

GENDER ROLES AND PRACTICES IN POLISH MIGRATION FAMILIES IN NORWAY THROUGH THE EYES OF CHILDREN¹

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This article is dedicated to the issues pertinent to transnational families found in children's narratives. We seek to shed light on the under-researched area of transnational research on 'doing family', which is vital due to the growing number of Polish families settling abroad, deciding on 'being together' and choosing a family reunification strategy in their mobility projects. Embedding an entire family in the destination society has profound implications for building and maintaining family ties, also across borders, as well as for changing the shape of the everyday experience of familiarity among children of immigrants. We draw a sociological portrait of the migration family, depicting the typical issues of work patterns among the parents (mothers' and fathers' jobs), the division of household and care labour, leisure patterns and maintenance of ties with family in Poland. Honing in on these issues facilitates the understanding of how social roles are fulfilled, and how social statuses are attained, both seen through the gender lens. Empirically, the paper is based on the *Transfam* project's sub-study entitled *Children's experience of growing up transnationally*. This qualitative and participatory inquiry consisted of interviews with children aged 6 to 13, born in Poland and living permanently in Norway. The methodological approach facilitated understanding children as active actors, who perceive and define their social worlds. Children were encouraged and asked to recall their migration experiences,

¹ The article is based on Work Package 5 study *Children's experience of growing up transnationally* conducted under the auspices of *Transfam* project titled *Doing family in transnational context. Demographic choices, welfare adaptations, school integration and every-day life of Polish families living in Polish-Norwegian transnationality*. The project received funding from the Polish-Norwegian Research Programme operated by the National Centre for Research and Development under the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009–2014 in the framework of Project Contract No Pol-Nor/197905/4/2013.

as well as express their views on the work type, meanings, commitments and schedules of their parents.

Keywords: childhood, transnational migration, employment, family life, gender roles, Poland, Norway

INTRODUCTION

Despite the fact that migration is an indispensable element of human history, the recent years are witnessing the expansion of scale, scope and complexity of the mobility phenomenon, largely linked to the pace of global changes (Castles, Miller 2011). The migrations of the early twenty-first century respond to the global financial crisis, transformations and restructurization of local and global economies, as well as growing individualization and career mobility requirements. As such, mobility introduced numerous social changes in the marital, family, and everyday lives, thus impacting the meanings and trajectories of childhood, as well as children's lives (Bryceson, Vuorela 2002; Walczak 2009; Goulbourne et al. 2010; Danilewicz 2010; Morgan 2011; Dreby, Mose-Brown 2013; Slany et al. 2014). Consequently, new contexts and requirements imposed on contemporary childhood come to view and instigate dynamic changes (e.g. Orellana et al. 2001). As many reports and statistical sources² document (UNICEF; MIS 2015)

² In addition to a growing interest in migrant children, the particular topic discussed here is further salient in the context of Norway becoming a new immigration country for Poles: first after 2004, and, even more so, becoming a destination for an international relocation in the face of the financial crisis impacting other Western European economies (i.e. Poles previously settled in the United Kingdom, moving on to Norway). The number of Polish immigrants registered in the flows is annually increasing, particularly the number of families with children (Slany, Strzemecka 2015: 2). The primary pioneer migrants (mostly men) choose a family reunification strategy, which inevitably leads to definite or long-term mobility. According to *Transfam's Work Package 1 Report – Poland – past and current migration outflows with the special emphasis on Norway* (Iglicka, Gmaj 2014), the total Polish population in Norway (on 01.01.2013) amounted to 82 600 persons. The number grew exponentially from just 7580 people registered in 2004, representing an 11-fold growth by the end of 2012. Among them, 19 360 persons migrated on the grounds of family reunification, meaning that Poles are the largest group entering Norway for family reasons since 2006. After 2009, the year that was especially harsh for Polish families in Norway (a decrease in the family reunification statistics from 4423 in 2008 to 2773 in 2009), a strong determination towards reunification strategies has been visible again (with the inflow of 4612 registered in 2010). As many as 11.6 per cent of all immigrants and Norwegian-born children with immigrant parents are Polish. The data concerning Polish children reveal 793 children in 2004, their age breakdown as follows: 172 aged 0–15, 393 aged 16–17. In 2013, the number grew to 5939, including as many as 4870 children aged 0–15, and 528 and 541 in the

the growing numbers of children take part in migration flows. They need to actively (to a differing degree) tackle the processes of experiencing culturally new contexts and engage with integration requirements posed by their new places of residence. As a result, over the last two decades there has been growing interest in migrant children and young people (e.g. Orellana et al. 2001; Hess, Shandy 2008; Orgocka 2012). At the same time, as noted by Marta Moskal (2014: 279) “the perspectives of migrant children and young people have been largely omitted in youth studies. Existing literature focuses predominantly on young people born to migrant parents in the host country, while the problems of first generation of migrant youth have received limited attention”. Migrant family studies frequently focus on children but usually through the lens of their parents (Mazzucato, Schans 2011; Derby 2007). However, contemporary literature has started to adapt a more ‘child-centred approach’ (Derby, Adkins 2012; Derby, Mose-Brown 2013), giving voice to the children’s own notions of family, gender and mobility, as well as emphasizing children’s agency (see e.g. Ni Laoire et al. 2011). Therefore, the currently prevailing approach relies on comprehending that children have their own opinions on their lives and the private and public areas where they exist. Jacqueline Scott (2004: 122) reiterates that for the ‘new sociology of childhood’³ children are agents rather than just passive ‘victims’ or ‘recipients’ of social circumstances and processes. They respond to what life brings them in accordance with their capacities and opportunities, which are strongly connected with their family situation – the position of the family in the society, patterns of inheriting, transferring and creating economic and social capital across and throughout generations. In this context, the migrant children are defined as important, active actors, set in a dynamic process of ‘doing family’ (Finch 2007). They are actors who observe, build and manage practices, ties and relationships within family (Bryceson, Vuorela, 2002; Goulbourne et al. 2010; Ni Laoire et al. 2011).

It is worth noting that a review of the sociological literature appears to concur that the issues of family life’s organization, gender roles, intra-family relations, parents’ employment, as well as the area of power and status in the family, have rarely been a topic covered by research. This statement holds particularly valid as far as the perspective of migrant children living abroad together with their parents is concerned. It is easier to find studies on adaptation, communication, language competence, diaspora/migrant organizations, educational entities as well as identities and belongings (see e.g. Ni Laoire et al. 2011; Sime, Fox 2014,

other groups, respectively (Dzamarija 2014: 35). In light of this statistics, it becomes even more vital to look into the children’s lives.

³ An umbrella term used by e.g. Ni Laoire et al. (2011) and many other leading scholars.

Moskal 2014; Pustulka, Ślusarczyk, Strzemecka 2015, forthcoming; Nowicka 2015). The so far scarce studies examining the organization of family lives conducted with migrant children underscore that not only parents but also children have their own views on family practices and gendered division of labour in their families. Further, they manifest specific expectations connected to fulfilling their own collective, emotional and integrative needs. Still, the gender relations in the family are not particularly visible, neither in the research on Polish transnational families, nor more generally in Polish family scholarship⁴. The private sphere has not been scientifically seen as something that children should be asked to evaluate, even though the youngest generation was considered an important agent of family life, ties and goals. In-depth inquiries into intra-family matters constituted a significant taboo in Poland and have been only subjected to dismantling by feminist research on family and power nexus (Duch-Krzyszczek 2007), the significance of unpaid domestic work and gendered divisions of household labour, as well as violence (Titkow 2007; Sadowska-Snarska 2011; Krzaklewska, Ratecka 2014).

In this article, we seek to fill the important research gap, germane especially in the context of the growing numbers of Polish families opting for the settlement in the destination country, family reunification and cessation of the transnational family separation phase. We see this observable tendency as significant for creating family ties, both in the nuclear family abroad and transnationally. Those dimensions influence how children-migrants experience everyday life and familiarity. With the use of empirical material collected during research with children of Polish migrants in Norway, we seek to draw a sociological portrait of the migration family, depicting the typical issues of work patterns among the parents (mothers' and fathers' jobs), the division of household and care labour, leisure patterns and maintenance of ties with family in Poland. Honing in on these issues facilitates the understanding of how social roles are fulfilled, and how social statuses are attained, both seen through the gender lens⁵. Particularly in the gender context, the socio-cultural norms of what it means to be a woman and a man, what a man and a woman can do, how they should behave and

⁴ The research conducted in Poland predominantly focuses on non-residential parenting, caring for children in the context of separation, consequences of parental/maternal absence, as well as the division of family roles (Walczak 2009; White 2010; Danilewicz 2010; Szczygielska 2013). Gender relations are not sufficiently explored in migration families living together.

⁵ Gender (understood as a socio-cultural opposite of the biological 'sex') is important for the analyzes presented in this work. It is defined as a collection of meanings, obligations and roles that a given society assigns to women and men, thus creating rules for the organization of social life (Titkow et al. 2004; Titkow 2011).

what is expected of them, are considerably stronger than any economic norms or factors. The power relations, goals and obligations in a coupledom are anchored in the Polish socio-normative gender-framework.

The meaning of specific relations, family practices and the shape of their effects are moderated by the gender stereotypes prevailing in a given society, as well as gender ideologies formed across different societies (of influx and outflow) (Krzaklewska, Ratecka 2014). Our hypothesis is that children construct the image of their families on the basis of gender role stereotypes and schemes, as well as family practices and relations maintained by their parents and, concurrently, rather strongly embedded in Polish culture. In the migration family context, this results in the bonded family type, marked by strong ties but contrary inflexible with regard to a deconstruction of a traditional division of gender roles. Our research will prospectively facilitate discussions about the relations, roles and ties in migrant families, taking into account the criteria of different resources at the parent's/parents' disposal, namely their economic capital (income, assets) and cultural and social capital (social status, education). Additionally, the findings contribute to debates on manifesting feelings and emotional investment of parents in succeeding abroad, processes impacting life choices (employment, deskilling, requalification, continuing education, negotiating family tasks, solving misunderstandings and conflicts), as well as their effects mirrored in the division of household labour, amount of free time, and access to resources (Cromwell, Olson 1975; Ferree 1990; Everston, Nyman 2011).

Our research allows to see what sometimes appears obvious, namely the invisible or perceived as 'natural'/rational explanations of gender schemes and stereotypes offered by the culture one grows up in (Duch-Krzystoszek 2007: 11). This is a particularly interesting concern for those children whose parents migrate from Poland to Norway. Poland can be seen as a country with arguably limited work-life balance awareness and strongly grounded conviction about the vitality of traditional family marked by a 'natural' gendered division of roles, clear delineation of what is masculine versus feminine, and the excessive physical burden over family obligations placed on women (Duch-Krzystoszek 2007; Sadowska-Snarska 2011). Conversely, Norway shall generally be described as a society with a strong emphasis on gender equality and policies that facilitate reconciliation of work and family lives⁶.

⁶ Family happiness remains the highest-rated and most important value for Polish people (CBOS 2013a). Adding a comparative perspective relevant for the migration context, a recent OECD study (2014) on the conditions for reconciliation between work and family has ranked Norway as 5th and Poland as 28th among the 36 countries examined.

METHODOLOGY

From February to May 2014, Stella Strzemecka carried out participatory research with children of Polish immigrants in Oslo and its surrounding communes within a radius of 200 km. During a period of two weeks, Strzemecka was supported by two field researchers Anna Bednarczyk and Inga Hajdarowicz. The participants were children aged 6 to 13, born in Poland, Norway as well as the United Kingdom and living permanently in Norway. The children come from Polish-Polish and Polish-Norwegian couples, currently attend Norwegian primary schools and speak Polish (at least at the level that allows for a good communication flow).

During the research situation with children of Polish immigrants we used the following methods and research tools: (1) semi-structured interviews with children (a total number of 50), (2) drawings (a total number of 60), (3) observation alongside the interviews (children's rooms), and (4) Sentence Completion Method issued to older children (24 tests in total, SCM was available in three language versions – Polish, Norwegian and English). Research techniques and tools was used in a flexible manner, in accordance with the child's competences, his/her decisions and willingness to become involved (see Wilkinson 2000). The main issues in the questionnaire of the semi-structured interview combined with drawing(s) and SCM were: (1) family and leisure: relations with parent(s) and sibling(s), wider kin in Poland and Norway, types and frequency of contacts, patterns of spending time and leisure (hobbies and interests); (2) school/learning and friends/peers: assessing peer groups and networks, relations with teachers and assessing receipt of support from school, language competences; (3) national identifications, choices and future plans.

In this article, a sociological analysis of the family and parents' work life is based on the semi-structured interviews with children born in Poland from nationally homogeneous (intra-ethnic) couples (a total number of 30) and observations. It is important to note that the analyzed 30 interviews actually amounted to 32 child-respondents (20 boys, 12 girls), as 2 group interviews with sibling pairs (4 children total) were conducted in addition to 28 individual interviews⁷.

⁷ In this article, we decided to exclude the descriptions of the situation of children from ethnically mixed families. This empirical material is currently being analyzed and will be approached in a more holistic and in-depth manner in the next research stage planned for 2016. An analysis along a comparative line of private and professional lives from the perspective of children of nationally homogeneous versus ethnically heterogeneous couples will be conducted.

According to the earlier-conceived research scheme, each meeting with a child started with obtaining a written consent of a parent and a verbal consent of a child who was to participate in the study. The researcher presented the goal of the study, asked for permission to (audio-)record the meeting, as well as answered any questions concerning the planned interview from the respondent's parents and/or the child/children. After the consent was obtained, the child would usually invite the researcher into his or her room. The researcher always brought a selection of art supplies (paper, crayons, markers, pencils, *etc.*) to stimulate the children's interest in the interview.

The interviews with children usually began with the interviewer requesting the child to draw his or her family and present its members. Children were eager to talk about all their immediate and more distant family members, usually describing them in a warm and friendly manner. One exception noted was when the child in question appeared agitated when speaking about their father – the child would lower the tone of voice, perhaps so that the father would not hear what was being said. Only one child refused to make a family drawing and, perhaps significantly, that was a child raised in a monoparental (single-parent) family. The older the child was, the more detail the researcher was able to solicit about his or her experiences of everyday life, contacts with various family members (both in Poland and in Norway), daily chores, school duties, and leisure patterns. Children were by no means pressured to talk about their families as they could freely direct the conversation to alternative topics they found interesting (e.g. games, toys, hobbies, school, and relations with peers).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS:

FAMILY LIFE AND PARENTS' WORK

FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF MIGRANT CHILDREN

In this section, we discuss the economic status of the families, in which the children-respondents grow up. We focus specifically on career mobility, deskilling and depreciation of qualifications obtained in Poland, as well as gendered division of roles. Although these elements are determined by external processes and conditions, they have profound significance for the organization of family life, type and strength of bonds, emotional engagement, and the broadly conceived 'family success' in the migration context.

WORK PATTERNS AMONG THE PARENTS: MOTHERS' AND FATHERS' JOBS

The lives of the migrant families were generally found to be strongly embedded in the Norwegian context of the welfare state and migratory politics, as well as, first and foremost, affected by the labour market situation (employment) of their adult members. Whether a parent or both parents have a job preconditions a better and safer life, as well as facilitates the family's integration process. One learns from the interviews that children have a good overview of their parents' professional situation and the type of work that their mothers and fathers perform. This way, we can extrapolate information about gender segmentation of the Norwegian labour market.

The children's statements show that the most common situation is when both parents are employed (23, with one father currently on paternal leave). The following alternative situations are rare: (a) both parents work, but one is employed only part-time (1, mother works PT), (b) only father works, mother takes care of the household (2), (c) only mother works (5, monoparental families), (d) only mother works, father is unemployed (1).

Among the studied families, the dual-earner family model in which both parents participate in paid-work market dominates. In Table 1, we present some trajectories that could be incurred from the interviews with children, assisted by supplementary data obtained through the interviews with parents (Work Package 2 and Work Package 5)⁸. The professional pathways depict an array of scenarios and outcomes, often in the form of a concurrent deprivation, downward mobility, and the steps taken towards overcoming the challenges in view of arriving at an ultimately better labour market position. It appears that high language competency in Norwegian and a familiarity with the local social rules are the factors most helpful for achieving success. It is worth noting that the collected data cases ranged from success and professional upward mobility, to deskilling and human capital wasting. However, in spite of problematic transitions on the labour market, it is vital that almost all researched families experienced significant improvement of their material situation when compared to their material standing in Poland. This melioration is one of the salient motivations in the decision-making processes favouring family settlement in Norway.

⁸ Work Package 2 of the *Transfam* project entitled: *Migrant families in Norway / Structure of power relations and negotiating values and norms in transnational families.*

Table 1.

Parent'(s') Work and Career in Polish and Norwegian Contexts – Selected Examples

	Mother's Education, Occupation and Employment	Father's Education, Occupation and Employment	Evaluation of the Professional Path M-Mother/F-Father
	Poland / Norway	Poland / Norway	Norway
Walbert's parents	University degree, Economist / NAV course, assistant at a primary school	High School Diploma, Retail Salesman (appliances) / Employee at a horse ranch, a department head at a junkyard (group leader)	M: Deprivation of qualifications, paired with action towards changing her work situation, overall good position – improvement in the economic situation / F: new career path, new qualifications, using new competencies, higher income improving the economic status
Adrian's parents	University degree, Medical doctor / Doctor	University degree, Medical doctor / Doctor	M & F: Maintaining occupational status – highly skilled professionals, more opportunities for professional development, overall improvement of economic status and newly found work-life balance strategies
Nina's mother (single parent)	Vocational school, Hair-stylist / Cleaner	–	Deskilling / downward mobility, not using qualifications; nevertheless the economic situation has improved

Source: Authors' own analysis.

Let us have a closer look at what children say about their father's or mother's work and how they say it. Reflecting on the fathers' employment, children showcase the following aspects and careers:

Stella: What does your daddy do?

Marcel: Yyy... he is a... Mechanic

S: OK.

M: All things from a car.

S: Oh, that is great.

M: He works in two companies.

S: Aha. So, in one of them he somehow repairs cars?

M: No, he repairs cars in both of them.

Marcel (aged 9) not only identifies the professional status of his father, who is a mechanic, but also underlines that he works simultaneously at two repair shops. This suggests a financial success, while also drawing attention to a potential problem of being overworked. The father's two job assignments are likely to prevent him from partaking in childcare, in consequence delegating the care-related tasks to his wife.

Marta (aged 9) also informs the researcher that her father has two jobs, knowing the rhythm and work schedule very well:

Marta: Yes, dad works with this because he wants all the best for the family. But I am a bit sad because dad has to go to Stavanger all the time and then it is only us girls.

S: Ahm, great. And what does your daddy do?

M: Daddy works. He drives to Stavanger; for two or three days. And there he works; he makes those rules that are written in the Statoil book.

S: Statoil, that is a gas station, right?

M: Yes. It is also a gas station, but primarily it is a... platform on water, built out there. It is there because Norway has a lot of oil in the water [...] they have oil here and there this big platform collects all these big pipes in itself. It holds oil and only then they can give that oil to other countries.

Rozalia (aged 11) says:

Dad is a carpenter and he recently travels a lot.

As already evident from the above, some children (like Katarzyna, aged 13) prefer succinct and precise statements about her parents' work:

Dad is a builder at the construction site [...] and mum does not have a 'literal' job.

Filip (aged 7) stated that his dad "works and is [his own] boss", which was stated about a father who indeed has his own construction company. His professional responsibility and being overworked seems to highly impact the home atmosphere, resulting in adoption of "a military model" for raising his son. The boy is disciplined when he struggles at school, his access to toys and computer is limited, and he generally receives military toys as gifts.

Among all 32 interviewed children, only one respondent (Marek, aged 7) said that his father was seeking work – a process which was described through a lens of generating certain tensions for the family. When the boy talked about his father – he lowered his voice. He might have been listening to the issues or complains made by his mother, who states that the husband “spends a lot of time at the gym”. The situation of the mother – sole breadwinner in this family – was perhaps a temporary one, yet it did influence the family’s financial standing. The child understands that, as manifested in his reflection that toys are only bought by parents when they have money and that these toys must not be expensive:

Well, they buy what I like, but nothing too expensive, [underline – K.S., S.S.] when we have money.

Reflecting on the mothers’ work, children showcase the following aspects and careers:

- Adrian (aged 10): *Mum is a family doctor.*
- Walbert (aged 9): *She works in a school for the disabled [....] not very close by.*
- Jowita (aged 12): *Mum works at the kindergarten.*
- Oskar (aged 7): *Mum works, bathes and prepares dinner* – In Poland, she worked as a hairstylist but only learnt to cut hair for boys, less so for girls, and then she stopped it altogether [...] She worked with a computer, now she works with cleaning.
- Honorata (aged 10): *Mum does cooking for [surname]* – which means managing a home of a very wealthy man [his house is bigger than ours – adds her younger brother].

It is clear that the children’s narratives confirm the documented gendered segmentation of the migrant labour market in Norway (Friberg 2014; Iglicka, Gmaj 2014). Mothers work in the broadly understood sectors of feminized services – in public and private realms. From the children’s descriptions, they emerge as teachers, shop assistants, cleaners, home-makers, carers. Conversely, fathers seem to be located in the ‘manly’ professions, such as construction, transport, oil rigs, as well as working (largely independently) as car mechanics, carpenters or glaziers. At the same time, both parents of one of the children are doctors, and one father is an IT engineer. While Anne White’s (2011) research with Polish migrants in the UK uncovers the lessening of and breaking through the gender labour market segmentation, the very opposite process appears to be true in the Norwegian case. Certain labour market niches require an influx of

workers, ready to take on simple jobs in construction or industry. We suggest that a majority of migrants holding those positions belong to working class, rather than middle-class. Similarly, Øystein Holter et al. (2009: 27–28) argue that the “Norwegian working life is strongly gender-segregated. While around 30 per cent of the men report working within the industrial, craft, building and construction sectors, only just fewer than 10 per cent of the women do so. At the other end of the scale there are the health and caring sectors, where they find about one quarter of the women, but only about five per cent of the men”.

It is significant that small children view their fathers’ roles primarily through the lens of the financial provisions and responsibility for the material security of the family. They maintain a belief that the father is supposed to be the breadwinner who takes care of the family, even though a majority of mothers are also employed and contribute to the family’s overall income level. Regardless of their prominent labour market activity, mothers are often perceived through their engagement in the organization of family life, and the fulfilment of household-related duties (Graph 1). Being so unlike fathers in this realm likely predestines mothers to being associated with the traditional female mission, rather than a choice of leading their own lives (Titkow 2007: 64). The breadwinner role is almost inseparable from the notion of masculinity in Poland, guiding and underlining men’s roles as husbands and fathers in the gendering processes. Undermining the binding gender ideologies requires parents, children, kinship networks and the entire social system to re-interpret the typical patterns of relations, or, alternatively, it also leads to conflicts, violence and disintegration of coupledom (Krzaklewska, Ratecka 2014). The work mothers do is, in the children’s eyes, less appreciated – a pattern which may also be linked to the generally lower salaries they receive. It emphasizes once again that legitimizing lower value of female work is often sustained in Poland (Titkow et al. 2004; Duch-Krzystoszek 2007; Charkiewicz et al. 2009). The interviewed children have the traditional gender scripts imprinted. Their gender ideologies of roles rely rather heavily on the biological understanding of sex (rather than gender), favouring the traditional understanding of masculinity, rather than the new equality ideas promoted and practiced in the Norwegian society, and presented to the children there from the early years. It is possible that a traditional perception of the gender order in the family, which ascribes parents to their respective sex/gender roles, could have also originated from the prism of occupational roles of the parents or stems from the livelihood strategies that the parents must be discussing at home (White 2011: 3). It signifies not only the gains but also the costs of mobility, which help to understand the input of each family member towards achieving better living conditions in a new place. It is important to

note that living in a society which places high emphasis on gender equality has so far not resulted in any evaluation of the gender contracts and the gendered division of work in their families among the migrant children. It may simply be too early for those conclusions that would acknowledge new gender scripts and show whether they have been internalized by the children or are actively challenged.

Despite the fact that mothers also work outside of home and contribute to the financial success of the family, children are still more inclined to underline the importance of their fathers' work and the significance that male employment has for the family's overall success. Some examples worth quoting were, as follows:

- Marta (aged 9): *Mum is [responsible] for doing sports, dad is for working [...] And dad works with this because he wants to do right by the family [...] Dad's work [is establishing] rules, at Statoil, there. It is not really very interesting, but dad works with that so that [there is] money for the family.*
- Roksana (aged 11): *[...dad] has gone to work here because in Poland it was quite difficult, that is clear.*
- Oliwier (aged 11): *when I was born we went to X, dad was still studying, but when he finished university, then we went back to Y. I mean, me and mum went to Y, and dad was going to different countries in order to get some money for us. Then he came to Norway.*

Children maintain a belief that the father is to be the breadwinner in the family, the one ultimately responsible for financial provisions, even if, as the research shows, the majority of mothers also engage in work outside of the household – which speaks of the prevalence of the 'dual-earner' model. It is nevertheless important to note that having money and manifesting one's wealth is particularly crucial for children. It denotes social position and may secure prestige in a Norwegian peer environment. The migration factor – being from Poland – activates certain stereotypes among children. As those arriving from a poorer country, children are often judged by their peers on the grounds of their economic status, their clothing, behaviours or family leisure patterns. Wojciech (aged 12) explains:

They have a different way of talking, they ask how much your dad earns [...] how much your mother earns, and they simply [...] are interested in this more. Norway is a very rich country; I understand that, it is good that not only poor countries but also rich countries [exist]. But come on – it is too much to talk about money at school. It is really a tad over the top. I believe so, but my mum

says that children in Poland are also changing now. [This applies to] children as well. They are changing. My parents raised me better than that, better than asking how much money your dad makes.

Quite naturally, it transpired that children did not want to stand out – they did not want to be different in terms of clothing or to behave differently than others. They suffer psychologically when someone suggests they might be poor. Despite their young age, they are capable of relativizing the notion of wealth here in Norway and there in Poland. It may be argued that the higher importance attached to becoming well-off and increasing the family's material status (one of the reasons for arriving to Norway in the first place) leads men to a higher degree of readiness of doing whatever it takes to reach this goal. The vicious cycle of traditional masculinity closes as increasing amount of time devoted to work means decreasing engagement in fatherhood and fathering. The more time migrants devote to work, the less time they have for practising 'doing family' (Finch 2007) and being together.

HOUSEHOLD, CARE AND HOMEWORK – MAGNA MATER MIGRATORIS

The role of migrant mothers in securing the smooth economic functioning and long-term sustainability of families is unprecedented (Graph 1). It can be argued that a mother can be portrayed as *Mater Migratoris*, or even *Magna Mater Migratoris* (Slany 2010) in children's accounts. This notion relates to the model of the Mother-Pole (*Matka Polka*) embedded in the concept of a managerial matriarchy, characteristic for women in the Eastern European regimes (Titkow 2007). In our case, it is realized and enmeshed with the new model of the Migrant Mother, which brings together the traditional characteristics of a Polish woman – resourcefulness, caring, dedication, sacrifice, understanding, and irreplaceability – with entrepreneurship, bravery and ingeniousness abroad. A Polish woman neither wants to reject any of these traits, nor does she want to delegate household work to men. International mobility appears to add one more 'building brick' to the image of a contemporary Polish 'superwoman', which allows improving one's self-esteem, feeling powerful, and maintaining domination in the private sphere. Therefore, the findings show that mothers perfectly play out the cultural model of the Mother-Pole and perform their mother-work whole-heartedly, with patience, devotion, as well as great psychological and physical resilience. They manage to reconcile the household and family duties with their professional careers. Children are aware of the important role that this work for others – for a family community/unit, for their benefit – plays. It appears that when many

tasks done by a mother are framed as resulting from family love and devotion, then generally better family relations can be observed.

Looking at the family obligations sharing scheme (Graph 1), mothers spend most of their time on caring for other family members and especially children, helping with homework and other family chores like cooking, cleaning, laundry. They are also responsible for maintaining ties with the extended family (through communication with family members in Poland). It is worth noting that the role of the transnational family kin-keepers is also assigned to children, who in their narratives often underline their engagement in transnational maintenance of relationships with their grandparents (Graph 1). Mothers seem to only have scraps of time left to tend to their personal needs. Father's presence and participation in the family's *orbis interior* is clearly small, even if we look at the activities conducted together with the mother for the family and the household. Instead, a significant engagement of relatives and, most importantly, the grandmother, is demonstrated in the narratives. Assistance provided by kin members is especially visible during visits of family members in Norway, as well as during the children's frequent visits to Poland over the holidays, as well as for summer and winter vacations. Grandmothers function as the family's 'providers/suppliers' tasked with securing the desired goods – most commonly packages with Polish food delicacies.

Caring for children and helping them with their school homework are usually maternal obligations. Not only mothers, but oftentimes also their mothers (grandmothers, as long as they are in Norway), are the caretakers and managers of the family life. From the narratives, mothers appear as the ones who make calls to their children, ensure that everything is all right and prepare tasty meals:

I guess mum simply likes to spend time with us... just hang out, yyy, spend time... yyy, and take care of us...care for us. [It is] Mum ['s task]. She is to know what we are doing and where. She frequently calls and asks where we are and what we are up to, [for example] when we are at the playground. (Wojciech, aged 12).

When mothers have certain skills they also teach children to swim or ski, and they transfer certain patterns of maintaining ties with the family in Poland. They take the children to the Polish Saturday School, which demonstrates their desire to safeguard the children's attachment to the national heritage and language.

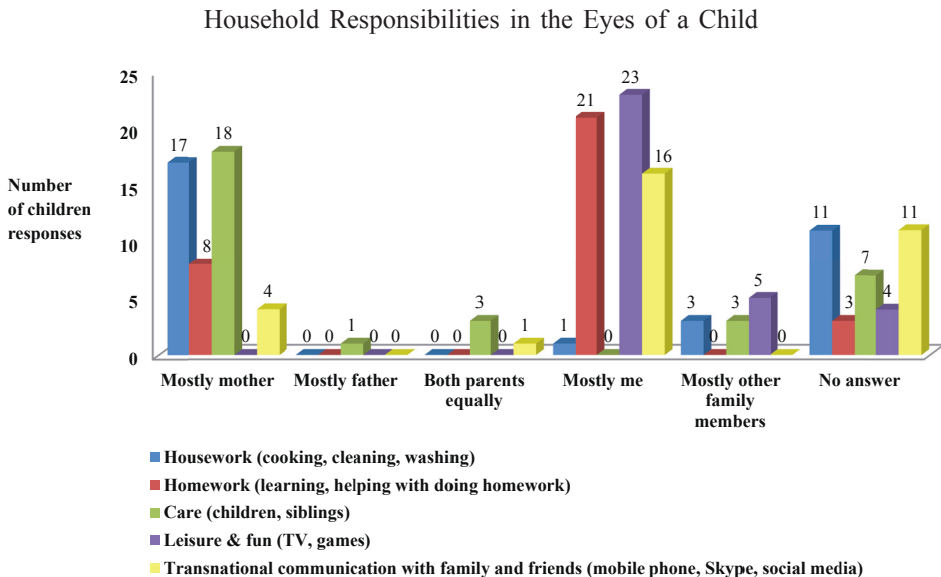
As already mentioned, mothers are supported in their caring efforts by maternal grandmothers arriving from Poland when it is especially necessary – for instance that was the pattern effectuated by a family with five children. Importantly, the children are extremely happy about the grandmother's visits and

perceive her as someone who cooks their favourite dishes and spends free time with them. Polish grandmothers should therefore be seen as a social institution in itself, pronounced even more in their provision of support within a transnational space. Fathers also occasionally participate in caretaking activities. Two sisters – Magdalena (aged 7) and Rozalia (aged 11) said in unison:

dad makes sandwiches [...] for all of us [in the mornings].

Overall, the children's stories led to a conclusion that the maternal contributions to the functioning of family lives and its organization cannot be underscored enough. For many fathers who perhaps would even want to engage more in the family life, doing so is impossible due to their professional obligations. It is common for fathers to work during the weekends, especially among those employed in the construction and renovations business.

Graph 1.



Source: Authors' own analysis.

No child has openly revealed conflicts resulting from the gender division of work between parents. They often assumed the given status quo within the family to be the norm. More broadly, this sociologically illuminative pattern elicits reflections on how work and family can be balanced, given these tremendously time-consuming work lives of men, not rarely marked by hard physical labour. It might be suggested that when a family is at the phase when achieving financial and professional stability is still ‘touch and go’, the egalitarian patterns of family lives cannot be realized. Fathers are mainly absent from family milieus. Parents try to arrive at certain formats of work division in terms of household tasks, but they often seem to land on the so called ‘mixed model’, in which the woman is not only professionally active outside of the home, but also primarily responsible for the majority of tasks connected with child raising and household labour⁹. Polish families rarely have paid carers and do not take advantage of hiring immigrants for menial tasks (e.g. cleaning the house), as it is believed that this is a privilege of the middle- and upper-classes. Two of the women – mothers of the interviewed children – actually work as cleaning ladies themselves and are also the sole breadwinners. In these monoparental families, mothers are hanging on to multiple jobs, often below their qualifications, all in order to secure a decent life for their children. The fact that there were families where mothers were the exclusive providers (as single parents or wives of non-working partners) did not alter the general conclusion about the children’s perceptions of the gendered worlds of home and work.

FREE TIME AND COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILY IN POLAND

It can be derived from Graph 1 that children are capable of organizing their leisure time themselves. It appears from the conversations that certain order is preserved in the children’s lives: when they come from school on a day with no extracurricular activities, they are first fed lunch (normally prepared by a mother or a grandmother, rarely with the child’s help). They are then expected to do homework and study – again, this almost exclusively entails maternal assistance. Occasionally, they would watch their favourite programs (e.g. on Disney Channel) during a break, only to return to studying later. Polish children and their families certainly bring with them the cultural codes (Oberg 1960; Rapaille 2007) of their country of origin to their destination country.

⁹ According to CBOS (2013b), 28 per cent of Poles practice a partner model, 26 per cent a mixed model and 20 per cent – a traditional model. A reversal of roles only appears in about 1 per cent of the surveyed households. The remaining respondents had a hard time describing their situation – for instance in couples affected by unemployment.

One of these codes means that as much time as possible is to be dedicated to education and studying. Children declare that their parents' expectations towards them are primarily linked to their academic achievements, while research on Norway shows the focus of Norwegian parents being more on creativity and self-fulfilment obtained through extracurricular activities of a child's choice rather than doing a lot of homework (WVS Wave 5; Waerdahl 2015):

[...] many parents write [the teachers] that children do not have time for homework because they train a lot [...]. Then if children have no time for homework, it is clear that the teachers thought that we should have less homework. We have as many lessons [as earlier] but earlier we had this thing that you would get a note when you did not do your homework, you would get a note that you need to do homework. If you still did not do it, then a telephone call would be made to your home. (Adam, aged 10).

What is interesting is that Polish children usually appreciate their parents' approach that foregrounds the school obligations. A hypothesis can be made about the children mirroring the desires of parents and believing that diligent studying and dedication to school will facilitate an upward social mobility for the family in the future. Children learn and are increasingly self-confident, especially since they often achieve better and better results in their Norwegian schools, regardless of the barriers they need to face and overcome as migrants. It appears that children already know that education is their door to success on the competitive labour markets, not only in Poland and Norway, but also internationally. They may also be vaguely aware of the subjective happiness through a balance between work and family that could be more attainable when professional success is a given.

Quite telling is the fact that as many as 19 (7 girls and 12 boys) of the 32 children interviewed attend paid extracurricular activities, both at school and at other places. It is typical for children to frequent more than one organized activity, and the most popular extracurricular include football trainings, taekwondo classes, dance classes, music lessons – guitar, artistic gymnastics trainings, as well as arts and crafts activities. After children devote their usual average of two hours per day for homework, they often play online games on their media devices – for instance tablets (Minecraft should be noted as the most popular game at the time of research), play with Lego blocks alone or together with siblings or visiting friends. On the average, they normally dedicate two hours to play every day.

Interestingly, not many children are partaking in the household chores in their spare time – the 'childrearing through work' model has become limited. While children named some things that they do at home (making scramble

eggs or pudding, grocery shopping, caring for a brother or sister), those had a rather occasional character. This departs from the Polish tradition of children's participation in household labour – for instance by doing the dishes, recycling activities, caring for siblings, doing shopping for the grandparents, as well as work in the field for those raised on the farms. In the Polish context, those experiences have been said to equip children with an elementary knowledge about the society, its functioning and the ways in which basic social roles are performed (Kocik 2002). Conversely, in accordance with the postmodern ideology, a child is now “economically ‘worthless’ but morally and emotionally ‘priceless’” (Hays 1996: 64). Thus, when children ‘work’, it is usually in the realm of school duties and obligations linked to extracurricular activities. Some children mentioned doing the ‘emotional labour’ (Gatrell 2004: 68) in the family – contacting grandmothers, grandfathers, aunts, uncles, cousins, as well as supporting their parents in social situations when high competence in Norwegian is needed in the destination country, operating as language brokers (e.g. Adams, Kirova 2006). Language skills foster a transfer of certain ‘services’ performed for the parents. The earlier ‘physical labour’ is changing into ‘intellectual and development-centred work’ (Scott 2004). Katarzyna (aged 13) says:

I speak Polish with my mum, but mum writes down a lot of words. She wants to learn Norwegian.

The daughter assists her mother with sending emails and text messages as the mother “knows most of the words already but has to learn how to put them together in sentences” due to the fact that the grammar is problematic “for older people”.

It is interesting to list some of the ways of spending time together in the family. For instance:

- Kornelia (aged 10) talks about going to concerts with her father: *The [Rolling] Stones are playing in the Telenor Arena soon and we are going. The girl also enjoys spending time with her mother: I like taking walks around the area with my mum” – they visit national parks and sometimes make a plan to meet “with my friend Marit and her dad. We take a tartan blanket, prepare sandwiches, have a picnic and go to the bay. We watch from afar how ferries, kayakers and private boats sail. It looks breath-taking.*
- Ada (aged 10): *[...] not so long ago we would travel somewhere almost every week – to the lake, or to the various museums, and now I go ice-skating with mum, or sometimes to the swimming pool. Overall, I am with friends all the time.*

- Wojciech (aged 12) enjoys fishing and trainings with father: *dad sometimes goes crazy with us. (...) Together we [all family], for example, watch TV, and we talk, [...] we travel to Poland together, or go on trips, perhaps it is all in all not that often, but it sometimes happens that we go to the beach.*

The children's stories point out to a wish of spending more time together – during the week, their school obligations, as well as the professional and household work take precedence, while also weekends may be affected by fatigue. In consequence, the children's perception is that families lack opportunities for 'doing family' (Finch 2007) together. They would expect more balance between the work and family lives of their parents.

CONCLUSIONS

The research focused on children conducted for the *Transfam* project supplies some interesting findings pertaining to the professional spheres of the parents' lives, as well as the organization of family life, family practices, and the gendered division of roles in migrant families. The children were anchored in the migrant life rhythm and included in the stories much earlier than at the time of their settlement in Norway. This plays an important role for the future processes of integration, adaptation to a life in a new country, and the perceptions of the family's work-life issues. It was quite commonly found that the parents had been involved in labour migrations earlier and that these journeys observably influenced family life.

As documented by our results, the children actively engage in constructing their social setting. They are interested in what their parents say about migration, everyday problems, work and family balance, and therefore attentively listen to their conversations, observe and sometimes even eavesdrop. Children frequently join certain family practices, for instance those aimed at maintaining ties with the family in Poland.

The statements are sometimes contradictory to some of the findings regarding the results concerning egalitarian and partner relations (e.g. *Transfam's* Work Package 2)¹⁰. Our findings show that the children view this issue differently

¹⁰ Those findings suggest pronounced changes towards gender equality in the private sphere (egalitarianisation of family roles, new fatherhood and fathering practices, male engagement in reproductive work) that are said to stem from the broadly conceived post-migration changes, as well as the gender mainstreaming policy implemented in the Norwegian society. What needs to be underscored, however, is the effect of social class in the respective groups of respondents in the WP2 and WP5 components of *Transfam*, with a note that the latter group – children – were

and they see the gender relations in the family, parental obligations and the core of each parent's work much more traditionally. The children's views uncover gender inequality, as well as the hierarchically different value and meaning assigned to the reproductive and productive work.

Certain narratives directly pinpoint the effects of employment (especially with regard to father's work), but nonetheless see them as aimed at the improvement of the living conditions, at having a better life. This is the sole reason behind so many parental efforts towards fulfilling this goal, as Anne White correctly links the two dimensions by saying that "[m]igration strategies are a subset of livelihood strategies" (2011: 3). Still, the gendered division of work in households is quite evident, especially when one looks at the values assigned to the two distinct types of work. There is a clear contradistinction between the productive work of fathers and the reproductive work of mothers. Although a dual-career dual-income model was the most common, children continue to underline the paternal role of a 'bread winner' as crucial for fathers. "It is dad who earns money for supporting the family" was a statement heard more than once, and it should be viewed together with even more specific: "Dad has to do jobs so that the family can do well, so that we have good living conditions". From the interviews with the parents it indeed transpired that many families have taken out mortgage in order to buy a house or an apartment, generating an inherent need for more and more work and higher income.

In addition, some of the children declared that their mother "works a lot at home". The family space of the home is clearly a women's realm – she is the one who cooks, cleans, and most commonly assists children with their homework. This asymmetric division of labour and private/public worlds is a consequence of the intensive professional engagement of fathers and their resulting physical absence from home. The fathers should be noted for being more active in 'doing family' on their days off, but this does not warrant a claim about engaged and active fathering, which is impossible not due to the lack of will, but rather the fact that they are overburdened with work. Our findings contribute to the discourse about 'caring masculinity' (Scambor et al. 2014) by referring to the

more often representing working class, while the WP2 respondents' pool of parents leaned more toward middle class families. In the WP2's paper "*Caught between Breadwinning and Emotional Provisions. The Case of Polish Migrant Fathers in Norway*", Pustulka, Struzik, Ślusarczyk (2015, forthcoming) draw on the significance of the institutional support and social expectations for creating new patterns of being a father, yet they also underline the salient importance of the individual, biographical elements that certainly influence the every-day practices of Polish migrant fathers. Authors put forward a general conclusion that there is not a singular fathering or fatherhood type among the Polish men in Norway, but rather a continuum of various family arrangements is observed, often propelled by men.

practices that are so welcomed and expected by the children (and not only them). Importantly, our results from the Polish-Polish, ethnically homogenous couples, did not lead to a pronounced tendency for a social change towards a 'new fatherhood' (see Pustułka, Struzik, Ślusarczyk 2015). The children highlight the need for 'togetherness' – spending free time together, organizing active forms of leisure. The here-presented research shows that so far they are rather alone in their task of organizing their free time in the space of home – they choose games, toys, watching TV, as well as doing school-related tasks.

Applying the known typologies of families (e.g. McCubbin, McCubbin 1989) to our research findings allows for concluding that migration creates Polish "bonded families" in Norway. Hitherto, Polish families remain tightly-knit, marked by strong bonds, trust and love, even if their everyday lives are by no means free from multiple difficulties. Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim (2013: 201) argue that "the most urgent goals of the kinship unit is to mobilize social, economic and culture capital resources in order to multiply both the individual and the collective opportunities for using the transnational space or, the 'transnational elevator'". Migrant families can also somehow be considered 'not flexible enough', as they do not alter the boundaries of rules and divisions within the roles that each family member has. The results presented in the article strongly indicate that families generally recreate the gender structures known from their country of origin, especially in their daily routines. It is less common that they actively invest in renegotiations of said structures (see also Titkow et al. 2004). They largely follow patriarchal patterns in their behaviours and this particular organization of family life may operate as a type of a compromise that ultimately brings the family closer to their superior goal: using migration as a stepping stone for finding success and life satisfaction in a transnational context.

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