

Review of research literature on:  
"Parenting styles and childrearing practices  
among Poles: Historical and Contemporary  
Perspectives"

Report prepared in the framework of  
The Polish-Norwegian Research Project  
PAR Migration Navigator

Oleksandr Ryndyk  
Øystein Lund Johannessen

SIK report 2015:1



**Senter for interkulturell kommunikasjon**  
Centre for Intercultural Communication  
Centre pour la Communication Interculturelle



## Senter for Interkulturell Kommunikasjon

Misjonsmarka 12, 4024 Stavanger, Norway

P.O. Box 226, 4001 Stavanger, Norway

Phone (+47) 51 51 62 74 / E-mail: sik@sik.no

Homepage: <http://www.sik.no>

<b>ISBN:</b> 978-82-7721-127-5	<b>Title:</b> Review of research literature on <b>Parenting styles and childrearing practices among Poles: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives</b> Report prepared in the framework of The Polish-Norwegian Research Project PAR Migration Navigator
<b>ISSN:</b> 1500-1474	<b>Authors :</b> Oleksandr Ryndyk, Øystein Lund Johannessen
<b>Project number:</b> 285206	<b>Editor :</b> Centre for Intercultural Communication (SIK)
<b>Completion date:</b> September 2014	<b>Publisher:</b> Misjonshøgskolens forlag

### **Abstract**

This report summarizes the findings of a literature review of existing research on issues pertaining to parenting styles and child rearing practices among Polish migrant families living abroad in different immigration contexts and under changing socio-economic conditions in Poland.

The review was conducted in the scope of the international research project entitled 'Socio-cultural and Psychological Predictors of Work-Life Balance and Gender Equality - Cross-Cultural Comparison of Polish and Norwegian Families' (October 2013 to April 2017). The project, known under its short name PAR Migration Navigator, is jointly run by the University of Gdansk (Project Promoter), the Institute of Psychology of the Polish Academy of Sciences (IP PAN), the International Research Institute of Stavanger (IRIS), the University of Stavanger (UiS) and the Centre for Intercultural Communication (SIK) in Norway.

The topic of parenting styles and childrearing practices among Polish migrant families in Europe has received relatively little attention in the research on families and parenting among immigrants. Polish migrant families throughout Western Europe, we argue, may in fact be regarded as culturally 'more similar' to host country's native population. Nevertheless, with about 2 million Polish citizens residing in other EU/EEA countries, most of whom have migrated and settled there only after 2004, the issue of parenting and acculturation among Polish migrant families deserves to be studied in more details.

**Key words:** parenting styles, childrearing, family life in Poland, Polish families in Western Europe.



## Table of content

Introduction .....	3
Chapter I: Family life in Poland in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s .....	5
1.1. Gender roles and parenting styles under communist rule .....	5
1.2. Polish family under political, economic and social transformations of the 1990s .....	7
1.3. Transformations of parenting roles in modern Poland .....	9
Chapter II: Enhanced labour mobility and transnationalisation of Polish family life in the post-enlargement Europe .....	12
2.1. Transnationalism in the current European context .....	12
2.2. Emigration from Poland to the EU/EEA after 2004 .....	12
2.3. Intra-European mobility among Poles and the role of family in it .....	15
Chapter III: Parenting among Polish immigrants in Europe .....	18
3.1. Mothering and fathering in immigration .....	18
3.2. Parents' involvement in schooling .....	20
3.3. Polishness, Polish language maintenance and local language acquisition .....	26
Conclusions .....	29
Bibliography .....	31

## **Introduction**

This report has been prepared by researchers Øystein Lund Johannessen, Sigurd Haus, and Oleksandr Ryndyk at the Centre for Intercultural Communication (SIK), Norway. It provides an updated overview of the academic research literature addressing issues of parenting styles and childrearing practices among Polish families living abroad in different immigration contexts and under changing socio-economic conditions in Poland.

This literature review was conducted as part of the Work Package 4 ‘Migrant couples re-conceptualizing childhood and parenting’ within the scope of the international research project entitled ‘Socio-cultural and Psychological Predictors of Work-Life Balance and Gender Equality - Cross-Cultural Comparison of Polish and Norwegian Families.’ The project, known under its short name PAR Migration Navigator, runs from October 2013 to April 2017 and is jointly run by the University of Gdansk (Project Promoter), the Institute of Psychology of the Polish Academy of Sciences (IP PAN), the International Research Institute of Stavanger (IRIS), the University of Stavanger (UiS) and the Centre for Intercultural Communication (SIK) from Norway. The international project received funding from Norway Grants in the framework of the Polish-Norwegian Research Program, operated by the National Centre for Research and Development (Poland).

The Work Package 4 has as its objectives to gain knowledge on (1) how Polish couples’ acculturation and adaptation to everyday life and work in Norway influence the way they act out their roles as parents and (2) how Polish migrant couples interpret perceived changes in parenting styles and practices, both in their own lives and on the group level, in terms of changing values, motivations and awareness rather than as immediate responses to a different context of childrearing in Norwegian “Polonia” in the county of Rogaland.

One of the key conclusions that emerged in the course of our work on this report was that there is a tangible lack of academic literature focusing specifically on parenting styles among Polish migrants living outside Poland. This may be due to the negligence of the fact that Polish migrant families living in other Western societies may in fact experience serious constraints in adapting to host country’s values and attitudes in the area of childrearing. When compared to the high number of case studies focusing on parenting styles among typically ‘non-Western’ immigrants (from Africa, Asia and Latin America) in some ‘Western’ societies (usually the USA, but also European countries, Canada and Australia), the research addressing migrants from Central and Eastern Europe is rather scarce. Yet, in the context of the post-2004 enlarged European Union with its enhanced labour mobility, the issues of parenting, childrearing and integration among intra-European

migrants are in a dire need of more attention. With about 2 million of its nationals living elsewhere in the EU/EEA, Poland is currently second after Romania in the rank of European countries that have the most migrants residing in other EU/EEA member states. At the same time, more and more of such east-to-west intra-European migrants choose to migrate with their families and children.

The search for relevant literature was done mainly online with the use of keywords, such as 'parenting styles,' 'Polish migrants,' 'Polish migrant families,' 'parenting in immigration,' etc. After careful selection of the most relevant studies, a list of twenty-five sources was prepared. The identified literature ranged from articles in peer-reviewed journals (e.g. Botterill, 2013) and chapters in books (e.g. Jerschina, 1991) to reports (e.g. Szlendak, 2003) and monographs (e.g. White, 2011a). The search for relevant literature has proved that there is a strong need for research on parenting and childrearing among intra-European migrants with a specific focus on migrant families coming from Central and Eastern Europe.

This report is organized into three chapters. *Chapter one* summarizes our findings in relation to changing attitudes and values of family life in Poland under three periods of different socio-economic and institutional settings: the communist (before 1989), the post-communist (1989-2004), and the post-accession (after 2004). The issues of gender roles, availability of childcare facilities, women's situation on the labour market, division of housework between spouses, parenting styles, and intergenerational relations within families are discussed in this part. *Chapter two* examines the transformation of the geographical mobility of individuals and families that occurred on the European scale after the EU's enlargement in 2004 and what role family considerations play in shaping current immigration from Poland. Finally, *chapter three* addresses the multitude of ways in which Polish migrant families adapted to living in other European countries, and in particular in the UK due to the country's central role to Polish labour emigration after 2004. The issues of mothering and fathering in immigration, parents' involvement in children's school life, and maintaining Polish identity and transnational ties with the home country are discussed here. The conclusions summarize the findings addressed so far in the available research and draw avenues for future inquiries in the field of parenting and child-rearing among intra-European migrants.

## **Chapter I: Family life in Poland in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s**

Titkow and Duch (2004) argue that as a result of succeeding historic occupations of Poland since 1795 and due to the lack of specific social institutions, in particular a national education system, the family took over the responsibility of such institutions in transmitting values and skills pertaining to Polish national identity. Due to historic legacies, and in particular due to the contradicting co-existence of the communist<sup>1</sup> ideology and the Catholic Church in Poland until 1989, family was perceived as the ultimate source of security and protection in Polish society. The Polish family of that era was compared to ‘a sanctuary in a hostile sea of social relations’ (Buchowski, 1996:84 in Botterill, 2013) and stood at the top of the hierarchy of values in Poland (Bednarski, 1987; Buchowski, 1996 in Botterill, 2013). Symbolically, the Polish family was almost universally associated with the Catholic Church and its tradition. The strong presence of the latter in Polish society may partly explain why the communist ideology did not succeed in eradicating the traditional gender roles in Poland.

### **1.1. Gender roles and parenting styles under communist rule**

Jerschina (1991) compares a typical Polish family from the 1980s to a ‘little ship that with great effort looks for quiet waters on a stormy ocean. A crew has to be disciplined and well integrated, and must follow the captain/father’s orders if all are to survive the storm’ (Jerschina, 1991: 287). Such comparison may be due to a very authoritarian style of parenting dominating in Poland in the 1980s.

At the same time, some studies suggest that conflict between children and parents in communist Poland was not a common phenomenon. Thus, Skorupska-Sobanska, 1967 (as cited in Wejnert and Djumabaeva, 2005) reported that only 3% of youth felt alienated at home. Furthermore, only 22% of youth reported frequent but short-term disagreements with parents (Skorupska-Sobanska, 1971 in Wejnert and Djumabaeva, 2005). Worth noticing, conflicts were reported to occur more frequently between children and mothers than between children and fathers (Kowalski, 1980 in Wejnert and Djumabaeva, 2005), an observation that generally supports the hypothesis about a restricted scope of child-father relations in the communist Poland.

Another important feature of the Polish family in the 1980s, Jerschina argues, was the instrumental approach towards children. According to this approach, the value of having children is not in children themselves or their happiness, but rather related to parents’ needs or plans. The latter could be related to parents’ lifespan considerations and/or a felt lack of public welfare security. Thus, a

---

<sup>1</sup> Similar with White (2011a), we use adjectives ‘communist’ and ‘post-communist’ instead of ‘socialist’ and ‘post-socialist’ when we describe Poland before and after 1989 respectively.

lack of certainty and trust in the public welfare system, especially after retirement, was believed to encourage Poles to have children early in the adult life, so that the latter could become self-sufficient and thus able to financially assist their retired parents. Widely available housing under the communist rule, even though of a modest standard, could be seen as a strong factor that encouraged relatively young marriages. Accordingly, most people in Poland in the 1980s married between the age of twenty and twenty-five (Rocznik Statystyczny 1988: 44 in Jerschina, 1991: 288). Thus, the Polish family in the 1980s, Jerschina argued, was ‘the best insurance company and system of social services’ (Jerschina, 1991: 288).

According to Jerschina, the hard economic conditions in Poland after World War II, where most of the active population worked in agriculture, made an upward social mobility often an unrealistic goal within one’s lifespan. As a result, parents’ internalized need of climbing up the social ladder is believed to have extrapolated on their children. Accordingly, the upward social mobility in the communist Poland became an aspiration spanning over several generations. As a result, Polish parents in the 1980s tended to be overprotecting and highly demanding towards their children (Jerschina, 1991). Accordingly, about 80% of Polish parents, regardless their educational level or place of residence, wished their children achieved a college degree (Niezgoda, 2003 in Titkow and Duch, 2004).

In order to understand how parenting styles are shaped and evolve within a given culture or society, it is of utmost importance to look at how women fare in the society. It is widely accepted that parenthood has a different impact on employment patterns among men and women. Whereas men with children demonstrate higher employment rates compared to men without children, women with children, on the contrary, have lower employment rates than women without children. Thus, the rate of labour market participation of mothers was reported to be 12.1 percentage points lower than that of women without children, while the rate for fathers was 8.7 percentage points higher than that for men without children (European Commission, 2012). This indicates the traditional gender role division: men are more attached to work, whereas women are more involved in family life.

Despite the gender equality ideological discourse under the communist regime, women in Poland rarely held top-rank positions, and general attitudes towards women’s role were rather conservative (White, 2011). Throughout the communist bloc countries, the problem of gender inequality was considered to be non-existent (Gontarczyk, 2001: 213 in Wejnert and Djumabaeva, 2005). Although women under communist regimes enjoyed fair equality in the public sphere, especially in terms of education, labour force participation, and political representation, they faced serious inequality in the domestic sphere. House chores, including buying groceries, cooking, cleaning, and taking care of the children at home, were universally regarded as primarily women’s responsibilities. Attempts



to bring this problem to the public attention were considered as dissident political activity and Western propaganda (Binyon, 1983:36 in Wejnert and Djumabaeva, 2005). At the same time, women in most communist countries enjoyed significant social benefits, ranging from inexpensive childcare facilities to 3-year paid maternity leaves (Weinert, 1996a in Wejnert and Djumabaeva, 2005). Thus, with widely available public childcare facilities, women in communist Poland managed to combine paid employment with household chores. For example, female employment in the communist Poland stood at around 80% for women between the age 15 and 54 (Lovenduski and Woodall, 1987:158 in White, 2011a:28), a rate typically found across Scandinavia nowadays. The situation, however, changed dramatically after 1989.

## **1.2. The Polish family under political, economic and social transformations of the 1990s**

Titkow and Duch argue that the Polish family can be understood 'as a form of adaptive mechanism in times when the society experienced a vivid dissonance between the world of cultural scripts and the possibilities of their realization' (Titkow and Duch, 2004: 70). Economic problems associated with Poland's transition to market economy in the early 1990s demanded from the families a demobilization of all its material and psychological resources (Titkow and Duch, 2004). In the political chaos of transition, family, they argued, remained one of the few stable institutions in Polish society. At the same time, opening the economy to the West after decades of communist rule, lead to an increase in the population's expectations and needs for material goods, stimulating competition and eroding solidarity.

Poverty of the late 1990s was a phenomenon that affected many Polish families. According to Nowakowska (2000), 35% of Polish families with one child, 50% of families with two children, 67.5% of those with three and 84.5% of those with four, as well as 55% of single mothers lived below the social minimum at the end of the 1990s (cited in Titkow and Duch, 2004). Parents' level of poverty as the main reason, accounted for about 34% of children who were placed in orphanages at that time (ibid.).

In their study, Wejnert and Djumabaeva (2005) examined how (a) family size, (b) fathers' employment status, (c) religiosity, and (d) traditionalism influence parenting roles in two post-communist countries, Poland and Kyrgyzstan. They identified two tendencies that occurred in both countries in the course of transition to market economy in the 1990s. On the one hand, they argued, the average family size was reduced in both Poland and Kyrgyzstan. This may reflect the countries' movement towards Western democratic values, such as egalitarianism in family relations. On the other hand, attitudes towards abortion, birth control and the desired family size (at odds with the actual family size) reflected more traditional norms.

In Poland in the early 1990s, Wejnert and Djumabaeva (2005) argue, political and socio-economic reforms were accompanied with economic hardships and rising unemployment. As a result, the image of ‘the working mother,’ once promoted under the communist ideology, was transformed to ‘the mother-homemaker.’ This could occur with the influence of the Catholic Church and conservative political groups in Poland (Wejnert and Djumabaeva, 2005). As an illustration to this, the Office for Women and Family Matters in the Polish Government (i.e., Pełnomocnictwo Rządu do Spraw Kobiet i Rodziny) was abolished in 1993. This rebirth of traditionalism in Poland is believed to be due to the growth of religious freedom and increasing religiosity after the communist ideology had been abandoned by the State (Wejnert and Djumabaeva, 2005).

Wejnert and Djumabaeva (2005) argue that father’s employment status was the factor that determined the patterns of his involvement with housework and childcare. Thus, almost 75% of Polish husbands who reported to be working helped with domestic duties, whereas only 11% of unemployed fathers did. Similarly, 71% of working fathers helped with childcare, whereas only 13% of unemployed fathers did. Religious husbands in Poland were reported to be more involved in parenting than non-religious husbands (Wejnert and Djumabaeva, 2005). Furthermore, Polish wives who did not adhere to traditional gender roles were able to convince their husbands to share parenting and house duties (ibid.).

Szlendak (2003) sheds light on parenting styles among Polish parents during the economic and political transformation in Poland. He compares parenting styles of two groups of parents who are placed on the opposite extremes of the Polish socio-economic strata: the high-income versus low-income households. He argues that mainly three groups of factors, namely parents’ educational level, economic status, and environment, influence parents’ childrearing practices. In the Polish settings, as they are described in Szlendak (2003), employment and unemployment seem to be of key importance when defining one’s social status. Polish society, he argued, was ‘becoming more and more polarized in a manner that is typical of the post-modern world, where an invisible barrier separates those who have jobs from the unemployed’ (Szendak, 2003:53).

Using interchangeably such terms as ‘the unprivileged,’ ‘the unemployed,’ and ‘the underclass,’ Szlendak seems to associate them with the low-income families (Szendak, 2003: 54). Szlendak, on the contrary, describes affluent families, as households ‘where parents have decent jobs’ (Szendak, 2003). Furthermore, the sample of high-income families, where both spouses have higher education and both often work full-time, is said to be drawn among residents of big cities and larger towns. On the contrary, low-income families, where the spouses rarely hold advanced degrees and often come from farmer backgrounds, are presented as residents of small towns and rural areas. Such dichotomisation of sample profiles creates an impression of Polish cities as habitats of the rich, on

the one hand, and Polish rural areas as habitats of the poor, on the other hand. Szlendak's rhetoric is clearly influenced by the neo-liberal discourse, and terms such as '*marketable skills*,' '*a child to be an achiever*,' '*post-modern, free-market society*,' '*skill-enhancing play*,' '*high-flyer in the capitalist jungle*,' '*competitive nation*' and so on can be frequently found in the text.

### **1.3. Transformations of parenting roles in modern Poland**

Szlendak (ibid.) suggests that after a decade of living under a capitalist economy, Polish people's approach to parenting in the early 2000s remained largely conservative. He argued that two out of four parenting styles, namely the democratic and the authoritarian (the other two being the inconsistent and the liberal/permissive), were the most typical for contemporary Poland. In Polish tradition, he suggests, children 'belong' to their parents and may therefore be regarded as second-class citizens who do not deserve the same attention as adults do. Thus, in a 1998 survey 52% of the respondents were reported to have said that corporal punishment of children should be used more often as a sign of parental care (Wychowanie dzieci, 1998 in Szlendak, 2003: 7). One of the pertaining myths among Polish parents is that 'children who are not beaten may become unruly and end up as criminals' (Szendak, 2003: 9). Szlendak refers to such traditional stereotypes about childrearing as a 'Polish parenting mythology.'

Wejnert and Djumabaeva (2005) argue that economic difficulties in the early 1990s did not affect parent-child relationships in Poland negatively. On the contrary, when compared to the situation under the communist regime, they might have improved. A study by Kwak (2001), referred to in Wejnert and Djumabaeva (2005), suggests that such indicators as the percentage of children who felt to be loved and understood by their parents improved. Worth noticing, children from religious families reported to be loved twice as often (56% vs. 27%) as those from non-religious families (Filipiak, 1999 in Wejnert and Djumabaeva, 2005). Similarly, children from urban settings seemed to be more satisfied with the attention and love they received from their parents (55% vs. 27%) when compared to children from rural areas (ibid.). Accordingly, children with religious parents and those living in urban settings felt less alienated than children with non-religious parents or living in rural areas (ibid.).

Kwak (2001) reported children from wealthier families to have stronger and more positive relationships with parents than children from less-affluent families (in Wejnert and Djumabaeva, 2005). They also felt more loved and less alienated when compared to children from poorer families (Filipiak, 1999 in Wejnert and Djumabaeva, 2005). Notwithstanding, children who did report having misunderstandings with their parents mainly came from families where parents had college degrees. Parents with college degrees were believed to have higher expectations on behalf of their

children and put stronger emphasis on their children's education, which, in turn, led to more conflicts between parents and children (Wrzesie, 2001 and 2002 in Wejnert and Djumabaeva, 2005).

Szlendak (2003), however, seems to favour a rather deterministic view on culture, poverty and parenting. He suggests that social status has become hereditary in Poland (Szlendak, 2003: 55). Thus, poverty, he elaborates, 'is passed on through inherited patterns of educational aspirations,' suggesting that parents in unprivileged families have little educational aspirations for their children (ibid.). Such a view is at odds with Jerschina's statement that Polish parents tend to aspire to upward social mobility and extrapolate it unto their offspring. Szlendak, on the contrary, argues that in low-income Polish households parents rarely have any preferences regarding their children's occupation in the future. By continuously citing extracts from the interviews with his informants, Szlendak creates an image of underprivileged families where parents see their children's future outcomes as determined exclusively by their talents and dispositions, inherited by birth, and primary socialization in early years rather than as a result of parents' deliberate efforts in building their child's cultural capital. Furthermore, he argues that such problems as divorce, single parenthood, marital quarrels and a lack of time for children, traditionally portrayed in the Polish media as the problems of the rich, are actually more applicable to less affluent families.

The declining availability of childcare places in nurseries and kindergartens across Poland in the 1990s negatively affected the rates of labour market participation among women (Mickiewicz and Bell, 2000 cited in Janneke and Chantal, 2009). As a result, in the 2009 European Commission's review on childcare provision across Europe, the use of formal childcare arrangements in Poland was reported to stand far below the Barcelona targets.<sup>2</sup> Thus, it was only 2% for children under the age of 2 and just 28% for children aged 3 years (Janneke and Chantal, 2009). Not surprisingly, women's decisions to postpone having the first child in Poland coincided with the closure of childcare facilities in the 1990s and, associated with it, increasing labour market difficulties for women (Kotowska et al., 2007 in Janneke and Chantal, 2009).

In addition to its scarcity, childcare facilities in Poland are often expensive. Thus, it was reported that childcare fees in public facilities might amount to 24-35% of individual income among minimum wage earners and 10-14% among average income earners, and respectively 24-200% or 10-79% in private centres (Janneke and Chantal, 2009). Thus, parents in Poland were said to pay for up to 80% of costs of formal child services, whereas this share was only 8% in Sweden (ibid.).

---

<sup>2</sup> *Barcelona targets* on availability of childcare facilities were set in 2002 in Barcelona by the European Council. The EU Members States agreed that by 2010 childcare across Europe should be provided for 90% of children between three years old and the mandatory school age, and for 33% of children under three.

Low levels of children enrolment into formal childcare facilities might be one of the reasons why Poland now has one of the lowest female employment rates in the EU/EEA. Thus, in 2007 only 50.6% of women in Poland were formally employed, considerably below the Lisbon target of 60% and Norway's rate of 75%, 2<sup>nd</sup> highest among the 30 countries under study (ibid.). Further, women's salaries in Poland were reported to be just 60% of men's (Anon, 2009a: 6 in White, 2011a: 29). It comes as no surprise that the total fertility rate in Poland in 2006 was 1.27 children per woman, one of the lowest in the EU/EEA. This is clearly at odds with the traditional understanding of declining fertility rates which is often conventionally explained by increasing rates of higher education and better employment among women. To support this inconsistency, Nordic countries and France are good examples where women demonstrate both high employment and elevated fertility rates. As government-subsidized childcare facilities tend to lower the price of having children, a lack of such facilities or their high costs may in fact discourage parents from having more children (see more in Rindfuss et al. 2007 as cited in Janneke and Chantal, 2009).

Although Polish parents still prefer to look after the youngest children at home, recent attention to the benefits of formal care and opportunities to combine work and family may indicate shifting attitudes in this domain (Janneke and Chantal, 2009). White (2011a) argue that attitudes towards women in employment recently have improved in Poland, and the dual-earner model has become more accepted. Citing a study by Fuszara (2009), she points to the fact that in 2004 a 'partner-like' marriage was supported by 56% of respondents, up from 35% in 1994 (White, 2011a:29). When compared with reported attitudes, the actual practices, however, might not necessarily be so optimistic. Hence, only 15.5% of couples in Poland reported doing equal amounts of housework and paid work, whereas in 19.3% of households the wife had no paid employment (Szczeplanska, 2006:5 in White, 2011a:29).

## **Chapter II: Enhanced labour mobility and transnationalization of Polish family life in the post-enlargement Europe**

### **2.1. Transnationalism in the current European context**

Transnationalism, coined as a term in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, re-entered the vocabulary of social sciences in the 1990s (Vertovec, 2001; Glick-Schiller et al., 1992) and quickly became too vague (Vertovec, 2001; Portes et al., 1999) for its extensive use in multiple contexts, ranging from international migration to globalisation and transnational corporations. In the migration context, transnationalism encompasses social, economic, political and cultural connections, or ‘social fields’ (Glick-Schiller et al. 1992) that are being created between sending, transit, and receiving countries as a result of international migration. At the individual level, transnationalism may refer to a way of life pertaining to international migrants: keeping in contact with families and friends living in another country (usually, the home country, but sometimes other countries as well) via different means of communication (letters, phone calls, etc.), frequent visits home, participation in political and cultural life of the home country, sending or receiving remittances for/from relatives and/or friends, consuming goods and services from the home country, and so on.

Nowadays, we argue, transnationalism as a way of life may be reinforced through recent technological advancements in communication (e.g. E-mail, Skype, social media networks, Internet telephony, reduced fares for international calls) and travel (low-cost airlines, expansion of regional airports, etc.). In this regard, the European Economic Area (EEA), with its four fundamental freedoms, may in fact be one of the most spectacular arenas where transnationalism takes new shapes. Thus, referring to the findings of the 2005 CAA Passenger Survey, Ignatowicz (2011) suggests that ‘visiting friends and family’ (VFF) mobility type was the fastest growing segment of inbound air traffic in the UK and accounted for about half of all travel within the EU (CAA Passenger Survey, 2005 in Ignatowicz, 2011). Furthermore, citizenship and/or permanent residence in one of the EEA countries implies strong legal entitlements to work and social protection within the EEA. With regards to the latter, some of the social protection benefits, among which child benefits, pensions, and social allowances, are regarded as one’s social rights and can, in fact, be transferred from the host to the home country within the EEA.

### **2.2. Emigration from Poland to the EU/EEA after 2004**

Prior to 1989, the decision to emigrate from Poland entailed long-term implications for migrants’ ability to return. Sokół-Rudowska (2013), for example, suggests that Polish political refugees fleeing persecutions under the Solidarity movement in the early 1980s had to remain in Norway for several years and first acquire Norwegian nationality before they could consider visiting Poland. The political and socio-economic transformation of Poland in the 1990s opened opportunities for

Poles to move abroad more freely. At that time, Germany and the USA were on top of the destinations list among Polish migrants. Thus, short-term and circular migration became typical, in particular, between Poland and Germany (Wallace, 2002; Cyrus, 2008 in Ignatowicz, 2011). Thus, emigration from Poland to the EU before 2004 was often undocumented and individual (Ryan, 2011). For a variety of reasons, such as one's undocumented status and ineligibility for social protection in the host country, family emigration was not a common phenomenon. On the contrary, after the right to labour mobility was institutionalised in the EU/EEA, short and very frequent air travels within Europe, and recent rapid developments in telecommunication technologies made it possible for Polish migrant workers living abroad to maintain strong transnational ties with Poland.

When in 2004 Poland joined the EU and three countries, namely Ireland, Sweden, and the UK, liberalised the access for Polish workers to their labour markets, family emigration became a feasible option for many Polish migrants. From May 2004 and until the financial and economic turmoil across Europe in 2008, Polish labour emigration skyrocketed.

The global financial crunch of 2008 and the following economic recession in many European countries, in particular Ireland, cooled down migration aspirations of potential migrants from the new EU members states, mainly due to the difficulties in finding jobs in the construction sector in the EU15. At the same time, outmigration was reported to intensify from the UK, Ireland, Iceland, and other European countries whose economies were hit the most. However, not all European countries were equally affected by the economic crisis of 2008-2009. And, in fact, Poland was reported to be the only EU country to avoid economic recession and keep growing. Return migration among Polish migrants became an issue of a high interest. Thus, Statistics Netherlands<sup>3</sup> reported that nearly 60% of Poles who had come to the Netherlands after 2000 had left the country by December 2010. It is explained by the fact that Poles, being EU citizens, enjoy free access to other EU member states and therefore can always return to the Netherlands should such need emerge. Interestingly enough, the rapid growth of the Polish economy after 2004 reported in Polish and international media might not necessarily be a solid ground for Polish migrant families to return to Poland. White suggests that since Polish migrants tend to conceptualise their return as a return to 'home localities' rather than 'the home country,' strong economic growth observed in big cities across Poland might not be enough to trigger immigrants return en masse to Poland (White, 2011a).

Some Polish migrant workers, leaving the UK, Ireland, and Iceland may in fact have re-emigrated to other European countries. Norway, despite minor declines in the construction industry and average employment rates, handled the European economic crisis of 2008-2009 relatively well and

---

<sup>3</sup> Statistics Netherlands (2010) 'More than half of Polish immigrants do not settle in the Netherlands' Online URL: <http://www.cbs.nl/en-GB/menu/themas/bevolking/publicaties/artikelen/archief/2010/2010-3284-wm.htm>

quickly returned to growth. Some micro-studies suggest that some of the Polish migrant workers in Norway had worked in the UK before the crisis hit the construction industry there (Ryndyk, 2013). Unfortunately, available official statistics are not always able to document the magnitude of such flows, as migrants tend to first return to their country, sometimes without definite intentions to stay there for long, and then decide on where to move next. When the transition period with restrictions on work ended in 2009, labour emigration from the EU10 to other EU/EEA member states, including Norway, became even less bureaucratic. In Norway, for example, Polish citizens (as well as other EU/EEA citizens) no longer need to apply for resident and/or work permit, if they arrive to the country as work migrants. After a relative decline in the 2008-2010 immigration rates to the UK, Ireland and Iceland, Polish immigration seem to have recovered its pre-crisis dynamics as well. Poles are now among the biggest immigrant groups across Europe. In 2010, Poland, with its 1.9 million nationals living elsewhere in the EU, came second (after Romania) in the EU ranking of countries by number of nationals living in other EU countries (Vargas-Silva, 2012). In the period 2008-2013, the number of Polish citizens doubled in Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Switzerland, and tripled in the Netherlands and Norway (Eurostat). In the UK, Poles were the second biggest group of foreign-born (8.7% of all) and the biggest group of foreign citizens (14.9% of all) in 2012 (Rienzo and Vargas-Silva, 2013). The 2011 Irish Census showed that there were 122 thousand Polish citizens, representing 31,7% of all EU27 (excluding Irish) nationals and 20% of all foreign citizens usually resident and present in Ireland (own calculation, data from Irish Central Statistics Office, CSO). During 2004-2013 a total of about 76 thousand people immigrated to Iceland, of who 26% were Polish citizens (own calculations, Statistics Iceland, 2014). In terms of net migration, Polish immigrants accounted for 91% of the total net migration to Iceland during 2004-2013 (8 035 out of 8 827).

As many other European internal migrants, Poles often migrate together with their families. In Norway, Polish migrants not only dominate labour immigration flows, they also do so in terms of immigration on family reunifications grounds. Thus, in 2011 Polish migrants have accounted for 15.4% (2 489 out of 16 200) of all family-related entries to Norway (Statistics Norway, SSB). In the retrospective, during the period 1991-2011 arrivals from Poland constituted 9.5% (18 607 out of 196 283) of all immigrants who came to Norway with family as the reason for immigration (Statistics Norway, SSB). Notwithstanding, this data may not accurately reflect the actual situation in terms of family migration from the EU. Thus, spouses to EU migrants in Norway have different options available to them in order to come to Norway. For instance, if a particular EU/EEA migrant residing in Norway is not able to meet income-related prerequisites for family reunification, his or her spouse may choose to come to Norway independently as a work migrant. Given legal



informality in some immigrant-intensive industries in Norway (e.g. cleaning sector), some internal EU/EEA migrants may reside and work in Norway without any formal status.

### **2.3. Intra-European mobility among Poles and the role of family in it**

With family migration becoming more and more common across the EU/EEA space, it is interesting to look at possible implications it may have for migrants' family life and community development in the receiving areas.

Ignatowicz (2011) suggests that migration from Poland within the EU/EEA can be better conceptualised as mobility and, in fact, many migrants themselves may think of their experiences as examples of affordable and even risk-free mobility (ibid.). Mobility, she argues, should not be exclusively regarded as a physical movement, a change of place, but rather the understanding of one's freedom to go home at any time of the migration process (ibid.).

However, aspirations for enhanced mobility as a symbol of freedom may be counterbalanced by one's feeling of obligation to maintain strong intergenerational ties and cherish kinship relationships. Botterill (2011) argues that for some young Poles the decision to migrate or travel may pose a dilemma to choose between contradicting needs and expectations within the greater family. On the one hand, there is a need for a more mobile lifestyle, sometimes encouraged by their own parents who experienced a very immobile youth under the communist regime. On the other hand there are expectations from the greater family, particularly from their more conservative and family-oriented grandparents. Due to the important role grandparents play in bringing up children and regarding work-life balance among parents in Poland, commitments towards them may be very strong.

Moskal (2011) argues that many Polish migrants in Scotland prefer not to un-register themselves with local authorities back in Poland in order to maintain their permanent residence in the home country. Hence, it may also explain why statistical data on migration flows across Europe, and in particular from Poland, are often inconsistent. However, it may serve as evidence that work migrants from Poland tend to keep their options open without excluding eventual return back to Poland, reunification with the family in the UK or moving further overseas. It can also indicate an emerging fluid European identity among Polish migrants living elsewhere in the EU (ibid.). Polish migrant workers' acceptance of mobility as a way of life and their preference to keep their choices open can well be characterized by using Morokvasic's expression 'settled within mobility' (Morokvasic, 2004 in Botterill, 2011).

In her study Ryan (2011) discusses three areas of transnationalisation of family life among Polish migrants: (1) split families, transnational ties and care arrangements; (2) family reunion; and (3)

dynamic development of local attachments. Caring responsibilities in the home country, especially for the elderly, seem to be one of the most important reasons why families do not migrate together. Waiting for children to graduate from schools can also play a role in family's decision to postpone an eventual reunification abroad. Although migrant families may be geographically separated as a result of migration by one of the spouses, they may, however, maintain strong emotional bounds. Ryan presents some case studies where Polish migrants in London, both male and female, engage into 'transnational parenting' and develop strong emotional attachments to those left behind. While physical separation from each other may often be very painful and challenging, it may result in an enhanced communication between the spouses thanks to availability of cheap communication methods.

While statistical data on family migration may not always be available, there is growing evidence that Polish migrants more and more often move with their families, either from the beginning or via family reunification on the latter stages (Ryan et al., 2008). Family reunions may weaken transnational ties, as migrants begin developing and strengthening local networks in the destination country (kindergarten, local toddler's groups, school, etc.). As Sokół-Rudowska emphasizes, chain-migration of friends or relatives among Polish migrant workers in Norway can be regarded, on the one hand, as migrants' desire to re-construct the lost homeland localities, and, on the other hand, construct a buffer in the dichotomy 'us-them' (Sokół-Rudowska, 2013).

Young Poles, among others, seem to have most actively responded to the new opportunities for mobility in the post-2004 Europe (Botterill, 2013:5). Elevated numbers of young Poles who have emigrated from Poland in the aftermath of the 2004 EU enlargement can be largely accounted for by high unemployment among youth and high housing prices. For many young Polish migrants, migration to the UK, for example, may be specifically linked with aspirations to get better education, to travel and experience other cultures (Ryan, 2011). However, they should not be conceptualised as 'free movers' with no attachments to wider kinship networks. Ryan argues that intragenerational relatives (siblings and cousins) are more likely to influence migration strategies among young and single people, whereas intergenerational relatives (adult children, grandchildren, or aging parents) might play a stronger role for migration formation among older migrants (Ryan, 2011: 97).

For many young Poles breaking up from their family, or as Botterill (2013) calls it, the 'rite of passage', more and more often takes form of moving out abroad vs. moving out within Poland. However, Botterill emphasizes that the Polish family, as an institution, must not be regarded as 'just something one leaves to seek a mobile life away from a perceived sedentary existence, but rather as a central mechanism in the decision and experiences of moving to and settling in a new place'

(Botterill, 2013:10). In other words, the Polish family, she argues, has for historical reasons institutionalised itself as ‘a space through which mobility is constructed as the alternative to normal or traditional expectations’ whereas mobility has become ‘a de-normalizing process’ (Botterill, 2013). The author elaborates further:

‘Aspirations for spatial and social mobility are inherited through intergenerational values, realised through networked migrations in the UK and practically supported through transnational connections, showing the complex ways that the family is tied to individual mobility choices.’ – Botterill (2013:10)

White (2011a) observed that her Polish informants shared the common Western assumption that it is best for children to lead settled lives. Accordingly, they tended to remain in the British locality they had first immigrated to. White also emphasizes the role of family considerations in planning eventual return to Poland and Botterill (2013) observed that the sacrifice of family was viewed by many Poles as the most challenging consequence of EU mobility.

### **Chapter III: Parenting styles among Polish immigrants**

Subject to new settings with its distinctive cultural conceptions of gender roles, women's participation at the labour market, and without traditional social networks, immigrant families may adopt different gendered strategies. For example, in typically egalitarian Scandinavian countries, where differences between female and male labour market participation rates are less significant, immigrants from less egalitarian, largely conservative or even patriarchal societies might feel pressure to adhere to the host country's norms. However, this might not necessarily apply to each case, as a range of other factors shape such acculturation processes among migrants.

Migrants, as actors, do not represent a homogenous group, and one may find very egalitarian families with emancipated women coming from very conservative societies. On the contrary, a generous state's support for non-working mothers may have a reverse effect on women's incentives to participate in the labour market. A lack of close relatives, such as retired grandparents, who can look after young children while the mother is at work, may be a significant obstacle for immigrant women who plan to join the labour market. In such cases, a good supply of inexpensive publicly-supported child-care facilities may be an adequate measure to counter the abovementioned effect. Finally, whether women will actively participate in the labour market or not, is also tightly connected to the host country's labour market conjuncture, its needs, and, not to forget, gendered differences in wages. For example, in countries with high levels of unemployment, women may find it difficult to find jobs, as they are often subject to discrimination by employers. Similarly, when technical professions, typically dominated by men, are substantially better remunerated than other professions, in particular in the education and health care sectors, women might be discouraged to work full-time (given their partners earn according the first group of professions). Not only the labour market conjuncture, but also the price level in a given location matters. Thus, in countries with high costs of living and low wages, single-income families might face severe financial constraints, encouraging dual-income household arrangements.

Accordingly, in the reception context, immigrants may adopt different family strategies in different local settings. Among others, such strategies comprise work, household, and childcare arrangements between couples.

#### **3.1. Mothering and fathering in immigration**

Given that the special symbolic and emotional relation between Family, Church and State is still central to Polish national identity (Graff, 2009:136 in Botterill, 2013), parenting, and in particular motherhood, can be viewed from the perspective of Polish nationhood. Similar to some other cultures, Poland as a nation is often conceptualised as a 'mother' among its citizens. In this regard,

the icon 'Our Lady of Czestochowa,' often called 'Queen and Protector of Poland,' has strong symbolic implications for the image of women and motherhood in Poland (Ostrowska, 2004 in Botterill, 2013). This image of 'Matka Polka' ('the Polish Mother') embodies a woman who is strong enough to take care of the family all by herself and, at the same time, is supposed to have 'no meaningful life of her own,' suggesting an absolute devotion to her family (Reading, 1992 in Wejnert and Djumabaeva, 2005). During the communist era, the state propaganda of female roles responded to the needs of the Polish economy. In the aftermath of WW2, when the national economy was broke and there was a strong need for labour, the image of the Polish woman as a 'socialist hero-worker' was widely exploited in public propaganda. Thus, posters with female tractor and streetcar drivers, bricklayers, miners and factory workers occupied Polish streets in 1945-1954 (Reading, 1992 in Wejnert and Djumabaeva, 2005). From the late 1950s, the image of 'the socialist hero-worker' woman was abandoned and replaced by a more traditional image of 'the working mother' (Wejnert and Djumabaeva, 2005).

Within the communist institutional environment, the child-parent relationship was expected to be one characterized by a strong emotional attachment between the child and the mother, whereas such attachments were supposed to be limited, if not completely absent, in father-child relationships (Wejnert and Djumabaeva, 2005). This resulted in different attitudes towards mothers vs. fathers among children in communist Poland. Thus, mothers were reported to be regarded as caring and dedicated, interested in children's problems, whereas fathers were seen as controlling, uninvolved, and showing no or little interest in children's lives (Rachalska, 1968 in Wejnert and Djumabaeva, 2005).

Wejnert and Djumabaeva (2005) argue that during the fall of communism the roles of fathers have undergone significant changes, partly due to a gradually more positive valuing of Western models of fatherhood. It was argued that the Polish Catholic Church, which after 1989 came into contact with more liberal western Catholic Churches, supported and promoted this move towards a more involving fathering style. Kvak (2001), as referred to in Wejnert and Djumabaeva (2005), found that the share of children who expected their fathers to support them in times of difficulties has increased from as little as 3% during the communist era to 30% in the late 1990s. The shares of children who reported discussing their problems with fathers also increased from 3% to 13% among girls and from 0% to 1% among boys (Kvak, 2001 in Wejnert and Djumabaeva, 2005). Notwithstanding, mothers remained the main persons children could talk to about their personal issues and rely on in difficult situations.

The last three decades have seen a spectacular shift in women's opinions regarding their place in Polish society. Titkow and Duch (2004) reported that the share of women who saw themselves

primarily as wives and mothers had fallen sharply from 53.3% in 1979 to 27.6% in 2003, whereas the share of those who were willing to successfully reconcile their working and family life had increased from 41.3% to 68.5% respectively (Titkow, 1984, Duch, 1998, Titkow et al., 1999 in Titkow and Duch, 2004). Changes in the traditional division of home duties were reported to occur slowly, and are still mainly performed by women (Titkow and Duch, 2004).

Parenting styles among Polish immigrants across Western Europe can to some extent reflect Poland's communist legacies and be deeply rooted in their own experience of being children under a more conservative and stricter regime. Notwithstanding, the role of host-country settings, including its labour market demands, can not be neglected. Thus, the research has shown that Polish migrant fathers, subject to high work pressure in the UK, might face considerable constraints in spending enough time with their families, and in particular with their children (Kilkey et al., 2013). Welfare provisions, including the supply of early childcare facilities may have strong implications for dual-income immigrant families. For instance, affordability of childcare was reported to be a particular challenge for dual-income Polish families living in London (Kilkey et al., 2013). Furthermore, White (2011a) argues that among her interviewees, '... gender roles became even more distinct ... since their working husbands were more exposed to the British society than their unemployed wives and seemed to have better English skills (White, 2011a:153). Therefore, falling back to more traditional parenting styles or gender roles among Polish migrant families may not necessarily be an indication of conflicting cultures, but can rather be a reflection of an adaptation to the host-country's existing structures. This hypothesis will be born in mind and tested in the course of our fieldwork on parenting and childrearing among Polish migrant families in Norway.

Furthermore, White (2011a) observed that Polish mothers she interviewed were most often rather poorly integrated into UK society. Despite feeling attached to local settings, or as White calls them 'localities,' her interviewees were reported to continue doing 'transnational' activities, such as cooking Polish food, speaking Polish and socialising with other Poles (ibid.). Some of her informants admitted that they knew little about British/English lifestyles, for example, what British mothers cooked at home.

Finally, a lack of extended family support as a potential source of childcare is another issue reported among Polish migrants in the UK (Kilkey et al., 2013). 'Flying grandmothers' – a migrants' transnational care strategy consisting of bringing their mothers to look after their children during shorter or longer stays (Nesteruk and Marks, 2009 in Kilkey et al., 2013) – seems to be frequently employed by Polish migrants as well (Kilkey et al., 2013; White, 2011a).

### **3.2. Parents' involvement in schooling'**

Poland's accession to the EU in 2004 not only led to a marked increase in Poles applying for work in the UK, it also changed the pattern of migration since the EU citizenship brought new rights as regards work permits in the whole EU zone and right to free movement and permanent stay in other countries (D'Angelo and Ryan, 2011; Lopez Rodriguez, 2010; White, 2011b). Thus, the overall pattern of Polish migration in the years after the EU accession changed from a predominant single worker labour migration for shorter or longer periods of time to a pattern of 'commuter migration' (D'Angelo and Ryan, 2011), characterized by single worker migrants moving back and forth several times over years between the UK and Poland. Another pattern emerging during the years after EU accession was a substantial increase in family migration where whole families moved together or where more than one member of a family moved (father and eldest child and sometimes also mother and children) while more family members followed stepwise. From here and onwards the Polish families' migration stories have followed a wide range of different paths. In some cases the whole core family finally were reunited in the UK and gradually settled in the new country on a long-term, often indefinite basis. In other cases some of the household members after some time and for a variety of reasons returned to Poland (Ryan et al, 2007, 2009; Fihel et al. 2006 and Burrell, 2009 in D'Angelo & Ryan, 2011).

It had been partly foreseen by demographers and other scholars in the field that high numbers of labour migrants from the EU states in CEE would register after accession, but not that such a high number of family unifications would take place and that families migrating as a unit would reach such high levels. An unforeseen consequence of the EU accession in 2004 was therefore that a high number of Polish children arrived in Britain over a short period of time and was registered in British schools (D'Angelo and Ryan, 2011). From 2008 to 2010, the numbers of Polish-speaking children in British schools rose from 26 840 to 40 700, making Polish-speaking pupils the fourth largest group of pupils in the UK (ibid:237).

The research of Louise Ryan and her research group of scholars affiliated with Middlesex University and studying Polish migration to the UK, offers many interesting perspectives on family migration ('doing family in a context of migration and transnationalism') and related issues. These include parenting, work-life balance- and gender issues, acculturation and identity management, all in the context of migration and socio-cultural change (Ryan et al., 2007; 2008; 2009; Sales et al., 2008; D'Angelo and Ryan, 2011). Regarding our particular focus in this report, Ryan et al.'s research on schooling in the context of family migration and parents' and children's encounter with the British educational system, has brought important new insights.

When drawing the picture of Polish family migration and schooling in the UK throughout the last three decades, a point of departure may be that issue of children's schooling and aspirations and opportunities for higher level education for one's children, in itself may be an important factor in migrating families' decision-making from the very outset (Jerschina, 1991; Szlendak, 2003). According to Ryan et al. (2008; 2009 as cited in D'Angelo & Ryan, 2011) it is certainly an important factor when deciding to stay away from Poland for a longer period of time and longer than originally planned. However, this is not to say that Polish parents – in Poland nor in the UK – in general would rate UK schools to be better than Polish schools. On the contrary, research has shown that Polish parents tend to regard the Polish school system to be better than the British (D'Angelo and Ryan, 2011:244). Rather, when it comes to the decision to move in the first place, the family income situation and the relative affordability of education, in particular high school and higher academic education, in Poland versus in the UK has been one important factor among several when family migration increased after 2004 (op cit). In fact, Polish parents' reported ambitions regarding higher education as a future option for their children, in some cases seems to have been the main pull factor.

Regarding Polish migrants' negative evaluation of British education compared to the Polish education they knew, there may be different reasons for this. Obviously, parents' judgement may be well informed and based on well documented differences between the Polish and the British school system as well as their personal experience regarding the quality of their children's education. As an example, one of the differences most often referred in pedagogical reasoning and educational practice between Poland and England, regards a more formal and rigid approach to the curriculum and to factual knowledge in Poland than in England. Further, that school in England more than in Poland focus on making education interesting and relevant to everyday life issues. While interviewed, Polish parents also tell that their impression of British teachers is that they are more helpful and caring and less demanding than Polish teachers. Their judgement regarding the quality of Polish and British schools may be based on their personal weighting of these factors.

Scepticism towards the quality of schooling in the country of reception may also be a result of misinterpretation on the part of the parents of what they experience in the UK. This is reported to be the case particularly among the newly arrived Polish parents, and research has shown that it is based on lack of knowledge about the differences between the two school systems. Such lack of factual information may regard how the educational system is set up and works in practice, what pedagogical values and reasoning lie behind different teaching methodologies and what assumption about children's learning and wellbeing supports certain practices within the two systems (Reynolds, 2008, Ryan et al., 2010, Adams and Shambleau, 2006 in D'Angelo and Ryan, 2011).



The parents' experience that children in England do not get much homework, while this is an important element of schooling in Poland, is not necessarily a good or sufficient indication of how demanding and efficient British education is (D'Angelo and Ryan, 2011; Sales et al., 2008). Sales et al. (2008) offer an overview of the most important differences between the school systems that Polish parents arriving with their children in the UK may not be aware of and which may be crucial for their judgement.

The major differences are the following (ibid: 10):

- The Polish state education system is more uniform and centralized than the British system with less autonomy for individual schools in relation to the curriculum and the resources used.
- Most children in Poland attend their local school and there is less emphasis on choice, although this is changing in Polish schools in recent years.
- Children start school at the age of six in Poland while in Britain they start as five year olds. Younger Polish children entering British schools at the age of six may therefore have no previous educational experience, which all their British schoolmates at the same age will have.
- In Polish schools, all children are expected to fulfil the same objectives and reach the same levels regardless of their achievements and there is no streaming of children regarding general ability.
- In terms of assessment, Polish children get a certificate of completion every year from grade 1. In stage I of primary school (years 1-3) it is accompanied by a descriptive report, but from stage II of primary school and onwards children get grades from 1 to 6 in all subjects. Students in Polish schools will have frequent tests to monitor their progress. At the end of primary school (age 12), all children take an official test, leading to a certificate of completion. Their results will determine whether they may go to more academic lyceums or to vocational schools within the overall gymnasium framework (year 7-9).
- Children in Polish schools are expected to do homework daily in each subject from the year 4, bringing exercise books home. They have a detailed homework timetable that facilitates parental supervision of their children's homework and general progress.
- Discipline is more heavily emphasised in Polish schools than in British schools.
- Parental *engagement in their children's learning* is more emphasised in Poland than *involvement in school life*. This marks a difference from the British school tradition where parents tend to get to know each other and each other's children a lot more due to participation in the overall life of school with its regular events throughout the school year.

The homework system on the other hand and centralized curriculum provides Polish parents in Poland with detailed knowledge of the curriculum and their children's progress and to help eliminate '... potential gaps in knowledge acquisition' (Lopez Rodriguez, 2005 cited in Sales et al, 2008). Parents bring these expectations of control to English education which can be a major source of frustration (Sales et al, 2008:10).

White's research confirms the frustration and disappointment felt by Polish migrants bringing their children to British schools feeling unable to follow their progress to the extent they were used to in Poland. White also points to lack of regular homework and a more fixed curriculum as important reasons for this (White, 2011a:161). The frustration and disappointment is understandable when viewed from the perspective of Polish parents expecting their children to be successful and make up for their own deskilling as a result of their migration (Sales et al. (2008: 34).

The research literature on family migration also discusses other issues related to children and schooling as seen more from an educational point of view and from the perspective of inclusion and integration. One of them is school as an important arena for socialization and acculturation (D'Angelo and Ryan, 2011; Sales et al., 2008). Several scholars argue that school is a place where '... most of a culture's dominant discourses are exchanged' (Suarez\_Orozco & Suarez Orozco 2001 in D'Angelo and Ryan 2011) This is not only true for the Polish children who are exposed to British culture every day in their schools. Also their parents, through the expected involvement with their children's school, their teachers and the other parents on a regular basis, necessarily will learn a lot about the host society while following up their children. In this integration process, both the Polish children and their parents will become aware of and find ways to relate to socio-cultural differences between the host society and their society of origin. School is therefore an important arena for socialization, but also for acculturation to a new national context.

The role and social position of the teachers may tell a story about the relationship between children and adults in general and more specifically in terms of respect and how to express it, independent thinking versus conformity and autonomy versus loyalty and group responsibility. It may also give clues to the valuing of education in the new society and what kind of skills and knowledge are important to make your way in it (Ryan, 2010a; Strier, 2006 cited in D'Angelo & Ryan, 2011). Respect for adults and elders, and for authorities like teachers, are not equally valued in different societies and neither is the way to express it. Afghan and Somali mothers interviewed by Ryan et al. (2010b cited in D'Angelo and Ryan 2011) expressed concern that British school children in their eyes are disrespectful towards elders and teachers, and they feared that their own children may learn bad manners from their British schoolmates.

Being unfamiliar with the multicultural situation they are exposed to as migrants in the UK may influence the process of inclusion and adaptation to the social environment also in school. In general, Polish migrants' encounter with the multicultural British society has been challenging in different ways (Temple, 2011). Both parents and children have experienced racism and discrimination (D'Angelo and Ryan, 2011:240). Many have also found it frustrating to find themselves categorized by members of the dominant white British population as part of a huge category of 'immigrants' or 'ethnic minorities'. It may take some time and reflection to re-think one's identity in such a multi-cultural context as the UK. Suddenly a young boy or girl in school age will have to rethink their 'Polishness', how they value their country and culture of origin and what kind of 'migration project' they are part of: 'Is this just an episode in my life where I stay Polish while I wait to come back to my home country, is it a permanent and irreversible process of immigration and acculturation where the end result is becoming a full British citizen or is it something in between – will I be a Polish-British person with a mixed identity?' An aspect of continuing to be Polish while in Britain may include to maintain a Polish lifestyle, express values and show signs of Polishness also in public spaces. This may include certain ways of adopting and acting out a male or female role in different social settings in the new country. In interviews with D'Angelo and Ryan (2011), Polish boys and girls living in London reflect on the expectations they have to the gender roles of boys and girls and what it means for a young Polish – British person to behave properly in school, for example while talking to the teacher or while interacting with school mates of majority or minority backgrounds in different settings.

D'Angelo and Ryan (2011) describe different stages and outcomes in this acculturation process while they present young Polish students' own thoughts about being Polish migrants in London. In such processes of acculturation and identity formation, parents and schoolteachers both may play important roles as may other adult persons who act as significant others in the lives of the immigrant child. It is therefore of great importance to develop a mutual understanding between teachers and parents where both become aware of the other's expectations. Vertovec (2007) and Reynolds (2008), as referred to in D'Angelo and Ryan (2011), have studied how the effects of the British multicultural policy model can affect children's inclusion in schools, particularly when the multicultural reality changes from being diverse to being "super-diverse". While British politics is still dominated by a model that recognizes 16 ethnic categories (Sales et al., 2008), the UK reality today is much more complex, and this is reflected in the way many Polish students experience school. Being a new white European minority in the UK, still in the process of migration or transnationality (Botterill, 2013), they experience that, while trying to adapt to this super-diverse reality, their identity work is not supported by the dominant thinking and strategies in schools. . The

predominant strategies of inclusion in British schools are still based in the established 16 ethnic minorities paradigm and not in the reality of families and school children of multiple backgrounds experiencing a long term process of migration and transition (D'Angelo and Ryan, 2011:243).

The Polish schoolchildren's development of skills in their new second language, be it in the UK or in another European society, is an important factor both in terms of identity formation and acculturation and in terms of subject learning. For obvious reasons, in the early stages of settling in the host community and school, lack of skills in the majority language of the host society, it is difficult for the newly arrived children to benefit from their accumulated cultural capital bound to their mother tongue. This may be a question of difficulties of translation, but it may also be a question of cultural capital acquired in the society of origin not being recognized in the receiving society. Here the differences between Polish and British school cultures may cause extra trouble for a Polish school child (Lopez Rodriguez, 2010). One illustrating example may be that factual knowledge is more highly estimated in Poland while critical reflection is more appreciated in British schools (Sales et al, 2008:10).

Although second language acquisition is important in the process of acculturation and of inclusion in school, many other issues faced by migrant children are important for their wellbeing and sense of belonging. Reynolds (2008:5), cited in D'Angelo and Ryan (2011), lists the following important issues as a summary of what interviewed children had told: finding new friends, adjusting to a new school system and to other public systems and institutions 'coloured by' a different socio-cultural environment and national mentality, trauma that may have occurred before, during and after migration, racism and anti-immigration sentiments. To sum up this section, all these factors are at work also when Polish parents and their children encounter the British school system, as they will be in most cases of families migrating from one country in Europe to another.

### **3.3. Polishness, Polish language maintenance and local language acquisition**

The mere fact of migrating, changing one's place or country of residence, almost always implies a change in social networks available to migrants. Once in a new setting, migrants realize that their relationships with families, friends, former work colleagues, groups of interests and so on, are no longer of the same character. Distance, in terms of both space and time, tends to transform such relationships. Modern advances in communication technologies might mitigate or partly compensate for the impact of migration on one's social networks by moving such relationships into a virtual dimension. In its turn, such technological advancements may offer migrants alternative forms to maintain and cherish their social networks and own identity. However, the lack of traditional social networks may be felt the most in the form of practical arrangements that migrant families used prior to migration.

Among those social networks, the loss of support from immediate family members (grandparents, aunts/uncles, cousins, etc.) may be felt the most among migrant families. In many countries across the globe grandparents often assume an active role in the upbringing of their grandchildren (Aassve et al., 2012). This phenomenon may have different explanations, ranging from country's cultural values to its labour market situation for women. In countries with scarce and expensive childcare facilities and, at the same time, a high demand for women to be active on the labour market, grandparents and other family members are crucial in child minding and rearing.

In some countries involvement of grandparents in childrearing is an important strategy for immigrant mothers' efforts to reconcile work and family life (Aassve et al, 2012). Thus, dual-income families among highly educated immigrants from Eastern Europe in the USA were reported to bring grandparents from Europe to look after their grandchildren, especially during the first months after the child was born. Such a strategy is commonly referred to as 'flying grandmothers' (Nesteruk and Marks, 2009). Although aware of various differences that exist between countries in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), Nesteruk and Marks argue that the communist legacies, and in particular the emphasis put on high female employment, lead to an increased involvement of grandparents in childrearing. Social and childrearing support from grandparents and extended family are believed to be the most important factor of adaptation among Eastern European migrants (Kovalchik, 1996 and Rubila, 2004, 2007 cited in Nesteruk and Marks, 2009). With regards to immigrants' educational profiles, an active involvement of grandparents in childrearing is by no means limited to immigrants with lower levels of education. In fact, because of the high costs involved in maintaining close transnational family relations in the form of expensive intercontinental airfares, the strategy of 'flying grandparents' and frequent visits to the home country might be less affordable for immigrants with lower levels of educational and household income.

Family ties in Poland have been traditionally reported as very strong. Thus, it was reported that 72% of adults in Poland visited their parents at least once a week (CBOS, 2000 in Titkow and Duch, 2004). White suggests that mass out-migration from Poland in the 1990s-2000s has not weakened family ties in Poland (White, 2011a:29). However, while close relatives still seem to be very important, some studies suggest that parents-children relationships have changed and have become more egalitarian (Bojar, 2005:286 in White, 2011a:29).

Watching Polish television channels can be a tool for Poles living abroad to maintain their Polish identity. White (2011a), for instance, suggests that watching Polish rather than English TV may explain migrants' need to re-create their 'Polish homes'. Equally, it creates opportunities for many to stay updated about the current situation in their home country. At the same time, it prevents

Polish immigrants from being fully merged into British life, especially when it comes to political participation in the UK. Prioritizing Polish TV over British TV may also hamper migrants' prospects to acquire fluency in English. White (2011a) observed that Poles in the UK tend to send their children to Polish Saturday school despite the necessary investments that may amount to several hundred pounds per year. She reports 90 Polish Saturday schools as of 2009 in the UK (White, 2011a: 189). Some parents were reported to send their children to such schools in order to learn better Polish language and Polish history, while others saw it as a means to facilitate an eventual return to Poland and children's re-integration into Polish society.

It is a well known fact that acculturation and adaptation processes follow different tracks and have different speed for individual members of the migrating family, and that this may lead to changes in the relationship between family members and in the internal dynamics of the family. Both age-related factors and the higher degree of exposure to the host society language for children in school than for their parents in their work place often result in faster second language acquisition for children than their parents. This may create imbalances in terms of authority and power within the family and conflicts between the child and its parents and other adults. As an example, parents often become dependent of their children as interpreters of school information, and this may lead to misunderstandings between family and school. This has also been the case within the Polish migrant group to the UK (Ryan et al., 2010a cited in D'Angelo & Ryan, 2011). In some cases, Polish parents in the UK reported being somehow dependent on their children as interpreters (White, 2011a:160). Furthermore, a good command of English among immigrants' children often constituted an additional factor for them to remain in the UK (ibid.).

## Conclusions

This literature review has shown that the topic of parenting styles and childrearing practices among Polish migrant families in Europe has received relatively little attention in research on families and parenting among immigrants. Polish migrants in Western European societies, we argue, may in fact be positively discriminated for their perceived 'whiteness' and assumed to be culturally 'more similar' to host country's native population. Nevertheless, with about 2 million Polish migrants residing in other EU/EEA countries, most of whom have migrated and settled abroad just after 2004, the issue of parenting and acculturation among Polish migrants, in general, deserves to be studied in more details.

Parenting styles and childrearing practices among adult migrants may have their roots in how those migrants experienced their childhood and what parenting styles they were subject to in their early years. Therefore, this report puts a special focus on the Polish context, especially in the 1980s and 1990s. Studies by Jerschina (1991), Szlendak (2003), and Wejnert and Djumabaeva (2005) provide a fairly good picture of how parenting styles, gender roles, and childrearing practices evolved in Poland since the communist times. Nevertheless, for the mere fact of having their background in less egalitarian cultures migrants should not be assumed to adopt more conservative parenting styles in immigration. More traditional division of gender roles and house chores among migrant families may in fact reflect the adaptation of migrants to the needs of the local labour market. This seems to be the case of many Polish migrants families in the UK where men mainly worked in the construction industry before its collapse in the result of the global financial crisis of 2008.

For its role as the key destination for Polish migrants after 2004, studies from the UK constitute the core of the research body on new Polish migrations. Researchers such as A. White, L. Ryan, R. Sales, K. Boterill, A. D'Angelo, and many others have made a big contribution to the body of literature in this field. Most of them employ qualitative methods, mainly interviews with Polish migrants either currently residing in the UK or former migrants who have returned to Poland. For example, by highlighting the multitude of ways in which families may be split, reunited, and reshaped as result of migration, Ryan (2011) explores what is meant by 'the family' and how it may operate transnationally in the British-Polish context. In her monograph, White (2011a) explores why so many Poles have migrated since 2004, why more children migrate with their families and how working-class families in the West of England make decisions whether to stay or return to Poland. She discovers that Polish migrants in the UK develop strong attachments to their new localities and the prospects of return are usually conceptualized by migrants as return to their home localities and not the home country as such. Furthermore, schools and kindergartens are important arenas where differences in parenting styles of migrants may come into light. Thus, a study by

D'Angelo and Ryan (2011) explore the role of schools as sites of socialization in the processes of adaptation, accommodation, negotiation and identity formation among Polish migrant families in the UK. Sales et al. (2008) discuss best practices in British schools to accommodate the needs of Polish pupils. Polish parents in the UK are characterized in the study as very involved in child's learning and willing to follow child's progression very closely. But being unable to do so because of differences in learning strategies many of them experience frustration, disappointment and misunderstandings. Generally, on the role of family in shaping migration, Botterill (2013), basing her conclusions on the empirical work with young Polish migrants in Scotland and Poland, argues that family plays ideological, affective and practical roles in shaping and supporting mobilities among young Polish people. Drawing on findings from interviews with recent migrants from Poland to the UK, Kilkey et al. (2013) emphasize the importance of situated transnational analyses and find that migrant men's fathering narratives, practices, and projects are deeply embedded within the dominant framework of the gendered division of labour.

Despite the relatively big body of literature on Polish migrations to the UK, the issue of parenting and childrearing among them in the immigration context has rarely been the main focus of their research. Therefore, more research on this topic, both in the UK and other European reception contexts as well, is needed in order to shed light on how parenting styles and gender roles change among intra-European migrants. A complex research project, financed via Norway Grants, is now being conducted in cooperation with several Polish and Norwegian research centres in order to answer these questions from the Norwegian perspective. Centre for Intercultural Communication (SIK) in Stavanger is responsible for the work package within the greater project which looks specifically on changing parent roles, household relationships and work-life balance of Polish dual career couples in Norway. Its goal will be to gain knowledge about how Polish migrant couples interpret perceived changes in parenting styles and practices – in their own lives and on group level – in terms of changing values, motivations and awareness or rather as immediate responses to a different context of childrearing in Norway and Poland.



## Bibliography

- Aassve, A., Arpino, B., and A. Goisis** (2012), 'Grandparenting and mothers' labour force participation: A comparative analysis using the generations and gender survey.' *Demographic Research*, 27(3), 53-84.
- Botterill, K.** (2011), 'Mobility and Immobility in the European Union: Experiences of Young Polish People Living in the UK.' *Studia Migracyjne–Przegląd Polonijny* 1 (2011): 47-70.
- Botterill, K.** (2013), 'Family and Mobility in Second Modernity: Polish Migrant Narratives of Individualization and Family Life.' First version of record, *Sociology* 6 June 2013, 1-18.
- D'Angelo, A. and L. Ryan** (2011), 'Sites of socialization – Polish parents and children in London schools.' *Studia Migracyjne–Przegląd Polonijny* 1 (2011): 237-258.
- European Commission** (2012), 2011 Report on the Application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. Retrieved from [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/fundamentalrights/files/2011-report-fundamental-rights\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/fundamentalrights/files/2011-report-fundamental-rights_en.pdf)
- Glick Schiller, N., Basch, L. and Blanc-Szanton, C.** (1992), 'Transnationalism: a new analytical framework for understanding migration,' in Glick Schiller, N., Basch, L. and Blanc-Szanton, C. (Eds.), *Toward a Transnational Perspective on Migration*. New York: New York Academy of Sciences, 1-24.
- Ignatowicz, A.** (2011), 'Travelling Home: Personal Mobility and "New" Polish Migrants in England.' *Studia Migracyjne–Przegląd Polonijny* 1 (2011): 33-46.
- Janneke, P. and R. Chantal** (2009), *The Provision of Childcare Services: A Comparative Review of 30 European Countries*. European Commission's Expert Group on Gender and Employment Issues (EGGE), European Commission Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg.
- Jerschina, J.** (1991), 'Polish Parents in the 1980s and the 1990s,' In: Ulla Björnberg (Ed.), *European Parents in the 1990s: Contradictions and Comparisons*. Transaction Publishers, 283-306.
- Kilkey M., Plomien A. and D. Perrons** (2013), 'Migrant Men's Fathering Narratives, Practices and Projects in National and Transnational Spaces: Recent Polish Male Migrants to London,' IOM International Migration, Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Lopez Rodriguez, M.** (2010), 'Migration and a quest for 'normalcy'. Polish migrant mothers and the capitalization of meritocratic opportunities in the UK.' *Social identities*, 16(3), 339-358.
- Moskal, M.** (2011), 'Transnationalism and the role of family and children in intra-European labour migration.' *European Societies*, 13(1), 29-50.
- Nesteruk, O. and L. Marks** (2009), 'Grandparents across the ocean: Eastern European immigrants' struggle to maintain intergenerational relationships.' *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 77-95.
- Nesteruk, O. and L. Marks** (2011), 'Parenting in Immigration: Experiences of Mothers and Fathers from Eastern Europe Raising Children in the United States.' *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 809-825.
- Portes, A., Guarnizo, L.E. and P. Landolt** (1999), 'The study of transnationalism: pitfalls and promises of an emergent research field', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 22(2): 217-237
- Rienzo, Cinzia and Carlos Vargas-Silva** (2013), *Migrants in the UK: An Overview*, Migration Observatory briefing, COMPAS, University of Oxford, December 2013.

- Ryan, L.** (2011), 'Transnational relations: family migration among recent Polish migrants in London.' *International Migration*, 49(2), 80-103.
- Ryan, L., Sales, R., Tilki, M., and B. Siara** (2008), 'Social networks, social support and social capital: the experiences of recent Polish migrants in London.' *Sociology*, 42(4), 672-690.
- Ryndyk, O.** (2013), *Welfare and migration: Transitions into and out of welfare benefits receipt among Polish migrant workers in Norway*. Master thesis published in HF-IGIS Collection, University of Stavanger.
- Sales, R., Ryan, L., Rodriguez, M. L., and A. D'Angelo** (2008), *Polish Pupils in London Schools: opportunities and challenges*. Social Policy Research Centre research report.
- Sandnes, T. and K. Henriksen** (2014), *Familieinnvandring og ekteskapsmønster 1990-2012*. RAPP 2014-11, Statistikk Norge.
- Sokół-Rudowska, M.** (2013), 'Us Among Them. A study of the contemporary Polish emigration to Norway.' *Studia Humanistyczne AGH-ISSN 2084-3364*, (12/1), 9-24.
- Statistics Netherlands** (2010), *More than half of Polish immigrants do not settle in the Netherlands*  
URL: <http://www.cbs.nl/en-GB/menu/themas/bevolking/publicaties/artikelen/archief/2010/2010-3284-wm.htm>
- Szlendak, T.** (2003), *The Neglected Playground. Childhood Parenting Styles and Educational Inequalities*. Report. Instytut Spraw Publicznych, Warsaw.
- Temple, B.** (2011), 'Influences on integration: Exploring Polish people's views of other ethnic communities.' *Studia Migracyjne-Przegląd Polonijny* 1 (2011): 97-110.
- Titkow, A. and D. Duch** (2004), 'The Polish Family: Always and Institution?' In: Mihaela Robila (Ed.), *Families in Eastern Europe. Contemporary Perspectives in Family Research*, Volume 5, Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 69-85.
- Vargas-Silva, Carlos** (2012), *EU Migrants in other EU Countries: An Analysis of Bilateral Migrant Stocks*. Migration Observatory briefing, COMPAS, University of Oxford, UK, May 2012.
- Vertovec, S.** (2001), 'Transnationalism and Identity.' *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 27 (4).
- Wejnert, B. and A. Djumabaeva** (2005), 'From patriarchy to egalitarianism: Parenting roles in democratizing Poland and Kyrgyzstan.' *Marriage & family review*, 36(3-4), 147-171.
- White, A.** (2011a), *Polish Families and Migration since EU Accession*. The Policy Press.
- White, A.** (2011b), 'The mobility of Polish families in the West of England: translocalism and attitudes to return.' *Studia Migracyjne-Przegląd Polonijny* 1 (2011): 11-32.

Official sources of statistics:

**Central Statistics Office (CSO) Ireland:** [www.cso.ie/](http://www.cso.ie/)

**Eurostat:** <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/eurostat/home/>

**Statistics Iceland:** [www.statice.is/](http://www.statice.is/)

**Statistics Netherlands (CBS):** [www.cbs.nl/](http://www.cbs.nl/)

**Statistics Norway (SSB):** [www.ssb.no/en/](http://www.ssb.no/en/)



**Senter for Interkulturell Kommunikasjon  
2015**

ISBN: 978-82-7721-127-5

ISSN: 1500-1474

Misjonshøgskolens forlag  
Misjonsmarka 12, 4024 Stavanger, Tlf.: 51516247  
Fax: 51516253, E-mail: forl@mhs.no