

Gunhild Odden¹

‘They assume dirty kids means happy kids’. Polish female migrants on being a mother in Norway

This article deals with how the Polish in Norway perceive and talk about motherhood in a migratory context. The changes such a context might imply in terms of a parenting style, defined as a set of attitudes that express the parents’ behavior towards the child, are the article’s main focus. The results presented are based on qualitative interviews conducted with twelve Polish mothers in Norway. The empirical data shows that the mothers interviewed consider the Polish parenting style as rather *demanding* and *intrusive* while the Norwegian parenting style is considered as rather *responsive* and *neglecting*. The article shows, however, that there is no absolute connection between rather stereotyped perceptions of the Norwegian and the Polish parenting styles, and the actual attitudes identified in the analysis of the mothers’ narratives. Better economic opportunities are among the most important changes for the mothers, which in turn influences their perceptions and practices of motherhood. Furthermore, the diversity in perceiving, talking about and performing motherhood across borders are stressed, highlighting that the changes in terms of parenting styles are to be seen, above all, in terms of structural opportunities and personal experiences.

Key words: Migration, motherhood, Polish migration, Norway, parenting style, welfare, cultural values

Introduction

Migration and motherhood are both life changing experiences, implying the idea of ‘multiple careers’². While there is a huge body of literature focusing on *trans-*

¹ VID Specialized University, Centre for Intercultural Communication, Stavanger (Norway); gunhild.odden@sik.no.

² The concept of career is a classical sociological concept. My use of it here is, additionally, inspired by the work of Martiniello and Rea (2011) who define the concept of migratory career as a concept which “integrates structures of opportunities, individual characteristic and networks to make sense of the migratory experience” (Martiniello, Rea 2011).

national motherhood [here understood as the geographical separation between a mother and her child(ren)], less attention is paid to the experiences and practices of mothering within one national context. Furthermore, in Europe many of the existing studies tend to focus on parenting styles within families with a non-European background (Ryndyk, Johannessen 2015). More recently a switch has nevertheless taken place and the literature on Polish family life across Europe is now growing, especially in the context of the UK (see for example Pustulka 2014; Kilkey, Plomien, Perrons 2013; White 2011).

This article will emphasize the Polish women in Norway and their perceptions and experiences of motherhood within the migration context³. The relevance of the article is related to the fact that the Polish migration to Norway has, like elsewhere in Europe, increased significantly since Poland has become a part of the European Union in 2004. Hence, Poles constitute by far the largest migrant group in the country. In 2014, 91,179 Polish migrants were registered in Norway, representing 15% of the total number of migrants in the country (Statistics Norway 2014)⁴. While there exist a certain number of studies dealing with the Polish migrants in Norway (see for example Friberg 2013; Ryndyk 2013a, 2013b), these tend to stress the migrants' link to the job market, whereas the family perspective remains understudied. This empirical article aims at filling the gap by stressing how the Polish mothers in Norway perceive and talk about their double careers as migrants and mothers, stressing the changes they observe in terms of parenting.

The first part of the article will briefly present its methodological, theoretical and contextual framework. The second part presents how the informants perceive and talk about the Polish and the Norwegian parenting styles. The third part stresses particularly the mothers' experiences with leaving their home country and adapting with a child, new economic possibilities, the encounter with new cultural values and the experience of mothering far away from other family members. The fifth and last part of the article aims at summarizing the identified changes, and discussing (1) if contextual changes automatically imply changes in parenting style, and (2) to what extent changes might be understood in terms of structure and/or culture.

1. Methodological, theoretical and contextual framework

This article is based on the interviews with twelve Polish families living in Norway. The families live both in the urban and rural areas on the Norwegian Western

³ The article is based on some of the findings from a larger international research project on Gender Equality and Work-life Balance named PAR Migration Navigator and funded from Norway Grants in the Polish-Norwegian Research Programme operated by the National Centre for Research and Development.

⁴ The Swedes constitute the second largest group of migrants currently registered in Norway (38,414), while the Somalis come in a third position (35,912).

coast. Within each family, three interviews have been conducted: one joint interview with both mother and father, one single interview with the mother, and one single interview with the father⁵. Conducting both joint and individual interviews gave the researchers, we argue, a rich material in terms of everyday life of the family in general, but also in terms of what is said and what is not during the joint interview. The present article is based on the discourse of the women in both the joint and the individual interviews.

Table 1. Main characteristics of the informants

Mother	Year of Arrival in Norway	Number of children	Education	Professional situation in Norway	First job
1	2001	2 (early age)	University level	Employed in a kindergarten (100%)	Cleaning
2	2006	2 (school age)	University level	Employed in a kindergarten (100%)	Cleaning
3	2013	2 (school age)	Vocational training	Cleaning, informal (part time)	Cleaning
4	2010	1 (early age)	University level	Pet care (50%)	Cleaning
5	2008	2 (early age)	High school level	Cleaning and catering (100%)	Cleaning
6	2008	1 (early age)	Vocational training	Employed in a kindergarten (100%)	Cleaning
7	2013	2 (school age)	University level	Employed in a retirement home (100%)	Same
8	2013	2 (early age)	University level	Stay at home	–
9	2013	1 (school age)	University level	Catering (60%)	Same
10	2009	1 (school age)	Vocational training	Cleaning (100%)	Cleaning
11	2007	1 (early age)	University level	Team leader in a factory (100%)	Employee factory
12	2006	2 (school age)	University level	Teacher (100%)	Cleaning

Source: Author's elaboration.

The article's theoretical framework is situated within the sociology of everyday life in general, and Goffman's theory of symbolic interactionism in particular. The study accordingly stresses how roles, meanings and symbols are constructed and reconstructed in everyday life (Goffman 1959).

Further, the article highlights the concept of a parenting style. Darling and Steinberg define the concept of a parenting style as a set of attitudes towards the child that 'taken together, create an emotional climate in which the parent's behaviors are expressed' (Darling, Steinberg 1993: 488 cited in Elstad, Stefansen 2014: 651). In 1978, Baumrind developed a well-known typology, which was later

⁵ All the interviews were conducted with polish speaking researchers and later translated into English.

extended by Maccoby and Martin (1983) (cited in Elstad, Stefansen 2014). Their model stresses two major dimensions in terms of parenting style, namely, responsiveness and demandingness. Here “responsiveness refers to the degree to which parents are accepting, supportive and receptive, i.e. their recognition of a child’s individuality and autonomy and «demandingness refers to behavioral standards and parental reinforcement, i.e. the parents» willingness to act as socializing agents who demand compliance with norms and rules” (Elstad, Stefansen 2014: 651). In their study dealing with the perceptions of parenting styles among the youth in Norway, Elstad and Stefansen (2014) introduce two additional dimensions, namely the dimension *neglecting*, which refers to the degree parents are disinterested, unhelpful and unconcerned, and the dimension *intrusive* which reflects “how parents act in overly controlling and invasive ways” (Elstad, Stefansen 2014: 655).

The existing studies show that parents raise their children in a way that corresponds with the demands of their environment and economic context as well as the systems of beliefs and cultural ideologies that they are being socialized within and into (Liamputtong 2007). These systems are, however, not static. The Polish society is an example of a national context that has experienced an important structural development over the last decades. These changes have also had an impact on the traditional gender roles. For example, White (2011) points out that attitudes towards working women have recently improved in Poland, and the dual-earner model has become more accepted. There are, however, still considerable differences between the Polish and the Norwegian societies in this respect. For example, in 2007, “only 50.6% of women in Poland were formally employed, considerably below Norway’s rate of 75%” (Ryndyk, Johannessen 2015)⁶.

The changeable characteristic of parenting styles is further influenced by the global phenomena in general and migration in particular, which is what the following part of the article will particularly focus on.

2. Perceptions of the Polish and the Norwegian parenting styles

How do the Polish mothers perceive and talk about the ‘Polish parenting style(s)’ and the ‘Norwegian parenting styles(s)’? The table below provides an overview of words and expressions used by the informants when asked to talk about the differences between the Polish and the Norwegian parenting.

The table shows that the informants’ perceptions of the Polish and the Norwegian parenting styles differ and that if we relate these empirical findings to the above-mentioned dimensions of Baumrind, Maccoby and Martin, and Elstad and Stefansen, the Polish parenting style would be rather ‘demanding’ and ‘intrusive’, while the Norwegian – rather ‘responsive’ and ‘neglecting’.

⁶ The percentage of Norwegian women participating in the work force is later in this article said to be slightly lower. However, in order to be able to compare the two countries, I here refer to the numbers of Janneke and Chantal.

Table 2. Word and expressions used when talking about the Norwegian and the Polish parenting styles

Polish parenting styles	Norwegian parenting styles
Obedience, punishment, strict rules, shouting	Relaxed/stress-free (<i>bezstresowe</i> in Polish), no rules
Overprotectiveness	Underprotectiveness, independence, responsibility
Care and affection	Little affection shown
Appearance important	Little attention paid to personal hygiene of children (dirty clothes, hands and hair, running noses)
Respect for parents/older people	No respect for parents/older people

Source: Author's elaboration.

Nevertheless, to a certain degree, the table above reflects the stereotypical perceptions of the Norwegian and the Polish parenting, and does not state whether parents relate to them or not. The analysis of the mothers' narratives gives a more nuanced picture. In the following section we will see how mothers 'themselves' talk about being a mother in a migratory context, in terms of what kind of parenting style they place themselves in, explicitly or implicitly, and to what extent mothering in a new context has brought any changes in this regard.

3. Re-thinking mothering?

Some of the informants had children in Poland before migrating to Norway, others gave birth to their child or children in another country where they had had migrated before coming to Norway, while the third category of informants became mothers in Norway. As already mentioned, migrating is a life-changing experience not only for mothers, but also for children. Especially those who had older children back in Poland before migrating to Norway, expressed that they were concerned about how their children would react to the decision of leaving and how they would adapt in Norway.

Narratives on leaving and adapting

Mother 7 says that she took into account her eldest child's opinion while taking the decision of leaving:

Our son understood it and took it [the fact that we were leaving for Norway] as an opportunity. [But] he presented some conditions: at least once a month he had to go to Poland to meet his friends – Mother 7.

Mother 7's son was in his early teens when he left Poland. As agreed with his parents, he travelled frequently to Poland during his first months in Norway. Thus, the family kept an apartment back in Poland, which the mother also uses frequently. The back and forth pattern seems to be one of this family's transnational adaptation strategies: they are here (Norway), but also there (Poland). With the low-cost direct flights between the two countries, travels back to or visits from Poland are frequent for most of the families interviewed. What is specific about this family is that the possibility for the son to go home frequently was agreed on within the family before the migration.

Another mother says that her daughter did not want to go to Norway and that the adaptation process was particularly difficult. At some point she even considered returning to Poland:

When we came to Norway, she did not agree. She did not want to live in Norway (...). It was difficult (...). She cried, she did not want to be in Norway. Sometimes I was thinking that we should go back – Mother 2.

Mother 2's daughter was also in her early teens when she came to Norway. After graduating from high school, she went to Poland to study at the university. Since many of the post-2004 Polish migrant families still have rather young children, it would be interesting to see if studying or working in Poland is something many of them aspire to or undertake.

Mother 10 also encountered challenges regarding the adaptation process of her child who was also a teenager when they came to Norway to join the father who had already been in the country for almost ten years. She claims that *if* her child had told her that he wanted to go back to Poland, she would have done so:

If my [child's name] had come to me and told me: "Mom, I don't want to be here. I want to go back to Poland", I would have packed those suitcases and we'd have left. For everything I did, I did it with regards to my child. I didn't care about myself. I would not even care about [husband's name], whether he would agree or not – Mother 10.

Mother 10 thus laid stress on the well-being of the child, putting his best before her own or her husband's needs or preferences. The fact that she had been a single mother in Poland for almost ten years, with a husband working abroad, might explain why she does "not even care about what [husband's name] would say". As she puts it herself: "In Poland I was the mother and the father"; she is used to making decisions on behalf of the child single-handedly. Furthermore, she states that it was difficult to live as a family again, which is a common challenge within the family reunification scheme. Mother 10 and her family have since learned how to live together and are currently planning to expand their family.

Mother 7 also places an emphasis on the well-being of her children and says that when they came to Norway, she gave priority to the adaptation process of her

children, a teenager and a pre-teen, rather than to her own career as a professional health worker:

We assumed that our financial situation was good enough to make a living on one salary. We decided that I wouldn't be looking for a job and that I would look after the children [during the first months] – Mother 7.

According to Mother 7, the children's adaptation went rather smoothly and she started looking for a job earlier than planned. She quickly obtained a job as a professional health worker and is the only Polish woman in the sample whose first job in Norway corresponded to her formal qualifications. The financial situation here seemed to make it possible for the mother to stay at home during the first steps of the children as immigrant children. Many of the interviewed families say that in fact in Norway, unlike in Poland, it is possible to live on one salary.

The experiences of the above-mentioned mothers show that migrating together with a child leads to certain challenges (child wanting to keep the apartment back home, not wanting to leave, to go back, or the general adaptation process) which, in its turn, contributes to changes and new ways of performing motherhood (transnational lives, learning to live together again or putting a career on hold). Further, the quotations show that for these women the child's perspective and well-being, which correspond with the responsive dimension, constituted important aspects as regards the leaving and/or adaptation phases. Thus, here, it is the practices and not the parenting style that change, as the parenting style refers more to the attitude (responsive) expressed in the context (migration). These attitudes do, however, not appear in the table 1, as they are not explicitly expressed by the mothers talking about the characteristics of the Polish parenting style.

(Economic) migration as a possibility to *become* or to *feel* like a mother

A different type of change described by the interviewed mothers is linked to the type of migration logic they are within, namely 'the economic migration'. In Poland, Mother 4 lived in such conditions that she could not imagine having a child there:

[Coming here] has changed everything. In Poland we could not afford anything, there were financial problems all the time. We lived with my husband's mother in her flat. We did not have hot water and the toilets were outside (...) we could not imagine having a child in such conditions – Mother 4.

According to Mother 4, it was the migration to Norway that gave her the possibility to become a mother. For her, better economic conditions equaled to the possibility of taking care for a child. Mother 2 also lived in difficult economic conditions back in Poland, together with her husband and two children. She claimed that moving to Norway, and the economic possibilities that came along with it, made her 'feel like a mother':

In Poland I had nothing. We lived poorly. It has been a huge change to move here. It was amazing to move here. Only here did I feel like a mother. Only here I could relax a bit, I felt comfortable, I did not have to worry whether my child would have food to eat or whether I would be able to ensure a good future for her – Mother 2.

Economic security is mentioned by many families as one of the most important changes in their lives when compared to the life they led in Poland. Elstad and Stefansen (2014) note that in earlier studies, economic hardship has been linked to poor parenting. They refer, for instance, to the Family Stress Model of Conger *et al.* (1992; 2010, cited in Elstad, Stefansen 2014) which states that “economic problems, such as unmet material needs and inability to pay bills, tend to generate emotional stress and parental conflict” which might lead to the “lack of care and harsh disciplinary methods” and the complementary Investment Model of Linver *et al.* (2002, cited in Elstad, Stefansen) and Bradley and Corwyn (2002, cited in Elstad, Stefansen 2014) which “suggests that parents in poor families will have to prioritize immediate material needs and will therefore be more inattentive towards their offspring, while families with ample economic resources are more able to «invest» in their children, both in terms of time spent and in terms of economic outlays” (Elstad, Stefansen 2014: 652). The link between (better) economy and (better) parenting is, as seen above, very explicit in Mother 2’s discourse.

More specifically as regards time perspective, spending more time with the family is stressed by many of the informants as one of the most important changes regarding the family life in Norway. In the Norwegian context, both the organization of the labour market⁷ and the relatively high salaries compared to other countries, give families more time together. As one of the mothers puts it: “In Poland parents must hold four jobs to pay for the children. Then when are they supposed to spend free time with them?” – Mother 4.

It is important to note, however, that not all of the informants migrated for economic reasons. Moreover, some of them state they had even better economic conditions back in Poland than in Norway. This is the case of Mother 10. Her husband had, as mentioned earlier, worked abroad for over ten years and during this time he sent money to her and her son. She explains that joining her husband was not a question of money, but a question of saving the marriage. Other informants, with the experience of a husband abroad, explain that coming to Norway was a strategy to stay together, as transnational marriages cannot last forever.

Acquiring or not acquiring new values?

Other differences concern values, such as a child’s independence and creativeness. Mother 2 came to Norway in 2006. With one child over the age of eighteen and

⁷ According to the Confederation of Norwegian of Enterprise (NHO), Norway has one of the lowest average hours worked per year in Europe (NHO 2013).

one of school age, she had a long experience of mothering both in Poland and in Norway. When talking about the perceived changes, she says:

In Poland I was extremely careful with everything. When we went for a trip [I worried] that she would fall or get her clothes dirty for example (...). When I went here I [thought]: "Oh my God! My daughter got all wet in the kindergarten, all they ate were sandwiches, they did not have warm meals and they drank only water!" It was horrible! I could not believe it. But now, from a longer perspective, I think that it is positive that children learn to be independent – Mother 2.

The aspects Mother 2 mentions as particularly different (falling, getting dirty, wet, no hot meals) are similar to those found in other studies dealing with migrant parents and childhood (see for example Johannessen *et al.* 2013). What is of particular interest here is that the informant links the perceived changes to the length of her stay: "But now, from a longer perspective, I think it is positive that children learn to be independent". In other words, she herself highlights that the adaptation process has occurred over time and that her perceptions of 'Norwegian parenting and childhood' has evolved from negative to positive.

Mother 8 came to Norway in 2013. She has two small children who attend kindergarten. When talking about the Norwegian kindergarten, she says:

In Poland, there were just crayons and paints, and possibly gluing some leaves. Here they make something out of nothing. And most importantly, he [my son] can get dirty (...) they assume that dirty kids means happy kids (...). I am delighted with the nursery system here – Mother 8.

Finally, Mother 11 claims that what is considered 'dangerous' in Poland is not necessarily considered as such in Norway, and how independence can be taught to even very small children in the kindergarten.

It was surprising for me when my daughter below one year and a half was seated by the table with a plate and a knife to put butter on a sandwich. It was shocking for us. I always thought I should protect her against sharp tools but in fact they [those working in the kindergarten] taught her to use cutlery. They develop independence and self-reliance in the kindergarten by teaching them how to prepare a sandwich or by asking the children what they would like to eat – Mother 11.

Viewed from a symbolic interactionist perspective, the symbolic meaning of, for example, the situation 'child using a knife' has switched from 'dangerous' to 'learning independence' through (intercultural) interaction in everyday life. This perspective is in line with the theory of William Isaac Thomas (a scientific partner of the Polish sociologist Florian Znaniecki) and his wife. They argued that if a situation is defined as true, it is true in its consequences (known as the 'Thomas theorem'). Defining a situation as dangerous will thus result in a negative impression of the Norwegian education ("it was shocking for us"). Defining the same situa-

tion as a way of learning independence, which in addition is defined as a positive value, will result in a positive impression of the Norwegian education.

Mother 11, for her part, believes that the Norwegian parents put their children in dangerous situations, which she expresses in the following way:

Here, parents, including mothers, follow somehow a rather casual model of upbringing, or you could even call it non-upbringing of children. For example, for me a 3-year old child is still a 3-year old child with a brain at this level and he or she cannot assess danger. Such children here are uncared for, they approach slopes and they jump from them. I try to look after my own child and warn the other mothers but they just say: "Let them go, they will not get hurt" – Mother 11.

Mother 11 does not share the same symbolic meaning of jumping from a slide as the Norwegian mothers she interacts with at the playground. Acquiring new values in the migratory context is, in other words, not automatic.

Finally, Mother 7, who came to Norway in 2013, and is a mother of two teenagers, claims that she does not feel any difference about being a mother in Poland and being a mother in Norway.

I feel a mother in the same way here as I did in Poland. I don't notice any differences (...). I have other economic possibilities, but our family and private lives are the same (...). I have certain values, which are important for me regardless of where I live – Mother 7.

The values Mother 7 here refers to seem to be the religious values the family adheres to. Religion is an important aspect in their life and they are active church members. The family is Christian, but not Catholic. Consequently, their religious values are not the Catholic ones traditionally linked to the Polish identity. Although Mother 7 says that she 'does not notice any difference' in being a mother in Poland and in Norway when asked explicitly about it, later in the interviews she admits that she has become less 'demanding' and 'pushing' in Norway. This change is not linked to the Norwegian context in particular, but rather to the migratory context which the mother perceives as stressful: 'I did not want to add extra stresses or duties', she says, implying that she adapted her parenting style to the (new) migratory context and changed from being rather demanding to more responsive.

Mothering far from home and the extended family

Finally, although the informants claim that migrating to Norway has given them new economic and other structural opportunities, raising a child in the new context presents also new challenges. Being far away from extended family members is commonly stressed as something that makes parenting particularly challenging in Norway, as they have few or no possibilities to get help with the children. As one of the mothers says: "We feel we are exhausted. Being only with

her, without relatives” – Mother 11. Thus, visits of grandparents, one of them or both, are appreciated.

It helps a lot when our parents visit us; I can relax because I know that not all the duties are on me. They are great help in cooking, cleaning and other housework when my child is in the kindergarten. We’ve just realized what a great asset a helpful grandparent can be – Mother 11.

In the existing literature on the Polish migration, the concept of ‘flying grandmothers’ is often used to illustrate how grandmothers circulate between Poland and the country where the grandchildren are being raised (Kilkey, Plomien, Perrens 2013; White 2011). From a gender perspective, it is interesting to note that the interviewed mothers, more than the fathers, seem to consider being far away from family members as a considerable loss. Some fathers even say that they feel good about being far away from the extended family and, thus, all kinds of ‘family obligations’. Another mother expresses in the following way the feeling of being constantly with the children:

When someone complains that they don’t spend enough time with their kids, I cannot understand them. Because we are with our kids in every second! Every day, every weekend. All the time, all the time! I wish that one day they [the kids] can just go and that I will not worry for them. I just hope that it will happen one day – Mother 1.

Being a parent far away from other family members, and thus the possible help in terms of child care, is a challenge not only for migrants. It is a challenge, however, added to many other challenges they encounter as non-natives in a whole new environment. It is also a challenge that might, if experienced as very stressful (e.g. “we feel exhausted”), have a negative impact on the parenting style (e.g. less responsive parenting). This impact is not, however, visible in our data, but still worth mentioning as a possible change in terms of parenting style in a migratory context.

Discussion and conclusions

This article has shown how the Polish mothers in Norway perceive and talk about motherhood in a migratory context, stressing the changes this context might imply in terms of a parenting style which has been defined as a set of attitudes that express parents’ behavior towards a child. The empirical data show that the mothers interviewed consider the Polish parenting style as rather ‘demanding’ and ‘intrusive’, while the Norwegian parenting style is considered as rather ‘responsive’ and ‘neglecting’. There is, however, no absolute connection between ethnicity and parenting style. In addition, we have seen that there is a difference in terms of (stereotyped) general perceptions of the Polish and the Norwegian parenting

styles, and the actual attitudes and behavior among the mothers. For example, among the mothers with the experience of mothering in Poland, some express that they were particularly concerned about the child's well-being and that they included the child's perspective in the decision of leaving – which is a rather responsive behavior. Also other scholars find that such models are not absolute. In their overview of the individual-centered and community-centered parenting, Holm-Hansen *et al.* (2007) highlight that parents most probably recognize aspects from both models in their own parenting styles.

The informants stress that coming to Norway has improved their economic possibilities and many of them relate this with motherhood, in the sense that coming to Norway gave them the possibility to become a mother, to feel like a mother and/or give a child a better future. Economic security is a structural change, linked to Norway's general welfare system that might have, according to this and other studies, a positive impact on mothering (e.g. less 'running for money' = less stress = better parenting in terms of attitudes and the time spent with a child).

Other observed changes are connected with (the appreciation of) values such as independence and creativeness, often referred to as typically Norwegian. In the World Values Surveys with numbers from 2005–2009, people around the world are asked which values they consider most important in the upbringing of a child. 90% of Norwegian respondents think independence is among the five most important values, which places them first among all countries regarding the importance of the value 'independence'. To compare, 41% of the Polish respondents think this is an important value, while 58.9% do not. In the same survey, the value 'imagination' has a score of 54.6% among Norwegians. Only Swedes hold a higher score here. Among Poles, the percentage is 20.2%. In other words, the existing quantitative studies show that there are notable differences between Norwegian and Poles in terms of values related to parenting. This article has given an in-depth description of how parents might perceive and talk about these differences, and how some of the mothers gave new symbolic meanings to the actions such as using a knife or getting wet and dirty in kindergarten. A Norwegian child psychologist Willy Tore Mørch (2013) argues that the values considered as important in a society reflect the general situation of the country under study. Thus, welfare and security give space for the above-mentioned values. Hence, the observed changes in terms of these values might also be linked to Norway's structural landscape.

Some mothers, nevertheless, explicitly state that they have not changed any of their values, as regards parenting, since coming to Norway (e.g. "my values are the same here as in Poland"). Others express a negative opinion of how Norwegians raise their children. That means there is, among our informants, a certain diversity when it comes to perceptions and attitudes of the Polish and the Norwegian parenting styles. Furthermore, how the mothers are aware of and put into words these observations, attitudes and possible changes, differs from a very conscious discourse to a more unconscious one. Additionally, the interview situation itself

might have influenced the informants' discourse. Adding to the interviews a methodological approach in terms of observation would give a more nuanced picture of what is said in the interview situation, and what is practiced in everyday life.

In the introduction to this article, I put forward an idea that as 'migrants' and 'mothers,' they hold 'two careers'. In our sample, ten out of twelve informants do have a formal job and one holds an informal job. Only one stays at home. That is to say that most of them have three careers. Migrants from the EU countries of Eastern Europe⁸ have in fact one of the highest labor force participation rates in Norway (73.2%). Only migrants from other Nordic countries hold a higher rate (76%). If we compare the rates of the non-migrant female population and the female population from the EU countries of Eastern Europe, 66.8% of Norwegian women aged 15–74 are employed, while the rate for Eastern European women is 67.6%. In other words, the rate is slightly higher for the latter group. In comparison, the rate for African women is 37.5% (Statistics Norway, data from 2015 published in 2015). Thus, many Eastern European women, in their everyday lives, juggle three careers (migrants, mothers and employees), where they negotiate meanings and play different roles. For mothers, this in itself is a change.

In this sample we have included those *willing* to talk about the meanings, roles and challenges, stressing their role as mothers. The sample consists of rather 'traditional' families with few (identified) conflicts and/or divorces and/or stepchildren. A different sample would most probably contribute to different perceptions and experiences of mothering in a migratory context. Whilst unemployment rates in Norway are currently increasing due to the decrease in oil prices, none of the interviewed mothers have experienced losing a job.

To conclude, I argue, in line with other scholars (see for example Nadim 2014), that 1) changing attitudes and practices regarding motherhood are above all to be understood in the light of new structural opportunities and personal experiences and thus, the influence of receiving a society's values appears as secondary. In addition, this article has shown that a country's values are also influenced by structural opportunities. Structural, cultural and individual aspects are in other words intertwined. The analysis of parenting styles in a migratory context in terms of intersectionality, with a more systematic use of variables such as ethnicity, class, gender, religion and sexuality, as well as other contextual and individual factors, is an approach that would further strengthen the knowledge on the (changing) transnational Polish motherhood. I also recommend further reflection on how Polishness and Norwegianness (Fangen, Lynnebakke 2011) is perceived and practiced by Polish mothers, which is an (identity) aspect not touched upon here. Finally, a gender-centered approach, stressing how gender roles are (re)negotiated among Polish mothers and fathers in a context which strongly promotes gender equality (Norway), is also welcome.

⁸ This is the category Statistics Norway use. However, as Polish migrants represent by far the largest group of migrants in Norway, the numbers should reflect the general tendencies regarding the Poles.

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