves and preserved it. So, I could feel a difference between them and us. They couldn't understand why we'd come to the UK if we finally have an independent Poland. And, why we'd leave this Poland. So, we explained it was about financial well-being. But, they kept repeating: "But, you finally have an independent Poland. You can live and work there – why don't you do it?"  
Filip (migrant, male, aged 28)

Researchers of Polish migration to the UK recognise a few 'generations' of Polish migrants (e.g. the post-1945, the post-1989 or post-2004 arrivals) and argue that each of them is distinctive in terms of values, lifestyles, community ties or understandings of Polishness (Bielewska 2012; Galasińska 2010a). These discrepancies are significant not only due to the generational gaps or historical moment of departure from Poland. They matter because of various class pedigree of migrants themselves as well as persistent, in the Polish (and migratory) context, national(istic) discourse which praises political migration while implying the subordinate status of labour mobility (Garapich 2009). This frequently results in mutual antipathy, prejudice or even tensions (Galasińska 2010a; Garapich 2007). Significantly however, while Filip does not identify with the post-1945 Polish community and notices many differences between the post-war generation and himself (or post-2004 migrants more broadly), he seems quite respectful of 'the other Poles' as well as open on dialogue.

In continuing my study of encounters with difference post-migration, in this section I have explored Polish migrants' attitudes towards their fellow nationals. I have stressed the predominance of negative attitudes which, contrary to literature, were frequently expressed by research participants towards intersections of (Polish) nationality and other social categories. In addition, I have recognised that not only ethnicity (other than White-Polish), religion and sexuality, but also personal views about difference as well as historical moment of arrival to the UK are likely to constitute prejudice towards other migrant Poles. These findings contribute to the discussion on how migrant encounters with the assumed sameness impact on values and attitudes towards difference.

## 6.6 Conclusion

Migrant encounters with difference remain underexplored (see Chapter 2). By investigating encounters that take place in the context of mobility between Poland and the UK, in this chapter I have discussed the complex nature of migrant experience of distinctive socio-historical setting. I have, firstly, studied the ideas of the UK pre-migration and looked into how they differ from the actual experience of UK society. In doing so, I have contributed to the geographies of imagined encounters that link the past with the present, the home with the host society. Secondly, I have stressed that migrants are likely to alter their perception of home society post-migration as well as re-define the national in the context of the foreign. Namely, I have demonstrated that as a consequence of encounters with the unfamiliar receiving society, migrants tend to discursively construct Polishness in binary opposition to Britishness. Interestingly, as they do so, they seem to put on colonial, or rather a 'dependence' (see Chapter 2), lens and conceptualize Poland as 'backward' and 'intolerant'. Moreover, I have noted the reverse tendency with regard to, what has been termed, Polish family values which are assumed to be morally superior to the British ones. This suggests that rather than producing the national and the host as hegemonic binaries, Polish migrants construct various aspects of the home and the receiving society in an intricate relation of inferiority and superiority. As such, this finding resonates with the 'inferiority-superiority complex' (Kurczewska 2003; Marciniak 2009) and implies that the culture-specific understanding of concepts such as nation, Polishness, Englishness and/or Britishness is brought to migrant encounters with difference and diverse societies. Further, in the chapter I have acknowledged that encounters with difference in the context of international mobility may also involve encounters with migrant co-nationals. I have evidenced that fellow Polish migrants are claimed to epitomize otherness not only due to their ethnicity (other than White-Polish), religion (other than Catholic), sexuality (other than heterosexual), but also time of their arrival to the UK as well as – importantly - attitudes towards difference. This extends the current understanding of Polish migrants' perception of their migrant co-nationals which has focused largely on the notions of distrust and discursive hostility stemming from the essentialist conception of nationality or different generations of Polish migrants to the UK (Galasińska 2010a; Garapich 2007, 2012).

In the next chapter, I continue to look at migrant encounters with difference and explore three case studies in depth. In particular, I focus on the consequences of migrant encounters be it rejection, hostility, negative prejudice, normalization, acceptance, familiarity, favourable attitudes, respect, solidarity and personal involvement.



## Chapter 7: Mobility and encounters with difference

### II

#### 7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I continue to investigate how people's values and attitudes towards difference are developed, revised or interrupted through international mobility by exploring in depth three case studies of migrant encounters – Julia's (female, aged 27), Piotr's (male, aged 40) and Magda's (female, aged 28). I have carefully selected these cases from the pool of 14 migrant stories I have collected in my study (see Chapter 3). They embrace a range of changes in values and attitudes from strong negative prejudice, rejection or hostility, through normalization, familiarity and acceptance, ending with favourable attitudes, respect, solidarity or personal involvement. Throughout the chapter, I acknowledge the selective, contextualized and fluid (ranging from positive to negative) nature of migrant stances.

As I have noted earlier in this thesis (see Chapter 2 and 6), migrant encounters remain underexplored in geography literature and there is still little understanding of how they affect values and attitudes towards difference. In particular, the consequences of encounters, be it (positive or negative) prejudice, isolation, familiarity or engagement with diversity, have been inadequately addressed. In focusing upon Julia's, Piotr's and Magda's cases, the following sections will look into these issues and contribute as well as extend the understanding of migrant experience of difference.

Although the main interest of this thesis lies in meaningful encounters (Amin 2002; Hemming 2011; Valentine 2008) which occur as a consequence of international mobility, I believe that looking into transformative interactions pre-migration is equally important. This is by and large due to the ontology of this study which recognizes personal dispositions, socialization as well as lived experience as crucial for personal change that may occur in later life. That said, the assumption underlying the following sections is that meaningful encounters prior to the act of

moving to a receiving society, may affect the perception of difference and the encounters that take place post-migration.

The case study approach I utilise in this chapter is particularly useful to investigate the complicatedness of social phenomena in changing geo-historical contexts due to its capacity to reflect on contradictions, inconsistencies and broader spatio-temporal connections (see Chapter 3 and Berg 2007; Yin 2003). The consequences of encounters, as I have argued earlier (see Chapter 2), stretch from past to the present and future, and rather than separate instances should be studied and understood as processes (Valentine and Sadgrove 2012). In the previous chapter, I have also evidenced that they are highly contextualised and thus need to be understood against the backdrop of social and personal circumstances. Adopting a case study perspective enables me not only to fully explore how the pre-migration informs the post-migration, but also to consider symbolic baggage (see Chapter 5) as well as external influences that possibly frame migrant reception of difference. As such, the chapter enriches my previous findings by providing a detailed, yet illustrative account of how my research participants experience difference across time and space.

I begin the chapter with exploring the case of Julia who expressed predominantly favourable attitudes towards difference pre- and post-migrations, and has engaged with diversity ever since moving into the UK. This is followed by the story of Piotr who while being one of the most prejudiced participants in my study, recalled some profound positive encounters. Finally, I look into Magda's case which draws particular attention to the situatedness and fluidity of both positive and negative attitudes.

## **7.2 Julia: Narratives of familiarity and engagement**

Julia (aged 28) grew up in a small relatively homogeneous town in Northern Poland in what she calls an "open-minded" family. Although tolerance *per se* was hardly ever openly discussed at home, her parents strongly emphasized such values as respect, equality and trust. Religion (Catholicism) was also an important aspect of family life. For as long as Julia remembers, her family was very mobile and had many connections with abroad. In particular, her parents used to travel to France for many years during summer holidays to pick up fruits and earn some extra money



beyond their teacher's salaries. Also, Julia's sister moved to London permanently when Julia was still a teenager. As both parents and her sister managed to develop many relationships with various people abroad, difference in terms of ethnicity, nationality and religion was often a popular topic at home. In this respect, Julia's sister was particularly influential as she frequently spoke of London's super-diversity (Vertovec 2007) in a very positive way. This is how Julia understands this influence now:

I've always been close with her. She was and still is a very understanding person who listens to others. And, well, when she left Poland, I used to spend hours talking to her over the phone. (...) My positive attitude towards diversity – maybe, I took after my sister? Maybe, you know subconsciously – all these years on the phone, all these conversations when she spoke of whom she met or spent time with or worked with. She spoke about people from various countries and so on. So, maybe it influenced me. I was curious: an older sister who lives in a different place, works here and there, and says things like that: “I work with a person from Jamaica now.” And, then she says that she works with a Scottish person, and yet another person.

Julia (migrant, female, age 28)

Julia suggests that her sister influenced her attitudes and values towards difference before she actually moved to the UK. Although, as she argued in the interviews, her sister had reported some negative encounters as well, she had never spoken of them with reference to stereotypes or prejudices. In addition, due to her sister's migration experience, Julia was fully aware of diversity in the British context pre-migration (see Chapter 6). It appears that Julia's sister was a transnational agent in mediating what could be described as remote encounters with difference. As such, she passed on a range of her own favourable feelings onto Julia (Valentine and Sadgrove 2012) which were further mobilized when Julia migrated herself.

Importantly, it was not only her sister who had an impact on Julia's attitudes towards difference pre-migration. In fact, Julia had a very meaningful contact (Amin 2002; Hemming 2011; Valentine 2008) with otherness in the Polish context long before she migrated to Britain. Namely, in order to undertake undergraduate studies, Julia moved from her small home-town to a major city in Northern Poland. This was a fateful moment (Giddens 1991b) for her as the move was followed by many (trans)formative encounters with difference – in particular, in terms of sexuality.

[It was] The first time when I felt that not everybody was the same. (...) I also met a homosexual person for the first time in my life that time. This person lived on my floor [in student hall] and we became very good friends. (...) We spent really a lot of time together. (...) I came to Leeds later on and here... I think X. [the city she moved to in Poland] prepared me for this [diversity] somehow. Julia (migrant, female, age 28)

In the interviews, Julia admitted that befriending a gay person was crucial for her as, in her own words, it “broke the ice, my barrier” regarding homosexuality. Before that, Julia did not have any fixed ideas of or feelings towards non-hetero-normativity apart from being familiar with certain negative stereotypes that existed in Polish society (see Chapter 5). Although, she never said it in an explicit way, by speaking of a barrier she implied that she might have felt an unease about homosexuality deriving from her lack of knowledge of the issue. As a consequence of her close and repeated encounters with difference, Julia developed a very open and respectful attitude. As such, her encounter could be described as both meaningful (Amin 2002; Hemming 2011; Valentine 2008) and (trans)formative. Moreover, as she stressed, this single relationship “prepared” her, as she put it, for meeting very diverse people in the UK.

Indeed, after moving to Leeds in 2006, Julia immediately got into a group of young international students that included several gay men and lesbians. Recently, she has also become very good friends with two gay couples. Interestingly, against this backdrop, she remains quite skeptical about same-sex couple raising children.

To be really true, I still don't know what I think about adopting children. Maybe, if I come across a case one day. Maybe if my acquaintances adopt a child and I'll see how it looks in practice, maybe I'll change my opinion. As for now, I don't necessarily think... I don't know what to think about it. Marriage – yes. If they want to be together and if they are sure about that, take care of each other and so on – yes. But, a child – not necessarily.

Julia (migrant, female, age 28)

It is important to note here that Julia has a very strong sense of family values, family (and, indeed, gender) roles as well as nuclear family model. Throughout the interviews she frequently narrated how she imagined family life and, in doing so, reproduced a normative model particularly popular (on a discursive rather than practice level) in the Polish context (see Chapter 4). It seems that this strongly rooted image affects her understanding of who should (or not) be given right to raise children - something that has been explored earlier in this thesis (see Chapter 5 and

Natalia's negotiations of same-sex couples having children, pp. 144-145). Although Julia has favourable attitudes towards sexual diversity and non-heterosexual relationships, she cannot transcend the conceptualisation of child rearing as heteronormative privilege. While speaking of these views, however, she clearly leaves a space for a possible opinion change. In doing so, she argues that she needs to "see how it looks in practice". Such talk reveals that, despite being influenced by certain normativities, Julia also develops and continuously negotiates her attitudes towards difference based on personal experience and observation.

Julia's encounters with difference post-migration are not limited to a diverse university campus (Andersson et al. 2012). In fact, Julia migrated to Leeds because she had fallen in love with a foreigner. Although he was born in one of the southern African states, her partner grew up mostly in a country at the Persian Gulf and then moved to the UK to study. This, as Julia argues, provided him with "an amazing outlook on culture". Above all, the relationship turned out particularly enriching for Julia.

If you put us together as a couple, we have views on things from different angles. I think very seriously of my boyfriend – when we have a family at some point our kids will have these two approaches - parents from two different worlds and I believe this is good. And, we actually had this conversation - it was about religion. I'd like to transmit this message on my kids - that religion is very important. [That] The basic rules are essential. But, the other things which are inculcated by the [Catholic] Church... You should – sure, you should listen to that - but, you should also think independently.

Julia (migrant, female, age 28)

The narrative above is an example of intimate encounters that occur between family members and/or partners within the context of 'home' (Valentine et al. 2014, forthcoming) rather than urban or semi-public spaces. Such sites of encounter, as I have argued earlier in this thesis (see Chapter 2), while potentially crucial for understanding of values and attitudes towards difference, remain underexplored in encounter literature. Interestingly, in spite of her partner's background, negotiating differences on a daily basis does not seem very challenging for Julia. They are both White, Christian (of different denominations though), have similar lifestyles, values and views on difference. Ever since starting a relationship, there have been – as Julia

stresses – no tensions related to significant life issues and/or decisions. Although her partner's nationality and complex life history appear to facilitate certain encounters with otherness (e.g. through visiting his parents who live in the Middle East), they hardly affect Julia's everyday life. In this respect, they are not meaningful as they have little capacity to challenge personal values and attitudes (Amin 2002; Hemming 2011; Valentine 2008).

Whereas Julia's home encounters are structured around similarities, her neighbourhood and workplace encounters frequently involve difference. Following her move to the UK, Julia has lived in a relatively diverse Leeds neighbourhood which she has enjoyed very much and has found the diversity there very stimulating. Having done a master's degree in English Studies, she got a part-time position as a teacher of English as a foreign language. Since she specializes in teaching adults, she has had a repetitive and intense contact with especially national and religious minorities of differing ages, classes and social statuses. These encounters, as she claims, enabled her to become familiar with cultures, religions and normativities she had no idea of and contact with when she had lived in Poland. Julia had, for instance, met Muslim people as well as people of various Middle Eastern nationalities for the first time in her life in the UK. Particularly meaningful for her were, as she implies, the encounters with her female Muslim students.

Before [encountering Muslim people in the UK], I had never understood why some women cover themselves. And here, I've taught so many Muslim women, hundreds of not more, I talked to them very often. We discussed such topics during our classes. There was always a topic. So, now I know how it looks like. I know that – maybe not always but very often – it's their choice and so on. So, I managed to understand it due to my stay here. (...) I'd never met a Pakistani person in Poland or – generally from the [Middle] East. Our neighbours [in Leeds] (...) are from Pakistan. They are very, very nice. I've been living here for four years now. I mean, in this building. And they've been living here for a longer while as well, so I've get to know them quite well. (...) When I was in Poland, I didn't meet such people. I'd only meet foreigners in Warsaw. (...) I remember meeting a person from Brazil. (...) You'd meet people from Europe many times. But, from this part of the world [Middle East] – no.

Julia (migrant, female, age 28)

Simultaneously, to earn extra money, Julia works few evenings a week in a restaurant employing people of various nationalities and ethnicities. In the interviews

and audio-diaries, she would on many occasions stress how ethnic, national and religious difference became a normality for her and how her engagement with diversity is an integral part of her life now.

It's all normality now. Last week when I was at work, the restaurant was full, the floor was full... I looked around and I could see this amazing mixture of people. Really. And it felt so normal. (...) I really like it when people mix and try to learn more about other cultures... and when they're curious. (...) If you live in a country which is focused on a single nation – like Poland – you can only learn such stuff from books or films. And you can live with it here. It's something completely normal.

Audio-diaries: Julia (migrant, female, age 28)

Migrant workplace encounters have been so far - as I have mentioned earlier in this thesis (see Chapter 2) - largely conceptualized in terms of prejudiced and even racist attitudes (Cook et al. 2011a; McDowell 2009; McDowell et al. 2007). This resonates with a broader tendency in the literature to look into exclusion and negative experience of otherness at work (Harris and Valentine 2014). Against this backdrop, much less attention has been paid to favourable attitudes towards the ethnic, national or religious Others that are shaped through the experience of working in diverse environments. Julia's workplace encounters are very significant in this respect. They have been followed by developing a range of positive feelings fuelled by Julia's curiosity of Muslim women and Islam as well as her mostly unprejudiced stance towards difference more broadly.

Across all the meetings and interviews Julia stressed that she developed predominantly positive attitudes towards diversity and difference while living in the UK. The only prejudice she openly admitted to holding was towards Roma people whom she had contact with in Poland, yet not in Britain. Her story is interesting for several reasons. First of all, it is a telling case of what people may bring to encounters of their past, something that is still underexplored in encounters literature (Valentine and Sadgrove 2012). Indeed, Julia understands her favourable feelings towards difference as a product of her upbringing, family (particularly sister's) influence and past encounters. Secondly, it is an example of how meaningful encounters within home society facilitate engagement with difference within host society. This finding is particularly valuable as such issues are rarely addressed in the literature (Valentine and Sadgrove 2012 is one notable exception). Julia's

relationship with her gay friend in Poland was a very significant encounter in this respect. Interestingly, this contact alongside many other encounters in the British context, have not affected Julia's views on raising children by non-heterosexual couples. These views reflect, to a great degree, the opinions of the majority of Poles that were discussed in the previous chapters (see Chapter 4 and 5). Next, although they remain largely non-meaningful, Julia's encounters with difference include many home encounters stemming from her relationship with non-Polish/non-British and non-Catholic partner. Such home encounters have been argued to be lacking proper academic attention so far (Schuermans 2013; Valentine et al. 2014, forthcoming). Similarly, Julia's encounters with her students resulting in warm feelings towards Muslim women in particular are a contribution to the underresearched geographies of workplace encounters which tend to focus on mostly negative effects of interactions with otherness (Cook et al. 2011b; Harris and Valentine 2014). Lastly, Julia's case evidences that development of positive attitudes, familiarity and engagement may be the consequences of migrant encounters with diversity. In doing so, the story emphasizes the links between the past and the present, home and host societies and acknowledges that the pre-migration may affect the capacity to live with difference post-migration.

### **7.3 Piotr: Becoming prejudiced**

Piotr (aged 40) grew up in a working-class family in a middle-sized town in North-Western Poland which could be described as quite homogeneous in terms of ethnicity, nationality and religion. Although Catholicism was routinely practiced at home, Piotr portrays his upbringing as largely secular (see Piotr's narrative of how his mother attempted to provide him with Catholic upbringing despite her lack of engagement with Catholicism in Chapter 4, p. 104). In addition, as he claims, no particular values regarding difference were ever passed onto him or openly discussed. In fact, Piotr recalls his childhood as quite traumatic. This, as he explains, was mostly due to one of his parent's alcohol addiction which dominated the family life and resulted in Piotr being quite neglected.

As a teenager (of around 15 years of age) Piotr left home and moved to a distant city in Southern Poland in order to do his secondary school. He describes this as "an escape from home", in particular from his parent's addiction. Having finished

secondary education, Piotr served in the army and then did several low-skilled jobs before starting to travel to the UK in order to earn what he viewed as “easy money”. As his first stays in Britain took place long before 2004, when the UK labour market was closed for Eastern European immigrants, Piotr worked mostly illegally which eventually led to his deportation. After 2004, when Polish people were granted access to the British labour market, Piotr moved to Leeds permanently. He was then followed by his partner and a little daughter.

Unlike Julia, Piotr emphasizes that his significant others had little influence on his values, attitudes, views and lifestyle. That said, he considers himself as fully independent in terms of developing any opinions.

If you are 15 years old and you leave your home for many years, then you go to the army, then you move abroad... nobody could really have an influence on you. If somebody had had an impact on me, I might have not left my home in the first place (...). But, we weren't such a family – we didn't support one another.

Piotr (migrant, male, aged 40)

Before his first move to the UK, Piotr had no idea and no interest in how British society looked like beyond his common knowledge about job opportunities and the ‘better’ wages on offer. He also had relatively little contact with difference in terms of ethnicity, nationality or sexuality at that time. He admitted, for instance, that he had never met a gay person in Poland. His arrival to Britain was quite meaningful in this respect as it was followed by numerous – mostly workplace – ‘first encounters’ with diversity and a development of predominantly negative attitudes towards various minorities as well as British society itself.

It is important to note here that the majority of positions Piotr held after moving to the UK were quite low-skilled, including many production-line jobs or cleaning. He has also been living in a predominantly working-class Leeds neighbourhood that is popular with Eastern European immigrants. Although labour migrant identities and attitudes are differentiated by age, gender, skills, skin colour and class (McDowell 2008), low-skilled migrants in the UK have been argued to use stereotypical assumptions about the embodied attributes of their co-workers (McDowell et al. 2007). In the context of their precarious position as well as competition for economic resources, this often results in new and deeper divisions among various groups of workers as well as, needless to say, many racial, religious or other prejudices (Cook

et al. 2011a, 2011b; Fox 2013; McDowell et al. 2009). Furthermore, such attitudes often mobilise racialized discourses associated with many derogatory characteristics such as laziness (Sibley 1995) or a bad work ethic (Fox 2013). Piotr's narrative about Black people is no different in this respect.

They [Black people] believe that they are sufferers because they were born Black. That's what I've noticed. They have claims. (...) And, they are very lazy. I don't know why. Do they think that they did enough during these several centuries of slavery? (...) We work and I can put for example 10 apples to the box and he [sic!] puts four... at the same time. I don't know – is he doing it because he thinks that's enough? Or – am I supposed to do more because I'm more hard working? I don't know. I think they are lazy. They really are lazy... and I haven't met a person of this skin colour who'd work like a White person. I haven't. I'm sure there are such individuals but I haven't met any.

Piotr (migrant, male, aged 40)

Apart from developing a very strong prejudice towards Black people who are, in the narrative, clearly racialized and regarded as a uniform group (Fox 2013), Piotr admits developing unfavourable attitudes towards many other social groups. Importantly, some of these prejudices have been claimed to circulate within British society. For example, Piotr spoke of working class men as, in his own words, “lazy *chavs* living on benefits”. This resonates with the stereotype of White English working class lacking a work ethic, undeserving social rights and abusing the social system (Jones 2012; Nayak 2006; Valentine and Harris 2014b). It appears that Piotr internalised this prejudice post-migration in the context of his own precarious position on the British labour market and against the backdrop of the stereotype of hard-working Polish migrants (Grzymała-Kazłowska 2005; Krings et al. 2013; van Riemsdijk 2010).

In addition, Piotr has quite ambivalent feelings towards Muslim people and/or people of Asian origin whom he racializes and considers as a uniform non-White community similarly to the case of Black people (Fox 2013). However, it is particularly interesting to note that while he lived in Poland pre-2000s, Piotr used to work in a restaurant owned by a Moroccan Muslim. In the interviews, he would nonetheless argue that this repetitive contact was largely insignificant and did not affect any of his attitudes. Apparently, his prejudices developed only after moving to the UK.



When I worked as a waiter [in Poland] (...) the owner of the place was an Arab person from Morocco. So, there I could see they [Moroccan Muslims] are slightly different. They have a different culture, different approach to various things. They eat meals differently. They have Ramadan. (...) But, I knew that before and it wasn't something that (...) had any influence on me. No. This sort of, I don't know, hatred or sense of difference towards them [Muslims] – I developed it here [in the UK], during all these years I've been living here. (...) Having worked with people of various nationalities, being able to see how they work, how they are and how they perceive things – I'm sure my opinion changed - (...) became worse. (...) There are many things [about Islam] which just cannot be accepted rationally. Treatment of women. A woman is just an element – she is not a family member. This is so – how come in 21<sup>st</sup> century, the age of freedom of speech, the age of democracy – things like this happen? (...) I couldn't live in such a religion. I couldn't accept it.

Piotr (migrant, male, aged 40)

What Piotr describes as “hatred or sense of difference towards them [Muslims]” resonates with the rhetoric of global Islamophobia which increased significantly in Europe (including the UK and Poland) following the 9/11 and 7/7 terrorist attacks (Allen 2010, 2013; Pędziwiatr 2010; Sheridan 2006). While developed in the context of international mobility and increased encounters with difference in the UK, Piotr's attitude appears to be driven by global events and echoes the prejudiced responses towards Muslim people which I have explored earlier in this thesis (see Chapter 5). Interestingly, although in the interviews Piotr expressed openly Islamophobic views, he also spoke of Muslims in positive terms with regard to family values. Moreover, in doing so, he seemed to identify with the Muslim community in Britain rather than Polish immigrants.

They really – and you can see it here [in the UK] (...) – family is a huge value for them. That's a number one thing. You can see it here [in the UK] - how they support one another. (...) And with us - you see it especially with the Poles abroad – it is slightly different. So, I believe it's a huge advantage for them, because I believe families should be just like this. Even though... there may be various relationships, family should stick together in significant moments. And with us – it doesn't work exactly like this.

Piotr (migrant, male, aged 40)

Significantly, until recently, Piotr had little contact with diversity in the UK context beyond his workplace. This is, indeed, exemplified in one of his statements - "I only live here. But, somehow I don't take part in it [UK society]" - which echoes Bauman's (2005: 78) claim about post-modern individuals "retreat[ing] into islands of sameness". The situation has changed, however, since he started attending college in order to improve his language and other skills. Unexpectedly, given the extent of racism and Islamophobia Piotr expressed in interviews, this turned out to be a fateful moment (Giddens 1991b) for him. It appears he has been gradually befriending his course mate, a Muslim Kurdish man.

I started college here two months ago and let me tell you this – (...) I sit next to a guy from Kurdistan or so and, well... if I had this contact earlier, I guess, my attitude towards them [Muslim people] would have been different. (...) As for now – I can see – I even talk to him, you know. We do talk. And, I can shake hands with this guy. I've realized today he shook hands with me! He wanted to shake hands and I shook back, and that very moment I realized that if I had been in a café full of them [Muslim people] or Black people with my friend X., (...) we'd be wondering why we're in such a place and why there are no separate restaurants for e.g. Blacks – such silly jokes right? (...) I admit there's this negative attitude towards these people. And, yet, today a guy wanted to shake hands and I shook back – it was normal – I shook his hand and I felt good with it, you know. I felt that this intolerance (...) sort of faded away. Maybe, maybe it's enough to get to know such a person and your opinion changes.

Piotr (migrant, male, aged 40)

The narrative above is an example of a meaningful encounter which has a potential to break down deeply-seated prejudices (Hemming 2011; Valentine 2008). In the quote, Piotr speculates that through such encounters he may possibly change his attitude towards Muslim people. Such a statement by a declared and 'consciously' racist person appears quite unusual. It suggests that an attitude towards difference is a process (rather than a condition) prone to continuous negotiations (Valentine and Sadgrove 2012). Indeed, Piotr seemed to be unprejudiced towards his Muslim boss in Poland. Then, in the context of increased encounters with Muslim people in Britain (and growing global Islamophobia), he developed a set of somewhat contradictory, yet predominantly negative beliefs about them. Finally, being aware of his own prejudice, he has started to enjoy the company of a Kurdish course mate and speculate of possibly rethinking his negative attitudes.

Paradoxically, given the extent and nature of his prejudiced views, Piotr strives not to pass any of his negative attitudes onto his, now teenage, daughter. This parenting strategy is very intriguing. Earlier in the thesis (see Chapter 6), I have argued that parenting styles are prone to change in the context of migration and encounters with different normativities (de Haan 2011). How Piotr wants to raise his daughter seems particularly influenced by his negotiations of socially acceptable views towards difference.

I don't show or express my attitudes towards different nations when I'm with X. [name], right? I don't let her notice that I think in a certain way. I never tell her they [Black people] are lazy or so. No. It's never like this. I try to be neutral when we're together, right? And, I don't make any comments. (...) I want her to evaluate such things on her own... I want her to decide what her opinions are... or to develop opinions. (...) I don't try to impose anything. Piotr (migrant, male, aged 40)

It appears that there is a significant discrepancy between Piotr's personal feelings towards difference and what he believes is an appropriate attitude to be passed onto his child. Although similar parental behaviour has been recognized with regard to dangerous and/or addictive activities including drinking (e.g. Valentine et al. 2012), there has been relatively little discussion about it with reference to 'political correctness' and socially appropriate behaviour. In their recent paper, Valentine and Harris (2014a) argue that due to growing awareness of public and legal penalisation of prejudice (such as racism) in the UK context, people tend to privatise their negative attitudes and express them amongst trusted friends or family members. This is, the authors stress, the consequence of increasing formal demand for conviviality and 'political correctness' in public spaces. What Piotr narrates here could be described as hyper-privatisation of attitudes – withholding negative feelings from a child in order to pass on 'politically correct' views only.

In contrast to Julia's story, this case study is an exemplar of how people may develop and further negotiate their attitudes post-migration. Whereas for Julia family influence and encounters in Poland were formative enough to affect her approach towards difference in the British context, Piotr's home situation as well as insignificant contact with Islam pre-migration had no impact on the negative attitudes he developed in his later life, in particular in the context of his precarious position as a low-skilled migrant (McDowell 2009; McDowell et al. 2007). Recent

Eastern European labour migrants have been reported to feel disadvantaged, devalued and deskilled in the UK context (Currie 2008) and thus more likely to develop unfavourable and stereotypical attitudes towards fellow workers (Cook et al. 2011a, 2011b). Importantly, some of the prejudiced views Piotr expressed are quite complex, selective and situated. In spite of being Islamophobic and anti-Muslim, Piotr truly admires Muslim people for some of the values he believes they live with. In doing so, he appears to identify with their attitudes towards family and mutual care, and distances himself from his migrant co-nationals (see Chapter 6). In addition, his recent meaningful encounter with a Muslim Kurdish course mate seems to have challenged the prejudice he was openly articulating not long ago. These findings contribute to the understanding of encounters with difference as open-ended and context dependent processes (Valentine and Sadgrove 2012). They also reinforce the recent critique of geographies of encounter by confirming that pure contact with the Other rarely translates into respect for difference and capacity to live with diversity (Valentine 2008; Valentine and Sadgrove 2012). Furthermore, the story reaffirms that workplace encounters may be particularly meaningful for some people and result not only in greater understanding or engagement with difference, but also in tensions, divisions or segregations (Cook et al. 2011b; Harris and Valentine 2014). Finally, unlike Julia's, Piotr's case suggests that development of prejudice – or a whole set of unfavourable feelings and emotions that mobilize racial, religious and other stereotypes - may be the consequence of migrant encounters with diversity. Curiously, these negative attitudes, regardless of their profoundness and intensity, may be at the same time recognized as inappropriate, incorrect or socially unacceptable (Valentine and Harris 2014a) and concealed from significant others, children in particular.

#### **7.4 Magda: In-between openness and prejudice**

Magda (aged 29) was born and raised in a non-diverse, yet as she claims very idyllic and open-minded, environment in the South of Poland. As a child she was strongly influenced by her father who became her role model and authority. Magda portrays him as a very spiritual, sensitive and respectful man, and argues that as a grown-up woman she strives to live according to the same values herself. Unfortunately, as her father died when she was a teenager, she withdrew into herself and her ties with the

rest of her family became looser. She admits that at that time one of her female friends who used to live according to strict Catholic values had a significant impact on her. As a result, she developed a rigorous attitude towards many important life issues including starting sexual life or drinking alcohol.

Having finished her master's degree in a major city in Southern Poland, Magda was encouraged by one of her acquaintances to find a summer job in London in order to save some money. She had very little awareness of British society at that time and practically no contact with difference in terms of ethnicity, nationality, religion or sexuality. When she was leaving Poland, she was certain she would be coming back in a few months at the latest. She had already had a full-time job waiting for her in Poland.

Magda's first encounters with British society were predominantly mundane. Contrary to the stories of some migrants in my study who were utterly surprised with the increased visibility of difference in the UK context (see Chapter 6), Magda claims to have taken the diversity she faced in London for granted and assumed it to be an integral feature of the UK society. In other words, despite being familiar with by and large White, Polish and Catholic environment, she did not consider London's diversity as different or strange. As she primarily focused on securing her summer job, she also admitted not paying much attention to her largely fleeting urban encounters. In doing so, she seemed to have an indifferent attitude towards diversity.

Unexpectedly, working as a waitress in one of the city centre's restaurants, she met a non-British Muslim man who she immediately fell in love with. She argues that she found his integrity and similarly strict religious values particularly appealing.

I knew I wouldn't find such a man in Poland. As a Muslim, he didn't drink alcohol. (...) And he has some rules he lives with... Religious rules I do appreciate. That was very important for me. (...) Marriage chastity. (...) The pure fact that in a relationship, there should be marriage. As much as I can see, the majority of couples live without a marriage, which is not – well, these are my very personal beliefs. (...) Personally, I would feel bad living with somebody without a marriage. So, it was very important for me. Magda (migrant, female, aged 29)

Interestingly, in the narrative, Magda seems to make an implicit moral judgement about Polish men. Although she never articulates this in an explicit way, she implies

that they are not devout enough for her to classify as potential life partners. In doing so, she essentialises and orientalisises them as morally inferior (Said 2003 [1978]) contrary to the general trend in my study to view Polishness as morally superior with regard to family values (see Chapter 6). A deeply religious Muslim man, whose values Magda could identify with, was on the other hand, regarded a ‘proper’ partner. Whilst the literature has often looked into religious conversion being the consequence of marriage (Köse 1999; Köse and Loewenthal 2000; Rambo 1993; Shatzmiller 1996; van Nieuwkerk 2004), there is relatively little studies into religion/value-driven motives of engaging into inter-faith relationships. Some researchers argue that one of the reasons for choosing to live in Islam is “the conception of essential manhood and womanhood as well as the patriarchal nuclear family” (Sultan 1999: 325). However, when Magda met her present husband, she never considered religious conversion. In her case, it was not Islam *per se* (or the value system it represents) that she found attractive. Rather, it was what Magda understood to be her partner’s personal characteristics in terms of religiosity, morality and certain normativity. This finding is, thus, quite unusual and contributes to the understanding of the motivations to engage in inter-faith relationships.

Falling in love with her husband was a fateful moment (Giddens 1991b) for Magda as it challenged and affected all her life plans. In a relatively short time she decided to stay in the UK, got married and started a new two-faith family life, first in London and sometime later in Leeds. It is particularly interesting in this context that, while living in Poland, she had quite ambivalent feelings towards Islam.

It was one of the religions of this world, I’d be a little afraid of – at that time, I mean. (...) I guess it’s [her attitude] more positive now. Being in Poland, I hadn’t - It wasn’t significant for me so to speak. The only thing I remember from that period is these horror stories of some women from the TV programme “Rozmowy w toku” [ENG: *Discussions in progress*]. And being here I could see that there are two sides of a coin. I still can see the things which could be changed. For example, men could use Quran less or try to truly understand it. But, on the other hand, (...) I see a lot of good things in this religion.

Magda (migrant, female, aged 29)

It appears that Magda held a set of Islamophobic views pre-migration. In the interviews, she stressed that this attitude was largely affected by the media - some sensationalist TV programmes in particular - which presented Polish women as the

victims of their Arab-Muslim husbands (see Chapter 5). Nevertheless, through her intimate relationship with a Muslim person her attitude has changed. It now seems to be shaped by Magda's day-to-day negotiations of difference. Previously in this thesis (see Chapter 5), I have suggested that since some of my migrant participants had a limited contact with certain categories of difference in Poland (e.g. Muslim people), their attitudes were particularly prone to be influenced by the media (see Chapter 5). The shift Magda narrates above suggests that in the context of mobility between a relatively homogeneous and a diverse society rather than remaining influenced by the media some migrants may start to develop attitudes through personal encounters.

Notwithstanding this significant change, Magda still appears to conceptualize what she considers European/Western and a Muslim world in binary oppositions. Interestingly, at the same time, she claims to be open to dialogue and everyday negotiations of difference.

There are differences. It's not like these are the same worlds. They are different worlds. Two worlds. But, everything's negotiable and manageable. Magda (migrant, female, aged 29)

Indeed, Magda's two-faith (Catholic-Muslim) relationship has required a lot of everyday negotiations. Against this backdrop, it is interesting how, and upon what rationale, she and her husband divided home duties between themselves.

I can see that my husband brought many behavioural routines or prejudices from his country. And, I don't like them. But, over time - it's important to explain things to him and say that it's not like this, that things work differently. (...) At the beginning when we started to live together, I remember he came into the house, took his shoes off and was barefoot. I told him to put slippers on. He said he was accustomed to be just like that because in X [country] his mum would always clean the floor, so you could be barefoot. At first, it surprised me, because what I meant was - I didn't want him to catch a cold. And, later I thought: "Do you think I'm going to clean this floor?" I told him so. I said: "I'm not going to do that. We're in Europe. I do work, you do work. I do clean, you do clean." And, in the end it's him cleaning the house [*she laughs*]. I don't usually do that.

Magda (migrant, female, aged 29)

Even though the narrative appears to recall (Islamic) feminist critique of patriarchal power relations in Muslim communities (Mahmood 2001; Moghadam 2002; Mojab

2001), Magda's claim about the importance of "explain[ing] things" to her husband and her desire to live in line with "European" values resonate with orientalist discourses (Said 2003 [1978]). Indeed, she conceptualizes Islamic and/or Arab traditions and values as somewhat inferior, less civilized, oppressive to women and thus requiring a correction or an adjustment to, as she implies, 'proper' European ones. This suggests that, despite her favourable feelings towards Islam explored earlier in this section, Magda essentializes Muslim people and communities. This is further reflected in the account below.

In a Muslim country you have no escape. (...) I prefer being here [in the UK], because I can do what I want and nobody forces me to do some things. It's not perceived badly when I go shopping alone in the evening. I'm not afraid that I'll be stigmatized for completely normal things. (...) We agreed that we would live in Europe. So, I wasn't afraid of anything because here the law treats women and men equally. So, here the law doesn't make any doors closed. Even if my husband turned out a bad person at some point, I'd be protected by law. I could fight for myself.

Magda (migrant, female, aged 29)

There appears to be an implicit prejudice towards Muslim people and living in what Magda calls "a Muslim country" underlying this statement. She, indeed, seems to assume that if she was in the same life situation in her husband's home society, she could be oppressed and stigmatized for what she understands as "completely normal things". For this reason, as Magda continues, she and her husband live in what she labels "Europe" and conceptualizes in similarly essentialist terms as a uniform social space rather than an ethnically, culturally and religiously diverse continent. The quote again reveals Magda's tendency to orientalise Muslim people as well as essentialize not only the Middle East, but Europe.

Magda's ambivalent attitude towards Muslim people and Islam is further expressed in her narrative of having and raising children. Although her marriage has been on many occasions described as transcending religious and cultural divides, mutually enriching and inspiring, it might sooner or later face a significant challenge. Magda admits that she and her husband have a profound (yet, consciously neglected) dilemma related to their future children's religious attachment.

We still don't agree about that [raising children]. Well, there's nothing to talk about here. Really. I'd prefer my children to be



of my religion and he'd prefer the kids to be raised in his... So, as for now – we don't have children [*she laughs*]. But, I don't know how we could solve it. We can adopt a child. If we adopt a child, this kid can be raised in a religion he or she was born in. (...) We still don't know - (...) I don't know what we'll do. Personally, if it is a boy – I'll have nothing against [him being Muslim]. But, if it's a girl – I'd prefer her not to be [Muslim]. They do have limited rights. (...) If my daughter was Muslim and in the future had a husband who's like my own husband, there's absolutely no problem. But, my husband is quite unique when I compare him to the majority of [Muslim] people I know. (...) So, we've sort of swept this issue under the carpet for now. And, I know it will be a difficult for us.

Magda (migrant, female, aged 29)

This narrative is also interesting for another reason. Namely, it captures the complexities of the effects of migrant encounters with difference. Magda's complicated, yet predominantly positive, encounter with a Muslim person does not appear to influence her attitude towards the whole group (Matejskova and Leitner 2011; Valentine 2008). Indeed, Magda perceives her husband as exceptional in comparison to other Muslim people, men in particular. This only reinforces her prejudice and mobilizes racialized as well as gendered discourses associated with the alleged domination of Muslim men and oppression of women (Døving 2010; Said 2003 [1978]; Spivak 1999). She would not want her daughter to be Muslim implying that she might as a Muslim woman be oppressed in the future. At the same time, she is not against her son being a Muslim. Even though she continuously experiences largely positive encounter with religious difference at home, her negative attitudes towards Muslim men and the assumed oppressive power-relations in Muslim communities seem unlikely to get challenged.

While Julia's and Piotr's cases are quite clear in terms of what the consequences of migrant encounters may be – the former exemplifies what could be viewed as a development of positive attitudes and the latter as mostly negative ones – Magda's story is much more complex. By shifting from openness to prejudice, respectful to essentialist discourse, her understanding of and feelings towards difference remain fluid, selective and contextualised. In this respect, the case is particularly reflective of the intricacies of lived experience of difference (Valentine and Sadgrove 2012). Importantly, it explores the willingness to negotiate similarities across difference post-migration and a capacity to live and engage with difference on an intimate level. In doing so, Magda's story contributes to and extends the understanding of

geographies of home encounters which remain largely underexplored (Schuermans 2013; Valentine et al. 2014, forthcoming). In particular, it suggests that such issues as family roles, home-making and raising children are prone to fuel tensions and mobilize prejudiced discourses. This echoes the findings of the previous chapters of this thesis (see Chapters 4 and 6) and reiterates the significance of family values for many Polish migrants to the UK. However, Magda's case appears more complicated in that regard. The informant has, indeed, rejected the Polish men as potential life partners. She admits being particularly attracted to her Muslim husband due to his religiosity, lifestyle and conservative understanding of marriage. In doing so, she draws clear identity boundaries between what she conceptualises as Polish men's values and her own.

In addition, Magda's story is significant, because it implies that the extent to which people's values and attitudes towards difference are shaped by the media is likely to alter in the context of migration from a relatively homogeneous to a diverse society. Magda's perception of Muslim people, and men in particular, was significantly influenced by the media discourse in the Polish context (see Chapter 5) pre-migration. At that time she had no contact with Muslim people and Islam apart from sensationalist TV programmes and took for granted the singular (and frequently prejudiced) representations of the Islamic world that she came across. Ever since she moved to the UK and met her husband, she has been personally engaged with Muslim people and her attitudes, while partly situated in broader orientalist power relations (Said 2003 [1978]), are mostly framed through her personal encounters.

## **7.5 Conclusions**

In this chapter, I have continued to investigate migrant encounters with difference. By looking in depth into three cases of Polish migrants to the UK, I have focused on the processual nature of encounters (Valentine and Sadgrove 2012). In doing so, I have particularly recognised the post-encounter – i.e. the consequences of encounters - which remains underresearched in geography and social science literatures (see Chapter 2).

I have illustrated that, in the context of migration, the effects of encounters with difference include development of values and attitudes, their enhancement, revision or change. I have also shown that they embrace a range of situated, contextualised

and/or fluid personal stances such as rejection, discrimination, stereotypization, normalization, familiarity, acceptance, respect, solidarity and involvement. Importantly, I have demonstrated that an increased migrant contact with diversity results not only in positive, but also negative attitudes as well as hostility, prejudice and racism. This contributes to the geographies of encounter critique (Valentine 2008; Valentine and Sadgrove 2012) outlined earlier in this thesis.

Throughout the chapter, I have evidenced that meaningful encounters (Amin 2002; Hemming 2011; Valentine 2008) pre-migration are likely to affect people's capacity to live with difference post-migration. As I have only focused on a few case studies, this calls for further insights allowing to recognise which types of encounters pre-migration (e.g. positive or negative) are particularly consequential for migrant reception of difference.

Given the fact that in my study I have investigated encounters with various categories of difference, it is important to reflect on the evident across this chapter (and the previous one) saliency of migrant attitudes towards non-White, non-Christian and, to a lesser degree, non-heterosexual people. As I have argued in the previous chapters (see Chapter 4 and 5), ethnicity, skin colour, religion and sexuality assume, for various reasons, the proportion of main axes of difference in Poland. It appears they remain so in the context of migration. This is only partially acknowledged in the literature which has so far drawn attention to migrant perceptions of ethnicity and non-whiteness (Fox 2013; McDowell et al. 2009; Parutis 2011; Ryan 2010a).



## **Chapter 8: The impact of migrant experience on the circulation of values and attitudes**

### **8.1 Introduction**

In this thesis, I have so far investigated migrant encounters with difference in terms of ethnicity, religion, class, sexuality, gender, age and disability, and the consequences of these encounters for value and attitude (re-)production, revision or change (see Chapter 6 and 7). In this chapter, I continue to explore the effects of migrant encounters and focus on how contact with difference in the British context impacts on or shapes relations between migrants and their significant others who live in Poland. In particular, I look at the circulation of values and attitudes between Polish migrants to the UK and their non-migrant relatives and/or friends.

While I have thus far argued that the consequences of migrant encounters have a personal dimension (e.g. affect migrant capacity to live with difference, see Chapters 6 and 7), in this chapter I evidence that they also involve mobility of values and attitudes. In the case of migrants and their significant others who reside in a sending country, such circulation occurs also across national borders and distinctive cultural settings. Despite a growing body of literature on transnational circulation of ideas (e.g. Elrick 2008; Levitt 1998; Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2011; Maliepaard and Lubbers 2012), there remains little understanding of how, when, where and to what extent passing on and challenging values, attitudes, behaviours, language and cultural capital may take place. In this chapter, I attempt to contribute to, and extend, these discussions by exploring how a cross-border circulation of values, attitudes and practices regarding difference becomes an integral element of migration experience.

Earlier in this thesis (see Chapter 2), I have outlined why I advocate the usage of the term circulation (instead of transmission) with regard to migration and transnational relationships. I have drawn attention to the fact that while the notion of transmission has been broadly explored in the context of intergenerational or institutional transfer of values, attitudes, lifestyles or everyday routines (e.g. Carol 2014; Gronhoj and Thogersen 2009; Scourfield et al. 2012; Valentine et al. 2012), it

is problematic with reference to migration experience. This is due to the assumptions of linearity the process of transmission is underpinned by (see Chapter 2). What occurs between Polish migrants to the UK and their significant others in Poland is, as I demonstrate, much more complex. Beyond one-way transmission, it frequently involves confrontation, contestation and proliferation of ideas, values and attitudes towards difference. Therefore, I have argued (see Chapter 2), the concept of circulation describes these processes more accurately. In the chapter, I nonetheless use the term transmission to stress the instances when one way transfer of ideas does in fact take place.

As circulation assumes in this thesis the pre-existence of meaningful human relations<sup>22</sup>, I begin the chapter with an analysis of the nature of migrant contact with significant others in Poland. In particular, I explore form, frequency and type of contact as well as strategies it may involve. Secondly, I recognise the significance of visiting and experiencing the aspects of migrant environment by family members and/or friends from Poland. In doing so, I examine how values and attitudes towards difference are passed onto significant others during their (yet short-term and often singular) stays with migrants in the UK. Next, I focus on what (rather than when) is transmitted and acknowledge that beyond values and attitudes behaviour, routines, language and stereotypes are also very likely to circulate between migrants and significant others. Lastly, by exploring the examples of change, revision or rejection of values and attitudes, I look at the influence of migrant experience on significant others in Poland on one hand, and the impact of family and friends on migrants in the UK on the other.

## **8.2 The nature of migrant contact with significant others in Poland**

Earlier in this thesis (see Chapter 2), I have noted that while migration necessarily affects relationships between significant others (Baldassar et al. 2006; Francisco 2013; Parrenas 2005), information and communication technologies and lower travel costs have increasingly contributed to sustaining close ties across long-distances (Krings et al. 2013; Levitt 2001; Nedelcu 2012). Against this backdrop, I have argued, it is particularly significant to continue research into how migrants *stay in touch* and possibly influence their significant others' values and attitudes towards

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<sup>22</sup> For the discussion of the concept of significant other see Chapter 3: Stages of research process.

difference. In this section, I focus on the nature of mediated contact (e.g. phone talks, Skype conversations, text and multimedia messages, e-mails, facebook activity) as well as direct - which involves migrant travelling to Poland. Significant others' visits to the UK are addressed in the next section as they unpack an embodied experience of diversity and difference in the British context and distinctive opportunities to pass on ideas.

Drawing upon the empirical data, I would like to note here that the majority of my research participants assessed their contact with relatives and/or friends in Poland as either very good/close or good/close. This is unsurprising given the conceptual and methodological framework of this research project. Indeed, I have focused on migrants and their significant others who remain in meaningful relationships (see Chapter 3). Moreover, in the majority of cases the contact was hardly limited to one type. Rather, it was diverse (mediated and direct) and engaged various information and communication technologies. This is illustrated in a short extract below in which Alina describes how she is constantly in touch with her sister in the UK.

Alina (A): We contact each other regularly. [Via] Facebook, for example. E-mails. I don't know. We Skype. She phones home.

Interviewer: How often do you get the opportunity to meet?

A: Always for Christmas, for Easter. And, for summer holiday. She comes here [to Poland] three times a year.

Alina (significant other, in her 20s)

Alina's statement is representative of the majority of respondents' narratives. It resonates with the studies into transnationalism and media usage which stress the simultaneous consumption by migrants of diversified technologies to maintain a broad and intense contact with their home societies (Christiansen 2004; Metykova 2010; Nedelcu 2012). Such routines appear to particularly encourage very frequent, yet short-message-style contact as in the case of Aga and her migrant brother - Marek.

Well, [it's] practically every day. We both have Skype, we have GG [Polish online instant messaging client] and these conversations are every day. But, these aren't long discussions... lasting for an hour or so. Such long conversations occur quite rarely.

Aga (significant other, in her 30s)

The frequent short-message-style contact was generally appreciated by the research participants. It was argued to play an important emotional role (e.g. the significance of hearing a person's voice even for several seconds, the meaning of SMS birthday wishes) which confirms the findings of other studies (Francisco 2013; Horst 2006; Licoppe and Smoreda 2005). However, a few informants admitted avoiding it and enjoying a more sporadic, yet – as they believed – better quality relations. It is important to stress here that this approach was utilised by the migrants who emphasized that they, in general, valued face-to-face over mediated contact such as Tomek.

Generally, I'm a person who rarely contacts relatives or friends from abroad. I'm not really into the Internet contact and, well, everybody complains they rarely hear from me. Both friends and family. (...) I guess I don't need it [contact] as much. I guess I don't appreciate such a contact. I don't like to contact via the Internet. But, if I go to Poland, I try to meet with everybody, visit everybody. Tomek (migrant, male, aged 26)

Given the fact that international mobility tends to change the dynamics of pre-existent relations (Baldassar et al. 2006; Francisco 2013), it is unsurprising that many informants compared the frequency of direct contact with their family members and/or friends pre- and post-migration. Unsurprisingly, many respondents in my study, such as Hanna below, spoke of a more frequent direct contact in the past.

This contact is more sporadic now. It's a telephone contact, facebook contact, we also communicate via the Internet – Skype or so. I'm also at this stage – I'm totally busy with thousands of things. I'm starting my own family, I work (...), so we contact each other not that often. Hanna (significant other, in her 20s)

Interestingly though, a few research participants described their contact with migrant significant others as more frequent and/or closer post-migration. Katarzyna and Wojciech, for example, are certain that they have had more opportunities to see or talk to their son ever since he moved to the UK in comparison to several years before when he studied in another Polish city and was, according to his parents, excessively engaged with social life.

It turned out we saw each other more often when he moved to the UK, than when he had studied in X [name of Polish city]. At



that time it was us who had had to travel to X in order to finally see him.

Katarzyna & Wojciech (significant others, in their 50s)

Given this body of data, the extent of migrant encounters with difference in the UK (see Chapter 6) and the literature on transnationalism (Levitt 2001; Nedelcu 2012; Vertovec 2009), it seems that there is a ground for the circulation of ideas about difference. I found it striking, however, that when asked about the nature of contact the majority of research participants claimed to discuss banal issues rather than any profound experiences of difference in the British context. According to my respondents, the most salient topics include what they call *regular catching up* – health, moods, weather, day-to-day work/school experiences, shopping, food, evening/weekend plans, family news and gossips, partners and friendships, broadly understood events in Poland, etc. This is illustrated in Barbara’s account of her Skype and phone conversations with her migrant daughter.

Last time we showed our nails to each other – she had bought a nice polish and she had to show it to us immediately. But, it’s a regular phone conversation most often. (...) It usually starts with: “What did you have for dinner today?” She asks us what we had or have for dinner, right? We talk about what she does, how she feels, what’s up at work, whether she has any new acquaintances, whether she’s planning something, what happened here [in Poland], what has changed, what I’ve seen and read, whether some film has been released in Poland or not... such things. Barbara (significant other, in her 50s)

As I prompted the respondents to elaborate about whether they discussed with their significant others difference in terms of ethnicity, religion, class, sexuality, gender, age and disability, a few of them produced somewhat defensive narratives. In these statements participants often referred to the interview situation (i.e. the topic discussed) and conceptualized it as exceptional in contrast to the everyday conversations they believed to have with their relatives and/or friends in Poland. One such a narrative is presented below. What makes this quote particularly interesting is the fact that Artur enthusiastically engaged in discussing his views on difference across all the interviews (see e.g. Chapter 6 and his narrative about Muslim people in the UK, p. 165).

We don't have such conversations [the respondent implies here he does not discuss with his significant others the issues he addresses during the interview]. We don't talk about gays and lesbians or minorities. If I challenge anything - that's related to politics mainly. That's usually with my father because he loves football and I love football, so we have such talks after a particular game, Poland-Russia for example.

Artur (migrant, male, aged 35)

One reason for the predominantly banal dimension of the contact with significant others in Poland may be the fact that the majority of migrant participants in my sample had lived in the UK for at least a few years at the time of the research. By doing so, they had accustomed their family members and/or friends in Poland to their life situation. In other words, migrant life in the UK did not appear to be an unfamiliar, urgent or important issue neither for the migrants themselves nor for their significant others. The other explanation for the perceived absence of more substantial conversations, may be related to the very nature of long-distance intimacy and closeness, and the role communication technologies play in maintaining them (see Chapter 2). For such remote family making it is neither the essence of conversation, nor the information it transmits, but the possibility to see, hear and be *together-apart* that makes the difference. Such a distant co-presence allows physical absence more bearable (Francisco 2013). Given this understanding, it is unsurprising that when asked about their contact with significant others abroad, many of my research participants focused on recalling such intimate moments in the first place. It is precisely such moments they found most meaningful for maintaining closeness and engagement. Krystyna, for instance, recalled celebrating her migrant daughter's birthday and drinking alcohol online (yet feigned) as particularly important.

Iga [daughter] gives me a missed call and I know I have to go to the living room, turn the computer on and call her. Then, we just sit and talk – sometimes we talk for 2-3h. She had her 30<sup>th</sup> birthday last year, so we celebrated it via Skype [*she laughs*]. I put the music on for her – the one she likes [she means she put the music on in her house and Iga listened to it via Skype]. She was so happy! We had so much fun. We were joking a lot and laughing. Quite recently there was another funny thing – we were Skype'ing and our son-in-law came from work and wanted to celebrate a football game. His team had been playing so he wanted to drink for them and he said to my husband: "Dad, you have to drink with me!" And, it was already quite late, so my

husband poured water into a vodka glass and pretended to have a shot with him [*she laughs*].

Krystyna (significant other, in her 50s)

Although the contact described above could be interpreted as embracing a set of mundane small-talks, banal exchanges or pleasantries, in the eyes of the respondent it is significant for maintaining family intimacy. In addition, against the backdrop of physical absence and longing, it resembles of ordinary family life and is, furthermore, a manifestation or a reminder of warm feelings and emotional engagement.

In a similar vein, a conscious avoidance of certain topics, tensions or conflicts becomes a strategy for sustaining warm and familial relations from abroad. In the narrative below, Lena reflects on her differing approach to her parents in Poland. Whilst with her mother, she can – as she says – discuss her attitudes and views, with her father she prefers to avoid such conversations for the sake of good relations.

Well, it depends who I talk to. For example, with my mum – I have no problem expressing my own opinions. It's a little different with my father. (...) I have a general idea of his [differing] views and I try to avoid topics sensitive for him or myself, or the topics which would make us irritated. Because, I think there's no point – we meet, you know, we try to meet as often as possible, but sometimes there's just no point starting arguments... there's just no point. The time is very precious for us and, you know, it's worth talking about nice topics or something more down to earth or something more significant.

Lena (migrant, female, aged 29)

For this informant it is, again, not the contents, but the pure contact that remains most important. Lena is aware that she does not share many of her attitudes towards difference with her father. Nonetheless, she hardly ever attempts to challenge his views or discuss them as the quality of contact they have (i.e. nice time) is far more valuable for her than full disclosure.

Despite the participants' declarations that their discussions with significant others abroad involve mostly banal issues, the analysis of empirical material suggests partly otherwise. It appears that the topics regarding difference are heatedly discussed in certain circumstances, for instance when something that is regarded very meaningful, disruptive, consequential or highly emotional occurs. Indeed, the very

same Artur, who was previously quoted for his lack of engagement in conversations regarding difference, admitted ‘warning’ all his significant others in Poland about Roma people when his new pair of shoes disappeared from the doorstep of his house in Leeds. It seems that he connected the increased presence of Roma families in his neighbourhood with the lost items. The occurrence triggered a series of unconstrained narratives concealing Artur’s prejudiced views about Travellers and Roma in the UK. The story was then repeatedly narrated during many conversations with Artur’s family members in Poland. Similarly, Magda’s marriage with a Muslim person – ‘unexpected’ by her relatives and friends in Poland - started a series of not only questions, but nagging about her safety and well-being. This suggests that, despite the predominance of unsubstantial conversations (which yet reflect intimacy and care), complex circulation of values and attitudes towards difference does occur. As such, it is frequently unintentional, coincidental and dependant on personal as well as broader socio-political circumstances. Clearly, of all the migrant informants only one, Tomek, explicitly spoke of the debating nature of his relationship with his significant other. Nevertheless, for the majority of participants the circulation of knowledge, values and attitudes remained largely circumstantial and unintended. In the quote below, Lena, cited above for her strategy of avoiding tensions with her father, explains this “coincidental” character of circulation:

It’s usually coincidental. My mum says something, for example she says a story or what happened or what she saw on TV or whom she talked to or what she was told by another person and we start developing this thread. And, it’s at that point when we form opinions and talk. Usually, she just asks me: “How does it work in England? What do people do?” For example – what do people have for dinner? Or – what do people do during Christmas? Such things. It’s random - rather than starting a conscious dispute.

Lena (migrant, female, aged 29)

Apart from experiences regarded as disruptive, consequential or emotional, a starting point for substantial discussions about difference is often a moment when migrant’s or significant other’s behaviour, language or decisions are interpreted as inappropriate or offensive. Filip, for example, revealed that he could not stand it when his father used certain stigmatizing expressions to describe ethnic and sexual minorities. Although for some time he ignored his father’s language in order to, as he told me, “have a pleasant time together”, he felt uncomfortable with this avoidance

strategy and eventually started to challenge his father. I come back to this example further in the chapter.

Lastly, and most importantly, a particularly fateful moment (Giddens 1991b) for initiating profound discussions about diversity and difference was in my study the significant other's visit to the UK. As it introduces another layer to the analysis of when and why circulation of values and attitudes takes place, it is explored in a separate section below.

By looking into the form, frequency and contents of the cross-border contact between migrants and their significant others, in this section I have attempted to explore the nuanced nature of human relations that remain a context for the circulation of values and attitudes towards difference. In doing so, I have contributed to, and extended, the discussion about transnational ties and diffusion of cultural knowledge. In particular, I have drawn attention to the circumstances (non-) conducive to the discussions about diversity and difference. It appears that long-distance family making prioritises ordinary and somewhat banal *being together-apart* over more substantial exchange of ideas and views. Beyond everyday gestures of intimacy and care, circulation of values and attitudes does, nonetheless, occur upon disruptive or meaningful personal experiences, family fractures, tensions as well as broader social disturbances. Importantly, a crucial moment triggering the transfer of knowledge, language as well as prejudice is the significant others' visit to the UK. This is investigated in the next section in which I focus on the role of 'the visit' for the circulation of values and attitudes towards difference.

### **8.3 The significance of the visit to the UK**

Although information and communication technologies have recently gained particular significance for maintaining close ties over long distances, direct contact driven by a human need for physical co-presence is still argued to hardly supplant mediated (i.e. online, phone) interactions (Mason 2004; Urry 2002). In her study of Asian and/or British Asian people in Northern England visiting their relatives in Pakistan, Mason (2004) argues that corporeal travel and co-present interaction plays a particularly symbolic role. Namely, it not only facilitates cultivation of kinship networks, but also enables people to confirm a sense of emotional belonging. In addition, "visiting involves complex and sometimes sensitive sets of negotiations and

practices (...) about propriety, morality, and exchange in kinship relations” (Mason 2004: 427). It is precisely such negotiations regarding values and attitudes towards difference that I address throughout this section.

Various studies of migration have suggested that there is a greater expectation that the migrant, rather than his or her relatives and/or friends left behind, will do the visiting (Baldassar 2001; Baldassar and Baldock 2000; Mason 2004). In particular, Baldassar (2001) has claimed that once migrants are granted ‘licence to leave’, they also acquire an ‘obligation to visit’. These studies have, however, largely focused on long-distance kinship management that often involves expensive and time-consuming intercontinental travel or is framed by restrictive travel policies (e.g. the necessity to hold a visa). The situation of Polish migrants to the UK and their significant others in Poland seems a bit different. Although what Baldassar (2001) calls an ‘obligation to visit’ is frequently still the case, the free movement policy within the EU, the presence of ‘cheap airlines’ alongside relatively short duration of flights between the western and eastern European frontiers, encourage many people from Poland to visit their migrant relatives or friends in the UK (Burrell 2011b). As Mason (2004: 424) claims, “visiting in this sense [is] a fundamental act of kinship in itself”.

The geography and migration literatures have looked predominantly into migrant return visits or second-generation migrants travelling to the country of their parents’ origin (Asiedu 2005; Baldassar 2001; Christou 2011; Christou and King 2010; Mason 2004; O’Flaherty et al. 2007; Pratt 2003/04; Valentine and Sporton 2009; Valentine et al. 2009). Less attention has been paid to significant others visiting (rather than reuniting or following) their migrant family members or friends in a host society. In this section, I attempt to contribute to this literature by encouraging a broader understanding of transnational kinship as a two-sided process in which agency and ability to visit is granted to both migrants and those ‘left behind’ in a sending country.

The majority of significant others in my study have visited their migrant family member or friend in the UK at least once. The main purposes of these stays were as my informants claimed: a willingness to maintain close relations, a curiosity to see the place where the migrant family member or friend lived as well as holiday. The visit was usually relatively short ranging from a few days up to over a week (with a few exceptions though). During this time significant others(s) would generally stay at

a migrant's home and spend quality time together. Importantly, many significant others argued that the visit was primarily planned as a family and/or tourist event. As such, it lacked a migratory aspect. This finding seems to add a different dimension to the literature about Polish migration to the UK. While there is emerging research into how close relations are maintained across national borders (e.g. Heath et al. 2011; Krings et al. 2013; McGhee et al. 2013), this literature focuses largely on family and network migration – i.e. moving abroad to reunite or follow family members or friends (e.g. Moskal 2010; Ryan 2010b; Ryan and Sales 2013; Ryan et al. 2009; White 2011a; White and Ryan 2008). Those significant others who travel to the UK simply for the sake of *being physically together* and enjoying a family holiday are addressed less.

As I have argued in the previous section, negotiations of values and attitudes towards difference between migrants in the UK and their significant others in Poland tend to occur in certain circumstances. In my study, I have observed that the visit to the UK was particularly influential in terms of circulation of cultural knowledge, understandings and approaches to difference. 'The visit' matters because it opens up opportunities for significant others, who are permanently resident in Poland, to personally experience the aspects of migrant environment – i.e. see, hear, touch and taste how, where and among whom their migrant family members and/or friends live. This is exemplified in the two narratives below: by Zuza, the sister of Magda and by Krystyna, the mother of Iga.

When I visited Magda (...) the only thing that was surprising was this diversity. (...) This woman in burqa first of all. That's what I remember until now. Because, you don't really come across such people in our country [Poland]. That's why it's so noticeable. (...) I was surprised for sure. I showed [this woman] to Magda, but that was it. We didn't talk about it much. (...) She [Magda] said: "It's normal here."

Zuza (significant other, in her 20s)

It was only when we went there [to the UK]... when I asked Iga many questions about such stuff [difference]. Because I could see people in turbans and all these things. So, it was me who asked questions. And Iga explained it to me. Otherwise, she didn't speak of such people. No.

Krystyna (significant other, in her 50s)

These accounts are interesting for a few reasons. Firstly, they emphasize the significance of visible difference. Indeed, for Zuza and Krystyna, who due to their short stays in the UK experienced mostly fleeting encounters with difference, it was what they could see - what caught their attention (e.g. burqa, turban) - that might have been interpreted as different. This is unsurprising, given the ‘whiteness’ of Polish society and the visual *standing-out-ness* of difference in the Polish context explored earlier in this thesis (see Chapter 4). It also resonates with wider debates about juxtaposing (and queering) of visible difference (i.e. burqa, turban) against what is viewed as normative bodies (e.g. Puar 2007, 2008). Here, difference is not only visible as such, but also exposes different normativities. Secondly, both Zuza and Krystyna draw attention to the role of migrant as a guide who introduces the visitors from Poland to the urban diversity of the British city. In this context, the migrant – be it Magda or Iga – is viewed as an expert who by “explaining” transmits unique cultural knowledge<sup>23</sup>. Thirdly, the respondents suggest that it was them who asked about difference as otherwise their relatives would rarely refer to “such people”. In other words, Zuza and Krystyna imply that it is primarily a significant other who by entering a sensually unfamiliar space initiates a discussion about what he or she finds different. In these narratives, an embodied experience of difference results in a curiosity or surprise that can be only satisfied by relying on migrant’s explanation and knowledge.

Whilst for many significant others their urban encounters with a visible (e.g. ethnic, religious) difference during their visit to the UK remain fleeting, superficial and mediated by the presence of their migrant relative or friend, a few respondents recalled experiencing a profound personal encounter. Maria, for instance, who was earlier in this thesis quoted for some Islamophobic remarks (see Chapter 5), spoke of spending time with her migrant daughter’s Pakistani-born house-mate.

She [her daughter] invited us to the place where she rented an apartment – I was shocked – because, it turned out she lived with a foreigner. So, for me it was... It’s not that I’m not tolerant, but it was fear – my first reaction was fear, because, God - not only was he a foreigner but also - God a Pakistani! Lena said: “Mum, you’re [intolerant]” and I replied: “No, I’m not, I’m not.” but as I said – I was terrified at first. (...) This

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<sup>23</sup> The role of migrant as trusted expert will be explored further in the chapter; see The influence of significant others in Poland on migrants.



myth about them [Muslim people], which is common. (...) That they are – it's not about them being religious, because people shouldn't be forbidden to have their religion. But, they are fanatics, so fanatic – and I had heard about these bombings. So, that's what I was afraid of. But, when they invited us, we met her acquaintances there and those people, this man... we met, he prepared a chicken meal. We ate together. And, I realized that they had had this sort of connection, they found it really ok.

Maria (significant other, in her 50s)

Clearly, Maria's encounter with her daughter's house-mate was what could be described as meaningful contact with religious and ethnic difference (Hemming 2011; Valentine 2008). Her initial fear, stemming from her prejudiced perception of Islam and Muslim people, was not only challenged by her daughter, but also questioned by what was for Maria an unexpectedly pleasant time. Further in the interview she admitted that:

When I got really surprised after finding out she lived with this Pakistani man, I asked: "God, Lena, aren't you afraid [to live with this person]?", she replied: "Mum, you're not a racist, are you?" I said: "No, but...!" And, she went on: "But...?" And, it made me re-think my reaction. No – I'm not [a racist] – apart from this single event. (...) She said: "Come on – they are people – he is a good man". I also met his acquaintances, because he worked in a shop nearby. But, well, nonetheless – I was a little scared. It was a sort of fear of the unknown. But, as I said, she knew this person, she spent time with him and she had this trust. So, why shouldn't I have such trust?

Maria (significant other, in her 50s)

It appears that positive contact with difference during a short visit to the UK resulted in revision of Maria's negative feelings. Indeed, in the narrative the respondent speaks of trust which is a very specific social attitude (Misztal 1996). In this respect, Maria's encounter (and visit to the UK) was deeply transformative as it resulted in an alteration of personal attitude towards difference and a development of a more general respect for the Other (see Chapter 7 and Valentine 2008).

Importantly, the transformative potential of the visit to the UK was emphasized by several other informants, some of whom claimed that they became, as they put it, "more tolerant" as a result of being among or engaging with difference. While what they mean by their alleged greater "tolerance" remains questionable (and is beyond the interest of this section – for more discussion see section 8.5 in this chapter), it is

important to consider these statements as being the consequence of passing on values and attitudes towards difference. Indeed, in many narratives, the migrant relative or friend - or his or her situated behaviour - plays an active role in shaping significant other's knowledge of and attitude towards the Other. This will be further explored in the next sections which focus on what (rather than when and where) is likely to circulate and how these ideas influence significant others.

Although the visit of significant others to the UK does not usually last long and the conversations about difference are generally time-limited and context dependant, the consequences of *being*, *seeing* and *experiencing* the aspects of the migrant environment seem to go beyond the stay in the UK. Indeed, the research participants in my study admitted that many discussions about diversity in the UK context are continued upon return to Poland either via phone or Skype. In her study of 'the visit' to Pakistan explored earlier in this section, Mason (2004: 423) claims that the life of the visit may "extend well beyond the temporal confines of the event itself". Interestingly, the visit may also encourage some people to actively deepen their new cultural knowledge after returning home. One such informant was Aga, who after visiting her migrant brother in the UK, became particularly interested in personal experiences of women of various religious affiliations and cultural traditions.

Generally speaking we talked a lot after my visit there [in the UK]. (...) And, I realized I missed that [education about difference]. Because, even though I saw these different religions there – I still didn't know what religions would that be. (...) And, even when my kids asked me about these religions – because I was there [in the UK] with my kids – I wasn't able to tell them what religion that was. (...) And, kids asked why one lady would have only her head covered while the other was covered completely. I didn't know. I don't know. Nobody teaches us such things. Nobody speaks about such things [in Poland]. (...) Whatever I saw [in the UK] and whatever he [her brother] told me about such issues made me curious. I started to read books, right? I started to pay more attention to how things are approached in various places and why they're approached in a particular way. (...) I don't read books such as encyclopaedias or scientific books. They'd be too tiring for me. But, I do read books like – for example the book about this model – Waris [Dirie], right? "Desert Flower" - such books. I also read something about India, about Chinese courtesans. About extreme cases, I'd say. About some women who described their stories... Sure, some of these stories are a little embellished, but

well, they let you conclude what the approach towards women, the world and people there is.

Aga (significant other, in her 30s)

In the narrative, Aga voices her unease about her lack of solid knowledge regarding cultural and religious difference being a consequence of ethno-national homogeneity of Polish society and the hegemony of Catholicism in Poland (see Chapter 4). While visiting her migrant brother in Northern England together with her young children, she realised that she was unaware of many customs and cultural codes the children asked about. Although her brother provided Aga with many pieces of information during and after her stay in Britain, which will be further explored in the next section, she became curious enough to start her own ‘research’ upon returning to Poland. In this respect, her curiosity of the Other goes beyond the embodied experience of British society and facilitates further interest as well as – what she called later in the interview – “better understanding” of diversity.

In this section, I have looked into the visit to the UK as a fateful moment (Giddens 1991b) frequently initiating or intensifying the process of the circulation of values and attitudes towards difference between Polish migrants in Britain and their significant others in Poland. In particular, I have stressed the significance of visibility (Puar 2007, 2008) and lived experience of difference for the discussions regarding diversity. Whilst much of the significant other contact with difference in the UK may be fleeting or superficial, in this section I evidence that profound and deeply transformative encounters (Valentine 2008) are also likely to occur. In addition, following Mason (2004), I suggest that the life of the visit – i.e. discussions of difference and circulation of knowledge, perceptions or attitudes – tends to extend beyond the temporal frames of the event. Likewise, the outcomes of the visit – be it greater knowledge or awareness of diversity; an attitude development or change – may be negotiated upon significant other’s return to Poland and fuel further circulation of values and attitudes towards difference.

Given that the migration literature tends to focus on migrants visiting their respective home societies and has so far conceptualized significant other’s presence in host countries as a part of family migration or transnational networks, in this section I contribute to the discussions about the nature of mobility and managing kinship over long distances. Naturally, and in line with the existing literature (see e.g. Mason 2004; Pratt 2003/04), the concept of the visit I have employed here could be

stretched to include migrants visiting their significant others in Poland. Nevertheless, my data suggest that visiting the UK by significant others is far more meaningful for the circulation of ideas towards difference than migrants' return visits to Poland. This is largely due to the embodied and sensual encounter with difference significant others from Poland may and frequently do experience in Britain.

Whereas in this section I have explored the circumstances in which the intensified circulation of values and attitudes towards difference may occur, in the next one I investigate what (e.g. stereotypes, prejudices, discourses, behaviours) rather than when are likely to circulate. As I do so, I implicitly refer, but not limit to, the significant others' visit to the UK.

#### **8.4 The act and the subject of passing on values and attitudes**

As I have argued earlier in the thesis (see Chapter 2), it has been broadly acknowledged that attitudes and values are forged through everyday practices, experiences and interactions that involve family members and friends (Cavalli-Sforza et al. 1982; Maliepaard and Lubbers 2012; Morgan 1996). Family, in particular, has been identified as a space of transmission (and, indeed, circulation) of values, attitudes, behaviours and routines (Carlson and Knoester 2011; Gronhoj and Thogersen 2009; O'Bryan et al. 2004; Schönplflug 2001; Scourfield et al. 2012; Valentine and Hughes 2012; Valentine et al. 2012; Vedder et al. 2009; Willoughby et al. 2012). While geographers and social scientists have increasingly explored social remittances and cultural diffusion (Elrick 2008; Levitt 1998; Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2011), there has been less research about values and attitudes towards difference (e.g. favourable, unfavourable, prejudice, respect) and how these are passed on or shaped by family members and/or friends in the context of international mobility. In addressing this issue in this section, I focus on the 'knowledge' about difference that circulates between Polish migrants to the UK and their significant others in Poland and look at ideas that are likely to proliferate among people and across national borders.

In my study, I have noticed that while both migrant and non-migrant participants impacted on their significant others' understanding of difference, it was predominantly migrants who passed on a broad spectrum of cultural knowledge, values and attitudes towards difference. Aga, for instance, earlier quoted for pointing

to the significance of visiting Britain, frequently referred to the mundane *insider knowledge* her migrant brother Marek passed onto her ever since he moved to the UK, in particular during her stay in Leeds. In the quote below, she describes what Marek told her about Muslim women dressed in burqas/abayas.

Marek told me for example that these women cannot undress when they're among people, right? That they wear these sort of clothes all the time. So, I went on: "So, how do they eat?" or "So, how do they take a bath?" Such simple, normal things, right? And, he told me that he saw them eating once... that they move this piece of cloth and eat spaghetti [*she laughs*]. He also told me that when they are at the seaside they swim in these clothes. They are all covered while in the water. I couldn't believe this! My kids would laugh at this – they'd laugh because they found it funny. And, well, this is funny at least for us. Let's be honest – Poles, including myself, don't have any idea of such religions... and how things look like for these people.

Aga (significant other, in her 30s)

Although Aga's questions may reveal some weaknesses in her (inter)cultural capital, they are, nonetheless, quite unsurprising given the relative ethno-cultural homogeneity of Polish society (see Chapter 4). Clearly, through her brother, Aga familiarises herself with difference and strengthens her cultural capital. In a similar vein, Maria learns about diversity through her daughter Lena when she spots a woman in burqa while on holiday in the UK. In addition, she gets admonished for what Lena perceives as inappropriate behaviour. Interestingly, in the interviews both Maria and Lena referred to the same event which seems to emphasize its significance.

This way of dressing (...) – I saw it for the first time when I visited Lena. (...) I turned around, watched – Lena told me to stop [*she laughs*]. I wanted to take a photo of them, but she told me to behave well.

Maria (significant other, in her 50s)

I remember when they visited me once and we went to the theme park... and there was a guy with his wife and this woman was all dressed in black and you could only see her eyes. And my mum started to say something about that. And she says to my brother: "X [name] take a photo, take a photo. We'll show it to aunt Y [name]." And I said: "Mum, why are you treating this woman like if she was a sort of gorilla in a zoo? Give it up! Don't make a fool of yourself!" And later on a whole topic started – we discussed this religion [Islam]. (...) It was an attempt to show to my mum that it wasn't true that the woman was a prisoner and that she was on a leash and she didn't have

any rights. I explained that women usually do it because it's their own choice and they want to dress like this... and that due to religious reasons they believe this is a right thing to do. And my mum would think: "Poor women. They must be treated like prisoners in these countries. They have no rights."

Lena (migrant, female, aged 29)

Unlike the previous account which identified situations when factual knowledge may be passed on, these narratives exemplify the transmission of what is believed to be an appropriate behaviour and attitude. Maria gets admonished by her daughter who, by living in a diverse local community in the UK city, has developed intercultural sensitivity towards religious and/or ethnic difference. Evidently, the situation appears the reverse of the one in which child is socialised by parent to live within a certain hegemonic normativity. In my discussion of the literature on transmission earlier in this thesis (see Chapter 2), I pointed out that there remains an imbalance in focusing on social actors who are argued to pass on ideas and practices. By frequently exploring what is in fact mostly 'parental' transmission, the geography literature seems to underappreciate the significance of other agents such as children and, in doing so, may imply a one way transfer of values and attitudes from older to younger family generations. Maria and Lena's case challenges this literature and, as such, extends the understanding of how intra-familial relationships shape the understanding of difference.

Alongside cultural capital and what is viewed as 'proper' behaviour and attitude, stereotypes and prejudices also seem particularly likely to be transferred by Polish migrants onto their significant others resident in Poland. This is described by Marek and his sister Aga – the same couple that was previously mentioned in this section for the transmission of factual knowledge.

Some bits always slip out in conversations. Things like: who you like or dislike. For example, Pakistani people, my views about them and so on. So, such issues must be slipping out sometimes when we talk.

Marek (migrant, male, aged 32)

Marek says they [Pakistani Muslims] are so religious in their countries, but when they arrive to England or to other countries they behave much worse – like if they left their religions behind. (...) Marek told me that they don't necessarily behave in such a holy way. (...) That women actually do have tough lives but men... they go to a mosque, they pray and then they go crazy during the night – they have parties and so on because Allah

doesn't see during the night. (...) He said woman is not respected much – that means a woman is somebody who's a sort of lower kind of person. That women have to sit at home and they only - they can only meet other women in some groups for an hour to talk, but, then they have to come back home. Anyway, he stressed that women are oppressed – not in a physical sense, but they are just a lower kind of persons. That man is a guru, right? So, that's what he told me about these women. (...) I'm glad to be living in Poland [*she laughs*]. In Poland woman is in a completely different situation. Aga (significant other, in her 30s)

It seems that, even though Marek provided Aga with a valid intercultural knowledge that enabled her to develop greater (inter)cultural capital, he has also passed stereotypical perceptions and prejudices towards Pakistani Muslims onto her. In the interviews, he openly expressed predominantly negative attitudes towards them. In his eyes, Pakistani people are religiously insincere, often involved in criminal activity and particularly oppressive towards women. From what Aga says, it appears that all these prejudiced views were shared with her. Curiously, she believes – which was explicitly articulated in the interview – that Marek is a very respectful, open-minded and culturally sensitive person. His migrant status<sup>24</sup>, further reinforced by what Aga considers broad cultural knowledge, seems to legitimize the correctness of the attitudes he expresses (Valentine 2010). For this reason, Aga fails to recognise Marek's views as prejudice (ibid.), does not challenge them and takes them for granted. This way, in - what could be described - *good faith*, Aga takes over and internalises her migrant brother's prejudice without actually having any personal contact with difference. In addition, with regard to my discussion of the transmission literature earlier in the thesis (see Chapter 2), the case demonstrates that the transfer of values and attitudes towards difference does not necessarily follow generational and gender lines as suggested by some previous studies i.e. of health and lifestyle (Walters 2001; Wickrama et al. 1999).

Building on the idea that positive and negative attitudes towards difference are likely to be passed on between significant others, my research data suggest that prejudice in particular tends to be linked with, or articulated through, discriminatory discourses (such as jokes, stories, small talk) assumed by many informants to be trifling, insignificant and humorous rather than stigmatising and offensive. In the

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<sup>24</sup> The role of migrant as trusted expert will be explored in-depth further in the chapter; see The influence of significant others in Poland on migrants.

quote below, Maja, who after moving to the UK shared accommodation with a lesbian and then Chinese house-mates, describes how her father resident in Poland often made, what she calls, “silly” comments about that.

There were some jokes or silly talk (...) about my lesbian flatmate. So, he asked something like: “Oh, is she hitting on you?” or so. And, I explained that no, no. I said it was completely normal. But, I’m sure they [her significant others] laughed this way. I also live with two Chinese girls now and one of them loves cooking, so we eat Chinese food very often. And, I like it very much. I tried various meals this way. And, my dad says sometimes: “So, you’ll have slant eyes when you’ll come back” [*she laughs*]. And, I also laugh: “Yes dad, I will – because I eat lots of rice here”. But, these comments are not any serious stuff – these are jokes... made of stereotypes really.

Maja (migrant, female, aged 21)

Maja’s father, Radosław, was actually quoted earlier in this thesis for expressing the *let them be*, yet largely prejudiced, views about non-hetero-sexual people (see Chapter 5). What, as he argued at that point, did not “bother” him, turned out to be disturbing enough to make seemingly banal yet discriminatory comments about a lesbian woman. In addition, he picked up particularly on phenotypical features of his daughter’s Chinese house-mates (eyes), to build up what he viewed as humorous situational joke. Although Maja challenged his perception of lesbians, she did not interpret the racializing comment about her Chinese house-mates as inappropriate and, furthermore, found it quite amusing. In doing so, she let the stigmatising discourse further circulate and potentially reinforce her father’s orientalist (Said 2003 [1978]) perception of difference.

Apart from knowledge, behaviour, prejudices, stereotypes and jokes, the language of difference also seems likely to be passed onto significant others in Poland. As I argued earlier in this thesis (see Chapter 3 and 5), the majority of Polish people consider such highly ambivalent words as *Murzyn* (describing a Black person) inoffensive and commonly use them in everyday interactions without acknowledging the power relations they convey. Given the fact that certain minorities are present within British society yet underrepresented in Poland (e.g. Pakistani, British Pakistani, Indian, British Indian people), some Polish migrants to the UK have further developed the similar ‘language of name-calling’ after moving to the UK. In particular, the expressions describing visual and/or phenotypical difference have



become relatively popular and, likewise *Murzyn* in Poland, regarded by many migrants as inoffensive. In addition, as I found out, they are frequently used in unprejudiced contexts by non-prejudiced migrant respondents (see Chapter 3). As a result, this stigmatising language of difference is, often unintentionally, passed onto their significant others in Poland who tend to assume its validity and common usage. In the short quotes below, two significant others use such expressions in an unprejudiced context without an intention to stigmatize, discriminate, not to say offend.

I was asking like this: “Iga, what nationality is this?” And she replied: “*Ciapaty*” [refers to Pakistani people]. And, she said they were ok. There were so many of them there [in the UK].

Krystyna (significant other, in her 50s)

[About Muslim women in burqas] Marek calls them ninjas [*she laughs*]. I guess that’s how people call them colloquially. They are these women dressed in black, all covered.

Aga (significant other, in her 30s)

The expression *ciapaty*, used in a variety of linguistic forms non-translatable into English (see Chapter 3), is meant to designate a Pakistani person (i.e. a Pakistani man). Although it has a predominantly urban-*slangish* overtone, it evidently draws on orientalist and essentialist conceptualisations of the Asian Other (Said 2003 [1978]). While the etymology of the word remains unclear, Nowicka (2012) argues that it may be related to the type of Indian/Pakistani flatbread called *chapatti*. The similar usage of food-related ‘nicknames’ to impose certain identity has been noticed by Valentine and Sporton (2009) who studied the complex positioning of Somali in the UK context as well as in Somalia. The authors described a case of a Somali teenager who was labelled by some members of the Somali community in Sheffield as ‘fish and chips’ to stress the reading of her identity as British (rather than Somali). In my study, some migrant informants would use the expressions *ciapaty*, *ciapek* or *ciapas* to refer to whoever they read or constructed as a Pakistani person. However, since few participants admitted mistaking Pakistanis or British Pakistanis with other Asian nationalities or British-Asian people, the term was rather used to designate Asian ethnicity and/or racial belonging (i.e. Brown people). In doing so, these respondents not only orientalist and essentialised, but also racialised those whom

they viewed as different. Needless to say, the expression was then passed onto significant others, who were less culturally aware, such as Krystyna quoted above.

In a similar vein, other stigmatising expressions stemming from sensory (predominantly visual), ethnic or religious difference started to circulate between the migrants and their relatives or friends in Poland. In particular, the figure of woman in burqa/abaya – a symbol of otherness in many Western societies (Harris et al. 2014; Phillips 2011; Razack 2004) and Poland, as this chapter suggests – was referred to as *ninja* or *letter-box*. Likewise *ciapaty*, these expressions also seem to proliferate across national borders. In addition, they tend – as Aga’s case evidences – to be assumed by some significant others as valid, correct and commonly used.

In this section, I have sought to understand what (rather than where, when and why) is likely to circulate between the Polish migrants in the UK and their significant others in Poland. By looking into cases of the transmission of the cultural knowledge, ‘proper’ behaviour and attitude, prejudice, stereotypes, discourses and language of difference, I have explored the intricate nature of passing on ideas, beliefs and values. Given that I have primarily focused on the contents of the message (and only mentioned how it may affect relatives and friends in Poland), in the next section I investigate whether, and to what extent, this message informs significant others’ capacity to live with difference. In other words, in the next section I explore how migrants’ experience of difference directly influence their family members and/or friends resident in a sending country.

### **8.5 The influence of migrant experience on significant others in Poland**

Encounters with difference have been argued to have a very broad influence on the capacity of migrants to live with difference both in this thesis (see Chapters 6 and 7) and the literature (Cook et al. 2011a, 2011b; Fox 2013; McDowell et al. 2009; Phillips 2012; Phillips et al. 2010). Given the scope and nature of the circulation of values and attitudes between migrants and their relatives or friends addressed earlier in this chapter, it is particularly interesting to consider to what extent the experience of migration affects significant others’ beliefs, views and behaviours related to difference. As I have argued earlier (see Chapter 2) and throughout this chapter, although this issue has been gaining an increased attention, it is nonetheless largely underexplored in geography literature.

The data I have collected suggest that significant others in Poland may be (and often are), influenced by their migrant relatives or friends in the UK. Although some non-migrant respondents in my study have argued that their perception of difference is hardly affected by their migrant family members and/or friends, many claimed to have become, as they put it, “more tolerant” due to their relationships with migrants. In addition, several have explicitly spoken of what they viewed as a very positive shift towards greater familiarity and understanding of otherness. They frequently emphasized that the awareness of their relative’s or friend’s engagement with difference abroad was crucial for reducing their own prejudices or stereotypes. In the quotes below, two significant others Hanna, the friend of Julia and Krystyna, the mother of Iga describe how their unease towards what they previously perceived as sexual difference significantly diminished owing to the awareness that their migrant friend/daughter has gay acquaintances whom she particularly likes.

I think I’m more tolerant now - being aware of her positive contacts with various persons. (...) When I was staying abroad it was for a month or a week, two weeks maybe. I could be shocked by certain things - homosexuality, for example or some gender issues. This clash with such an amount of these [diverse] people in a single place was shocking. But now I know it’s just a regular thing, I got familiar with it and sort of accepted it. I’m more tolerant about such things.

Hanna (significant other, in her 20s)

Krystyna (K): I know I have a positive opinion now. But, it might have been different before. (...) [In the past] I didn’t like some things. These gays for example and everything... How come that two men could be together or a woman with another woman. And, as for now – I don’t mind that.

Interviewer: Does the credit go to Iga [her daughter]?

K: Yes. (...) My children. It may also be due to the fact that I visited Iga there, in Leeds. It taught me something, I saw things. I saw this different world. Because, I hadn’t been anywhere before that. So, all these things together. I guess they influenced me. (...) I know they have gay neighbours. They [neighbours] take care of their dog when they [her daughter and son-in-law] come here. Iga bought a lovely vodka for them to say thank you. They [her daughter and son-in-law] tolerated it all immediately. There’s no problem. You learn life thanks to your children.

Krystyna (significant other, in her 50s)

Interestingly, in my study the development of largely positive attitudes by significant others was highlighted. This is intriguing given the range of unfavourable and

ambivalent feelings being the consequence of migrant encounters with difference (see Chapter 6) and the transmission of prejudice addressed earlier in this chapter. The tendency of significant others to perceive themselves as “more tolerant” may be related to the evident in my study understanding of tolerance as a consequence of greater – yet not necessarily meaningful – contact with diversity. Indeed, both Hanna and Krystyna quoted above seem to interpret (often fleeting) contact with difference as sufficient enough to describe oneself as “tolerant”. Yet, what they conceptualise as greater tolerance is merely a toleration of presence of others rather than profound respect of difference (Valentine 2008).

Alongside the awareness of a migrant relative or friend living with/among difference abroad, I have noted that an active passing on of what was viewed as desirable attitude was particularly significant for shaping significant others’ approaches and/or behaviour. This is exemplified by Katarzyna’s narrative of how her son Filip challenges her’s and her husband’s behaviour and language. It is important to note here that, after finishing his studies in the UK, Filip has held several positions all of which included direct and intense contact with various people. At each post he took part in an extensive training about how to provide good quality, inclusive and respectful service. This resulted in Filip developing a respectful approach towards difference. It appears that this attitude has been gradually passed onto Filip’s parents in Poland who previously found discriminatory jokes or language quite acceptable.

He has drawn our attention to some details we wouldn’t pay attention to otherwise. (...) For example, telling certain [here: homophobic] jokes to other people - which had happened very often and made everybody laugh. But, now we’re more careful about doing such things, even though we know that there’s no person who would felt offended in our environment. (...) So, our behaviour does change. (...) His behaviour makes us think if we behave the right way, if our approach is tolerant enough. (...) Wojciech [her husband] used to say “Negro” in English when he referred to [Black] people. And Filip once says: “Dad, you shouldn’t say so, because that’s not appropriate. (...) It’s not correct, politically correct and you offend the whole group. So, at least when you’re in my company – be more careful what you say”. It’s a sort of admonishing. I think that Wojciech will think twice now before he uses this word again. He’ll think twice because somebody has told him that some person may be offended to hear such an expression.

Katarzyna (significant other, in her 50s)

This narrative is interesting for several reasons. First of all, it evidences that not only the discriminatory language of difference circulates between migrants and significant others (and is frequently internalised by the latter). Rather, both language of respect and stigma are constantly in the making. Although, in my sample, the language of stigma was noticeable to a much greater degree, this is not to say this tendency remains a rule. Perhaps, the issue requires further studies that would shed more light onto how language (that refers to difference) evolves post-migration and why. Secondly, despite the fact that in the previous section certain discourses (i.e. racist or homophobic jokes) were argued to be rarely challenged due to their seemingly humorous nature, Filip's case demonstrates that some migrants are – for various reasons – aware of how such discourses shape social imaginaries and reinforce inequalities. Lastly, the narrative is an example of an active challenging of attitudes and language that results in what is considered as greater understanding of difference.

In contrast to Filip, however, some migrants prefer to limit the influence they have on their significant others in Poland. Notably, they filter the pieces of information they provide to their relatives and friends. One such informant was Lena, cited earlier, who never revealed the true nature of her relationship with a Pakistani-born man to her immediate family members. Instead, the person who was in fact her boyfriend was routinely referred to as a house-mate/friend, and in the eyes of Lena's mother Maria remained so even after their personal encounter in the UK. In the interviews, Lena explained that she was particularly worried that, given the extent of her mother's prejudice, Maria would disapprove of her relationship with a Muslim person.

I didn't tell my family about that. (...) I didn't say I was dating this person. All they knew was that we lived in the same house and hang out together as friends. (...) It was 2005 - very close to the bombings in London. (...) And I remember that she [her mother] said once: "How can you live in one building with such people? They might be terrorists – you never know". It was completely, you know... She had this media image. She had this image that every person who's Muslim must be a terrorist. You know, a sort of ignorance. And for me it was - I knew it wasn't true.  
Lena (migrant, female, aged 29)

As I have described earlier in the chapter, Maria's meaningful encounter with the person she was reading as her daughter's friend resulted in an erosion of her

prejudice and greater respect towards the Other. Paradoxically, and in contrast to other non-migrant participants in my study, it appears that by keeping her mother unaware of her intimate engagement with difference, Lena facilitated Maria's negotiation of her negative attitude. Being ambiguous and multi-layered, this case uncovers how intricate, contextualised and challenging for researchers migrant relations with their significant others abroad may be.

Importantly, not all significant others in Poland take migrant attitudes and behaviours for granted. It is necessary to acknowledge, that even though many non-migrant participants assume the correctness of migrants' attitudes and views about difference (for details see the next section), a few significant others in my study questioned or even rejected certain approaches articulated by their relatives or friends resident in the UK. Zofia, for example, the sister of Piotr, never took over and internalised her brother's frequently articulated prejudice towards Black people. Similarly to Lena and her mother Maria, she is another very interesting case. Not only Zofia's brother (Piotr), but also her husband live abroad – in different, yet both multicultural, societies. Interestingly, Piotr as well as Zofia's husband developed very similar prejudices towards racial difference post-migration. Furthermore, they both openly familiarised Zofia with their prejudice. She has, nonetheless, rejected it due to her own understanding of attitude formation.

I do have my own opinions and I'm sure he [her brother] wouldn't influence me in such a way. (...) You know I need to experience stuff in order to have an opinion. I need to get familiar with something in order to change my mind. (...) My husband also tells me various things about living abroad, but I believe I need to experience such things - to live them on my own – in order to have an attitude. (...) When we all meet they [her brother and husband] talk about [Black people's] attitude towards work. (...) They say that Black people are terribly lazy. That they want to take Polish people's jobs. (...) As I said, I don't have a huge experience with these people. These people just are there – they don't bother me (...) when I'm at by husband's or my brother's. (...) I absolutely don't feel I'm against such people. (...) I'm tolerant and I believe we shouldn't discriminate somebody just because somebody else told us something about this person, right? I guess, personal contact is very important... and only a personal contact could make me change my opinion. Zofia (significant other, in her 40s)

This example of, what I call here, an ‘incomplete transfer’ suggests that the cross-border circulation of values and attitudes is a complex and highly situated process. Although, in the chapter, I have demonstrated many examples of attitude, stereotype or language take-over, it is crucial to recognise that in the process of circulation significant others are, notwithstanding their assumed lack of cultural capital, active agents (see Chapter 2). They may (or not) challenge, question, accept or disagree with migrant views and behaviours. This is further explored in the next section which – for a change - focuses on how significant others in Poland influence migrants’ values and attitudes.

In this section, I have looked at how migrants to the UK may (or not) influence their significant others’ capacity to live with difference. In doing so, I have firstly demonstrated that although many research participants claim to be ‘more tolerant’ due to their relationship with migrants, their understanding of greater tolerance remains vague and superficial. Namely, it is largely linked to the greater fleeting contact with diversity which does not necessarily translate into respect for and willingness to live with difference (Valentine 2008; Valentine and Sadgrove 2012). Secondly, I have drawn attention to the fact that migrants may on their own initiative impact on their relatives and friends in Poland by directly challenging their unfavourable attitudes, ‘incorrect’ behaviour or the language of stigma. This way the normativity they adapted to post-migration is actively passed onto their significant others in a sending country. In contrast, some significant others may be kept unaware of their migrant family member’s or friend’s engagement with difference. Whilst ignorance – as the psychology literature suggests - does not usually contribute to eroding stereotypes and decreasing negative attitudes (Pettigrew 1998; Stephan and Stephan 1984), it seems it can sometimes assist a more gentle intervention against deep-seated prejudice. Lastly, in the section I have emphasized that even though some migrants intend to influence significant others’ perception of difference, their relatives or friends in a home country may – for various reasons – disregard or reject these views and attitudes. This results in an ‘incomplete transfer’ (a message is communicated, received, yet not internalised) and further pinpoints to the role significant others play in the circulation of values and attitudes towards difference.

## **8.6 The influence of significant others in Poland on migrants**

Although the chapter has so far focused on examples of migrants passing on ideas, prejudices, stereotypes, behaviours and discourses related to difference, it is not my intention to suggest values and attitudes travel one way only. Rather, they circulate between migrants and significant others in what Levitt and Lamba-Nieves (2011: 3) call “a transnational social field”. In this continuous process, that occurs across, beyond and over national borders, time and space, family members and friends in a sending country counter-influence migrants. They are active actors who respond to, react on and negotiate values and attitudes towards difference. Levitt and Lamba-Nieves (2011: 3) argue that “[w]hat migrants bring and continue to receive from their homelands affects their experiences in the countries where they settle. This, in turn, affects what they send back to non-migrants who either disregard or adopt these ideas and behaviour, transforming them in the process, and eventually re-remitting them back to migrants who adopt and transform them once again”. Furthermore, similarly to migrants, non-migrants may (and often do) encounter difference even in ‘assumed to be homogeneous’ home societies such as Poland (see e.g. Piekut 2012). As a result, they also may (and often do) express complex or situated feelings towards otherness and initiate negotiations of values and attitudes. The situation is further complicated by the fact that, likewise migrants, significant others are emotionally engaged with their relatives or friends abroad. They, thus, may feel particularly encouraged or discouraged to manifest some of their beliefs and views.

It is important to acknowledge here that there are certain methodological limitations to study how values and attitudes towards difference travel between migrants and non-migrants. Some scholars (Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2011) claim that it is difficult to explore how ideas circulate and evaluate their impact on significant others in a sending country and migrants abroad without focusing on one place at one point in time. Drawing from this understanding, I would like to add that it is, indeed, very hard to investigate how values and attitudes towards difference are negotiated by migrants and non-migrants without concentrating on one side of the circulation process at a time. Hence, the structure of this chapter which looked firstly into the migrant side and only then into the non-migrant influence - the latter occurring in my research to a much lesser degree. Notwithstanding this ‘enforced’ distinction, I fully acknowledge the simultaneity, multi-sidedness, complexity and



messiness of values and attitudes continuously travelling between agents engaged with distinctive socio-cultural and geo-historical contexts.

A telling example of significant other impact on migrant values and attitudes towards difference is Zofia, cited earlier in this chapter for her rejection of her migrant brother's (and husband's) prejudice towards Black people. Zofia's brother Piotr was one of the most prejudiced participants in my study (see Chapter 7). In the quote below, Zofia describes how she actively attempts to change his homophobic and racist views.

Speaking of gays – I think his attitude is a bit - I think he doesn't understand it. I tried to explain it to him from the medical point of view. (...) But, he has a different opinion about that. He cannot imagine two men having sex. He just cannot imagine that. And, I say: "Piotr, listen, they just feel they have such needs. Let's try to understand it". (...) I don't feel I should try to influence him by force. I [also] know that some of his friends share his [negative] attitude towards Black people for example. So, no - I don't try to influence him. Sometimes I only try to explain that not every person's the same. So, I say that not every Pole abroad is a thief... and that there are various Black people as well. Zofia (significant other, in her 40s)

By "explaining" rather than "influencing by force" and employing an analogy Piotr could easily identify with ("not every Pole abroad is a thief"), Zofia tries to interrupt her brother's prejudice and tendency to essentialise, not to say de-humanise, difference. By doing so, she strives to change Piotr's negative attitude developed as a result of his encounters with diversity in the UK context (see Chapter 7).

While Zofia's case may be regarded an attempt to pass on a favourable attitude, some significant others in my study have, however, transferred openly prejudiced views. This is evident in Magda's narrative below. Although Magda's attitude towards Muslims and Islam remains ambivalent (see Chapter 7), she has been happily married to a Muslim person for quite a long time now. This has not, nonetheless, refrained her best friend in Poland from repeatedly expressing her utmost unease about Magda's marriage.

Magda (M): From all the people in Poland my [female] friend had the most negative attitude towards that [getting married to a Muslim person]. I don't know if that's related to her being very close with our [sic] religion [Catholicism] or whether there were any other reasons. But she had this negative attitude for a long

time. I don't know how she feels now, but I had been married for two years and she still sent me some articles about women who had very difficult experiences with their Muslim husbands. (...) At the beginning there were quite a lot. But, amazingly, two years after getting married I got something as well. Some articles. That was surprising. (...) It was about a woman who got married to a Muslim man and went through hell. (...)

Interviewer: Why do you think she kept sending you these articles?

M: I don't know. I don't know her motivation.

Magda (migrant, female, aged 28)

Unfortunately, despite many efforts to arrange an interview with Magda's friend, I did not manage to meet with her. Perhaps, she could shed more light onto why she found the situation disturbing enough to bombard Magda with letters containing press cuttings about women being oppressed by their Muslim husbands. The narrative is quite interesting for another reason, though. Namely, it is an exemplar of a cross-border negotiation of values and attitudes that remains non-verbal. Magda explained that she and her friend in Poland never openly discussed this situation - and sending the anti-Muslim press cuttings in particular. Initially, as she told me, Magda wanted to avoid tensions and later on there were few opportunities to have more profound discussions. Eventually, the correspondence stopped and both women maintain largely banal Internet contact now.

Whilst the circulation of particular values and attitudes towards certain axes of difference by significant others in Poland (be it greater openness or prejudice) was a dominant pattern in my study, a few informants have drawn my attention to the cross-border negotiations of core Polish values such as religion or family (see Chapter 4). One such a participant was Ela who stopped practicing Catholicism post-migration. She has, nevertheless, never admitted doing so to her aging grandparents in Poland in fear of making them unnecessarily - as she argued - upset. Several weeks after I finished interviewing Ela for this research, she got pregnant which apparently initiated a discussion with her relatives about baptizing the child as well as making her relationship with the child's father formal (by getting married). This is reflected in a research note I took after my conversation with Ela and a subsequent interview with her grandparents Wiktoria and Jan.

I phone Ela to ask if/how I can contact her grandparents in Poland and arrange an interview. She interrupts my questions to say that she has recently got pregnant. Her grandparents were

told about that which resulted in a conversation about the child's religious affiliation. Ela does not want to baptize her child and raise him or her in Catholicism. However, her grandparents in Poland do not know (were never told!) that she stopped practicing it. Ela says they try to influence her to have the child baptized. She stresses that they cannot understand her decision to refrain from doing so. Research note, 30/04/2012, Re: Ela

Wiktorja: I think she should [baptize the child] and have a church marriage – do it the right way! They share a flat, they share everything. They should do it right! (...)

Jan: Well, she [Ela] says: “There’s no point baptizing my child. I’ll register him or her and that’s it!” I think that she is very tolerant at the moment, but... Well, we never tried to get into details, to make her tell us what her attitude towards religion [Catholicism] was. (...) She was baptized here [in Poland], she received a Catholic upbringing here. And there [in the UK]? Well, I don’t know! (...) I prefer not to discuss it too much – it’s shouldn’t really be my business. She is very, very tolerant.

Wiktorja & Jan (significant others, in their 80s)

Although during the interview Wiktorja and Jan were quite diplomatic (e.g. never explicitly opposed their granddaughter’s decision not to baptize her child and get a church marriage), it is clear that they would prefer Ela to follow a traditional Catholic path. Jan, in particular, spoke of how he strived all his life to pass religious values onto his children and grandchildren. This case suggests that beyond values and attitudes towards difference, other aspects of migrant lives including meaningful decisions and lifestyle tend to be challenged and affected by significant others in a home country.

Notwithstanding many examples of significant others passing values and attitudes onto migrants, I would like to note that in comparison to the extent of migrant transmission, the transfer of ideas, beliefs, discourses and behaviour from non-migrants occurred in my sample to a much lesser degree. One important reason for that may be the ‘expert’ status the majority of significant others ascribed to their migrant relatives or friends in the UK. In the eyes of non-migrant respondents, migrants are assumed to *know better* precisely because they are migrants and live *elsewhere* – i.e. outside the comfort zone of a familiar nation state. This is reflected in two short accounts below in which Zuza, the sister of Magda and Hanna, the friend of Julia, explain how they trust their sibling’s/friend’s judgement due to the fact that they (Magda/Julia) live in the UK.

I think that Magda has a better contact with it [diversity] – an everyday contact. And, if she tells me something I do listen to her - I must agree with it, because I don't have such a contact myself and I simply don't know how things work.

Zuza (significant other, in her 20s)

[When travelling in the past] I didn't have opportunities to be among such people on a regular basis. Julia had and that's why I do rely upon her experiences. I believe in what she says. (...) I don't have such an experience as she has now.

Hanna (significant other, in her 20s)

These extracts draw attention to a few interesting assumptions many non-migrant informants in my study seem to make. First of all, they appear to believe that migrants are the source of the most accurate or 'proven' pieces of information about a receiving society simply because they live there. They are, as I have demonstrated in the chapter, routinely employed as tour guides when their relatives or friends visit them in the UK. They are also frequently asked to explain how and why things work in certain ways in what non-migrants view as unfamiliar setting. Secondly, migrants are assumed to have greater cultural capital and contact with difference due to their experiences in a society regarded as foreign, strange and distinctive from the home one. Moreover, as I have argued earlier in the chapter, some significant others in Poland tend to associate increased contact with difference with greater tolerance. This results in construction of migrants as trusted experts whose knowledge 'cannot' be questioned. Indeed, Zuza and Hanna "must agree" with or "do rely" upon whatever their migrant relative/friend says about difference. In short, the migrant status legitimises their authority and credibility. The consequence of this may be reluctance by significant others to challenge migrant's views, attitudes and behaviour and, moreover, taking communicated ideas for granted.

Admittedly, the unwillingness to question the status of migrants as trusted experts, that was noticeable among some of my non-migrant participants, appears quite intriguing and requires a closer look. Earlier in this thesis (see Chapter 6), I have stressed that some informants in my sample tend to construct the UK as the 'civilised' Western empire in various ways superior to the 'underdeveloped' and 'intolerant' post-communist Poland. This strongly resonates with the post-socialist discourses of the 'backward' East necessarily needing to 'catch up' with the iconic West (Burrell 2011a; Horolets and Kozłowska 2012; Kania 2009; Kuus 2004; Mayblin et al. 2014; Owczarzak 2009). In addition, some studies suggest that

especially in the 1990s, during the period of transition to liberal economy and democracy, Polish society was particularly encouraged to internalize such orientalist gaze (Kuus 2004; Mayblin et al. 2014). Against this backdrop, the reluctance by non-migrants to challenge the appropriateness of attitudes and behaviour of migrants, appears interlinked with the broader post-communist context and migration to the UK (as the archetypical West). In other words, the construction of the ‘better knowing’ migrants (who possess insider knowledge and become trusted experts due to their migration experience), seems to be further reinforced by the popular post-socialist (and, indeed, postdependence) discourse, which casts Poland as somewhat inferior towards the mythical West (see Chapter 2).

By providing examples of how significant others in Poland affect Polish migrants in the UK, in this section I have shown that circulation of values and attitudes towards difference is a complex process engaging migrants and non-migrants. Nevertheless, I have simultaneously demonstrated an imbalance in attempts to influence others in favour of migrants. It appears that migrant positionality as a trusted expert impacts on the extent to which passing on values and attitudes occurs between migrants and their significant others in a sending country. This, in turn, explains why in my study the migrant transmission of cultural knowledge, positive and negative attitudes, stereotypes, behaviour, discourses and language was more noticeable and consequential than the transfer of ideas by significant others.

## **8.7 Conclusions**

In this chapter, I have investigated how contact with super-diversity in the British context (Vertovec 2007) affects relations between Polish migrants and their significant others who live in Poland. In particular, I have pinpointed the cross-border circulation of values, attitudes and practices related to difference that becomes an integral element of migration experience. Even though the term ‘transmission’ is commonly utilised in the geography and social science literatures, I have argued for the usage of the notion of circulation. The term circulation draws attention to a two- or multi-sited process that includes passing on, confronting and contesting of values and attitudes.

The data I have collected evidence that cross-border circulation of ideas, beliefs, prejudice, behaviour and discourses is a complex, multi-layered, *messy* and

analytically challenging process. Although many migrants maintain frequent contact with their relatives and friends in Poland, the circulation of ideas about difference rarely occurs unless significant others have been to the UK themselves or something meaningful, disruptive and consequential happens. This is, by and large, due to the very nature of long-distance kinship and friendship relations which prioritise distant gestures of sympathy, intimacy and care over substantial discussions or ideological disclosures. Having said that, the visit to the UK frequently becomes a meaningful moment for many significant others and fuels negotiations of difference and sameness that tend, furthermore, to extend beyond the temporal frames of the event. The embodied opportunity to *see, hear, taste* and *touch* difference intensifies discussions with migrants who are assumed to provide their significant others with proven *insider knowledge*. This, in turn, encapsulates circulation of not only values and positive or negative attitudes, but also behaviours considered appropriate, routines, stereotypes, discourses (e.g. jokes) and stigmatising or respectful language. Importantly, in such exchanges agency is often granted to multiple actors. Their consequences are, thus, multi-fold. Beyond the acceptance of ideas, beliefs and prejudice they may include, for instance, contestation or rejection of certain views. As a result, values and attitudes towards difference continuously travel between migrants and non-migrants rather than being transferred one way only.

Notwithstanding the two- or multi-sidedness of this process, the research shows that there is an imbalance (in favour of migrants) in the extent to which ideas, beliefs and prejudices are passed on. The reason for this may be the assumption of migrant credibility that appears to underlie the common understanding of international mobility and the contextualised East-West migration in particular. The construction of migrants as trusted experts legitimises the ‘correctness’ of their views and behaviour. Consequently, significant others in home societies are more willing to internalise the values and attitudes towards difference that migrants express.

Above all, the chapter brings an important finding to the fore. Namely, the circulation of values and attitudes towards difference frequently seems to be the consequence of migrant encounters with difference (see Chapter 6). It is crucial to stress here, however, that encounters with otherness in the context of receiving society may be meaningful not only for the migrants themselves, but also for their significant others in sending countries. Indeed, values and attitudes towards diversity, as this chapter has demonstrated, proliferate across national borders and impact on

individuals that may not have a direct contact with difference. This poses a great challenge for national as well as European policy makers.

Despite growing interest in social remittances that travel across national borders (Elrick 2008; Levitt 1998, 2001; Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2011), the geography and migration literatures pay insufficient attention to the circulation of values and attitudes towards difference between migrants and non-migrants. By investigating the nature of Polish migrants' relations with significant others in Poland, the importance of non-migrants visiting migrants in the UK, the travelling of ideas and the intricate process of mutual influence, in the chapter I have discussed in what circumstances, and how, values and attitudes towards otherness circulate (or not). In doing so, I have contributed to, and extended, the understanding of value and attitude 'transmission' (as understood in the literature) as well as questioned certain assumptions about direction and scope of transmission (in particular, about parental, intergenerational and intra-familial transmission).





## **Chapter 9: Conclusion - The consequences of migrant encounters with difference**

In this thesis, I have explored how international mobility across distinctive socio-historical contexts as well as encounters with difference within these contexts impact on circulation of values and attitudes between two European countries – Poland and the UK. Specifically, I have looked at Polish post-2004 migrants in Britain and their significant others in Poland, and outlined how distinctive normative framework in the Polish context necessarily affects Polish people's values and attitudes towards difference. I have demonstrated that this normative framework constitutes a symbolic baggage that people tend to refer to while interacting with others and/or the social world. I have also evidenced that such baggage may be contested or challenged as well as *carried* when people travel or move across national borders and social contexts.

Further, I have argued that mobility itself may be a fateful moment (Giddens 1991b) for some migrants and may disrupt identities as well as understandings of the social world (Silvey 2004). By looking into encounters with difference and sameness post-migration, I have investigated how a move from a relatively homogeneous to a super-diverse society (Vertovec 2007) contributes to changing, reshaping or developing of values and attitudes towards what have been constructed as 'familiar' and 'other' pre-migration. This has led me to suggest that mobility impacts on the understanding of and living with/among difference. Importantly, I have noticed that beyond the influence mobility has on individual migrants (and their values and attitudes), the consequences of migrant encounters with difference also affect their significant others who live in a sending country. Significant others, i.e. people who stay in meaningful relationships (Mead 1934), tend to influence each other in various ways. My research suggests that, similarly, migrants in host societies and their non-migrant significant others in sending countries discuss (explicitly or implicitly) values and attitudes towards difference. This, as the thesis evidences, results in a constant circulation of ideas, beliefs, opinions, discourses, behaviour and language

between migrants and significant others who live in distinctive national and socio-historical contexts.

### **9.1 Theoretical contributions**

Throughout the thesis, I have drawn on a range of disciplinary literatures. As such, the thesis contributes to theory and knowledge not only through extending various literatures separately, but also through cross-disciplinary engagement which is innovative in a number of ways. First of all, in the thesis, I discuss the concept of postdependence<sup>25</sup> to explore orientalist and essentialist discourses regarding Poland as well as the iconic ‘West’ and ‘East’ my research participants extensively utilised (see Chapters 2 and 6). As I have argued, the obscure positionality of Poland in Europe and globally produces distinctive understandings of diversity, otherness and sameness (see Chapters 4 and 5). So far this has been addressed largely within the frames of postcolonial studies. Snochowska-Gonzales has, nonetheless, recently argued that “the post-colonial face of Poland is rather problematic” (2012: 708) and the employment of postcolonial perspective to the Polish case leads to “unjustified assertions and conclusions” (ibid.). Against this backdrop, the postdependence perspective I employ in this thesis offers a refreshing alternative to postcolonialism as it presumes a complex relationship between being an oppressor and being oppressed, dependence and independence. Interestingly, although the concept of postdependence seems to have an immense capacity to reflect on the intricate historical and present relations between Poland and other nation states, societies or merely ideas (e.g. ‘the West’), it has been inadequately discussed – i.e. only with regard to Polish literature (cf. Piekut 2014, forthcoming). In the thesis, I propose to extend this perspective on broader social relations and encounters with otherness and sameness in particular. This significantly contributes to the critique of the applicability of postcolonial lens to the studies of Poland and Central and Eastern Europe (see e.g. Kołodziejczyk 2011; Snochowska-Gonzalez 2012). It also acknowledges recent claims within geography with respect to researching encounters with difference – that “encounters never take place in a space free from history, material conditions, and power” (Valentine 2008: 333).

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<sup>25</sup> I thank my colleagues from the LIVEDIFFERENCE team for many useful discussions on postcolonialism and the positionality of Poland (for insights, see Mayblin et al. 2014). I am particularly grateful to Aneta Piekut from bringing the concept of postdependence to my attention.

With regard to difference, throughout the thesis I have evidenced that understandings of difference are mobile between places and socio-historical contexts – something that, despite a substantial body of work on difference (e.g. Bell and Valentine 1995; Butler and Bowlby 1997; Jackson and Penrose 1993; Sibley 1995), has been so far insufficiently addressed in broader literature. In particular, I have demonstrated that in the Polish context conceptualizations of sameness and difference are embedded in hegemonic normativities and framed through history, religion, politics, significance of family and *obvious whiteness* of Polish society (see Chapter 4). This necessarily impacts on social attitudes towards various axes of difference in Poland (see Chapter 5) as well as perceptions of familiarity and otherness in the context of migration (see Chapters 6 and 7).

Likewise, in the thesis I have shown that values, attitudes and prejudice are continuously mobile. Although each of these concepts is distinctive and – as I have demonstrated (see Chapter 2) – has been developing extensive separate literatures, what they have in common, I argue, is their capacity to travel between people, places or national contexts. This is, however, underresearched and underappreciated in these respective literatures. For example, geographers have been largely preoccupied with values being, as Philo put it, culture- and place-bound “and thus anchored in and non-transplantable from particular peoples and places” (1991: 16). Prejudice has also gained attention mostly as a spatially inflected phenomenon (e.g. Sibley 1995; Simonsen 2008; Valentine 2010). Attitudes, while extensively studied in quantitative psychology, have only started to receive increased consideration in other disciplines<sup>26</sup>. In sum, all these disciplinary literatures rarely conceptualise values, attitudes or prejudice as mobile constructs. My study, however, evidences that that these concepts continuously circulate between people and places (see Chapter 8). This finding, alongside my attempt to bring these separate bodies of work together, provides a significant input into scholarship on values, attitudes and prejudice.

Further, the thesis contributes to the geographies of encounter literature by firstly challenging the fixity of encounter. While much empirical research by geographers has been framed through the ‘here’ and ‘now’ of encounters, less attention as Valentine and Sadgrove (2012) suggest has been paid to understanding the processual nature of encountering difference and the consequences of such

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<sup>26</sup> This is evidenced by broader outcomes of the LIVEDIFFERENCE programme this thesis is part of.

encounters. In the thesis, I have addressed this issue by exploring both the pre- and post-encounter - imaginary encounters with difference (see Chapter 6) as well as the effects of actual ones (see Chapters 6, 7 and 8). Secondly, in the thesis I have suggested that many meaningful encounters occur beyond public or semi-public spaces (see Chapters 6 and 7). In doing so, I have specifically looked into the spaces of encounter which are often overlooked in broader encounter literature – workplace and home (Harris and Valentine 2014, Valentine et al. 2014, forthcoming).

Thirdly, throughout the thesis I have investigated first and foremost migrant encounters and the consequences of these encounters for individual migrants as well as their significant others. While migrant encounters have been increasingly investigated in the context of post-2004 East-West mobility in Europe (e.g. Cook et al. 2011b; Phillips 2012), the issue has been raised mostly with regard to labour migrants and their work-related interactions. Furthermore, the literature exploring the interplay between migrant encounters and attitudes towards difference has predominantly focused on unfavourable and/or hostile attitudes including racism (e.g. Fox 2013; McDowell 2008, 2009). While it brings many significant insights, I have argued (see Chapter 2), this literature seems to downplay the significance of certain presumptions (e.g. about the contextualised understandings of whiteness) that need to be written into any study of migrant encounters with difference. It also overlooks what migrants bring to encounters of their lives pre-migration and pays relatively little attention to encounters that result in favourable attitudes and involvement with difference. Critically engaging with this research, throughout the thesis, I have demonstrated that the consequences of migrant encounters embrace a wide range of stances towards difference such as rejection, discrimination, stereotypization, normalization, familiarity, acceptance, respect, solidarity and involvement. Additionally, I have illustrated that encounters pre-migration may have a significant influence on how difference is understood and approached post-migration. I have, for example, shown that values and attitudes towards difference are not only developed in the context of encounters that take place within receiving society. Rather, I have stressed that pre-migratory stances towards difference are also prone to get enhanced, revised or challenged through mobility. As these issues still lack adequate attention in the geographies of encounter and broader disciplinary literatures, my research provides a crucial contribution to theory and knowledge, and hopefully extends a debate on what migrants from relatively homogeneous societies

may bring to encounters in super-diverse contexts and why. This is crucial for British and European policy-makers and, as such, is addressed further in this concluding chapter.

In exploring encounters with difference, I have frequently referred to whiteness studies. While preoccupation with race and skin colour is, as this thesis illustrates, particularly salient among migrant Poles, this framework has been rarely utilised with regard to post-2004 Central and Eastern European arrivals to the UK and elsewhere (see Chapter 2). Throughout the thesis I have argued that racial difference tends to be essentialised, orientalised and homogenised by Polish migrants due to its visibility and *standing-out-ness* in the context of mobility from a predominantly White Polish society (see Chapter 4). Some migrant informants in my study have, for example, admitted repeatedly mistaking Pakistani or British-Pakistani people for Indian or British-Indian people (see Chapter 6). What is more, my empirical data demonstrate that many migrants consider whiteness as an inherent feature of the UK society. Some participants, indeed, admitted that they had assumed British society to be White pre-migration and were surprised to learn about its ethnic diversity. The consequence of this was sometimes the production of host-guest discourses with regard to non-White people (often coupled with non-Christians) which – in the eyes of some of my informants - legitimised their presence in the UK rather than the presence of non-White minorities (see Chapter 6). These findings bring to the fore a pivotal issue related to how whiteness may be constructed across various socio-historical contexts. However, as Bonnet and Nayak have poignantly put it, “it is a concern that geographers have combined (...) focus [on whiteness] with a parochial geographical horizon rarely lifting their sights above the familiar terrain of Britain, North America and Australia” (2003: 309). This has been reiterated, more recently, by van Riemsdijk who advocates for a “need for whiteness studies (...) to take account of national and ethnic specificity” (2010: 123). My thesis contributes to whiteness literature precisely by informing these concerns and exploring the production of whiteness among White migrants who originate from a relatively homogeneous society and move to a racially diverse one. My study evidences that such migrants are likely to develop or mobilise racialised discourses. Greater understanding of why and in what circumstances such discourses are produced is in the context of an increased East-West mobility in Europe of particular significance for policy-makers.

With reference to migration and transnationalism literatures, in the thesis I have established that mobility may be a meaningful experience and may influence both migrants' and non-migrants' understandings of difference. Although cultural diffusion and cross-border transfer of social remittances have been gradually investigated for some time now (e.g. Levitt 1998; Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2011), this body of work has rarely addressed values and attitudes towards difference in terms of ethnicity, religion, class, sexuality, gender, age and disability. In this respect, in the thesis I offer an original interpretation of how relationships with significant others in a different national setting shape the capacity of migrants and non-migrants to live with/among difference. While in managing long-distance kinship or friendship relations research participants seem to prioritise gestures of sympathy and care, ideas of difference do circulate between Polish migrants to the UK and their relatives and/or friends in Poland. This, however, occurs in certain circumstances. Particularly meaningful in this respect is significant others' visit to the UK – neglected in migration literature aspect of international mobility (Mason 2004).

Alongside extending the understanding of how ideas of difference are shaped through international relationships, the acknowledgement of cross-border mobility of values and attitudes contributes to the literature on intra-familial and peer transmission. Although intergenerational (and largely parental) transmission has been increasingly studied (e.g. Gronhoj and Thogersen 2009; Valentine et al. 2012), the circulation of values and attitudes towards difference between/among individuals who are in various kinship and friendship relations remains explored less. In the thesis, I have addressed and challenged various assumptions about the process of passing on ideas and practices. First of all, I have questioned the concept of transmission and proposed to employ the term circulation instead. Even though it is broadly utilised in the geography and social science literatures (e.g. Carlson and Knoester 2011; Gronhoj and Thogersen 2009; Scourfield et al. 2012; Valentine et al. 2012), transmission assumes a linear and one-way process in which one side transfers ideas or sets behavioural examples and the other accepts and/or internalises them. As such, it seems to recognize the agency of the transmitter only. What I have observed between Polish migrants to the UK and their significant others in Poland seems much more complex and embraces a two- or multi-sided process of proliferation, exchange, confrontation and contestation in which agency is often

granted to many social actors. This process, I have argued, would be better conceptualised as circulation rather than transmission.

Secondly, in the thesis I have drawn attention to the fact that in the case of such concepts as values and attitudes there are no generational or gender patterns of circulation noted elsewhere (e.g. Valentine and Hughes 2012; Valentine et al. 2012). I have, indeed, provided numerous examples of adult migrant children passing on their views and beliefs on their non-migrant parents or siblings (or even friends) of different sexes.

In the thesis, I have also demonstrated that, while values and attitudes do circulate between migrants in the UK and their significant others in Poland, non-migrants (and their capacity to live with/among difference) tend to be influenced by migrants to a greater degree than otherwise. This is, as I have argued, due to the construction of migrants as trusted experts (see Chapter 7). Finally, I have established that beyond values and attitudes towards difference also ideas, discourses, behaviour and – importantly - language (both stigmatising and ‘politically correct’) travel between migrants and non-migrants.

## **9.2 Methodological contributions**

While contributing to a range of disciplinary literatures, in my study I have raised several significant issues involving methods. I have, firstly, recognised and reflected on the role of translator researcher who works with dual-language data and, as such, may have a significant influence on knowledge production process (see Chapter 3). In addition, I have proposed an innovative data translation procedure that has the potential to aid researchers involved in dual-language research as well as big transnational teams that draw on data in various languages. While the usage of interpreters in the research process and translation issues have been debated to a certain degree (Squires 2009; Temple 1997; Temple et al. 2006), there has been little consideration of the practical side of translating data as a part of a research process. In this respect, my discussion of how to translate respondents’ narratives from one language to the other and not *get lost in translation* provides an original contribution to methods. The procedure I have proposed allows gaining conceptual equivalence which is so necessary to produce valid knowledge (Birbili 2000). In effect, a translated transcription of data is produced, yet – importantly - it remains very close

to the linguistically nuanced record in the original language. Although in the thesis I have focused on translation from Polish into English, I hope other researchers involved in dual-language studies will find it meaningful and will be inspired to develop similar approaches including other languages.

Alongside considering the role of translator researcher, I have drawn attention to the complicated position of migrant researcher exploring his or her own migrant population (see Chapter 3). Feminist geographers and social scientists have paid much attention to complexities of positionality in terms of ethnicity, religion, class, sexuality, gender, age, disability or even personality (e.g. Haraway 1988; Katz 1996; Kobayashi 2003; Moser 2008; Rose 1997). However, these discussions have rarely considered the features distinctive to migration experience (e.g. migrant status, bilingualism) and the challenges that come with the position of migrant researcher researching migrants. In my study, I have addressed these issues and noticed that although many of my informants implicitly assumed that by sharing nationality, language and migrant status we share migration experience and views on difference, there were numerous moments of multiple (dis)identifications (Valentine 2002). My reflections on these fieldwork experiences add a different dimension to the literature on sameness and difference in the research process. In the thesis, I have also pointed to the ‘obscureness’ of the relationship between the migrant researcher and the migrant researched. Kim (2012: 131) has recently drawn attention to the fact that positionality debates “have tended to assume a conventional hierarchy positioning and have been limited to the relationship between the researcher and the researched only”. In critically engaging with this assumption, she has suggested that migrant researcher must be distinguished from a researcher *per se*. My study contributes to and extends this understanding, by providing many examples of how distinctive data were produced in a research encounter involving the migrant researcher and the migrant researched, and taking place in the context of migration.

Finally, the overall data collection phase of my fieldwork is worth recalling here (see Chapter 3). It has been argued that there is:

“the need for researchers to reflect on the research tools that might provide the most effective ways of exploring and understanding the transmission of values and practices. This might include, for example, employing methodological techniques that are not commonly used in researching



geographies of encounter, such as life histories, biographical interviews or intergenerational studies.”

(Valentine 2008: 334)

Acknowledging this call, my research was designed specifically to explore two- or multi-sited circulation of values and attitudes across national settings. Firstly, I distinguished two types of participants in two different countries (i.e. key participants/migrants and their significant others). And, secondly, I supported my main data collection technique (i.e. multiple interviewing including life history and follow-up interviews) with creative methods meant to prompt responses that refer to people with whom migrants maintain close and meaningful relationships (i.e. relational mapping, timeline, linking survey). This allowed me to target and subsequently include into my study those significant others with whom migrants were most likely to exchange ideas and discuss their encounters with difference.

In attempting to obtain unconstrained and spontaneous narratives from the migrant participants, I also employed audio-diaries so far praised in methods literature (Monrouxe 2009; Worth 2009). This data collection technique proved problematic however (for details see Chapter 3) and having analysed the feedback I received, in this thesis, I have provided guidance for a conscious choice of the method. As there is still little discussion on how and why audio-diaries may be unsuitable in certain circumstances and with certain participants, my critical review of the method provides an important contribution into research methods literature.

### **9.3 Policy implications**

The main finding from my research is that cross-border circulation of values, attitudes, beliefs, discourses, language and practices occurs as a consequence of migrant encounters with difference. In the context of accelerated and diversified migration flows in Europe and globally, this circulation is likely to become a key issue for European and national policy-makers. While mobility of ideas brings many positive social changes, it may also raise new challenges. Such challenges include transnational transfer of prejudiced attitudes such as racism, Islamophobia or homophobia (Valentine et al. 2013), or circulation of discriminatory language. The big question this brings to the fore is how to reduce proliferation of prejudice?

Throughout the thesis I have evidenced that ideas travel with and proliferate through mobile individuals. Migrants seem, thus, a crucial target group for European,

national and local policies related to multiculturalism, social inclusion as well as the challenge of how to live with difference. In my study, I have drawn attention to prejudiced attitudes and language that (alongside their non-prejudiced counterparts) are developed through migrant encounters with difference. In particular, I have argued that many of my informants remain unaware of the stigmatising and discriminatory nature of the prejudiced speech or discourses they employ and/or mobilise. Therefore, apart from being aimed at fighting hostile ideologies and phobias (e.g. racism, Islamophobia, homophobia), anti-discrimination as well as equality and diversity policies should, I believe, recognise and minimise the role of such people in ‘unintentional’ proliferation of prejudice. This could be achieved through programmes and policies seeking to accustom people with difference through, for example, generating the ‘good encounter’ (Wilson 2013b), a sense of proximity (Fortier 2010) as well as mutual respect rather than merely tolerance (Valentine 2008).

Recently, Wilson (2013b: 73) has drawn attention the powerful effect of a diversity workshop aimed at “unpack[ing] the constructions of prejudiced thought” and disrupting deep-seated stereotypical associations with difference and/or non-normative bodies. It appears that such community and organisational programmes can significantly encourage familiarity with difference and, by doing so, reduce (migrant) prejudice and its diffusion (e.g. Paluck 2006; Tromski and Doston 2003). It is important to stress here, however, that in order to address different groups of people (and migrants) who live with or were socialised to live with distinctive sets of values and/or attitudes towards difference, such programmes and policies also need to be culturally-sensitive. This, above all, requires a thorough recognition of why certain people are likely to conceptualise difference in certain ways.

Throughout the thesis, I have intended to emphasize that people tend to be socialised to understand difference in certain way as societies develop distinctive normative frameworks - history- and culture-specific understandings of sameness and otherness. I have highlighted that migrants are likely to bring these understandings to encounters in the context of receiving society. I have, for example, explored how ethnicity, religion, gender or sexuality are produced in the Polish postdependence context and how these understanding of difference may be recalled in the context of migration to Britain. I have also explained that due to the complicated understanding of whiteness and non-whiteness in post-communist

Poland, some migrants may express racist attitudes post-migration being simultaneously unaware of their orientalisising, essentialising or racialising nature. In doing so, I have attempted to draw attention to the fact that the cross-border circulation of ideas (e.g. the transnational transfer of prejudice) is – at least to some extent – influenced by distinctive and culture-specific reading of difference migrants and their significant others may employ. This, I argue, should be written into how policy-makers address migrant groups in order to effectively unpack and disrupt prejudice. In short, in this thesis I emphasise the significance of culturally-sensitive policies tailored to inform misconception in socially constructed and contextualised imaginaries regarding difference.

Existing policy work on migration and living with difference involves substantial amount of local, regional, national and European bodies, and is targeted to challenge prejudice and discrimination as well as advance community cohesion. Within the UK, with regard to the city of Leeds only, there is a multitude of governmental and non-governmental (public, private and voluntary) organisations such as Leeds City Council, Equality Leeds, local branches of Stop Hate UK or Migration Yorkshire. Particularly influential in the area of migrants' integration is Migration Yorkshire, an authority-led partnership having its regional equivalents across the whole Britain<sup>27</sup>. The partnership works with national and local governments, voluntary, community and private sectors as well as researchers and scholars in the region in raising awareness of migration, campaigning for social inclusion, providing consultancy, education and training on a range of issues that involve migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. While it delivers an impressive repertoire of policy work into combating prejudice towards immigration, more could be done with regard to prejudice that some migrants express towards difference and pass onto their significant others in sending societies.

Importantly, given the capacity of prejudice to travel between people and places, not only migrants should be targeted by the policy makers. This thesis demonstrates that the attitudes towards difference of non-migrant Poles are likely to be shaped by their migrant significant others in the UK. Likewise, migrant attitudes may be to a certain degree influenced by non-migrants. In this context, it is necessary for the Polish policy makers to recognise the challenges that come with an unprecedented

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<sup>27</sup> Data about Migration Yorkshire and its activities outlined in this thesis have been collected through the partnership's website: <http://www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk/> accessed on 04.04.2014.

influx of Polish people to the UK. There are a number of Polish governmental and non-governmental organisations that engage with combating discrimination and assist in the development of relevant policies as well as equality legislation. The Polish Association for Legal Intervention and the Polish Society of Anti-Discrimination Law, for instance, both engaging law practitioners, policy experts, activists and academics, are particularly influential in the field of promoting and improving anti-discrimination laws in Poland. Similarly, the Polish Institute of Public Affairs appear to have a 'real' impact on how the policies on migration and living with difference are developed and delivered. Finally, there is a number of human rights NGOs such as Citizens for Democracy, the Campaign Against Homophobia or *Feminoteka* (a feminist organisation) which are renowned for their work in promoting inclusion and diversity. Whilst the social work these organisations do is invaluable, in the near future they may need to nuance and extend their activities in order to address the issue of trans-nationalisation of prejudice.

#### **9.4 Future directions**

While this research contributes to some key debates in geography and social sciences, it also pinpoints a few significant areas which, I believe, require further insights. Language, and verbal expression of values and attitudes in particular, is one such an area. In their recent review article, Collins and Clement (2012: 14) claim that "language is the primary means through which prejudice can be explicitly or implicitly communicated and is, therefore, a major contributor to its transmission and maintenance". Yet, the authors continue, it tends to be neglected in the studies of prejudice. Although in this thesis I have acknowledged its role in expressing and passing on negative and positive attitudes, more research into situated (and not only migrant) production of language of difference is needed to better understand how it assists and perhaps advances transnational proliferation of prejudiced attitudes. We still do not know, for example, why some people employ racist rhetoric and/or language of stigma in positive contexts (e.g. when they recall what they view as positive encounter or reflect on their favourable, not to say warm, feelings towards difference). We still do not quite understand to what extent equality legislation may shape language of respect and produce actual respectful attitudes.

Alongside verbal language, another area that warrants further studies is the non-verbal articulation and circulation of values and attitudes. In the thesis, I have drawn attention to a few instances when some of my informants would disclose their prejudice through, for example, their body language. Given that values and attitudes are conveyed not only verbally, but also through behaviour and practice (e.g. Valentine et al. 2012), this is likely to be a crucial aspect of production and proliferation of prejudice. Similarly to the case of (verbal) language, however, it remains largely underexplored.

In this thesis, I have looked into what is likely to happen to people's values and attitudes towards difference when they move abroad or have a migrant significant other. I have explored the issue in the context of mobility between Poland and the UK, a postcommunist and a postcolonial state. Understanding such processes is crucial given the unprecedented nature of East-West migration in Europe and its capacity to shape social relations. For this reason I hope that this research will contribute to the fields of geographies of encounter and migration by providing a nuanced analysis of migrant encounters as well as transnational circulation of ideas regarding difference.



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## Appendix 1: Research participants

\*interviewed together

No.	Pseudonym (migrant)	Moved to UK (post-2004)	Age	Gender (M/F)	Religion & Belief	Family status	Work status	Migration hist. pre-UK	Significant other (type, gender indicated or implied/approx. age)	No.
1	Piotr	2004	40	M	Non-practicing Catholic	Divorced (single)	Low-skilled	Yes	Zofia/sister/40s	1
2	Ela	2005	31	F	Buddhist	Divorced (PL partner)	Skilled	Yes	*Jan & Wiktoria/grandparents/80s	2-3
3	Lena	2005	29	F	Agnostic	Married to UK person	Temp. unempl.: High-skilled	No	Maria/mother/50s Ewa/F-friend/30s	4-5
4	Artur	2005	35	M	Practicing Catholic	Re-married to PL person	Skilled	No	none	
5	Iga	2005	30	F	Non-practicing Catholic	Married to PL person	Low-skilled	No	*Krystyna & Andrzej/parents/50s Ola/sister/20s	6-7-8
6	Filip	2005	28	M	Practicing Catholic	Married to PL person	Skilled	Yes	*Katarzyna & Wojciech/parents/50s	9-10
7	Julia	2006	27	F	Practicing Catholic	Non-UK/PL partner	Low- & High-skilled	No	Hanna/F-friend/20s Asia/F-friend/20s	11-12
8	Marek	2007	32	M	Agnostic	Married to PL person	High-skilled	Yes	Aga/sister/30s	13
9	Magda	2007	28	F	Practicing Catholic	Married to non-UK/PL person	Student (post-gr)	No	Zuza/sister/20s	14
10	Tomek	2007	26	M	Atheist	Single	Student (post-gr)	No	Pawel/uncle/40s Kacper/M-friend/20s	15-16
11	Irena	2008	51	F	Non-practicing Catholic	Divorced (PL partner)	Low-skilled	No	none	
12	Natalia	2009	21	F	Practicing Catholic	Single	Student	No	Barbara/mother/50s Alina/sister/20s	17-18
13	Dorota	2009	28	F	Practicing Catholic	Non-UK/PL partner	Student (post-gr)	Yes	none	
14	Maja	2011	21	F	Non-practicing two-faith	Single	Student	No	Radosław/father/50s	19



## Appendix 2: Research Leaflet

### CONTACT DETAILS

Main Researcher:

Anna Gawlewicz

PhD Candidate

University of Leeds

Email: [gyakg@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:gyakg@leeds.ac.uk)

Tel: +44 (0 in UK) 113343 3345



If you want verification of my identity  
please contact:

Professor Gill Valentine

Email: [g.valentine@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:g.valentine@leeds.ac.uk)

Tel: + 44 (0 in UK) 113 343 3396

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This PhD project is an integral part of the European Research Council funded research programme called LIVEDIFFERENCE - *Living with difference in Europe: making communities out of strangers in an era of super-mobility and super-diversity.*

You may find extra information online:

<http://www.geog.leeds.ac.uk/projects/livedifference/index.html>

## MOBILITY AND ENCOUNTERS

### WITH DIFFERENCE:

The Impact of Migrant Experience  
on the Circulation of Values and  
Attitudes

## Information for participants



European  
Research  
Council



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

**This leaflet tells you about the research study “Mobility and Encounters with Difference: The Impact of Migrant Experience on the Circulation of Values and Attitudes”. Should you be interested in more information, please contact Anna Gawlewicz, the main researcher. The details are available overleaf.**

### **What is this research about?**

It is estimated that there might be round half a million Poles in the UK which makes the Polish community one of the most significant new national minorities in Britain. This PhD project is part of a broader research programme funded by the European Research Council. It explores values and attitudes towards difference understood in terms of ethnicity, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation or social status. Within this research I am interested in Polish migrants in Leeds and their encounters with social diversity. I also want to investigate how these encounters possibly influence them as well as their families or friends who live in Poland.

### **What would taking part in this study involve?**

I would like to invite you to participate in two interviews and keep an audio-diary for me. If possible, I would also like to conduct a single interview with two adult people living in Poland whom you consider very significant - e.g. family members or friends.

The interviews with you will involve me coming to your home or to a place of your choosing. Each interview will take around one/two hour(s) and with your permission, I would like to record it. You do not need to prepare for the interviews and I expect that they will run like a normal conversation.

The interviews can be conducted in either Polish or English and will have the following form:

- In the first interview I will be asking about your life history and migration history. Additionally, I would like to discuss about your background and the people who influenced and shaped your values.
- Then, I will supply you with a dictaphone and ask you to describe your encounters with difference in a form of an audio-diary. This is expected to take around a week and can be done in either Polish or English.
- Afterwards, I will interview you again to explore what you think about people different from yourself.
- Next, I want to find out how views are shared or dispatched within family or friendship networks. In order to do that I would like to interview two of the most significant adult persons in your life who live in Poland. If possible, I would conduct these interviews whenever and wherever convenient for them. I will meet with each person only once. This interview is meant to be conducted in Polish.

Every time that you meet with the interviewer, there will be a chance to ask any questions you have about the research and your participation.

### **What will happen to the information I provide?**

All data collected will be used for research purposes only and shared exclusively by the research team. Your identity will be carefully protected. All names and information that is particular to you or your family will be kept secret so that you cannot be identified. Participant anonymity will be also maintained in presentations or publications about the study. In addition, any information released during interviews will never be discussed with other family members or friends who will participate in the research. Furthermore, I will not divulge

anything about any informants to their relatives and friends who will take part in the study.

### **Why should I do this?**

The findings from the study will be used to inform academic debates and European policies about diversity and equality. Therefore, you will have a say in a larger discussion. You may also contribute to the identification of various problems following the act of migration and adaptation to the new society. In the long run, your participation might result in an increase in the social awareness of the experiences new migrants in the UK and encourage positive attitudes towards them.

### **Do I have to take part?**

Your participation (as well as participation of the members of your family and friends) is entirely voluntary. Even if you decide to take part, you do not have to answer any questions that you feel uncomfortable with and you may request that recorders are switched off at any time. If you experience personal difficulties during the study, you can contact me, and if you need to leave the study you are free to do so at any time.

### **What do I do now?**

If you would like to take part in the research please contact Anna Gawlewicz, the main researcher (details on the back side).

**Thank you for your help!**



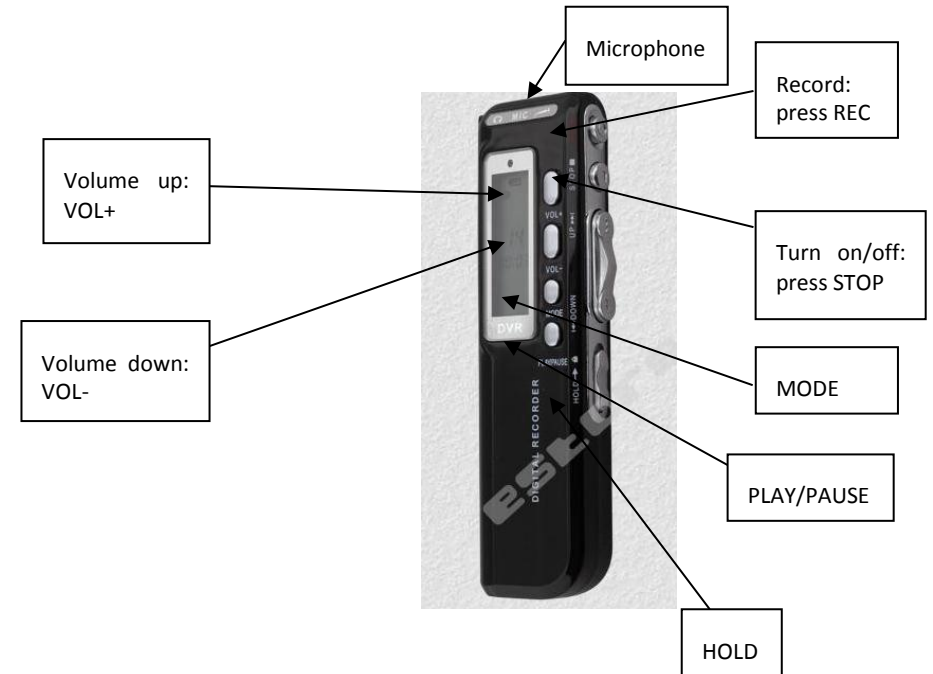
## Appendix 3: Audio-diary Leaflet

### AUDIO-DIARIES: How to do this?

- 1) Record your thoughts when you find it convenient. You don't have to do it at fixed times. You can choose when and where you do the recordings.
- 2) You are free to do as many recordings per day as you want. Likewise, if nothing comes to your mind, have a break and then do recordings another day.
- 3) Speak about your day-to-day encounters with difference. Avoid general statements. Rather speak about particular events and the emotions, feelings or opinions evoked by them. Your recordings can be very short (e.g. a few sentences) or longer (e.g. a simple story).
- 4) Think about *people different than yourself* => difference in terms of: ethnicity, nationality, social class/background, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability or any other difference you can think of.

You may find the following questions useful:

- Did you, during the day, personally interact with somebody different from yourself? When? Where? How did it look like? How did you feel? Was it a pleasant, neutral or unpleasant experience? Why?
- Did you, during the day, witness an incident involving somebody "different"? How did you feel? What did you do? Did you challenge somebody's opinion about different people?
- Did something happen or was discussed - in your home, workplace, school, neighbourhood, social setting which was related to people different to yourself? Why did it catch your attention? What did/do you think about incident or discussion?
- Did somebody tell you a story about an event involving "different" people and you felt you had an opinion or some feelings about that? What did you think? What were your feelings?
- Did you learn from the media about some news involving people different from yourself and you had an opinion or some feelings about that? What did you think? What were your feelings?



**Turning on:** Press PLAY for about 2 seconds.

**Recording:** Press REC. Wait for the red light. Red light means that your voice is being recorded. Keep the Dictaphone (microphone) close to your mouth. After finishing recording press STOP.

**Listening to recording:** Press PLAY.

**Deleting recording:** Make sure that the Dictaphone is in DVR mode (see small icon in the left upper corner of the screen). Press MODE for about 2 seconds and then press PLAY.

**Turning off:** Press STOP for about 2 seconds.

**Blocking the device:** Move HOLD upwards. Move HOLD downwards for unblocking.



# Appendix 4: Consent Form

European Research Council



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

## MOBILITY AND ENCOUNTERS WITH DIFFERENCE: The Impact of Migrant Experience on the Circulation of Values and Attitudes

### Research Consent Form

*Please initial box:*

1. I have read and understand the information sheets about the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I was informed and I am fully aware that this study is a part of a research programme LIVEDIFFERENCE “Living with Difference in Europe: making communities out of strangers in an era of super mobility and super diversity” funded by the European Research Council.
3. I agree to be interviewed, and for this interview to be digitally recorded and be typed up as an anonymized transcript.
4. I give permission for my interview to be used for research purposes and I give copyright permission for anonymized quotations from my interview to be used in the research reports and publications.
5. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw without penalty at any time without giving any reason.
6. I understand that no information I disclose during the research is ever discussed with my family members or friends who also partake in the study. I am aware the researcher will not divulge to me any information my family members or friends revealed during the research.
7. I understand that I might be contacted again by the researcher and asked to consent to take part in further interviews/research activities.

_____	_____	_____
Participant's Name	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Researcher's Name	Date	Signature

If you have any questions about this research, please contact the main researcher Anna Gawlewicz at [gyakg@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:gyakg@leeds.ac.uk) or by phone +44 (0 in UK) 113343 3345. For other inquiries contact LIVEDIFFERENCE Principal Investigator Professor Gill Valentine at [g.valentine@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:g.valentine@leeds.ac.uk) or by phone: 0113 343 3396