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### Journal Item

How to cite:

Gawlewicz, Anna (2015). Beyond 'us' and 'them': migrant encounters with difference and reimagining the national. *Fennia – International Journal of Geography*, 193(2) pp. 198–211.

For guidance on citations see [FAQs](#).

© [not recorded]

Version: Version of Record

Link(s) to article on publisher's website:

<http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.11143/46322>

<https://fennia.journal.fi/article/view/46322>

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# Beyond 'us' and 'them': migrant encounters with difference and reimagining the national

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Gawlewicz, Anna (2015). Beyond 'us' and 'them': Migrant encounters with difference and reimagining the national, *Fennia* 193: 2, 198–211. ISSN 1798-5617.

In an era of accelerated international mobility, individuals have increased opportunities to confront values, practices and discourses linked to their national belonging with the lifestyles, cultural scripts and social norms of receiving societies. This paper discusses how migrants, who move between a relatively homogeneous society (Poland) and a superdiverse one (the UK), negotiate “the national” and “the foreign” in orientalist binary oppositions. It explores how Polish migrants’ lived experience of difference in the UK context impacts on the construction of Poland. As such, it focuses on essentialist discourses of ‘inferiority’ and ‘superiority’ (of the UK to Poland and vice versa) that are mobilised while migrants negotiate what they believe are British values (i.e. tolerance and diversity) and Polish values (i.e. family). The article draws upon multiple interviews and audio-diaries from a wider study that explores Polish migrants’ encounters with difference and the circulation of values and attitudes between Poland and the UK.

Keywords: Polish migrants in UK, nationalism, encounters, diversity, family values, multiple interviews, audio-diaries

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## Introduction

International mobility is a profound experience that influences most aspects of everyday life (O'Reilly & Benson 2009). By moving across national borders, migrants are frequently exposed to distinctive normativities, competing values, different lifestyles and unfamiliar cultural scripts. The moral framework they were socialised to live with in their home societies alongside the cultural baggage they bear are therefore particularly prone to be contested, reshaped or enhanced. Against this backdrop, in this paper I discuss how migrants from Poland (a country perceived as relatively homogeneous with regard to ethnicity, nationality and religion, Podemski 2012) who move to the UK (a society representative of ‘superdiversity’, Vertovec 2007) negotiate “the national” and “the foreign” in orientalist binary oppositions. I explore how lived experience of difference in the UK context affects Polish migrants’ (re-)construction of their country. In doing so, I focus on essentialist

discourses of ‘inferiority’ and ‘superiority’ (of the UK to Poland and vice versa) that are mobilised while migrants negotiate what they believe constitutes British and Polish values. I use the example of tolerance and diversity to reflect on migrant discussions about the supposed inferiority of Polish society to the UK. Then, by looking at family values, I investigate a reverse discourse of the alleged superiority of Polishness over Britishness. The choice of tolerance/diversity and family values to study the relation between “the national” and “the foreign” stems from the tendency among my informants to associate the former with core British values and the latter with core Polish values.

The paper draws upon data collected for a wider study that explores Polish migrants’ encounters with difference and transnational circulation of values and attitudes between Poland and the UK (Gawlewicz 2014b). Since 2004, when Poland entered the European Union, there has been an unprecedented influx of Polish people to the UK. It is estimated that there are currently over half a mil-

lion Poles in Britain (ONS 2011), which makes the Polish community one of the most prominent new national minorities in the UK. Whereas the UK has had an uninterrupted history of immigration in the second half of 20th and early 21st century (Vertovec 2007), the situation in Poland developed quite differently. Because of the communist regime, Poland was largely 'isolated' from ethnic, national, cultural and religious diversity until late 1980s (Borowik & Szarota 2004). For this reason, Polish society is still considered relatively homogeneous (Podemski 2012). In this context, it has been argued that for many Polish migrants moving to such heterogeneous societies as the UK is accompanied by the first meaningful encounter with increased cultural diversity (Jordan 2006).

Importantly, the majority of the post-2004 Polish migrants to the UK were reported to be in their 20s at the time of entering Britain (Fihel & Kaczmarczyk 2009). It is precisely now – a decade later – that they have often started their families and are having children. The numbers of childbearing Polish women in the UK have indeed been increasing rapidly and are now opening the rank of non-UK-born women giving birth in the UK (ONS 2012). Polish is also the second most spoken language after English in England and Wales (ONS 2013). Against this backdrop, the study of how Polish migrants negotiate "the national" in terms of social norms, daily routines, attitudes towards difference, religion, family values and parenting strategies is of great academic and social importance. There has been, nonetheless, relatively little scholarly interest into these issues so far, with several notable exceptions that focus on the expressions of diasporic belonging (e.g. Burrell 2006, 2008; Temple 2010; Brown 2011; Bielewska 2012) and family migration (e.g. Lopez Rodriguez 2010; Heath et al. 2011; White 2011). This paper therefore contributes to and extends the discussion about how recent Polish mobility shapes the understanding of home society and how discourses of tolerance and diversity on the one hand and family values on the other hand intertwine with these debates. In doing so, it adds to broader literatures on international mobility, transnationalism and belonging by problematizing how "the national" is re-imagined, re-made or re-defined in the age of migration.

I begin with briefly reflecting on the question of "the national" in times of mobility followed by a short introduction into the research context and methodologies employed. Then, I explore how the notion of Polishness (and implicitly Britishness) is

shaped in migrant discourses of 'inferiority' and 'superiority'. In doing so, I firstly look at values such as tolerance and diversity associated by research participants with the UK. Secondly, I explore the understandings of family constructed by participants (and in a popular nationalistic discourse more broadly) as the core Polish value.

## The question of "the national" in the age of migration

The experience of international mobility opens up possibilities to disrupt and negotiate various aspects of national identity and belonging (Silvey 2004). It has been argued to be "undoubtedly a massive upheaval, bringing about many transformations in the migrants' lives" (O'Reilly & Benson 2009: 7). There is a well-established tradition in researching the link between the issue of "the national" and migration through the studies of diasporic identities and transnationalism (e.g. Glick Schiller et al. 1992; Anthias 1998, 2001; Portes et al. 1999; Faist 2000; Çağlar 2001; Ehrkamp 2005; Kofman 2005; Nagel & Staeheli 2008; Kennedy 2009; Vertovec 2009). Glick Schiller et al. (1992: 1) have famously defined transnationalism as "the process by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement". As such, it acknowledges that while transnational migrants move across national borders, 'here' and 'there' remain for them the elements of the same social field. Effectively, they develop complex loyalties and maintain social and economic ties with two or more countries. Even though transnational behaviour is not solely the feature of contemporary times (Portes et al. 1999), it has significantly escalated by the widespread availability of inexpensive and fast transportation and communications. These new technological capabilities have been increasingly argued to transform the lives of migrants by creating new social and political geographies as well as multiple (hybrid and/or overlapping) spaces of belonging (Vertovec 2009; Nedelcu 2012).

Despite the scope of transnational practice and complex allegiances mobile people may express, some studies evidence that "the national" or the strong sense of belonging to the imagined national community (Anderson 1991) does not lose the capacity to shape everyday lives as well as values and attitudes of contemporary migrants (e.g. Glick

Schiller & Fournon 2001; Pratt & Yeoh 2003; Burrell 2008; Brown 2011; Skey 2011; Bielewska 2012). This could be paired with Anderson's (1992) concept of long-distance nationalism. Although it was originally used to describe political activities involving a country or a place where one no longer lives (or never lived at all), in the context of accelerated and diversified global mobility it has instead been employed to explore migrant forms of nostalgia, loyalty and emotional attachment to their home societies (Skrbis 1999; Glick Schiller & Fournon 2001; Wise 2004; Jaffrelot & Therwath 2007). As such, it seems to partly mirror the ongoing debates on banal nationalism "embedded in routines of social life" (Billig 1995: 175) that primarily regarded static populations (e.g. Paasi 1999; Palmer 1998; Edensor 2006; Antonsich 2009). Here, Edensor (2006: 539), for example, argues that even though people find themselves in increasingly globalised circumstances, nationalisms remain "grounded in the everyday routines and practices surrounding work, family, consumption, leisure, socialising and cultural activities". This has been recently extended by Skey (2011: 233) who, by investigating English people's narratives of travel, has noted that "individuals are often made aware of their own national identity and allegiances, when negotiating encounters with other people and cultural forms".

While national attachment does not always seem to decrease among mobile people (Antonsich 2009), the nature of migrant relationships with "the national" may get contested, challenged and/or altered (Pratt & Yeoh 2003). It has been acknowledged that "the changing relationship between migrants and their 'homes' is held to be an almost quintessential characteristic of transnational migration" (Al-Ali & Koser 2002: 1). Although the home Al-Ali and Koser refer to may, in fact, relate to various concepts beyond the nationality and nation (e.g. space, place, identity), the sending society remains for many migrants an embodiment of home (Armbruster 2002). The recognition of the ever flexible migrant relationship with their 'homes' raises a few significant questions which despite a substantial body of work on migration, diaspora, transnationalism and the constructions of the homeland (cf. Christou & King 2010; Mavroudi 2010; Christou 2011) have been less addressed. How and to what extent does migration from a relatively homogeneous to a diverse society impact on the perception of "the national" and "the foreign" with regard to social diversity? How,

in this context, does migration contribute to the romanticisation, essentialisation or orientalised of home and host societies? Finally, which aspects of migrant life within/among diversity are likely to be influenced by the national, how and why? In this paper, I intend to address these issues by investigating the narratives of recent Polish migrants to the UK.

## Research project and methodologies

This paper draws upon the empirical material from a wider study into Polish migrants' encounters with difference and transnational circulation of values and attitudes (Gawlewicz 2014b). While this study involved research participants in both the UK and Poland, in this paper I focus on data collected from migrants to the UK only. In recruiting these participants, I was seeking to diversify the sample in terms of age, gender, sexuality, family/marital status, class, education, occupation, religion/belief, personal views and length of stay in the UK. Given the small size of the sample (14 migrants in total), I prioritized gender, age and length of stay in the UK. The participants included nine women and five men aged 21–51 (being representative of Polish arrivals to the UK post 2004, Fihel & Kaczmarczyk 2009) who moved to the UK between 2004 and 2011.

I conducted multiple interviews (at least two) with these participants between June 2011 and May 2012. The interviews explored each participant's life in Poland pre-migration, the experience of migration itself, the first impressions of the British society and aspects of life in the UK post-migration. In addition, I asked the migrants to record audio-diaries (Worth 2009) for a period of one 'typical' week – a time which they would expect to be illustrative of their life in the UK. In the audio-diaries they talked about their impressions, feelings and emotions related to day-to-day encounters with difference. This enhanced the data I collected through the interviews by providing spontaneous, uncontrolled and uninterrupted flows of oral narration (cf. Worth 2009).

Importantly, I explored migration experience in the context of the Northern English city of Leeds, one of the major (and diverse) cities in the UK. My unique position of a Polish migrant researcher studying my own migrant co-nationals was written into the research process (Gawlewicz 2014a; see also Kim 2012). As the body of data I collected was

entirely in Polish, I carefully translated it into English. This required maintaining conceptual equivalence, i.e. the comparability of meanings between the original utterance and the translated piece (Temple 1997; Birbili 2000; Gawlewicz 2014a). Then, I employed narrative analysis to explore linkages, relationships and socially constructed explanations that naturally occur within oral accounts (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009). This approach enabled me to analyse "varieties of individual selfhood and agency 'from below' and in practice, as constructed in peoples articulated self-understandings" (Maynes et al. 2008: 1).

All the quotations I include in this paper come from my translated transcriptions of the interviews. Three ellipsis dots in brackets are used to indicate that a small section of text has been removed to facilitate the readability of quotations. Clarifying pieces of information are introduced in square brackets. All names I use in the paper are pseudonyms to ensure participants' anonymity.

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

In an upcoming discussion about responses to diversity in postsocialist Poland, Mayblin et al. (2014: 13) note that "the orientalist perspective which casts Poland as traditional and behind the West" still resonates in many Polish narratives as well as in popular discourses. They explain that during the 1990s transition period from the communist rule to a liberal democratic political system, Poles were encouraged by the emerging neoliberal politics to internalize the orientalist gaze which depicted Poland as 'backward' and/or 'lagging behind' Western Europe. The rhetoric of Poland needing to "catch up with the West" or "return to Europe" was further reinforced against the backdrop of Poland's accession to the NATO and the EU (1999 and 2004, respectively) (Kuus 2004). The discursive practices of re-inscribing truly colonial relations between the West and the East of Europe, and situating Poland in an obscure position in-between, resulted in what some scholars call "inferiority-superiority complex" (Kurczewska 2003; Zarycki 2004). On the one hand, the Polish society seems to feel insufficiently modern in comparison to the iconic West, and on the other hand, it appears to express high levels of national pride and a sense of exceptionality (Marciniak 2009).

The production of Polish society as inferior towards the iconic West has been broadly investigated by a range of researchers across various disciplines including geography (e.g. Verdery 1996; Kuus 2004; Stenning 2005; Chari & Verdery 2009; Marciniak 2009; Owczarzak 2009; Burrell 2011; Horolets & Kozłowska 2012; Mayblin et al. 2014). By exploring the Polish migrant narratives of childhood in late socialist Poland, Burrell (2011: 143) has, for example, looked into "why west was often considered best". In doing so, she has noted a tendency to self-orientalise and self-occidentalise among Polish children and migrants to the UK, respectively. While referring to how migrants recall their past material encounters with 'western' things (e.g. toys, sweets or clothes), she has drawn attention to "a binary divide between colourful, fashionable and good-smelling west and a grey, overtly standardised east" (Burrell 2011: 153).

The persistence of such binarism with regard to Polish and other Western European societies could be linked with the construction of normality and abnormality (for a discussion about the concept of normality see Goffman 1974; Giddens 1987; Misztal 2001). Galasińska and Kozłowska (2009) and Galasińska (2010), for example, explore how post-accession Polish migrants in the UK construct the experience of everyday life and work in Britain as 'normal' in contrast to the supposedly 'abnormal' state of affairs in the contemporary Poland. This is even more evident in Horolets and Kozłowska's (2012) recent study. By investigating representations of the UK as a receiving society, the authors establish that many Polish migrants associate the UK with high culture, excellence, aristocracy and civilizational development.

In this article, I extend these debates by evidencing how in everyday narratives Polish migrants to the UK reproduce the orientalist binary relation (Said 2003 [1978]) between Poland and the UK. I explore the discourses of 'inferiority' and 'superiority' research participants engaged with following their encounters with difference in the UK context. Discourses of 'inferiority' are investigated with regard to tolerance and diversity understood by the majority of participants as the core elements of essentialised Britishness. Discourses of 'superiority', on the other hand, are analysed with reference to family values conceptualised by the migrants in this study as core Polish values.

### Discourses of 'inferiority'

The discursive construction of home and host societies in binary oppositions was striking across my fieldwork with Polish migrants in Leeds. Interestingly, this seemed to be the case regardless of the extent of the study participants' encounters with difference in terms of ethnicity, religion, class, sexuality, gender, age and disability in the UK. In comparison to the experience (if fleeting or superficial) of diversity in the British context, many of my respondents constructed Poland as by assumption homogeneous in terms of ethnicity, nationality and religion. Furthermore, while difference in the British context was articulated as 'obvious' and/or 'normal' by many of my informants, it was simultaneously 'unimaginable' in Poland. This is reflected in the quote below where one of my female participants, Natalia, says:

"There [in the UK] is this mixture of nationalities, religions. You see a Catholic church, a Sikh temple nearby, an Orthodox church and a Buddhist temple. Such a mixture. I cannot imagine this in Poland. (...) They're building this mosque in Warsaw – it's such a controversy. There were protests. And here [in the UK] it's no problem." Natalia (female, aged 21, moved to the UK in 2009)

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

"I think sometimes if it would be possible – city like London – if it would be possible for such a city to exist in Poland. So many nationalities... And, if it would be possible that everybody lives together. I think it would be hard. People in Poland wouldn't be as open and tolerant. And, it wouldn't work, (...) especially small towns where people who have a different skin colour or a nationality are not really seen." Lena (female, aged 29, moved to the UK in 2005)

Evidently, Lena implies that the main reason for the 'impossibility' of diversity in the Polish context is the supposed intolerance of Polish society. In one of the interviews, she went so far as to claim that Polish people were 'narrow-minded' in terms of acceptance of difference. Most curiously, a similar view was uncritically expressed by many other informants who repeatedly constructed the essentialist image of Polish society as 'backward/parochial' or 'closed'. In doing so, they not only mobilized the popular postsocialist discourse of "lag-

ging behind the West" (Kuus 2004; Owczarzak 2009; Mayblin et al. 2014), but also extended this orientalist perspective onto the capacity of the Polish society to be tolerant and/or welcoming to difference.

"I think that we [Polish people] are backward in terms of tolerance. (...) As a society, we try hard not to let any outsider in." Marek (male, aged 32, moved to the UK in 2007)

"Poland is a more closed country [than the UK]. There's less diversity. And here [in the UK] – you have lots of various nations... and, I don't know, cultures... And in Poland – the majority is white, right? Heterosexual. (...) Everybody tries to be the same. And difference is noticed." Tomek (male, aged 26, moved to the UK in 2007)

The supposed intolerance of Polish society some of my informants elaborated on was, furthermore, often discussed in the context of presence and/or visibility of Muslim people in public spaces. Despite the long-lasting existence of a small indigenous Muslim-Tatar community in Poland (see Górak-Sosnowska 2011), Muslim people evoke largely unfavourable attitudes (Pędziwiatr 2010). For some of my research participants, who admitted having increased contact with Muslims in the UK, this figure of religious Other has become a *litmus test* for social attitudes towards difference. This may be one of the reasons why one of my respondents, Ela, linked the supposed 'backwardness/parochialism' of the Polish society with the alleged social incapacity to be welcoming towards Muslims. It is crucial to mention here that the Polish adjective she used to describe the society (*zaściankowe*) does not have a literal English equivalent. It has neither the negative undertone as the English term 'backward' nor the neutral one of 'parochial'. Thus, I use both in the quote below:

"It's [Polish society] backward/parochial. (...) This strives for Polishness. It would be very difficult for Muslims to settle down. People would just oppress them and, and squeeze them." Ela (female, aged 31, moved to the UK in 2005)

The tendency to contrast the alleged homogeneity/closeness of Polish society with the assumed diversity/tolerance of British society is particularly intriguing and requires a closer look here. It is necessary to explain that alongside the construction of Poland as non-diverse and 'backward', I noted a similar process regarding encounters with difference in the Polish context. Namely, despite being

reminded that difference is a broad term including social status, class, age, gender, sexuality and disability, the majority of my research participants assumed that Poland was a place of scarce encounters with difference. Oddly enough, many of the very same respondents admitted later in the interview(s) that they did, in fact, have a repeated contact with difference. What is more, numerous informants spoke of encounters in Poland that deeply influenced their personal pre-migration values and attitudes. The analysis of these inconsistencies in migrant stories has led me to argue that the construction of Poland as a homogeneous space of little contact with otherness is merely a discursive practice, rather than a reflection of actual social relations. This, in turn, suggests that the post-migratory production of Poland as non-diverse/backward and the UK as diverse/tolerant is also a discursive tendency reflecting the process of othering (and stereotyping), rather than the expression of judgment based on actual experiences. Indeed, although research participants constructed the home and host societies in binary terms, some of them spoke of experiences that contradicted this simplistic relation (e.g. discrimination or prejudice they experienced in the UK). In this respect, their narratives were often 'messy' and reflected inconsistencies between the discursive production of Poland or the UK and the stories of actual experiences in these societies. While in this article I primarily focus on discursive constructions, I do acknowledge that this perspective has its limitations regarding how the national and the foreign may be experienced or 'lived' by migrants. Nonetheless, I believe it is significant in a discussion of the national in the age of migration as it reflects the changing migrant relationship with the sending society (Al-Ali & Koser 2002) and the process of constant (re)production of home and host countries.

Importantly, the assumed intolerance of Polish society was argued in my study to be one of the major reasons why some participants dis-identified with their home society post-migration. Quite intriguing in this respect is particularly Tomek's account in which he speaks of how easier and more comfortable it is for him to express personal views about difference in Britain. In the interview, Tomek, quoted earlier in this paper, admitted that while living in Poland he was afraid to openly express his opinions about religion, sexuality or politics even to acquaintances or friends. Apparently, he feared for being stigmatized and ridiculed or as he put it: "having everybody against you". This has, howev-

er, changed after he moved to the UK where he has not only gained confidence about his views on many social issues, but – as he argued – realized many people in his environment shared his attitudes towards difference:

"It's just easier here, in the UK. (...) I don't know whether, if I lived in Poland, I'd openly say that I'm pro-gay, pro-whatever and an atheist. I guess, it would be more difficult. (...) When I lived there and met with people the majority would have similar views and it was difficult for me to say anything, because if there are ten people against one person, it's difficult to make statements, right? (...) I consider myself very tolerant [now]. And, I guess this is due to the fact that I can [be tolerant], I can talk about stuff [in the UK]. I think I wouldn't be as tolerant in Poland if I was sticking to some groups. (...) My acquaintances from elementary and secondary school... They are less educated, some of them didn't study. (...) And here [in the UK] – I could be tolerant here, so it has encouraged me, it motivated me." Tomek (male, aged 26, moved to the UK in 2007)

In the eyes of this informant, the social pressure in Poland is limiting people's willingness to be openly 'tolerant' regardless of one's willingness to be so. Britain, on the other hand, seems to offer Tomek more freedom of opinion and speech. Indeed, he constructs the UK as a place where one "can be tolerant". It appears that Tomek distances himself from his home society, and his groups of Polish acquaintances in particular, as – in his view – it is impossible to express less popular views in Poland.

The striking tendency of research participants to discursively construct Poland and the UK in binary oppositions suggests that the encounter with diversity in the UK context strongly affects the migrant perceptions of Polish society and reinforces the orientalist gaze (Verdery 1996; Kuus 2004; Chari & Verdery 2009; Burrell 2011; Horolets & Kozłowska 2012; Mayblin et al. 2014). In migrant stories, Poland and the Polish society are, indeed, assumed to be in my informants' words 'backward', 'homogeneous' and 'intolerant', while the UK by implication 'developed', 'diverse' and 'tolerant'. Although sometimes challenged by the narratives of actual experiences, this essentialist binary relation has a capacity to influence the extent to which some Polish migrants (dis-)identify with their home country. Given the necessity to reflect on this issue, the discussion here aids a greater understanding about the influence of migration as well as the consequence of a major shift from a relatively homogeneous to a diverse social space.

Crucially, the changing relationships with home society are discussed here with regard to tolerance and diversity. These values, as I have mentioned earlier in the article, were perceived by the study participants as the elements of essentialised Britishness (despite the fact that experiences of some migrants seemed to challenge this assumption). Given this understanding, it is crucial to consider how values particularly associated with Polishness are understood in relation to Britishness.

### Discourses of 'superiority'

Alongside the discursive construction of Poland as non-diverse and intolerant, numerous attempts to compare and morally evaluate Polishness and Britishness were quite salient in my study. In these migrant negotiations, family values – including the nature of human relationships, gender roles, lifestyle and mundane practices – were most frequently mentioned. This is unsurprising given the significance of family for many Polish people. Indeed, family is believed to be, in the Polish national(istic) imaginary, one of the core elements of Polishness (Cieniuch 2007; Jasińska-Kania 2012). The significance of family is above all reflected in public opinion polls in Poland. According to the recent survey of a representative sample of adult Poles, 78% of Polish people consider happy family life as the most significant value in their lives (CBOS 2013). Importantly, in a similar representative survey five years ago exactly the same percentage viewed family as the core value (CBOS 2013). Furthermore, the vast majority (85%) of the 2013 survey respondents believe family is a source of personal happiness and only 12% think that a person can be happy without a family life. The survey also reveals that 55% of adult Poles consider a nuclear family (i.e. a married couple with children) the most appealing family model. In fact, practically all adult participants state they would like to have children. Nonetheless, although a certain family model seems to exist in the Polish collective consciousness, very diverse family arrangements exist in practice (Mizielińska 2010). It then appears that on a discursive level one family model – i.e. nuclear and/or traditional family – remains hegemonic and powerful whereas on a social practice level family models are quite diverse (ibid.).

It is crucial to mention here that what is broadly understood as 'family' is to a significant degree imagined (Gillis 1996; Smith 2011; Valentine et al. 2012). Gillis (1996) has argued about living in two

families: the idealised vision of family (*the family we live by*) which constitutes a normative framework people aspire to, and *the family we actually live with* which embraces the 'messiness' of everyday life (Valentine et al. 2012). In this article, I focus largely on the migrant narratives of the imagined *family we live by*. In doing so, I look into how what is constructed by my respondents as Polish family values is conceptualised against British.

Although the narratives of a few informants revealed disharmonies between how family was imagined and lived, it was pinpointed by the majority of participants as a core Polish value. Often idealized, it was discursively constructed as a 'warm' community of strongly tied people. According to my informants' narratives, the dominant family model in Poland – a "typical Polish family" as some study participants would put it – is a heterosexual family often extended to grandparents and further relatives. In addition, in these narratives respect towards older people or older generations is frequently stressed as one of the most significant values intentionally passed onto children. Family seems furthermore associated with certain normativity involving the celebration of home, religious practice and tradition. This is reflected in the account of Maja below who describes how the concept of family inevitably intersects with the notion of home, Catholicism and behavioural normativity:

"Family's very important – family and home. (...) I guess, in Poland everybody attaches greater importance to home – it's something most significant. If you live in one place it's usually for life. (...) In my village [in Poland] it's very important to have a garden in front of a house which would be neat and tidy and look nice. On the other hand, this might be a little hypocritical... because everything seems so nice from the outside, but it's not necessarily so inside. (...) [Religion] has been transforming into a sort of set of traditions – rather than being faith. It's about celebrating holidays or such things. (...) But still – in my tiny place you can still see that during holidays people dress up nicely, for example they put on their Sunday best and go to church every day [during few-day holiday like e.g. Christmas]." Maja (female, aged 21, moved to the UK in 2011)

While migration seems, for many of my participants, to reinforce the essentialist construction of home society as inferior towards the Western world, it also appears to cement a reverse tendency to view what is considered Polish values as morally superior to the Western ones. Indeed, "a



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

"I think family's more important for Poles than for English people. English people are shallower in this respect. Yes, they do love their wives, mothers and fathers but this is different (...). They just do what they have to do. (...) On the one hand, they are more relaxed and there are less tensions in their families, but... the simple fact – they don't eat at home, they don't cook. That's different. We [her family] have dinner together every day. (...) This single meal makes a difference. We eat in the kitchen, no TV, and we simply talk. English people go out very often. And, if adultery happens – this is more [socially] accepted than in Poland. In Poland adultery is more stigmatized. I think that Englishmen respect their girlfriends less. Sure – not everybody." Ela (female, aged 31, moved to the UK in 2005)

Interestingly, although Ela never says it in an explicit way, she seems to imply that as far as family values are concerned, British people live with lower moral standards than their Polish counterparts. That said, there appears to be a strong moral judgement in Ela's narrative. In somewhat similar vein, a younger respondent Natalia, also cited earlier, elaborates on the supposedly different approach to getting married in Poland and in the UK (implicitly also about religious belief):

"Family values are definitely more present and cultivated there [in Poland] than here [in the UK]. In Poland people still – when they decide to get married, they don't usually get married with this assumption that they can always get a divorce; they don't have this option in mind. If they get married they really think it's for life. If, later on, something just doesn't work, they, well they actually get a divorce. But, it's not like here [in the UK]. People get married here, it's often in a rush. People just assume, that well – that a divorce can occur in the future." Natalia (female, aged 21, moved to the UK in 2009)

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

less willing to care, not to say self-centred. Many other informants in the study would similarly compare and contrast what they viewed as 'Polish' and "English family life". Curiously, despite being on many occasions reflexive about the senselessness of such comparisons (e.g. through reporting examples that challenged this simplistic binary), they would still construct British/English family values as morally inferior to what they believed were Polish values.

Significantly, in the stories of migrant participants, the "Polish family" embraced not only a set of family, but also religious values. These values, including Catholic practices, traditions and beliefs, were then in some cases argued to be consciously reproduced in the British context. In addition, the decision to have and raise a child in the UK became a fateful moment (Giddens 1991) for several of my respondents as it forced them to rethink their own life stances and in particular reconsider what values they would like to pass onto their children in the future and how. For Artur, this situation became a source of a huge dilemma. He moved to the UK together with his wife several years ago and they have a 3-year-old son now. For a while now, he has been thinking of making his home situation more stable in terms of everyday life. This, similarly to many migrant stories noted elsewhere (see e.g. Ehrkamp 2005), requires buying a house. Yet, Artur and his wife cannot make a decision whether to buy a house in the UK, stay there and raise his son in the British society or move back to Poland. Artur is particularly worried that raising children in the British context may have – as he told me – a negative influence on them. Although much of Artur's narrative reveals his admiration for the capacity of British society to encourage people of various ethnicities, religions and sexualities who work together as a team, he remains critical of the way some values (such as religion) may be socially constructed in Britain.

"In Poland people live more traditionally. (...) The majority of people I know, go to church. And here – it's quite the opposite. (...) We try to raise our son the way we were raised. We just feel such a need. We feel a need to go to church or the Catholic centre in [name of city]. We feel the need to have Christmases the way they should be. There's this holiday called Assumption of Mary. When I was younger, I didn't feel a need to make a garland and now I do. I'd love to go out with my kid, pick up some flowers and make a garland. (...) I pay more attention to such things now. When I was in Poland – sure, I noticed that – but, I didn't

feel the need to do anything. (...) This Polishness. It might be related to the fact that I'm living abroad. I kind of started to emphasize my values." Artur (male, aged 34, moved to the UK in 2005)

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

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

"I don't like the way family works [in the UK]. But, there are some nice solutions here which I'm sure I'll adopt. (...) This sense of partnership [between a parent and a child]. (...) This openness towards various people for sure. So, that he or she [his kid] doesn't feel shocked or becomes prejudiced when he or she sees a person of a different skin colour for example. And doesn't have [these associations] that a [skin] colour indicates something bad. Here, you live among other people and it all becomes natural for a child. (...) [Thinking of] Poland – definitely various traditions and upbringing – this respect for people first of all, good behaviour, being polite and kind. I'm sure I'll inculcate such things into my child. (...) What's bad about raising children here is the fact that they are not taught to respect older people – that's very bad." Marek (male, aged 32, moved to the UK in 2007)

Various studies demonstrate that parenting strategies are prone to be shaped by the experience of migration (Sims & Omaji 1999; Lopez Rodriguez 2010; Ryan 2010; de Haan 2011; Renzaho et al. 2011; Kilkey et al. 2014). While there is evidence that some parents may, like Artur above, turn to what they understand as "home culture" infused child rearing (cf. Renzaho et al. 2011), de Haan (2011) argues that parenting styles may become very complex when various cultural traditions come into contact with each other. Despite his general scepticism towards the British/English family life, Marek is convinced that certain values being recognised in the UK context could improve the way he will raise his child. At the same time, he feels that some elements of what is regarded as Polish upbringing would be very beneficial too. Unlike Artur's, his parenting style appears to be hybrid and include whatever Marek claims to be the best of both cultures. This case is particularly significant as it demonstrates that while many migrants engage with discourses of 'superiority' with regard to family values (and reproduce the binary relation between Poland and the UK), some start to negotiate Polishness and Britishness and challenge the binary understanding about "the national" and "the foreign". In doing so, they seem to recognise that when it comes to personal experience or choices they remain under the influence of both the home and host normativities.

The data collected in the course of this research suggest that, against the backdrop of mobility between a relatively homogeneous (Poland) and a diverse society (the UK), migrants are likely to make (at least discursively) moral judgements

about the home and host normativities. In doing so, they particularly focus on what is socially constructed as 'inherently' national (i.e. family values in the context of Polishness). Evidently, the Polish migrants in my study engage with the process of othering and construct what they assume to be "a Polish family" as morally superior to what they view as the British/English family model. As a consequence, family life is frequently characterised by long distance nationalism (Anderson 1992) and is involved in the re-making of the national outside the home society. Alongside the unchallenged reproduction of Polishness, however, some migrants appear to combine both Polish and British/English normativities and develop hybrid transnational practices. This is reflected in, for instance, parenting styles.

## Conclusions

In this article, I have looked at the complicated links between migration, nationalism and national identity. I have specifically focused on Polish migrants to the UK, a group that has been argued to experience a major shift from a relatively homogeneous (Poland) to a diverse society (the UK) (Jordan 2006). As the Polish minority has been increasingly involved in shaping the social life in the British context, the case of Polish migrants is illustrative of what challenges there are for living together in diversity, peace and respect.

Notwithstanding the ubiquity of the notion of home in disciplinary literatures on migration, diaspora and transnationalism, the changing migrant relationship with "the national" and "the host" remains less explored. In this article, I have addressed this issue by investigating how Polish migrants' encounters with superdiversity in the British context (Vertovec 2007) (re)shape their ideas of Poland and the UK, and by exploring the aspects of Polishness that are prone to be re-imagined post-migration.

In particular, I have looked into how migrants discursively construct "the national" and "the foreign", Polishness and Britishness, in binary oppositions. In doing so, I have used the example of tolerance/diversity and family associated by research participants with Britishness and Polishness, respectively. With regard to tolerance and diversity, I have evidenced that many of research participants uncritically (and often contradictory to their own personal experience) produced Po-

land as socially homogeneous and intolerant, and the UK as diverse and welcoming of difference. In doing so, they mobilised discourses of 'inferiority' of essentialised Polishness in comparison to essentialised Britishness. As long as family values are considered, I have noted a reverse tendency. Here, despite appreciating some aspects of living in the receiving society, research participants inevitably constructed Polishness as more valuable and 'superior'.

The orientalist relation (Said 2003 [1978]), that the participants of this study drew upon, seems to stem from broader essentialist understandings of the iconic West and Poland. Discourses of 'inferiority' and a necessity to "catch up" with the Western world have been suggested to dominate the public opinion in Poland during the transition period of 1990s (e.g. Kuus 2004; Mayblin et al. 2014). These discourses seem to echo in the narratives of research participants comparing and contrasting the alleged Polish homogeneity/intolerance with the supposed British diversity/tolerance. Interestingly, they are frequently coupled with counter-discourses assuming the superiority of what are perceived as core Polish values. While noted elsewhere (Burrell 2011; Horolets & Kozłowska 2012), the tendency among my informants to construct the home and host societies in simplistic terms was strong enough to affect their (dis-)identification with the set of values and attitudes each society was believed to convey. This suggests that migration and migrant encounters with difference in particular engage negotiations of "the national" and "the foreign", and have a capacity to re-define the former.

Significantly, the tendency to mobilise both the discourses of 'inferiority' and 'superiority' suggests that rather than producing "the national" and "the host" as hegemonic (and fixed) binaries, research participants construct various aspects of the sending and the receiving society in an intricate relation of inferiority and superiority. This strongly resonates with the "inferiority-superiority complex" I mentioned earlier in this article (Kurczewska 2003; Marciniak 2009) and implies that the culture-specific understanding of such concepts as the nation or national identity (e.g. Polishness, Britishness) is brought to migrant encounters with difference and diverse societies.

Importantly, it needs to be reiterated that the production of Poland and the UK as binaries refers to a discursive practice. The narratives of actual social experience produced by research participants

in the course of this study did not always fit this simplistic construction. This is reflected in my discussion of the parenting strategies as well as stories of discrimination and prejudice in the UK context which, while not explored in this article, appeared in the interviews with research participants. As such, this calls for further insights into how “the national” may possibly be re-defined, reproduced, negotiated and challenged not only on a discursive level, but also in everyday practices.

Against the backdrop of recent East-West mobility, the capacity of migrants to live with and among difference becomes a key issue for contemporary Europe. Arguably, these large-scale migrations have been followed by broadly understood encounters with “the foreign” or “the unfamiliar” and impacted not only on the everyday lives of migrants, but also their understandings of “the national” and “the familiar”. The main evidence of this article is that migrants are likely to alter their perception of their home society in their post-migration experience as well as re-define or re-make “the national” facing their encounters with “the foreign”. This has implications for how they live their everyday lives, how they refer to diversity or what meaningful decisions they make (e.g. what parenting strategies they adopt). In sum, how migrants understand home and host societies is likely to impact on how they and their significant others live (and will live) with and among difference.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all research participants who shared their stories with me in the course of this project. I am also grateful to Marco Antonsich, Elizabeth Mavroudi, Gill Valentine, Nichola Wood and two anonymous reviewers for their constructive comments on previous versions of this paper. As part of the research programme “Living with Difference in Europe: making communities out of strangers in an era of super mobility and super diversity” (LIVEDIFFERENCE), this work was funded by the European Research Council through an Advanced Investigator Award to Gill Valentine (grant agreement no. 249658).

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