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BODY, GENDER AND SEXUALITY AND RECENT MIGRATION OF POLES TO THE UNITED KINGDOM

INTRODUCTION

This article focuses on the constructions around body as gendered and sexualised within recent migration of Poles to the United Kingdom (UK). No attention has generally been paid to the issue of body within migration. Moreover, migration of Poles to the UK attracted a lot of attention among academics; however the gender and sexuality dimension of this migration has been overlooked. Gender and sexuality issues may turn out to be crucial within this migration, as different discourses on gender and sexuality appear to prevail in Poland and the UK and can potentially influence views on body¹. Around 613,000 Poles have migrated to the United Kingdom since May 2004, when the UK Government decided to open its labour market to the citizens from the new European Union (EU) states (Home Office 2009). Poles migrate, as it appears, from an environment in Poland characterised by more conservative views on gender and sexuality to a more liberal environment in the UK. As the discussions Poles run in the cyberspace show, the body as gendered and sexualised appears to play an important role within this migration.

Although Foucault (1991) focused on the body as site of social and cultural regulation and target of power, he did not consider gender dimension of this phenomenon. However, these online discussions mostly focus on female bodies rather than male ones. Therefore, this article uses feminist perspective and examines the influence of this migration on discourses around body as gendered and sexualized and its potential to liberate conservative discourses especially on women's bodies. Bordo (2004) argues that the body is a medium of culture and the body may be seen as a site for investigation into gender and sexuality (Petersen 2003), which this article undertakes. This article uses intersectionality framework as lens to examine issues around body and analyses how specific social categories

¹ My PhD research project focuses more broadly on issues of gender and sexuality within Polish migration to the UK; the thesis is due to be completed at City University London by the end of 2011

such as gender and sexuality, seen as ‘social processes’, simultaneously influence construction of these issues (Nash 2008). Gender allows the focus on the division between women and men and the relationship between them that includes power (Jackson and Scott 2001). Gender as a social category is seen as greatly influencing the construction of social bodies (Lorber and Martin 2008). However, gender operates on multiple social and cultural levels and they include not only the body, but also the state (Mahler and Pessar 2006). This article also uses sexuality as a social category and investigates sexualised aspects of the body. Sexuality is seen as encompassing sexual norms, expectations and pressures from others that exist in every cultural context (Lorber 1999). These patterns of sexual behaviour are gendered, and as Lorber (2005) alleges, a departure from established norms of gender and sexuality often provokes a reaction manifesting itself in the use of power and social control.

This article looks at body within migration and migration in turn is also a gendered, and for that matter, sexualised phenomenon (Donato et al 2006; Erel et al 2002). Mahler and Pessar (2006) argue that although gender ideologies, relations and practices have a great role in migration processes, they are often unexamined. This article considers the role gender and sexuality ideologies play in constructions around body by Poles in the UK. The focus of this article is on bodies as engaging in relations, also of a sexual nature, bodies as attempting to prevent pregnancies through the use of contraception, and bodies as dealing with unplanned pregnancies through the use of abortion. It also looks at men’s sexualised bodies in relation to women’s sexualised bodies². The main aim is to show how gender and sexual ideologies are reproduced and negotiated in relation to body within this migration process. In order to be able to understand the gender and sexuality dimension of this migration, this article now looks at the local gender contexts, gender ideologies and gender histories prevalent in both Poland and the UK.

BODY POLITICS IN POLAND

Polish culture is perceived as quite conservative in relation to gender and sexuality (Gontarczyk 1995). A lot of changes have taken place within the last two decades, when the process of transition from communism to democracy has been taking place. Within the process of the post-communist nation-building the prevalent context has been nationalist (Booth 2005; Graff 2008) and it was

² For more discussion the physical appearance of bodies, Polish women’s and men’s sexualities and the perception of inter-ethnic relationships please refer to Siara (2009)

especially prominent when right wing governments were in power³. Nationalism, however, has deeper historical roots in Poland. The country was partitioned in the late 18th century by the Russian Empire, the Kingdom of Prussia and the Habsburg Austria. First partition took part in 1772 and it was followed by second partition in 1793 and third partition in 1795. Following the third partition and until the end of World War One Poland was not officially regarded as a separate independent state on the political arena. During this time the particular focus was on maintaining the continuity of the nation. A special role was then given to women who through their sacrifice and focus on home and motherhood were supposed to help this process and this led to creating a notion of 'Matka Polka' [Eng. Mother-Poland] (Ksieniewicz 2004) seeing woman's role as sacrificing herself for the benefit of the nation.

Apart from the Polish state, its governments and their politics, the influence of the Catholic Church on gender, especially since 1989, has been very visible (Pankowska 2005; Duch-Krzyszczek 1997). The Catholic Church in Poland not only has insisted on traditional understanding of gender, but also strongly influenced changes in the policy concerning women's loss of reproductive rights once the strict anti-abortion law was introduced in 1993 (Pascall and Kwak 2005). This law prohibited abortion for social and economic reasons (Kramer 2007). According to this law, abortion can be carried out only in cases when "the woman's life or health is threatened, when the pregnancy is the result of crime or in cases of severe foetal abnormality" (Nowicka 1996: 24). At the same time, there has not been free contraception available and there have been efforts made to limit the access to paid-for contraception (Nowicka 1996). Interestingly, around the time when the anti-abortion law was being introduced, 37 percent of Poles supported abortion in the case when a woman wanted it for any reason (Saxonberg 2000). In any case, the strict anti-abortion law did not stop abortions from being carried out as it is evident in existence of so called 'abortion underground' in Poland (Zielinska 2000). Moreover, attitudes to sex in Polish culture are often not only heavily influenced by the Catholic Church's rhetoric, but also patriarchal views (Hauser et al 1993). In official discourse sex is then constructed as connected to reproduction rather than sexual pleasure.

Generally, women's movement in Poland has been quite weak. This is partly connected to the negative perception of feminism in Poland generally, and resulting from it limited support for a women's movement (Booth 2005). Furthermore, the women's movement in Poland had been heavily attacked by the Catholic Church officials (Nowicka 1996). Although, women's movement in Poland grew in strength in the 1990s with the support from many intellectuals and academics,

³ From 1989 until 1993, from 1997 to 2001 and from 2005 to 2007

it did not successfully impact on creating women-friendly policies in Poland or changing discourses on gender and sexuality.

BODY POLITICS IN THE UK

British gender context appears to be more liberal in comparison to the Polish one. As the historical conditions were different, women's liberation was entirely separated from the nation-building process (Booth 2005). Moreover, the Anglican Church, main religious institution in the UK, has had a weak impact on people's lives choices for a long time (McDowell et al 2008).

Furthermore, the women's movement in the UK has been strong and has campaigned for many years for liberation of traditionally understood gender roles (Zweiniger-Bargielowska 2000; Pascall and Kwak 2005). It also led to redefinition of issues around sexuality and the body. It called for the separation of sex from reproduction and insisted on women's sexual pleasure (Charles 2002). The women's movement saw sexuality not as a personal but a political issue and it became concerned with securing free contraception and abortion on demand (Smith 2000). As a result of campaigning, contraception became available free-of-charge on the National Health System (NHS) in 1974 (Zweiniger-Bargielowska 2000). Moreover, "Abortion Act" allowing artificial termination of pregnancy was legalised in 1967 and abortion became available, also free-of-charge, on the NHS in 1974 (Pilcher 1999).

The UK makes it an interesting research terrain when focusing on the issues of body and more generally gender, sexuality and migration as it is inhabited by migrants from various parts of the world. The more intensive movement of people into the UK started in the 1950s (Vertovec 2007). It included migrations from West Indies, India, and Pakistan. However, Vertovec (2007) claims that since the 1990s there has been not only a rise in immigration to the UK, but also a great diversification of migrants' countries of origin as for example from the other (EU) countries or from the Middle East. He also refers to substantial further increases from the accession states since the 2004 EU Enlargement. In Vertovec's (2007) opinion, such diversity leads to greater socio-cultural differences and greater variety of cultural values and practices carried out by migrants. This diversity is especially important when considering social relations, including gender and sexual relations as there are variations in terms of attitudes to gender and sexuality among different migrants.

INTERNET FORUM DISCUSSIONS

This article uses internet forum discussions as data. Such a choice of research technique was motivated by a number of factors. Firstly, choosing such a method

gave an access to naturally occurring settings (Romano et al 2003), which are in no way influenced by the presence of the researcher. Secondly, it also provided access to research participants, who actively engage in debates relating to the topic under study (Markham 2005). What is important is that topics of discussions are set by participants themselves rather than a researcher and this gives an opportunity to analyze issues that are important to discussants themselves. Additionally, such data is unstructured, rich and detailed (Byrne 2001) and not controlled by time or space. However, the researcher does not know much about respondents apart from what is apparent from their opinions. As quite a novel and emergent research technique (Rutter and Smith 2005), analysis of the internet discussions can extend knowledge about gender and sexuality within the migration process (Curran and Saguy 2006), as it gives an insight into the issues important to migrants themselves.

The analyzed discussions were carried out on the forums hosted on a number of internet portals catering to Poles in the UK⁴. The names of the portals are kept confidential for ethical reasons (Rutter and Smith 2005). All the identified discussions relating to body, gender and sexuality were included in the study and subsequently analyzed. All these discussions were carried out in a public space i.e. forum participants voluntarily published their opinions on the Internet and as a result made them available to the open public. However, anonymity of forum users is maintained by not stating their real or nick-names (Markham 2005; Hewson et al 2003).

The analysis involved ten forum discussions. Discussions comprised of between 10 to 175 posts, with the mean of 52. They were carried between 2006 and 2008. The discussions lasted between a few days and several months. All the internet forum discussions were held in Polish. The analysis was firstly carried in Polish, and only afterwards main themes were translated into English. Thematic analysis approach was used in the process of analyzing discussions as this method focuses on identifying themes that are important in describing an analyzed phenomenon (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006; Byrne 2001). As in Polish language a verb agrees with gender, by looking at verb's ending the gender of the speaker can be recognized. Therefore, when the gender of the person expressing an opinion is known, it is marked accordingly in both analysis and the quotes.

Some forum users refer to 'race', which is translated accordingly in the quotes. However, it is recognized in the analysis that 'race', marked in inverted commas, is a socially constructed category without a content created for ideological reasons and used in the processes of racialization, in which people are seen as belonging to distinctive groups – races and this supposed belonging is imposed

⁴ For more information on the internet usage by Poles in the UK please refer to Siara (2009)

on them (Pilkington 2003; Miles and Small 1999). However, in order to refer to the multicultural population in the UK in this article the term ethnicity is used and ethnicity is seen as a fluid process encompassing variety of people's cultural identities, belongings and attachments, and these are seen embraced by these people themselves (Pilkington 2003; Miles and Small 1999).

BODIES AND SEXUAL RELATIONS

Women's bodies and sexual relations

According to some (only male) internet forum users Polish women in the UK engage in relations, also of sexual nature, with men of other ethnicities and these men disapprove of such practices. Within such statements strong objectification of women as passive sex 'providers' to men rather than those actively participating in sexual activities could be observed:

'How is it Polish women that you give yourselves all over, to anyone who wants' (male)

It was claimed that Polish women who engage in relationships with men of other than Polish ethnic origins "spoil" the opinion of the whole country Poland. By such users women were seen as 'representatives of the nation':

'Because of such women from London it is not only them who lose out in the eyes of foreigners but the whole our country does' (male)

The counter-opinions expressed by other forum users suggested that such a statement strongly objectifies women and therefore it was strongly rejected:

'Gentlemen, don't exaggerate, Polish women are not prostitutes... and they won't be giving themselves either to you, dear country-fellows, or to any other nation' (male)

Moreover, it was claimed by some male forum participants that apparently some men of other ethnic origins also see Polish women in such an objectifying way; as passive sex 'providers':

'It pisses me off that Pakistani or Hindu comes over to me at work and boasts about how many Polish women he slept with' (male)

It was also suggested that Polish men are laughed at by men of other ethnic origins in the UK, because Polish women are sexually active whilst abroad:

'Other nations laugh at us, Polish men, and such stories how many Polish women they slept with are very frequent. [...] Many Polish women and girls act outside the country as typical and additionally cheap sl...s. At the moment I don't think as a man. For me, a Pole, it is very upsetting'. (male)

Men expressing such views appear to have conservative attitudes to gender and sexuality, according to which women are not allowed to actively engage in sexual relations with a person of their choice (i.e. of varied ethnic origins) and when they do so, they risk being stigmatized. This could also be the case in relation to how some men of other ethnic origins may perceive some Polish women in the UK as they may also hold conservative views on gender and sexuality.

Moreover, the suggestion was made by other user that it could simply be a man's talk i.e. men like to talk about their sexual adventures even if they are only the imagined adventures rather than the real ones:

'One has to consider how true these stories are coming from Turkish or Afghani men that they 'slept' with Polish women. Men like to boost about a lot' (female)

However, the claim was made that it is rather Polish men than men of other ethnic origins who engage in stigmatizing and name-calling Polish women who engage in relations with men of other ethnicities:

'Never before I heard about a stereotype of a Polish woman as a slut from an Englishman. However, I heard many times when Polish men called so their female country-fellows, who had relationships with British or Pakistani men. Stereotypes don't come from anywhere' (male)

“Sexual-ethnic double standard”⁵ was constructed within these debates as it was claimed that whilst a Polish woman can engage in a sexual activity with a Polish man, she is not allowed to do that with a man of other ethnic origins. At the same time, Polish men are also allowed to do so women of other ethnic origins, but Polish women should not:

'So if a Polish woman goes with me, that's cool, but it's bad if she does it with somebody else. Gentlemen, let's be honest, which one of you didn't feel like [meeting a woman of other ethnic origins]? If possible I would be very willing. Who wouldn't be? Why do we criticise women? I don't defend anyone, but please be tolerant. It is a private issue of each person. Let everybody live their life, and how they do it, it's their business' (male)

⁵ It is understood as sexual double standard embracing the issues surrounding ethnicities

Men's bodies and sexual relations

It was pointed out that Polish men who express negative opinions towards women engaging in relationships with men of other ethnic origins may be sexually frustrated as they themselves are not involved in relations with any women:

'And why do you write rubbish? Do you have some complexes over racial issues or your hand can't stand it anymore? [...] if any woman prefers other races over you, one should only feel sorry for you. [...] and maybe this problem exists only in your head as a creation of imagination tired of masturbation?' (male)

Such men were seen as unable to engage in similar relationships either with Polish or with women of other ethnic origins; in the latter case likely due to poor language knowledge:

'Why are you so much focused on Polish women? [...] But be honest men. Do you feel upset because they don't look at you (such great men) and you don't speak good enough English to be able to attract British women or other migrant women?' (female)

'Rather Poles are hopeless. There aren't any discussions here about English, Hindu, Black or any other wives or fiancées of Polish men...' (female)

WHEN BODY, GENDER AND SEXUALITY INTERSECT WITH ETHNICITY

Negative comments made about Polish women were seen by some forum users as driven by nationalistic attitudes and seen as a need to preserve Polish women for Polish men through controlling their activities (also the sexual ones):

'You should only get condolences now. No Polish woman was interested in you. And this should justify in your opinion the crusade in defence of POLISH AR...E, understood in wider patriotic terms?' (male)

However, such nationalistic attitudes were ridiculed by others and the questions were asked whether there is a "national duty" for Polish women to engage in relations only with Polish men. The claim was also made that Polish women are not owned by Polish men:

'Who cares who Polish women sleep with? Does any Polish woman have a duty to see only Polish men? If this is a constitutional duty, you men are such great patriots, and what are you doing on the Isles?' (female)

'Why are you so jealous about Polish women? You are boiling when you see a Polish woman with a foreigner. Nevermind his nationality, POLISH WOMEN DON'T BELONG TO POLISH MEN' (female)

The discussion was raised to a global level and it was argued that a person's ethnicity whilst engaging in relations with other people does not matter in the global world:

'We live in the world in a global village, where nationality doesn't matter. The fact that you offend Polish women who meet with foreigners simply shows your own level!' (female)

It was also argued by some that women should be able to act freely the same as men do including engagements in relations, also of sexual nature without a risk of being criticized and their choices should be their private matters:

'How is it that a man is always allowed and we, women, have to resign from everything, because they can talk about us. If anybody fancies a foreigner, it is their private matter' (female)

'Easy or not easy [women]. Who cares? [...] everybody does what they want and they have a right to it' (male)

GENDER AND SEXUAL ENVIRONMENT

The importance of gender and sexuality environment was also stressed in internet discussions. By some forum users the UK context was seen as more liberal and characterised by sexual liberty, whilst the Polish context was perceived as more conservative:

'I don't understand how in the atmosphere of total sexual freedom amongst young people on the Isles anybody can be seen as sleeping around' (female)

The claim was also made that women change the way they think once they move to the UK and it was argued they should never be allowed to leave Poland in the first place:

'It is a call for men, never allow your women to go abroad, even if you are to go together. Their brains turn sides as soon as they cross the border. Total reset. It is a fact, tried in practice' (male)

BODIES AND REPRODUCTIVE ISSUES

Contraception

Some discussions surrounded contraception i.e. some Polish women sought advice on the forums about places, where they would be able to obtain contraceptives in the UK. Differences between Poland and the UK were discussed, and the UK was described as a “contraceptive paradise”, where contraceptives are available free of charge. At the same time, they are quite expensive in Poland and the claim was made that they should be made free as this helps to prevent unplanned pregnancies:

‘In comparison to Poland it is a ‘contraceptive’ paradise’ (female)

‘I have lived in the UK for two years. All the contraception is free. When I lived in Poland, I used contraception pills, which are unfortunately quite expensive and most women can’t afford to buy them. I think that such basic means as contraception pills should be free-of-charge’ (female)

Abortion

The debate on abortion started with some forum participants quoting newspaper publications which claimed that a large number of Polish women undergo abortion in the UK. However, it was argued that despite a possibility of having abortion done on the NHS many women still use private ways to terminate pregnancy:

‘Every year ten thousands Polish women undergo abortion in London only. [...] despite abortion being free-of-charge in the UK, most ‘Polish’ abortions are carried privately or completely illegally’ (male)

Another claim was made that it is a woman’s private matter and comments suggesting interest in these issues is driven by conservative views and is an attempt to control women’s activities:

‘And so what? Why do you care? It stinks with mohair’⁶...

Moreover, it was suggested that Polish women use so called ‘abortion underground’ in the UK. Some forum participants wondered why women would

⁶ Mohair [Polish – Moher] became a symbol of conservative thinking in Poland. The word originated in mohair hats worn by older Polish women who are church-goers and who are seen to have conservative views on gender and sexuality

do so in the face of free access to abortion services available on the NHS or the possibility of using private services set up for this purpose. This was seen as a strange practice in the light of legally allowed access to abortion in the UK in opposition to Poland, where abortion is prohibited and abortion underground is well-developed:

'But why underground? In the UK one can undergo abortion legally for free on the NHS or privately in the clinic.' (female)

'If abortion is legally allowed, why so many women undergo illegal abortion, 'in the underground'?' (female)

Women experiencing unplanned pregnancies also used the forum to look for information about the ways abortion is done in the UK:

'I became pregnant, but it is not a planned pregnancy and I want to terminate it. How do you do it here? Where should I go? Directly to the hospital or to my GP?' (female)

The differences in attitudes towards women dealing with the situation of unplanned pregnancies in Poland and in the UK were also stressed. The attitude in the UK was seen as more 'human' and where women have an opportunity to make a decision themselves and this was appreciated by female forum users:

'Go to your GP or to the Family Planning Centre – in the UK women in your situation are not treated as an outcast'

'Every woman has a right to decide because she lives in a FREE country the UK and not a Catholic, bigoted and backward Poland'.

EVALUATING VIEWS ON BODY AS GENDERED AND SEXUALISED WITHIN MIGRATION SPACE

In a wider perspective although the analysis focuses on bodies, it is also helpful for learning more about contexts, ideologies and practices that constitute bodies and the constructions around them. Different views on body were identified through the analysis and it was found that debates contained a mixture of nationalist, patriarchal, conservative and liberal attitudes. These discussions concerning bodies in migration space are initiated within a specific discourse – a nationalist discourse. However, at the same time counter-discourses are also

constructed. Conservative and patriarchal attitudes are mostly associated with the Polish gender context, whilst liberal attitudes with the UK context, although they are also present in Poland. This agrees with a claim made by Bator (1999) that there had been two prevalent discourses on gender in Poland in the 1990s; a nationalist, conservative and patriarchal discourse based on Catholic Church's teachings, which accordingly sets specific roles for women; and a liberal discourse treating women as equal citizens aware of their rights and who should fully participate in public life. Migration to the UK gives an opportunity to interact even more with a liberal context, outside of the Catholic Church's politics and the conservative governments' policies. However, some men still expressed more nationalist, patriarchal and conservative views, whilst women and some men articulated more liberal views on body.

Nationalism has been a dominant political discourse in Poland for quite a long time, but it has been highly prevalent especially since 1989. Initially, it was a backlash against communism, when pro-democratic changes started in Poland and within this backlash; the conservative and nationalistic understandings of ethnic, gender and sexual identities have been revoked. This has been additionally fused with Catholicism and its approach to gender and sexuality (Pryke 1998). McClintock (1997) suggests that all nationalisms are gendered and alleges that the needs of the nation are typically defined by men and often connected to their aspirations. At the same time women's needs and wants are dismissed and this is the case with Poles in the UK. Furthermore, Milic (1996) argues that nationalism dwells on people's frustrations and fantasies, in this case men's. Within a nationalist project women are perceived as 'mothers of the nation' (Sharp 1996: 99) and reproducers of national and ethnic group identities and boundaries (Einhorn 1996; Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989). As a consequence women's bodies, behaviours and roles are 'objects of national concern', and as such they are closely monitored and controlled (Puri 2004: 115) and the same happens to Polish women in the UK. There are restrictions exercised on the choice of a partner for their marital and sexual relations. Pryke (1998) suggests that nationalist ideology insist on 'national sexual duty' e.g. an individual is required to seek a partner within his or her national or ethnic group and some forum users required this from Polish women in the UK.

Within the nationalist approach also state-based regulation related to reproduction is also targeted at women (Puri 2004; McClintock 1997). Women's bodies are controlled through anti-abortion laws and as such it means that women have no right as individuals to make decisions about their own bodies (Milic 1996). Such control is also often done in the name of religion and moral values (Melchiori 2001) and this is a case in Poland where strict anti-abortion law is in place. Pryke (1998) alleges that nationalism in its view of gender and sexuality does not allow any space for women's agency.

Furthermore, attitudes to gender and sexuality in Polish culture are influenced by patriarchy (Hauser et al 1993). As Liu (1994) argues, patriarchal ideology constructs specific meaning of sexuality as to serve the interests of men rather than that of women. Men are allowed to have sexual desires and sexual freedom, but not the women (Abbott et al 2005) and this can be observed in relation to Polish women in the UK. According to Liu (1994) a woman is expected to abstain from sexual activities and any contravention of these rules is severely punished, as women are then stigmatized and labelled negatively and Polish women in the UK also experience it. Melosik (2002) suggests that women's sexual activity may lead to anxiety amongst men, as they become afraid of losing power over women as well as losing them as potential partners.

As it was outlined earlier, the nationalist discourse is dominant in Poland and this analysis showed that this discourse in a way "travelled" with migrants. Within this discourse women and their bodies are constructed in a specific way; they are not only a national symbol, but also sexualised aspects of the body are seen in particular ways. However, counter-discourses were created in the process such as liberal one, which gives women choice in relation to their lives and does not prescribe strict gender and sexual roles. These two discourses have been battled over on 'the symbolic terrain' of Polish women's bodies (Liu 1994: 37). Liberalism as an ideology in relation to gender is concerned with the language of gender equality and equal rights for women and men. Generally, such a view is mostly held by women and cultivated by the women's movement, but it is still quite limited in Poland, at least in an official public discourse. However, according to Saxonberg (2000), Polish women, especially the younger and the more educated ones are more in favour of gender equality than men. The analysis also showed that some men have liberal views on gender and sexuality.

In the UK women have more opportunities to interact more with a liberal context. In addition attitudes are liberal and more personal freedom and choice is allowed in relation to gender and sexuality. This liberal context offers a lot to women and they are the ones who use these opportunities and this is heavily criticized by some men. It can be observed within discussions that women actively argue against nationalist, patriarchal and conservative views. As Einhorn (1996) alleges, women refuse gender and sexuality constructions imposed on them by others and they want to be able to construct their own understandings. Einhorn (1996) also argues that women open up the spaces for interethnic dialogue and this is also the case with Polish women in the UK.

However, Poles in the UK encounter not only liberal attitudes but also conservative and patriarchal attitudes from people of other ethnic origins. Within such views, liberated women are seen as commodified and prone to 'sexual exploitation' and such a view also does not allow for women's agency. It appears

then from the analysis that some migrant men of other ethnic origins try to impose their understandings of gender and sexuality on Polish women and men.

There are different constructions around female body and sexuality in Poland and the UK. In the UK, sex is separated from reproduction, and in Poland within the official public gender and sexuality context, sex is constructed as closely connected to reproduction and a strict anti-abortion law is in place. Also, in the UK, women are decision makers with regards to the reproductive sides of their lives, and on the other hand, in Poland, this decision has been made for them in the form of a strict anti-abortion law. This law in Poland takes away women's rights to control their own bodies and reproduction, but women gain this right in the UK. The fact that there may be Polish women who undergo abortion in the UK caused stir among some discussants, whilst others thought it was a normal phenomenon. Moreover, whilst some women used legally available abortion services run by the NHS, other women used other alternative ways by undergoing abortion in private clinics, or made use of "abortion underground". For some women liberal attitudes to sexuality and availability of free access to abortion in the UK may not really be important, it is likely that shame and the lack of language knowledge pushes some women to the underground when they seek help in situations where they want to terminate the unplanned pregnancy.

CONCLUSIONS

This article looked at the constructions around gendered and sexualised body within Polish migration to the UK. Not much attention has been paid to body within migration and this paper attempts to fill this gap. It shows how bodies are becoming 'gendered' and sexualised within migration space (Jackson and Scott 2001). In wider terms, this article also contributed to the debate on gender, sexuality and migration. It also showed how the use of novel research techniques such as the analysis of internet forum discussions can help in extending knowledge about gender and sexuality within the migration process.

The analysis showed that gender and sexuality ideologies and contexts have a great impact on people's views on body, particularly on women's bodies. It also demonstrated that gender and sexual ideologies and practices are negotiated and reshaped as part of the migration process (McIlwaine et al 2006; Datta et al 2008), where different views on gender and sexuality as well of intersections of these with ethnicity come into play. Gender and sexuality are both reconstructed and reproduced within the transnational space; in the opinion of Dannecker (2005), especially women's migration initiates transformations of gender and this was the case in this research, which also revealed women's liberalising agency. However, some men were trying to reinforce conservative views of gender and sexuality. As

Akpinar (2003) suggests, in the migration context, men who are discriminated and as a result frustrated and who additionally hold conservative views, will attempt to exert pressure on females to hold onto patriarchal values. However, many women were questioning these norms through their individual practices (Mahler and Pessar 2006) and some men did the same. At the same time, some women relied on the sexuality constructions prevalent in Poland and considered abortion as too private an issue to be able to seek help in the public health system.

Practices concerning women's bodies and their sexualities are in flux within this migration process. Two intersecting processes take place in relation to sexual practices within this migration. Firstly, the process of liberalisation of sexual practices i.e. women in the new context construct more liberal sexual practices and embrace the 'sexual freedom' of the new context. Secondly, the process of 'nationalisation' of sexual practices takes place. As the new multicultural context offers opportunities to mix with people of other ethnic origins than Polish and some women and also men engage in relationships of varied nature with people of other than Polish ethnic origins, such relations are perceived negatively by some Polish men as well as men of other ethnicities, who then try to impose their conservative views on Polish women and men. It appears that women's views are changing in the new environment but not all the men's, or at least women find it liberating in gender and sexual terms.

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