

# TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES OF POLISH MIGRANT MOTHERS PARENTING IN GREAT BRITAIN

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The paper discusses educational strategies of Polish migrant mothers parenting in the United Kingdom. The main argument concerns a growing need for examining the diversity and heterogeneity of the Polish migrant parents, particularly evident in the educational choices they make for children growing up abroad. The findings stem from a doctoral research project, supplemented by the data from the *Polish schooling in UK – tradition and modernity* study. Qualitative methodological approaches of both projects relied on conducting interviews. The topic of educational choices is anchored in the discussion of three models of motherhood, which seemingly distinguish the approaches to Polish supplementary schooling, as well as highlight inherent differences and conflicts within the views pertinent to local (English or Welsh) schooling that the parents share. The focus is placed on parental reasons for children's participation in Polish education, further elaborating on the motivations of the parents who do not take up this form of learning. The paper pinpoints a transnational character of the educational choices, linking them to the debates on social and educational capital of migrants. Finally, it puts forward a claim that there is a tendency among Polish parents to somewhat overburden their children with multiple educational pathways.

**Keywords:** Education, Migration, Polish families, educational capital, Saturday schools

## INTRODUCTION

Recent developments within the migration scholarship debates have led to considerable attention dedicated to specific intersections of several dimensions of mobility (e.g. King, Vullnetari 2009, Chow et al. 2011, Bürkner 2012). The questions pertaining to the education of migrant children abroad are located at

one of such theoretical and empirical junctions, as educational choices of migrant parents can be a mirror into broader ideologies and strategies of mobility and settlement (Kirova 2007, Heckmann 2008). They further highlight developments of migrants' social and educational capital (Erel 2012, Goulbourne et al. 2010), as well as point to the newly observable modifications of parenting strategies. In this paper, **the educational choices of Polish migrant mothers in the United Kingdom** take centre stage.

There is little doubt that the argumentation on the topic of migrant children's education should rely on research with migrant women: as primary care providers and decision-makers within families, it is the mothers who directly determine children's educational outcomes (e.g. Erel 2009, Citlak et al. 2009, Pratt 2012, Arzubiaga et al. 2009, Vasquez 2010). This is especially valid in the Polish context, wherein a cultural norm of maternal responsibility for children's wellbeing, "appropriate" upbringing and overall life success continues to dominate both social discourses on parenting, and the pragmatic choices and strategies of child-rearing (e.g. Titkow 2007, 2012, Hryciuk, Korolczuk 2012). Polish migrant mothers are no exception in trying to comply with the pressures of being "a good mother" and, in the much more challenging situations of international mobility, they strive to be "good migrant mothers" (see e.g. Muszel 2013, Pustulka 2014, 2016, Lopez Rodriguez 2010). What is less commonly researched, however, is the fact that Polish migrants abroad constitute a conglomerate of very much differing social groups, varied across intersectional dimensions that impact their paths. To just name a few categories of difference, one needs to account for educational and occupational status (social class), place of residence, gender, religion and religiosity, family situation, as well as duration of a migrant's stay abroad (e.g. Ryan et al. 2008, Trevena 2011). With the increasing levels of heterogeneity, it stands to reason that what people consider being "a good parent" will substantially vary. Consequently, the example of educational choices and strategies demonstrates the relationship between diversity and mothering in a transnational space. In effect, the paper asks **how Polish migrant mothers in the UK differ from one another in terms of their educational capital and the resulting evaluations of foreign (local) schooling**. Moreover, it also seeks to extend the discussion on parental evaluations to supplementary schooling as a form of transnational educational practice. The questions are therefore linked to **whether all migrant mothers agree that Saturday school is beneficial and necessary for their children**. The nuanced perspective goes one step further in also trying to explain what kind of supplementary school mothers have in mind when they decide to take-up this type of extracurricular activity for the young generations of Poles abroad.

## FROM GLOBAL MIGRANT EDUCATION TO POLISH SCHOOLING IN THE UK

The issues surrounding accommodation, experiences and outcomes of im/migrant children have been often underscored as a globally pivotal phenomenon. This is due to the immediate impact of migrant children on the native population's schools and communities, as well as the *longue durée* policy view on the consequences of the influx. As a result, certain efforts have been made towards measuring opportunities and outcomes for migrant children of the second and later generations (e.g. Azurbiaga et al. 2009, Adams, Kirova 2007). Conversely, since the situation of children is largely marked by the premigration status of their parents, their post-migration life-pathways can greatly diverge (Azurbiaga et al. *ibid.*: 247). Thus, an application of the so called "blanket terms" like 'migrant children' is said to conceal rather than unpack the specifics and complexities of intergenerational negotiations surrounding educational choices in migrant families (Portes, Rivas 2011). This is quite evident in the US-American context, whereas standardized indicators on migrants faring better at each generation in fact obscure the social inequalities and racialization of educational capital, averaging between high-achieving Asian-American children of highly-skilled highly-educated professional parents, vis-à-vis the newcomers from Mexico and Latinos more broadly, for whom reproduction of low educational capital and social marginalization is often the case (*ibid.*, Byun, Park 2012, Kao, Thompson 2003, Ream, Rumberger 2008, Valdés 2001). In that sense, it is important to take note of how the matrix of ethnicity and class influences children's outcomes.

Nevertheless, children's schooling remains one of the most powerful institutional and organizational vehicles for integration with the host society (Devine 2005, 2009, Heckmann 2008, Goulbourne et al. 2010) and it is through schools that socialization of migrant children to the values and norms of the destination societies takes place. Positive educational messages directed at migrant children should therefore originate from schools as the first institutions where migrant parents and children encounter new society's practices, and develop their responses to the receiving country's policies (Heckmann 2008, Adams, Kirova 2007, Citlak et al. 2008, Devine 2005, Portes, Rivas 2011, Ream, Rumberger 2008, D'Angelo, Ryan 2011, Goulbourne et al. 2010).

As argued by Portes and Rivas, "[u]nlike adult immigrants, who are born and educated in a foreign society and whose out-look and plans are indelibly marked by that experience, the children of immigrants commonly become full-fledged members of the host society with outlooks and plans of their own" (2011: 220). At the same time, it is parents – and particularly mothers, as demonstrated in

the studies by, among others, Vasquez (2010), Erel (2009), Reynolds (2010), and Pratt (2012), that have tremendous decision-making power regarding children's education. A model of educational capital developed by Howard and colleagues speaks to its enlacing with parenting style. Here the levels of parental engagement with school, as well as reinforcing and communicating parental outlook on education as a value for children (or lack thereof), have been noted as leading predicates for the ensuing increasing or decreasing educational aspirations and attainment of children (1996: 142–144). This is especially valid as far as practical investment of family resources into schooling and the views on education as a form of capital are concerned. Recalling classic social capital conceptualizations, Ryan et al. (2007: 675) reminds that Putman specifically stated that social capital is “negatively correlated with migration” (2007: 156, cited in Ryan et al. 2004: 675) and that Colman argued that mobility can potentially be a destructive force for said capital. Furthermore, as “varying levels of available cultural and social capital differentially enable parents to influence their children's educational desires” (Howard et al. 1996: 146), it is crucial to look at said capital of migrants, both in regards to its transferability from abroad (Erel 2012) and the aforementioned inner-differentiation alongside the social class axis within a migrant community.

Honing on the context of Polish migrant children's education and capital, significant research contributions have been recently made in the UK and beyond. Background statistical information from DCSF School Census<sup>1</sup> has already demonstrated in 2008 that at least 26840 students of primary and middle schools declared Polish as their first language, corresponding to 0.4% of an entire student population and 3.3% among all children whose first language was not English (DCSF 2008, Prasałowicz et al. 2013, Ryan et al. 2008). More recent data for 2012 have spotlighted this trend with 53 915 students with Polish as mother-tongue at doubled rate of 0.8% for the entire student body (DCSF 2013). In London itself, 16 475 Polish children frequented English schools in 2011 (Lasocka 2011) and it was further estimated that almost 25% among them (4070) also attend Polish Saturday schools (Prasałowicz et al. 2013: 26–27).

Accordingly, the position and visibility of women and children's experiences have increased, and a recent reframing has moved away from describing migrations as chaotic or unplanned, with Ryan and Sales noting that “the education of children emerged as a significant determinant of family migration decisions, with children's age crucial in affecting the choice about whether to move” among Poles (2013: 93). Similarly, Trevena et al. (2016) concluded in

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<sup>1</sup> DCSF (Department for Children, Schools and Families) collects school survey data on local and national level. Since 2008 Polish is being tracked among the languages used by pupils.

their study on parents' school strategies that "Polish parents coming to the UK typically do so *for the sake of the children* and believe *a better life* for them can be achieved through education". This was reiterated in the fact that Polish parents approach education abroad with increasing compliance to the local norms (Lopez Rodriguez 2010, Ślusarczyk, Pustułka 2016).

However, while the intra-European context of the Polish mobility to Britain may suggest encountering largely compliant and EU-regularized educational systems across the three EU member-states, the reality is marked by structural differences (Horner et al. 2007) and poses demands for constant renegotiations of family strategies of settlement and return. In this realm, the unprecedented mass-influx of A8 migrants, among which Poles are the largest group, has exerted pressure on schools to not only accommodate pupils, but also to provide English language support systems (Moskal 2010). Evidently, initial experiences of Poles in London and beyond have shown that children's abilities and capacities were commonly misjudged (Ryan et al. 2008), while parental initial unfamiliarity with the systemic differences might have had a negative effect on the future outcomes (Trevena et al. 2016). On a similar note for Ireland, Kosmalska has noted that the local society was rather difficult to integrate with, and a high degree of segregation is present in schools of certain districts, given that in some places even 60% of children are non-native and religion remains a criterion on school applications (2012: 130–132). Both researchers and migrant communities are increasingly aware of the differences and a need for providing information for all parties concerned, as demonstrated by the efforts into producing guidelines for parents and teachers on the practical approaches, initially in English and later on in the Polish language (e.g. Sales et al. 2010).

Some areas of maternal and migrant capital are, however, still understudied. One exception drawing on Bourdieu's work, stems from Ryan et al.'s application of the notions of capital to their study of Polish migrants in London. They stated that "migrants' ability to mobilize social capital and successfully engage in bridging may [...] depend upon the cultural capital (language, skills and educational qualifications) at their disposal. (2004: 677) and, furthermore, "people from the same ethnic group may have differential access to these forms of bridging capital" (Ryan 2004: 676). They illustrate this phenomenon with examples of differentiation between low-skilled labour migrants and professionally mobile Polish women, concluding that while engaging in children's schooling facilitated development of networks and social capital for low-skilled Polish women formerly bound primarily to their co-ethnic milieus the already aligned social capital of professionals resulted in an instantaneous formation of cross-ethnic and class-orientated networks through schools, with 'Polish' networks absent (Ryan et al.

2004: 682–683). This finding remains relevant for examining involvement with Polish supplementary schools as sites of capital bonding.

To conclude with some notes on the latter topic of Saturday school, the fact remains that educational entities constitute the largest and fastest-growing type of structures present in the associational landscape of Polish migrant organizations in the UK (Lacroix 2011: 14–16). With long and worldwide tradition of supporting Polish migrants abroad in their general mission of fostering national identity constructions and espousing social networks of Poles abroad, today's landscape of Polish schools in UK is visibly changing in response to post-accession migration challenges and a majority of them falls under a category of “schools which aim to maintain the cultural and/or language traditions of a particular community”, as defined and examined by Mayrol et al. (2010: 27). There is currently over 130 schools in operation (Lasocka 2011), and they are increasingly diverse in terms of legal status, curriculum, selection of textbooks and materials, offers for different age groups, as well as scheduling, length and types of classes available (Praszałowicz et al. 2013). As the schools' connection to the centralized umbrella organization of the Polish Educational Society (Polska Macierz Szkolna) varies (Lacroix 2011), it is conceivable that schools primarily respond to the locally contextualized needs of migrants in a particular area and are dependent on the capital and engagement on their constituency's side. Volunteering academic personnel is not only responsible for curricular choices, but also plays a vital role in shaping ideology that guides their local educational entity, with examples of religious education (inherently present or purposefully absent from various schools), and inclusiveness towards *all* children rather than selecting only new/old migrants, fluent in Polish or learners of a second language (Praszałowicz et al. 2013). Catering to such needs continues to pose challenges for all of those involved, and as schools continue to demonstrate minimum levels of transnational engagement in a form of beyond-diaspora orientations and activities (Lacroix 2011), they have to be revisited.

## METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

The paper draws on my doctoral research – a qualitative cross-nationally comparative project on Polish mothering abroad, using the empirical data from narrative interviews and participant observation<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, selected data

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<sup>2</sup> My doctoral dissertation “Polish mothers on the move – gendering parenting experiences of Poles raising children in Germany and the UK” is supervised by Professor Howard Davis at Bangor University and due for submission in late 2013. The research was funded by Bangor

from the *Polish schooling for all of those involved, and as – tradition and modernity*<sup>3</sup> is also presented.

While my PhD dissertation compares female experiences between Poland, Germany and the UK, the scope of this paper limits the discussion UK, primarily for the reasons of the Polish supplementary schooling being a growing phenomenon in the destination. Therefore, the core empirical material entails 16 narrative interviews (a combination of semi-structured and biographic method) conducted in the UK in 2010 and 2012. The women were encouraged to share details about their own educational experiences, as well as those of their children. They commonly reiterated their beliefs in the possibilities for a better and English-language education for their children as a factor featured in their migratory decisions and future plans. Further probing involved direct questions on the experiences with local schools, the process of signing children up for schools, as well as engagement with supplementary schooling (with reasons “for” and “against” such a form of education being revealed).

The interviews were meticulously transcribed and analysed with the use of open-coding, as well as categorical cross-comparative and case-by-case analysis. Supporting ethnographic material includes notes from participant observation at Polish playgroups, mothers’ meetings and Saturday schools.

With regards to respondents’ demographics, the group comprises women aged 31 years on average, mothers of 2 children (mean) and the group’s fertility rate of 1.73. Children’s ages ranged between 0 and 18, with the 8.9 average. The average length of migration was just over 6 years at the time of the interview, with as many as 12 women arriving in the first two years after May 2004, thus constituting the initial wave of the so called *euromigrants*. They further represented a significant diversity in terms of social class and occupational status in the UK, as reiterated also in the later arguments put forward in this paper.

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University’s 125th Anniversary Research Scholarship (2010–2013), and supported by a short-term visiting scholar grant from DAAD awarded in 2011.

<sup>3</sup> “Polish schooling in the UK: tradition and modernity” project was financed by Polish Ministry for Foreign Affairs and completed in 2012 by Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences in cooperation with the Jagiellonian University. I have been involved in this project in Research Assistant capacity. The project data was collected primarily via semi-structured interviews with various stakeholders; used here are the interviews with parents.

## FINDINGS: LINKING CAPITAL, MOTHERING STRATEGY AND EDUCATIONAL CHOICES

One undertaking of this work is to showcase the irrevocability of the connection between a strategy that a mother effectuates in her parenting, and the educational choices she makes for her children. Those are seen equally illustrative and applicable to broader family orientation and social capital (see also: Erel 2012, Howard et al. 1996). The article reflects on the three ideal-type models of motherhood and mothering, specifically tying them to mothers' capital and migrant practices<sup>4</sup>. The three main models used for categorizing the educational strategies and choices entail (1) a translocally-oriented Mother-Pole (*Matka Polka*), (2) a cosmopolitan Intensive motherhood, and (3) a hybrid strategy of New Migrant Mothers. The following paragraphs supply details on the entanglement between capital, mothering strategy and educational choices abroad for each of the category/ideal type.

### 'MOTHER-POLES' TRANSLOCALIZING EDUCATION

Conversations with migrated 'Mother-Poles' highlight the 'managerial matriarchy' (Titkow 2007, 2012) of the parenting style that these women execute in their lives abroad. This group of women is characterized by being very specific and vocal about making the 'right' decision in maintaining the core 'Polishness' of their children, yet also not implementing any forms of non-Polish practices and resisting integration with the local community.

The educational choices made by Mother-Poles in the UK are often reinforced by their religious beliefs and a strong norm of Polish Catholicism permeating family life. Convinced of their mission as Polish mothers and patriots, oftentimes abandoned by their partners in their efforts towards transferring heritage and Polish culture (Titkow 2008, see also: Vasquez 2010), Mother-Poles do not hold British schools in high esteem, often stating that the Polish system is much better, voicing critiques of the teaching methods and curricular content:

*“Learning in English is good but they do teach them a lot of unnecessary things – global history, well, I don't know, it does not show much respect that they have for their own history, right? [...] Here in Wales [it] is even more complicated*

<sup>4</sup> While a presentation of the education-related data provides a focus, the full list of mothering characteristics examined in the doctoral thesis is much more extensive and considers twelve areas of differences, such as labour market, religion & religiosity, gender orders, belonging & ethnicity etc.



*and they seem to confuse the children even more [...], the sense of identity is often lost for this weird diversity politics that do not work. At least Catholic schools in the area are good”*

More so than mothers in other groups, they are reminiscent of the respondents’ narratives recounted by Ryan’s and D’Angelo (2011: 244–254) in the fact that they struggle with being ‘a minority’ and understanding or accommodating diversity. They are in constant (mental or actual) conflict with the local values, which they deem dangerous and delinquent, as per a quotation below:

*“I don’t want them [children] to mix up with the locals, they’re bad influence, they should be with children **like them** – not some Muslims who do not belong here [sic]. [...] and I wish there were full-time normal Polish schools here – there are enough of us to do this. I wish they had the same proper education that children in Poland get”*

Mother-Poles choose to orientate themselves and their children towards the country of origin, subjecting educational choices to a judgement of their perceived value in Poland rather than in the receiving country. Beata, a 38-year-old chef and a mother of a teenage girl, who both arrived in UK in 2004, goes to extremes in demonstrating that her daughter is Polish (and just lives in Britain “temporarily”). She not only assured me that all of her daughter’s friends are Polish, but also downplayed the fact that her daughter has problems with her British school by saying that it is not important since she does not need a diploma from here and adamantly arguing that her main education will be in Poland.

*“It’s important to have an education but I don’t think my daughter has much interest in college and those kinds of things. [...] They get discouraged here by all these projects that you have to do that require reading newspapers and watching news on TV – this is very boring for me, not to mention teenagers! And it’s very hard to figure out what’s important to know – in Poland it was quite clear what you have to learn, and here it is all very broad – I think he should know the facts – history dates, how many lungs a person has but she still gets bad grades [...] Maybe she goes to a private university back in Poland because everyone can get in there”*

The primary goal of Mother-Poles is to prepare children for an ultimate return to the home country. Matylda’s two sons, aged 10 and 8, for instance, have already been attending Polish Saturday School in their town of residence for 5 and 3 years respectively. However, she still does not feel that this is enough

to ensure educational transition and, as right as she might be, the intensity of extra schoolwork she imposes on her children needs to be noted:

*We spend weekends and holidays on translating the exercises they do in their English school into Polish and we go over Polish textbooks assigned to their current age or division chapter by chapter [...] I want my children to have Catholic friends, I just need these children to be Polish [...and] at Christmas it should be about God and not the commercialization [komercha – a pejorative term describing consumerist focus was used – PP] you see here [...] We will be going back to Poland soon*

At the same time, between Matylda's low-skilled work in a warehouse, her husband's recent unemployment, and significant debts still needing to be paid back in Poland, this optimistic prospect of a fast-approaching return to the homeland does not seem particularly likely.

Vast proponents of Polish Saturday schools as facilitators for maintaining cultural belonging, national culture and heritage, Mother-Poles are vocal about "bad parents who cannot be bothered" to preserve their children's national identity and skip Polish school. Agata, who should be commended for commuting for over an hour to bring her children to the closest Polish supplementary school, has even equated participating in Polish schooling with patriotism, at one point referring to those who do not value their Polish heritage (as in: speak English at home, allow children to become English, do not engage with the diaspora) as 'traitors'. Conversely, the importance of Catholic religion and inherent connection between Polish schooling and parish activities has been almost univocal.

Mother-Poles effectuate translocal lives marked by a clear preference for Polish ethnic enclaves abroad and Polish educational system. Such attitudes should not only be delineated for the betterment of understanding of the heterogeneity among the Poles abroad, but also as a potential site for intra-ethnic conflicts. Those have already arisen in the schools when Mother-Poles clashed with other migrant mothers from Poland. Keeping in mind that Mother-Poles strongly believe in Polish schooling abroad, the examples particularly pertinent to this group include two areas identified in several stories from various stakeholders<sup>5</sup>:

1. Insufficient/broken/inexistent relationship between a given Saturday school and a parish has prompted mothers to challenge or abandon Polish schooling

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<sup>5</sup> I am here referring to both recorded and informal conversations and observations that have taken place during "Polish schooling in UK – tradition and modernity" project. The people in different roles (teachers, parents, headmistresses) have either hinted at or openly recounted these situations and problems, both in specific cases and as general tendencies.

for either ideological or practical reasons (i.e. wishing to connect education with preparation for holy sacraments);

2. “Too much diversity” – mothers could not handle the growing numbers of children from mixed-marriages (also biracial), who according to them lacked language skills, were perceived as disruptive in the classroom (i.e. encouraging the unwelcome usage of English in the Polish schools); the action taken focused on ‘removing’ such children from school and obviously had adverse effects on women representing different views.

Thus, while Polish Schools may be advertised as facilitating integration with a receiving society (Lasocka 2011), this was not the case among Mother-Poles.

#### INTENSIVE MOTHERING AND GENERALLY EXCESSIVE EDUCATION

A basic definition of Intensive mothering states that mothering is a laborious, emotionally trying and costly task that demands constant provision of 24/7 care and attention from mothers, centralizing children as key players in families and societies (Hays 1996). At the very core of this model, the extensive and intensive practices involved are evidently applicable to educational choices, often viewed as investments into capital-building potential and future payoffs (Erel 2009, 2012). Unlike Mother-Poles, Intensive mothers tend to gravitate more towards the local schooling, ensuring that their children are well-adapted and doing well in the system that will most likely determine their future paths. Those choices are concurrent with their own educational capital and occupational status of successful professionals in the West, showing similarities with highly-skilled mothers worldwide, who use ‘English language fluency’ and ‘British education’ as means to satisfy their ‘cosmopolitan strivings’, not only in their instrumental sense but primarily in redefining their pan-national and class belonging (Park & Abelmann 2004: 667, Erel 2012). Children’s skills in Polish are contextualized as one of the many elements within “global education” that Intensive mothers desire for their children, sometimes losing to other possibilities that are seen as ‘more appropriate’:

*“My husband was not particularly open to this idea of them going to [a Polish] school and I am not sure if I can win with him next year when they are old enough to sign up for a sailing school for children, his dream hobby for them [...] As for now they are attending the school and are having much fun at it; I can see it gives them [a lot], that they can speak to other children in Polish, this is completely different from talking to us –adults, a different language [...] I will see what to do later, one thing is clear that I will take them from the school if some*

*religious messages [in original: “tony maryjne” suggesting a negative outlook on the presence of catholic/national element in educational contents] prevail”*

While her two children currently attend a Polish Saturday School, Kamila has demands for a specific type of school that is ‘modern’, which in her view entails disassociation from religion. As can be expected, the school-leavers and those who decided against Saturday schools in the first place largely belong to the Intensive mothers’ category. Lena’s daughter, for instance, has been attending a school in their earlier place of residence for one year but a combination of factors has led the mother to cease her involvement in Polish schooling. Lena was unhappy with the patriotic and heroic narrative of sacrifice, underscoring elements related to historical suffering of the Poles in exile presented in a very expressive form and offered even to the youngest children. She further noted her disappointment with fellow Polish parents, who appeared to be more interested in shaming the British social welfare system than in their children, also mentioning being appalled with their racist remarks towards other immigrants and the local society. With tolerance and diversity named among the key values that Lena wishes to imprint on her children, it is no surprise that her vision of Polish school differed from the one that the institution she happened to encounter had shown to her. Still, the family continues speaking Polish at home and the parents invest time in teaching their children to read and write in the language, in line with the motivation of “bilingualism as a form of capital for life”. However, the focus on multicultural values and a carefully considered type of a particular and British educational pathway, for which the parents agreed on to change jobs and move house, has taken priority.

It is not that Intensive mothers are against Polish Saturday schooling *per se*, but they often do not see value in peer relationships that those environments foster, arguing that contacts with peers from around the world is sufficient (if not more beneficial). Such views were expressed by Basia, a graphic-designer living in Wales and a mother of two daughters aged 8 and 5, who also acknowledged that there was enough to do over the weekends in their international circle of friends and professional acquaintances (quite telling examples of the activities included trips to a sea world and aquarium, hopping over to Ireland for a sightseeing weekend, art classes from accomplished artists, etc.). Nevertheless, she talked about home-schooling her daughters and ensuring that they can read and write in Polish, encouraging them by obtaining the best of the Polish children’s books and using digital media. In addition, Basia envisions certification examinations in Polish as part of her daughters’ academic curriculum. Other Intensive mothers had similar views, illuminated in strategies of registering in

Polish internet school, hiring GCSE/ A-level Polish<sup>6</sup> tutors or signing children up for language-exam preparatory courses.

In the cosmopolitan lifestyles of migration seen as a way of making the life (for oneself and one's children) easier (rather than means of survival, as in the case of Mother-Poles), there is generally no place for Polish school built on values strongly linked with Catholicism. Beyond-national European and middle-class values of women in this group led them to question Polish Saturday school as an inadequate educational choice, particularly when, compared to other parents, they were faced with a clear incompliance of their expectations towards the school.

#### NEW MIGRANT MOTHERHOOD – TOWARDS AN EDUCATIONAL BALANCE

A slight majority of the respondents have neither executed Intensive mothering nor relied on Mother-Pole in their parenting strategies. It was particularly visible in the discussions about education when women recalled struggles to 'marry', 'bridge' or 'connect' the two systems, understanding a need for facilitating the children's educational attainment and success in Britain while underscoring the vast range of strategies they attempted to ensure that their children accomplish basic literacy skills (reading, writing) and have a decent general comprehension in the Polish language. A hybridized strategy of balancing educational efforts between the two contexts of sending and receiving societies is therefore distinguishing the New Migrant Mothers.

As such, Ania, who works with newly arrived Polish women, recommends that parents cultivate their Polish roots while equally opening their social circles to integration, foreign acquaintances and practices. She said:

*"It is not good to exaggerate: I feel sad when I hear Polish people speaking broken English to their children in the street – one has to raise their awareness, educate them [...] On the other hand, our children live here, so they should feel well here, so overall I would like them to feel a part of the Polish community here in Britain, to engage with it"*

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<sup>6</sup> GCSE stands for General Certificate of Secondary Education, qualification exams recognized across the UK, normally sat by students aged 15–18 but open to anyone. It can be taken in over 45 subjects (Qualification and Curriculum Authority). In 2010, 4,000 students took the Polish exam, with 1500 pupils doing so in Polish Schols (Lasocka 2011). It is also possible to select Polish as a modern language for one's A-level exams at the end of secondary education (equivalent of the Polish "Matura"). The numbers have stabilized and 5018 students took Polish GCSEs in 2015.

Indeed, her children (aged 8 and 4 at the time of the interview), speak Polish without an accent. Although her younger child has been born in the UK, she first learned to read in Polish. Neither has it prevented her from being a star pupil in her English school, perfectly fluent in the language. Both children happily attend a Polish Saturday School but are said to be similarly comfortable in the activities they partake in from their English school's side, such as dancing and playing sports. Continuing on, Marta's story showcases New Migrant Motherhood in a different age-group context, as her now 16-year old arrived in Wales at the age of 9:

*"After just a year here my son was mistaken for a Welshman, I was very proud of him for managing to integrate as quickly, but, truth be told, I was also a little worried whether he would remember that he is also Polish [...] Now it is harder, he is almost a grown-up, but earlier he would spend every summer in Poland, cultivate friendships there, took classes at our local Community Centre"*

Marta elaborated that ensuring her son sees Poland as attractive was also tied with his future in Britain, as he has taken a GCSE exam in Polish. Furthermore, it is interesting that the mother herself narrates a dual identification she envisions for her son and this seems to be guiding her educational choices. She wants to keep the door open for potential university studies in Poland, although she underlined that it would have to be a top-ranked program taught in English. As a part-time teacher Marta encourages other migrant parents to speak their language at home, highlighting the financial payoff for buying certain high-quality educational materials (books, electronics) in the country of origin cheaper as a practical way for bringing general knowledge and learning Polish simultaneously. In fact Klara, another interview-partner has told me about doing just so when her daughter requested an expensive digital wall world map, which she bought for her during a stay in Poland, fulfilling the girl's wish but effectively making her learn new Polish vocabulary in a subject that interested her but was not taught in a Polish school at her level. In that sense, New Migrant Mothers are effectuating practices of capital's transnationalization described by Erel (2009, 2012).

For Amelia, who initially migrated to Germany with her German husband but has been living in the UK since the family moved there in 2008, Polish schooling is "a fight for Polishness of her [three] children", aged 13, 11 and 7, who all consistently rebel against this form of education. While her foreign spouse is said to be supportive, Amelia is very stressed about forcing her children to attend Polish Saturday School, constantly making adjustments, changing schools

and managing her own desired involvement with the school, catering to her children's wishes instead. While she has said: "This is important to me and I really want it to be important to them", when recounting her motivations, she also seemed to be at the end of her rope, mentioning that this school is her last attempt and a last resort. Luckily, this time around Amelia seems to have found a place which better suits the needs of her children who have lived and gone to school in Germany and Britain but had very limited contact with Polish language aside for the mother using it at home. Understandably, the language competence of her children (born abroad to a foreign father) is not up to par when compared to those pupils of similar ages who have spent most of their lives in Poland, migrating with their Polish parents only a few years earlier. This posed a problem in the two schools Amelia tried out earlier, where her children were simply lost with no staff member challenging the age-driven class division blind to the actual competency level.

All in all, New Migrant Mothers have successfully attempted balancing educational strategies towards destination locality and their Polish origin. Their children were always involved in obtaining or maintaining a set of literacy skills in Polish. When Polish Saturday School was either (geographically) unavailable or unable to fulfil particular needs of their children, mothers sought out alternatives. Children appeared to display high levels of success in their foreign schooling, with examples of winning competitions, memberships in sports teams and academically-orientated groups. In several cases, a successful admission to university education in Britain was noted. Resourcefulness of transnational New Migrant Mothers facilitates educational success abroad but maintains an option for children to connect with and benefit from their Polish heritage. They thus are likely to develop a bi-national orientation of being Polish and British in regards to language and culture (Mayrol et al. 2010).

## DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

This final section brings together the differences between maternal attitudes to schooling among Polish migrant mothers, as summarized below in Table 1.

In light of their migratory background paired with their position in the social structure and occupational status, Polish migrant parents are effectuating educational strategies towards their children in a beyond-border manner, with practices ranging from translocal, to transnational, to cosmopolitan. While Ryan (2007) suggested that "having children necessitates local practical support and seems to enable migrant women to access particular types of localized

Table 1.

## Migrant Mothers and Schooling (grid comparison)

	<b>Mother-Pole</b>	<b>Intensive Mother</b>	<b>New Migrant Mother</b>
<i>Educational strategies and the receiving country</i>	Limited value assigned to foreign education, often no understanding of the local system paired with unwillingness to learn; English language fluency among children seen as a potential benefit on the Polish labour market in the future	General “intensive” nature of educational practices, choices and investments, extensive focus on the destination country	Slight preference for the destination country, which is seen as the driving force behind higher educational attainment; understanding of the systemic differences cross-nationally
<i>Vision of the Polish schooling abroad/ Poland-focused educational strategies</i>	Vast support and acknowledgement of Polish schooling abroad Users of supplementary weekend Polish education, often broadening its scope through additional Polish- and Poland-focused educational activities. Polish school equated with Catholic school	Polish language treated as an additional element of ‘global’ education, an area of a relative easiness for building social/ academic capital. Ideals of a ‘modern’ Polish school disassociated from religion and nationalistic narratives; Home-schooling and certification often replaces Polish institutionalized/ supplementary education	Support of Polish schooling, often in an active form of volunteering, etc.; Ideals of a balance between traditional and modern school that is capable of including all migrant children. Polish school as a potential resource improving performance in a British school.
<i>Key Values</i>	Patriotism, national heritage, Catholic religion-associated values, superiority of ‘Polishness’ in various areas.	Beyond-national upper middle-class values, Europeanization, globality, (cosmopolitan) integration, diversity	Heritage and Integration, core middle-class values, traditional religiosity, bi-national focus
<i>General orientations in migration</i>	Translocalism; migration seen as sacrifice for the nation, unwelcome necessity	Cosmopolitanism; migration as an “easier” life for parents and children	Transnationalism, migration as life-improvement for children, might be less so for parents.



networks”, she further noted that not all migrants “become enmeshed in their neighbourhoods” abroad, and the here-presented findings support the claim for an inner-differentiation among post-UE accession migrants. It is no longer possible to look at migrant biographies from a singularly ethnic perspective (as in “a Polish migrant”), as interrelatedness between educational capital, social class and parenting strategies is evident.

It should be underlined that Polish female low-skilled worker abroad and Polish female professional migrant will neither be mobile nor mother in the same way. The differences extend beyond destination country character and pertain to the educational capital and social class from pre-migratory contexts, vastly determinant of parenting strategies and educational choices incited abroad. This further characterizes the main issues faced by Mother-Poles and their children, which stem from the generally low social and educational capital they possess. It might be hypothesized that the children raised in these families do not get opportunities that could allow them to be successful as the 1.5<sup>th</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> generation abroad. Instead, there is a possibility for a reproduction of limited educational achievement, especially if one considers the costs that pursuing university education in the UK entails. Linking the debates to heterogeneity of migrant population, a considerable risk for persistent social and educational inequalities among Polish households abroad needs to be noted. This especially applies to the often marginalized families of Mother-Poles who demonstrate low social capital and virtually no signs of capital bridging. Conversely, Intensive mothers select strategies that focus more on bridging capital – signing children up for activities that lead them closer to local populations, boost their networks and social popularity. In the British society, this strategy of “fitting in” and only benefiting from Polish competency as an additional form of educational capital, makes the women and children susceptible to rejecting the unsuitable supplementary education that does not mesh with their views. The issue at hand is, however, that children of Intensive mothers will clearly be more ready to jump in on the more prestigious educational pathways. In the future, these generations of migrants might enter the well-educated upper-middle-class sectors of the destination society. Finally, the New Migrant Mothers seem to be the most difficult category to make predictions for, especially since their class backgrounds are most diverse. The crucial period of children’s adolescence needs to be carefully observed if more deterministic and correlative arguments are to be made. Otherwise, it is equally possible for the educational strategies of balancing to either fail or succeed.

Undoubtedly, there is still an observable and continuous interest in Polish supplementary schooling among the recently migrated Polish parents, with

a potential of framing it beneficially for both Polishness and achieving certain necessary levels of integration with the host society. It is important to note that very few women among those interviewed have completely abandoned Polish education. While it is clear that English language is increasingly seen as an “ideological vehicle” with a value beyond its practical usage (Park & Abelmann 2004: 647) globally, “Polish” has a potential for being a localized form of ideology transmitter. The today-lacking mainstream British educational frameworks pushing towards intensifying teaching and learning of modern languages as obligatory and to a high standard (Lasocka 2011) may improve the standing of Polish as an important and commodifiable asset.

Conclusively, further research is needed, taking into account the specific variables of children’s age at migration, earlier competence, social class and habitus (parental engagement, interest and knowledge, aspirations: Maylor 2010), children with one foreign-born parent, with a view on the longer story of mobility, especially in the local context of Polish schools abroad as a type of ‘first-responders’ that may inform and determine educational strategies of Polish migrant families settled in the United Kingdom.

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