4. Cyber space: A refuge for hegemonic masculinity among Polish migrants in the UK

Kamila Fiałkowska

Abstract

This chapter* explores the relationship between masculinity, migration-related issues and super-diversity (Vertovec, 2007), with Polish migrants in the UK as a case study. The research question refers to how being a man shapes the migratory experience of migrants who come from a considerably more conservative and patriarchal society and now live in a super-diverse society, i.e. complex, multi-ethnic, liberal etc. In this chapter I investigate the content of selected migration-related internet forum discussions among Polish migrants in the UK to see what aspects of living in Britain are discussed and how they are viewed, interpreted and constructed in a discursive practice by the male internet users. I am interested in the response of male internet forum users to the challenges of living in a super diverse socio-cultural environment and how this relates to gender construction. I argue that masculinities, understood as configurations of practice realised in social actions, offer a potential angle to understand how Polish men adapt to and appreciate life in Britain. I apply the concept of hegemonic masculinity and hegemonic bargain to understand the process of 'doing gender' in a migratory context. Gender norms, importance of the nation, whiteness and sense of patriotism are identified as issues that are strongly connected with the gender identity of some male forum users and the migratory context. It also seems that the internet forums and, more broadly, social media offer a space of considerable significance. The internet enables forum users to strengthen the ethnic bonds

with those in and out of the country. Cyber space offers the platform to vent their views openly, to discuss and to argue on matters that often cannot be understood by the host society or would not be accepted.

Introduction

According to Steven Vertovec, ‘the multi-local life-world presents a wider, even more complex set of conditions that affect the construction, negotiation and reproduction of social identities’ (Vertovec, 2001: 578), which suggests that gender identities, ideologies and practices are formulated and negotiated in diverse ways. When people move across national borders and yet maintain ties with their home countries, they create what have become known in the literature as transnational social spaces (Faist, 2004; Mahler, 1999; Osella & Osella, 2000; Pessar, 2005). This concept points to the fact that migration is not only a process of moving body and some material belongings from one place to another. The social links with the sending community are sustained for a long time, and very often it is the main point of reference for the migrants while abroad, either permanently or circulating. Transnational social spaces are therefore dynamic combinations of sustained social and symbolic ties with their countries of origin and host country, their contents, positions in networks and organisations (Faist, 2004: 199). The relational and contextual nature of gender is particularly interesting to observe in a migratory context, as migrants attempt to fulfil expectations of identity and behaviours that may significantly differ across multiple localities (Donato, Gabaccia, Holdaway, Manalansan, & Pessar, 2006: 6).

This chapter is inspired by two sets of academic literature that touch upon the specificities of migration and the experience of adapting to a super-diverse environment among male migrants coming from a more conservative and patriarchal social background. The first area of study points to integration problems resulting from practising a specific model of hegemonic masculinity. (i.e. Datta, 2008, 2009; Garapich, 2011; Siara, 2009, 2011). The latter—transnationalism studies—focus on gender in transnational social space and significant re-negotiations of gender identities and gender relations as a result of migrants’ efforts to meet the different expectations held of them by different social worlds (Donato, et al., 2006; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994; Mahler & Pessar, 2001). The questions that arise are: does the adaptation to a super-diverse environment cause any disturbances that affect their sense of self or result in a

renegotiation and/or reconstruction of the masculinity model; and how do these processes affect gender relations and integration strategies?

In this chapter, I focus on the views, interpretations and narratives regarding certain aspects of living in Britain expressed by male migrants from Poland on selected internet forum discussions. My goal is further to investigate what these discussions tell us about how the internet forum users respond to the challenges of living in a super-diverse socio-cultural environment, and specifically whether it affects their sense of self, gender relations and integration strategies. Since masculinities can be understood as configurations of practice that are realised in social actions, and as such can differ according to historical, geographical, cultural and social contexts (R. W. Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Wojnicka & Ciaputa, 2011), they offer a potential angle to understand how Polish migrants perceive living in Britain and adapt to it. Thus, the discourse on certain topics may be ascribed to their upbringing in a traditional and more conservative society¹ and/or to integration problems and gender-based expectations held of them (related to i.e. work, language, social life).

In the following paragraphs, the social constructivist understanding of gender is adopted, which recognises gender as a performative act that is constructed according to social expectations (Butler, 2011). Gender means embodying and believing in certain norms which exemplify gender relations, and acting accordingly.

In this chapter I also use the concept of hegemonic masculinity and hegemonic bargain (Chen, 1999) to discuss the masculinities in a migratory context and negotiations in that sphere. As Connell claims (2005), men adopt hegemonic or another form of masculinity when it is desirable. Hegemonic masculinity is therefore not a certain type of man; rather 'a way that men position themselves through discursive practices' (R. W. Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005: 841), that reflects cultural values and ideologies and their embodied practices. The hegemonic masculinity, as an ongoing gender project, represents the currently most valued ideal of a man to which men are compelled to somehow relate—i.e. to aspire to, negotiate with or reject—and according to which women are subordinate. The understanding of hegemonic masculinity as a certain pattern of practice means that the dominance of men does not require violence, although it can be supported by force. It achieves ascendancy through culture, institutions and persuasion, hence in this understanding it corresponds with the masculine domination in a Bourdieusian sense (Bourdieu, 2004).

As I will attempt to show, when migration comes into play bringing about new challenges, other strategies are implemented for which Chen coined the term of hegemonic bargain (Chen, 1999). His analysis is built on gender strategies of Chinese American men who were “achieving manhood” by consciously trading on, or subconsciously benefiting from, privileges afforded by his race, gender, class, generation and/or sexuality” (Chen, 1999: 585). He argues that the intersection of race, class and gender reinforces a worldview in which some masculinities are regarded as inferior and subordinate to the masculine ideal. In the same vein and advancing the discussion on the hegemonic bargain, Morris (2006), after his study of school environment and in Texas, notes that the system of racial hierarchy places whiteness higher than non-whiteness, thus bolstering and supporting a hegemonic formation of whiteness that is based on maintaining advantages over non-whites.

Masculinity in the Polish context

The role of a man, still dominant in the Polish context, as the economic provider, breadwinner, head of a household (Arcimowicz, 2011), corresponds with the cultural definition of hegemonic masculinity (R. Connell, 2005). It is generally acknowledged that research on gender, especially on masculinities in post-socialist countries, is still under-developed (Wojnicka & Ciaputa, 2011), despite ongoing changes to gender relations, to which migration also partly contributes. Whereas the socialist state put women to work while maintaining their role as a mothers, men were offered very few versions of masculinity—within family life they were still assigned their traditional role. Within the workplace, physically strong men-workers were encouraged to identify with economically productive roles (Fidelis, 2004). Thus, contrary to popular opinion, the socialist state did not attempt to change traditional gender roles in society as it did not transform power dynamics within families (Novikowa, 2012: 97) and work relations, but rather sustained traditional views on gender roles, especially in the private sphere.

The transition to democracy and a free market economy, accompanied by the demolition of the communist welfare state, changed the position of families and put them in direct confrontation with the instabilities inherent in radically changing labour markets. Men reinforced their traditional roles as breadwinners and protectors of families from the unpredictable outside world. This rise of masculism was the primary characteristic of gender relations after the transition

as identified by e.g. Watson (1993). Watson argues that social policies essentialised gender differences and promoted men in public spaces at the expense of women through the traditional discourse of gender roles in society. Patriotism (or even mesianism, after Janion, 2006) and the Polish nation were the principal points of reference of public discourse, in which women's role as guardians of the family nest or, as Titkow writes, as managers of family life is reinforced (Titkow, 1993; Titkow, Duch-Krzyszczek, & Budrowska, 2004).

Gender relations have been at the heart of the discourse on nations and nationalism according to Yuval-Davis (1993), who rightly notices that the systematic attempt to relate gender to different dimensions of the nationalist project does not have a long tradition. As she argues, femininities and masculinities are important as they reproduce the nation biologically, culturally and symbolically. Agnieszka Graff, building on work by Yuval-Davis, discusses how national ideologies create certain types of masculinities and femininities (2013) for which certain roles are ascribed—the female figure as the allegory of the nation and natural, predestined bearer of the culture, which is actively created and defended by the men. This re-traditionalisation of Polish society is also attributed to the power of the Roman Catholic Church. Thus we find that masculinity as defined by working outside the household and in reproductive capacities is supported by a patriarchal social system (Dąbrowska, 2011: 242; Marody & Giza-Poleszczuk, 2004).

The downsizing of state-owned heavy industries and the rise of unemployment challenged the dominant image of masculinity in the Polish context. As Mazierska (2008) noted, the post-socialist transformation and growing unemployment led many men to think about this time as the worst in their lives—they could not fulfil the traditional roles of bread winners, husbands and fathers. Similarly, in other post-socialist contexts, e.g. Latvia and Lithuania, it has also been found that not fulfilling the role ascribed to a man is the cause of distress and humiliation (see Tereškinas, 2010: 29). This was exacerbated by the movement of women into the labour force, leaving behind reproduction sphere and domestic realm attributed to the female and moving into production, previously attributed to men (Dzwonkowska-Godula, 2011).

Wall and Arnold (2007: 509), continuing this discussion, point to a plethora of research about shifting gender roles and higher expectations on men-fathers which can partly be attributed to the movement of mothers into the labour force. Observing the Polish context, the greater number of women participating in migration caused “moral panic” about the absence of the guardian of the

family nest (see e.g. Urbańska, 2008, 2015). Inevitably, however, the focus started shifting towards the role of a man in such families and forms of fatherhood. While the most widespread notion of a man in most European societies was and still is white, heterosexual, having a career and a family (Dąbrowska & Radomski, 2010), there is a continuing pressure not only on work-based gender identity construction, but also on caring masculinity. The 'gender project' of building hegemonic masculinity can vary according to time and place, incorporating new elements and multiple intersecting dimensions—hence the presence of discourses on e.g. involved fatherhood, or emotional care, also in Poland. Despite the growing diversity of masculinity models, the model that refers to power, economy, sexuality (heteronormativity) and aggression/defence is still firmly present in the political and public spheres in Poland (Dąbrowska, 2010).

Methodology

The Internet and its usage have become an intrinsic element of everyday life, so it would be difficult to ignore it in social research. Despite the multitude of studies on Polish migrants that emerged in the immediate post-EU accession period (2004), the analysis carried out by Siara (2009, 2011) was the first to address Internet forum usage as part of the migratory experience of recent post-accession Polish migrants.

In the migratory context, Internet usage is not just a means of instant communication with close ones spread across space. Through reading some of the internet forum discussions on migrants' life and experiences in the UK, I decided to expand the scope of my research to include an analysis of some of these discussions, as they reveal the sometimes very peculiar views and opinions on the state of affairs in the UK. What interests me most is how participation in the internet forums affords migrants an opportunity not only to discuss practicalities related to life in the UK, but also to share their varied experiences and exchange views related to work, social life, contacts with locals and with fellow nationals. Spontaneous creation of discourse around certain topics related to life in Britain, uninterrupted by the presence of the researcher, allows for an observation of what bothers migrants, besides everyday issues.

In the analysis of internet forum discussions, it is difficult to say who exactly are the people engaged in the discussions. The representative study of the Centre for Public Opinion Research (CBOS, 2015) shows that everyday Internet usage

is most widespread in the group of adults between 18–34 years of age, with the second most prominent group aged 35–44. The relatively younger internet users prevail when it comes to engaging in activities that require interaction with other forum users—this includes social media, communicator apps, forum discussions and online games (gender is only a significantly visible marker of difference when it comes to online games). In the national census of 2011, the National Office for Statistics (GUS, 2012) established that the majority of migrants (83%) who spend at least 3 months abroad are in the productive age. This emerged in migration research during the first years after accession: the typical emigrant to the UK is fairly young—up to 35 years old—with limited work experience in Poland, without children, is relatively well educated (though the majority does not have a tertiary education), comes from medium-sized towns or rural areas, and his/her job does not require high qualifications (see i.e. Duszczuk & Wiśniewski, 2007; White, 2011). These characteristics, combined, offer a glimpse of the average migrant internet user.

I choose to present the early analysis of three selected forum discussions on three internet portals, as they offer interesting insights into relations between Poles abroad and their co-ethnics, as well as their views on life in Britain. All the discussions were carried out in Polish, and so was the analysis. The quotations used in this article were later translated. In Polish, identifying a speaker's gender is not a problem as the verb agrees with the gender of the speaker (the verb's ending differs for male and female).

The research on the internet raises ethical concerns; however they are discussed to a lesser extent in the literature so far (cf. Flicker, Haans, & Skinner, 2004; Siuda, 2010). The general guidelines which guide the standard, not on-line research procedures, are a good starting point; however, the subject itself is challenging enough and calls for more elaborate codification of ethical guidelines. Here, the major problem is related to lack of consent, which researchers experience also by conducting covert participant observation (cf. Hammersley & Atkinson, 2000). Since the forum users were not aware that they were being observed (or, more precisely, their opinions were being analysed), I was guided by the principles of protecting anonymity and respect for the privacy of forum users. The opinions were expressed anonymously or, in some cases, under the real names of the forum users. Therefore, since the forum users could with some effort be identified, for ethical reasons the names of the internet portals as well as their nicknames and real names are kept confidential to preserve the users' full anonymity. For the privacy concerns, I used only the discussions which were carried out in public

forums, which are therefore considered publicly available to any internet user. Following the discussion of *private* vs. *public* on the Internet (see e.g. Denzin, 1999; Flicker, et al., 2004), I decided that, from an ethical standpoint, the usage of such quotations did not violate the privacy of their user. I also did not benefit from any other knowledge about the forum users, provided on the Internet social media, especially in those instances where I could identify a person by their real name. Hence, the selection of quotations for the purpose of this chapter does not violate the terms and conditions of given internet portals or the privacy of its users.

The internet forum discussions used for the sake of this analysis focused directly on issues relating to life in Britain (forum 1) and to multiculturalism and immigration (forum 2 and 3). The latter came up after a thematic analysis identified the main issues that are shared among and show high importance for the first forum users—gender norms, ethnicity, nationality and migration. In all cases, participants in the internet forum were living either in Poland or elsewhere. I therefore made a specific effort to identify those living Britain—in most cases this was evident from the narratives of the users, who at some point of the discussion would reveal their place of residence. In other cases the IP address indicated possible UK residents. If I could not verify whether forum users had experience of living in Britain, I did not quote them, although they did take an equal part in creating a certain discourse surrounding certain topics. The chosen internet forums offer a certain kind of transnational social space, which brings together people with migratory experience (although not only) to discuss issues they find relevant, and where they share their ideas and give meaning to different practices.

As Siara (2009) already noticed, the internet forums can be used as data, as they are rich and detailed. What's more, they provide a natural scene for observation, without researcher interference and without many of the frequently discussed and criticised aspects of such interference. Also, bearing in mind that I wished to pursue interviews with the male migrants in the UK further, I needed to acknowledge my position while researching this topic (being Polish and a female, which may result in some gender interference, e.g. when discussing issues related to lifestyles, differences in terms of religion, ethnicities, national consciousness, migration, etc.) and to be prepared for the fact that the interviewees might not want to openly discuss some sensitive issues. Therefore, by identifying the main concerns among males through the internet analysis, this would enable me later to relate the latter research findings to the views expressed on the internet

forums. The forum users independently choose or create topics of discussion and often fiercely engage in discussions of particular importance to them. Therefore, the spontaneity of their views and no or limited moderation can be considered an asset of such data. Of course, one has to be careful when trusting in the authenticity of views as the forum users create a certain atmosphere and, being more blatant, or even provoking others to engage in the argument, does not necessarily lead to a proper debate on any issue discussed. For this reason I consider the views expressed anonymously on internet forums as a form of emotional outburst rather than as expressions of well-considered thoughts and opinions.

As such, the internet forums offer spaces of definitive importance to their users: they are spaces to interact, connect and discuss aspects of importance with like-minded people. They also enable them symbolically to strengthen their ethnic bonds with those in and out of the country. The internet moreover offers a platform for the expression of opinions which cannot be vented and/or are not accepted otherwise.

I apply a critical discourse analysis approach, as it touches upon relations of power and subordination. It also shows how these power relations are embodied in the language people use in communication—therefore, I present quotations expressed by male forum users only to identify their language of power and domination in the construction of their gender identity and to determine with what other aspects it is intertwined. This enables researchers to show and elaborate on the processes of social and cultural change, which is particularly useful for the focus of this analysis (Byrne, 2001).

Polish men abroad and in cyber space

In the light of discussed literature, emigration to the West, which increased steeply after Poland's accession to the EU, can be viewed not just as an economic strategy to provide for their families and themselves, but also as a strategy to cope with the social burdens of masculinity and its ascribed role in the Polish patriarchal social context. Thus, it can serve as a departure point for researching male migrants in the super-diverse environment. How do physical and spatial issues, as well as the associated social processes, affect the reformulation and renegotiation of gender roles and identities? What male migrants undergo and how the migratory experience affects them has yet to be investigated. This is particularly evident

among the men who move to the UK where they are confronted with new socio-cultural structures embedded within public and private realms of home and workplace. British society is often referred to as super-diverse (Vertovec, 2007), due to its ethnic and religious heterogeneity, resulting from a long history of colonisation and immigration (see e.g. Hampshire, 2005; Joppke, 1996). Polish society, by contrast, is rather homogenous, resulting from the post-World War II order and non-democratic governance until 1989, with a restrictive stance on migration (Stola, 2010; Wallace & Stola, 2001).

According to Datta (2009), after the new Polish migrants to the UK arrive their ideas of masculinity, nationhood, work and sense of self are continually reshaped in their new social, political, economic and spatial contexts. Siara's research (2009, 2011) reveals that in the migratory situation, the agency of Polish women—a traditionally subordinated group—changes. Female migrants more often adjust easily to liberal norms and to changes in their social status, and hence are quicker to abandon the strict confines of gender norms and social control of the community of origin, for instance by entering into interethnic relationships. This corresponds with the notion that migrants become particularly aware of the relational and contextual nature of gender when they find themselves in other localities where different gender norms apply (Donato, et al., 2006), which some adopt more easily than others.

As noted by Siara (2009, 2011), in the new social setting the gender norms are discussed and contested, especially when male migrants observe that the more liberal values are more easily accepted by their female fellow nationals. In my analysis I, too, noticed that gender relations and inter-ethnic relationships are a perpetually hot topic, mostly for male forum users. In the forum discussions analysed, many opinions are expressed rather harshly, with some seeking to explain this behaviour by ascribing it to the provincial origin and limited life experience of Polish women prior to emigration:

'Well, I think these are women with some issues, most probably because they come from little towns and want to prove how well are they doing abroad, how progressive they are, how modern. Then they work two shifts—one at home, one at work because their *habibis* value themselves too much to do anything around the house. I am not even sorry for them.'

Social control over women diminishes when they are abroad, which can be linked to reduced social networks. In some of the literature, a lack of social bonds and support networks has been related to women's vulnerability to traffickers and the sex industry (see e.g. Anderson, 1991). The view that women are more prone to deception and exploitation especially when abroad has historically led to restrictions on the migration of women (see e.g. Bukraba-Rylska, 2007). Entering into interethnic relations seems to be interpreted as a sign of lesser social control. As such it provokes certain negative reactions towards them, such as those expressed anonymously on the internet forum discussions.

The quotation below also suggests that the relative freedom that some women find abroad makes them behave differently from when they are in their local community, where, as this forum user explains, they would be faced with direct criticism.

'In Poland they would never behave like this, because their family, friends bring them down to earth. When abroad they behave as if they forgot where they come from, as if they broke their chains. I personally do not want to get in touch with a girl who spent some time abroad.'

Women often symbolise the national collective and national honour, as Yuval-Davis notes (1993), while referring to the shaving of the heads of women who fraternised with the enemy during the Second World War. For the national project, seen as 'range of collective strategies oriented towards the perceived needs of a nation' (Delanty & Kumar, 2006: 119), the question of what is culturally appropriate behaviour for a woman gains a lot of significance in the multicultural context. Social control over women is stronger in the community of origin, where neighbours and family enforce certain norms of behaviour. Emigration changes this, as contacts with the sending local community are rather scarce. The male forum users taking part in this discussion tend to agree that emigration *spoils* women, in the sense that they do not behave as they are supposed to back home. They rarely note the positive aspects of liberation from oppressive gender norms and the emancipatory potential of emigration. This is however noted by other forum users, both male and female, who point to women's independent agenda of having a partner of their choosing, not necessarily limited by ethnic boundaries, and to their economic independence or the state support that enables women smoothly to return to work after childbirth, etc. Rather they—male forum users—hold onto views that express their general dissatisfaction with

the fact that Polish women enter into inter-ethnic relationships, a criticism that derives from the white, heterosexual hegemonic male narrative:

‘Is that a new model of Polish women abroad, hanging out with Arabs, *ciapaks*,² blacks.³ *Does nobody care?*’

Criticism of women entering inter-ethnic relationships with ‘men of color’ (Glenn, 2002: 6) is nothing new and comes from the perceived need to maintain the racial purity and integrity of the white population. In this context, Glenn (2002) refers to 19th-century America to elaborate on the special responsibility placed on white women, whose purity was crucial for maintaining distinction, superiority and the hegemony of whites over non-whites. Control over female sexuality according to accepted and widely shared standards of sexual behaviour in one’s society of origin is also extended when abroad. As such, it serves as an ‘opportunity to reinforce and re-establish sexual and nationalist hegemony’ (Nagel, 2003: 142). Siara (2009) also links the frustration to traditional perceptions of gender roles and the high value placed on ethnicity, that is on being Polish and preserving Polishness when abroad. This is evident in further discussions, where traditional views on gender norms mingle with ethnicity and a lack of sympathy towards the multicultural environment. While these views are often contestable, it seems that the holders of such opinions do not engage in discussion with opponents (of either gender), but rather communicate only with those who share their ideas and are eager to elaborate on the position and lack of moral values of Polish women abroad. As the discussion develops, it becomes vividly clear how nationalistic values are incorporated into the idea of a proper Polish woman—one who deserves to become the wife, the mother, the supporting partner.

‘Decent women would stay in Poland and live with Poles!’

How the ideology of nationalism links morality with the nation (B. Anderson, 2006) is shown clearly in the quotation above: the decency of a woman depends on her devotion to a nation. Being part of the nation imposes obligations, and the responsibility for its purity is even more important when abroad (Yuval-Davis, 1993) as women carry Polishness and transmit the national values to future generations. The focus is on purity and on not being sexually used by other men (i.e. not Polish), especially ‘men of color’ (cf. Glenn, 2002). Interethnic relationships of women with Englishmen (besides sparking comments on the supposedly financial reasons for entering into such a relationship) do not cause

much controversy. Polish women's relationships with other ethnic minorities that live in Britain arouse such strong indignation partly because they are viewed as being humiliating for Poles who might later have relationships with these women. This can be interpreted as positioning oneself higher among the migrant community in the UK and hence distancing oneself from male migrants from e.g. the Middle East, Africa or the Indian subcontinent. For the forum users studied, whiteness places them higher in the social hierarchy compared to other migrants in the UK. Archer (2001) points to the reproduction of white hegemonic masculinities through the denigration of sexual and racial 'others'. Her work on 'achieving manhood' by young Muslim men shows that masculine identities are constructed by the positioning and negotiation of power relations with regard to other (white and/or black) men and Muslim women. '[M]asculinities may be simultaneously an *assertion* of a particular social location ... and a form of *resistance* of one social division to another' (Hearn and Collinson, 1994: 110 in Archer, 2001: 82). This negotiation, positioning and bargaining in 'achieving manhood' are also noticeable among Polish male migrants to the UK when faced with other masculinities, for example by looking down on women who supposedly bring disgrace to the nation:

'I am already abroad for 3 years, mostly in the UK, Germany and France. What Polish women do abroad is beyond belief. In the eyes of coloured men they are the easiest to sleep with. I congratulate you on all those "experiences". The worst thing is that you sooner or later you come back to those Poles, whom you despised before. I am sorry for them because it is the worst thing to find out that your wife slept with a Muslim, or with a black.'

With the notion of hegemonic bargain, men embodying marginalised masculinities may emphasise aspects of their manhood that come closest to the hegemonic ideal (Chen, 1999)—here whiteness comes in handy as it supports the system of racial hierarchy which is favourable for them. Being abroad they compete with men of other ethnicities for the attention of women and, as noted by other researchers, this is often a lost battle. Wojnicka and Młodawska (2011) illustrate it by presenting a perspective of women on the 'Polish boyfriend', a figure that is often not ready for a truly egalitarian relationship, who sticks to patriarchal values and thus is far less socially attractive than other men from the West. When their male supremacy is put into question, male migrants, by denigrating men of

other ethnicities (Archer, 2001), stick to the discourse related to patriotism and the importance of Polishness and Polish values:

‘I seriously hate those women who are with those guys, either from Europe, or *ciapaks*. Ok it is your thing but I will not forgive that you are so disgraceful about Polish men and complain about us. Polish men, who are brave, who always fought for their land, intelligent, resourceful, creative...our own women spoil our nation abroad. I am ashamed of them.’

All analysed discussions at some point touch on the importance of the nation, homeland and the high value placed on the sense of national identity. Moreover, despite the fact that they are immigrants and thus part of a multi-ethnic society, issues such as immigration and multiculturalism are often viewed rather negatively (Garapich, 2011) and often tightly intertwined with patriotism and nationalist (or in many cases observed in cyber space, openly racist) views.

On this issue, Gawlewicz notes that the response of Polish migrants to the super-diverse UK and their encounter with difference (in terms of ethnicity, religion, class, social status, sexuality and gender) is ‘complicated’ (Gawlewicz, 2016). Although the relationship of migrants with their country of origin is similarly complicated, the attachment does not always decrease, as has been discussed in the literature on long-distance nationalism (Fouron & Schiller, 2001). In her other work, the author discusses the reproduction of orientalist binary opposition: Poland as backward versus the UK (and the West generally) as developed, and explores discourses of ‘inferiority’ and ‘superiority’ when encountering the difference. As she notes, discourses of ‘inferiority’ are related to tolerance and diversity, which her study participants see as core elements of Britishness, whereas ‘superiority’ refers to Polish family values and the assumed shallowness of the British people (Gawlewicz, 2014: 201–205). Following the forum discussion it became evident, however, that some of its users negotiate with the presumed ‘inferiority’ and instead value homogeneity more highly than diversity. Some forum users refer to British people who share similar opinions, arguing that such views are legitimate and more widespread, not only among Polish migrants. By doing so they construct a discourse of ‘superiority’ around whiteness: our country is poor but white and that’s what matters.

‘I talked with my British colleagues from work, they went to Poland for a weekend, when they came back they said how they envy us that our country is white.’

Eade, Drinkwater and Garapich (2007) claim that some UK-based Poles express hostile attitudes towards the multicultural environment and value whiteness, as it presumably places them higher on the social strata in Britain. This is indeed evident when observing the internet discussions of Poles abroad, especially during the ongoing so-called migration crisis. This would also explain their negative attitude towards women who enter into interethnic relationships. The forum users enthusiastically shared their appreciation of the lack of other minorities⁴ in Poland and openly expressed anti-immigration views with mostly negative comments on multiculturalism as such.

Some forum users also voice the opinion that, due to their mostly negative experience with multiculturalism, they have the right to say that this is the least good thing for Poland:

‘I live in the UK and I am in daily touch with Muslims. I do not want them in Poland, they are religious fanatics, they do not respect women at all.’

Interestingly, this line of argument also touches on the unfair treatment of Polish immigrants by the UK authorities. In their eyes British political elites make intra-EU and specifically Polish migration the biggest problem for the UK. The anti-EU mobility stance was one of the main arguments of the EU sceptics in the Brexit debate prior to the referendum, but the concerns of migrants were raised in cyberspace long before the referendum debates. In the British public’s discussion on purported job theft, benefit tourism, poverty migration and so on these terms were mostly aimed at post-EU accession immigrants, which is perceived as an injustice.

‘And then Cameron will say again that most of the benefits are going to Poles, but he does not see what those Muslims are [sic] doing. Who pays for their living?’

As this quotation shows, those forum users believe instead that the biggest threat lies in the immigration of people from majority Muslim countries, and that it is due to political correctness that Britons do not speak out against it.

This narrative is backed up by a similar discourse on migration issues, especially relating to the recent refugee crisis in Poland and the Polish position on the solution proposed within the EU arena.⁵ Poland here is perceived as one of the few countries (together with Slovakia, Hungary, Czech Republic, the Visegrad Group) able to form a real opposition to the perceived *islamisation* of Europe. The perceived clash of civilisations and, again, the need to protect families, homeland and religion correspond with the iconic heroic Polish fight for independence and with the myth of Christianity as a bulwark (*Antemurale christianitatis*). The argument is built on belonging to Europe, being white, a Pole, a Christian, an EU member, which is a bargaining strategy for achieving manhood in accordance with the masculine hegemonic ideal (Archer, 2001; Chen, 1999; Morris, 2006).

‘They will not make it in Poland. The 1683⁶ will repeat. We will save Europe against Muslim hordes.’

‘They should be kicked out immediately. Poles who live in England should do something about it. They will save England again just like they did during the second world war.’⁷

Among many such views, those above stand out for the way in which they connect contemporary migration issues in the UK to historical events, placing the situation in a perceived ongoing clash of civilisations—white and Christian vs. non-white and Muslim, and the aforementioned *Antemurale* myth and the heroic fights for independence and freedom.

Again the argument of white, brave, courageous Polish men, ready to stand up and protect their nation (and others besides), is brought up in the discussion. Gender intertwines interestingly in discussions regarding nationality and history, as mentioned before. The collective myth (here of national heroism and romanticised fights for independence) has been recognised (see e.g. Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 2005; Janion, 2006) as playing an important role in building national identity and pride, and frequent references to this by male forum users helps to ‘achieve manhood’ in a situation of relative deprivation, which emigration can be considered to be.

Conclusions – gender, ethnicity and national consciousness in flux

McIlwaine et al. (2006) claim that gender practices may be negotiated when people migrate and encounter different socio-cultural influences. It firmly appears in the discussions, and also touches upon the current refugee crisis issue and perceived need to protect Europe against *Islamisation*.

Bator (1999) claimed that there were two prevalent discourses on gender in Poland in the 1990s: a nationalist, conservative and patriarchal discourse based on the ideology of the Roman Catholic Church, and a liberal discourse treating women as equal citizens aware of their rights and who should fully participate in public life. McClintock (1997) suggests that all nationalisms are gendered and that the needs of a nation are typically defined by men and so are often connected to their aspirations. Within a nationalist project, women are perceived as ‘mothers of the nation’ and reproducers of national and ethnic group identities and boundaries (Dąbrowska, 2011; Titkow, et al., 2004). Furthermore, attitudes to gender and sexuality in Polish culture are still influenced by patriarchy (see i.e. Marody & Giza-Poleszczuk, 2004). As Liu (1994) argues, patriarchal ideology constructs the meaning of sexuality in such a way that it serves the interests of men. They are allowed to have sexual desires and sexual freedom, but not the women—this is evident in the views expressed by the forum users on women and their inter-ethnic relationships.

Almost two decades after Bator (1999) made her remarks, one can observe a revival of nationalism. This observation is supported by an analysis of the political views popular in the Polish diaspora in the UK. Political sympathies among migrants have changed significantly over the last decade—from the majority supporting the liberal Civic Platform in previous parliamentary elections (see Lesińska, 2014) to the rising popularity in the recent presidential election of 2015 of the right-wing presidential candidate, Paweł Kukiz, who formed an alliance with the nationalist politicians (Lesińska, 2015). Dwelling on people’s frustration and sentiments and building on the historical and national mythology when referring to the Polish nation in his public appearances, he was supported by young voters especially, many of whom were voting from abroad.

Based on the works of e.g. Sowa (2011) and Janion (2006) and building on the literature on masculinity in post-communist countries, in a situation of radical change (socio-political transformation, emigration) we can observe how those who feel deprived, betrayed by the elites and marginalised in the new society

compensate for their difficulties by taking pride in tradition and reaching out to history and national mythology. As the hegemonic bargain concept suggests (Chen, 1999), strategies of taking pride and building masculinity around certain myths, history, national identity and race take hold when other masculine ideals are hard to reach. The experience of living in a super-diverse society challenges the traditionally dominant position of men in the Polish context and contributes to the feeling of deprivation when abroad. Thus, the revival of patriotism and nationalism can be interpreted as a hegemonic bargain by male Polish migrants.

Migration to the UK provides an opportunity to interact intensively with a liberal context, outside the Catholic Church's influence and the conservative government's policies. Yet despite, or precisely because of, their exposure to a super-diverse social environment, migrant men express nationalist, patriarchal and conservative views in forum discussions. Evidently, what the host society will generally not understand or not accept is vented freely in cyber space.

This chapter results from work on the research project entitled 'Polish migrants in the United Kingdom: (re)negotiation and (re)construction of masculinity in the super-diverse environment', undertaken at the Centre for Migration Research, University of Warsaw. The project is funded under the National Science Centre's (Poland) PRELUDIUM grant number 2015/17/N/HS6/01176.

Notes

- 1 Due to the limited space in this paper, I will refer only to the Eurobarometer 2015 survey related to gender equality, in which 68% of researched Poles agreed with the statement that women's labour market activity is harmful for the family life. In the UK 47% of respondents agreed with this statement. This could, with further analysis of other measures, indicate the prevalence of conservative values in Polish society.
- 2 In Polish slang "ciapak" or "ciapaty" (plural: ciapaki/ciapaci) would be an equivalent to what "paki" means in British slang. In both cases it is a derogative term to describe members of ethnic minorities living in the UK, mostly originating from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan.
- 3 Here, as in other cases in this article, the forum users did not use capital letters when referring to e.g. Black British or Muslims. Probably it is due to the fact that religious denominations are not capitalised in Polish, in contrast to the names of ethnic minorities, which are capitalised.

- 4 It should be pointed out here that Polish society also comprises German, Czech, Slovakian, Ukrainian, Belarussian, Lithuanian, Jewish, Russian, Roma, Lemko and Tatar minorities. It would be difficult to assume that speakers are not aware of that, therefore we may assume that they mean a lack of non-European ethnic minorities (although again there are small-sized ethnic minorities of e.g. Vietnamese or Arabs, although mostly in the main Polish cities).
- 5 Public opinion polls show a significant decrease in support for accepting refugees in Poland, from a survey carried out in the early summer of 2015 to a survey carried out in September 2015 at the peak of the refugee crisis and on the eve of parliamentary elections in Poland, in which migration featured as a highly politicised topic. In September 2015, only 5% (previously 22%) of Poles surveyed agreed that refugees should have help and be allowed to settle in Poland, 37% agreed that they should be offered temporary protection and be required to return when the situation in their countries stabilised (previously 54%). The most significant change is from 15% to 55% of respondents saying that Poland should not host any refugees from countries that are in a state of war/conflict (CBOS, no. 81/2015 & CBOS, no. 122/2015).
- 6 The forum user is referring to the siege of Vienna in 1683, where John III Sobieski, the king of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, became famous for his victory over the Ottoman Empire.
- 7 The speaker here is referring to the battle of Britain in 1940 during the Second World War, in which 303 Squadron of Polish pilots made a significant contribution to winning the battle.

References

- Anderson, Benedict (2006). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. Brooklyn NY: Verso Books.
- Anderson, Perry (1991). "Nation-states and national identity." *London Review of Books* 13: 5–8.
- Anthias, Floya and Nira Yuval-Davis (2005). *Racialized boundaries: Race, nation, gender, colour and class and the anti-racist struggle*. London: Routledge.
- Archer, Louise (2001). "'Muslim brothers, black lads, traditional Asians': British Muslim young men's constructions of race, religion and masculinity." *Feminism & Psychology*, 11(1): 79–105.
- Arcimowicz, Krzysztof (2011). "Nowe wizerunki mężczyzn w polskich przekazach telewizyjnych." In: *Karuzela z mężczyznami. Problematyka męskości w polskich badaniach społecznych*, edited by Katarzyna Wojnicka and Ewelina Ciaputa. Kraków: Kraków Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls.

- Bator, Joanna (1999). *Wizerunek kobiety w polskiej debacie politycznej: perspektywa feministyczna*. Warszawa: Instytut Spraw Publicznych.
- Bourdieu, Pierre (2004). *Męska dominacja* (L. Kopciewicz, Trans.). Warszawa: Oficyna Naukowa.
- Bukraba-Rylska, Izabella (2007). "W kręgu przeszłości. Tradycje migracji ludności wiejskiej: rozmiary – kierunki – efekty." In: *Tu i tam: Migracje z polskich wsi za granicę*, edited by Maria Wieruszewska. Warszawa: Instytut Rozwoju Wsi i Rolnictwa Polskiej Akademii Nauk.
- Butler, Judith (2011). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. London: Routledge.
- Byrne, Michelle (2001). "Data analysis strategies for qualitative research." *AORN Journal*, 74(6): 904–905.
- CBOS (2015). Internauci. Komunikat z badań (Vol. 90/2015). Warszawa: CBOS.
- Chen, Anthony S. (1999). "Lives at the Center of the Periphery, Lives at the Periphery of the Center: Chinese American Masculinities and Bargaining with Hegemony." *Gender & Society* 13(5): 584–607.
- Connell, Raewyn (2005). *Masculinities* (2 ed.). Cambridge: Polity Press; Sydney: Allen & Unwin; Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Connell, R. W. and James W. Messerschmidt (2005). "Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept." *Gender & Society* 19(6): 829–859.
- Datta, Ayona (2008). "Building differences: material geographies of home(s) among Polish builders in London." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 33(4), 518–531.
- Datta, Ayona (2009). "Places of everyday cosmopolitanisms: East European construction workers in London." *Environment and planning A*, 41(2): 353–370.
- Dąbrowska, Magdalena (2010). "Męskość w okresie transformacji: zmiana ekonomiczno-społeczna a polityka płci na przykładzie debat aborcyjnych w Polsce." In: *Męskość jako kategoria kulturowa. Praktyki męskości*, edited by Andrzej Radomski and Magdalena Dąbrowska. Lublin: Książki Books.
- Dąbrowska, Magdalena (2011). "Męskość, aborcja i ekonomiczne przemiany okresu transformacji." In: *Karuzela z mężczyznami. Problematyka męskości w polskich badaniach społecznych*, edited by Katarzyna Wojnicka and Ewelina Ciaputa. Kraków: Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls.
- Dąbrowska, Magdalena and Andrzej Radomski, eds. (2010). *Męskość jako kategoria kulturowa. Praktyki męskości*. Lublin: Książki Books.
- Delanty, Gerard and Krishan Kumar (2006). *The SAGE handbook of nations and nationalism*. London: Sage Publications.

- Denzin, Norman K. (1999). "Cybertalk and the method of instances." In: *Doing Internet research: Critical issues and methods for examining the Net*, edited by Steve Jones. London: Sage Publications, 107–125.
- Donato, Katharine M., Gabaccia, Donna, Holdaway, Jennifer, Manalansan, Martin and Patricia R. Pessar (2006). "A glass half full? Gender in migration studies." *International Migration Review* 40(1): 3–26.
- Duszczek, Maciej and Jakub Wiśniewski (2007). *Analiza społeczno-demograficzna migracji zarobkowej Polaków do państw EOG po 1 maja 2004 roku*. Warszawa: Instytut Spraw Publicznych.
- Dzwonkowska-Godula, Krystyna (2011). "Publiczny dyskurs o współczesnym ojcostwie w Polsce." In: *Karuzela z mężczyznami. Problematyka męskości w polskich badaniach społecznych*, edited by Katarzyna Wojnicka and Ewelina Ciaputa. Kraków: Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls, 113–139.
- Eade, John, Drinkwater, Stephen and Michał P. Garapich (2007). Class and ethnicity: Polish migrant workers in London. Full research report. ESRC End of Award Report: RES-000-22-1294. Swindon: ESRC.
- Faist, Thomas (2004). *The volume and dynamics of international migration and transnational social spaces*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fidelis, Malgorzata (2004). "Equality through Protection: The Politics of Women's Employment in Postwar Poland, 1945–1956." *Slavic Review* 63(2): 301–324.
- Flicker, Sarah, Haans, Dave and Harvey Skinner (2004). "Ethical dilemmas in research on Internet communities." *Qualitative Health Research* 14(1), 124–134.
- Fouron, Georges and Nina Glick Schiller (2001). "All in the family: gender, transnational migration, and the nation-state." *Identities Global Studies in Culture and Power* 7(4), 539–582.
- Garapich, Michał (2011). "'It's a jungle out there. You need to stick together': Anti-institutionalism, alcohol and performed masculinities among Polish homeless men in London." *Liminalities: A Journal of Performance Studies* 7(3): 1–23.
- Gawlewicz, Anna (2014). "Beyond 'us' and 'them': Migrant encounters with difference and reimagining the national." *Fennia: International Journal of Geography* 193(2): 198–211.
- Gawlewicz, Anna (2016). "Beyond openness and prejudice: The consequences of migrant encounters with difference." *Environment and planning A*, 48(2), 256–272.
- Glenn, Evelyn Nakano (2002). *Unequal freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Graff, Agnieszka (2013). "Nacjonalizm." In: *Encyklopedia Gender*, edited by Monika Rudas-Grodzka et al. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Czarna Owca.

- GUS (2012). Narodowy Spis Powszechny Ludności i Mieszkań 2011. Raport z wyników. Warszawa: Główny Urząd Statystyczny.
- Hammersley, Martyn and Paul Atkinson (2000). *Metody badań terenowych*. Poznań: Zysk i S-ka Wydawnictwo.
- Hampshire, James (2005). *Citizenship and belonging: Immigration and the politics of demographic governance in postwar Britain*. London: Palgrave MacMillan
- Hondagneu-Sotelo, Pierrette (1994). *Gendered transitions: Mexican experiences of immigration*. Oakland: University of California Press.
- Janion, Maria (2006). *Niesamowita słowiańszczyzna. Fantazmaty literatury*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie.
- Joppke, Christian (1996). "Multiculturalism and immigration: A comparison of the United States, Germany, and Great Britain." *Theory and society* 25(4): 449–500.
- Lesińska, Magdalena (2014). Partycypacja Polaków głosujących za granicą w wyborach krajowych: analiza wyników wyborów parlamentarnych i prezydenckich w Polsce w latach 1990–2011. CMR working Paper 79(137).
- Lesińska, Magdalena (2015). "Wybory prezydenckie 2015 – jak głosowali Polacy za granicą." *Biuletyn Migracyjny* 52 (wrzesień): 3–4.
- Liu, Lydia (1994). "The Female Body and Nationalist Discourse: the 'Field of Life and Death' Revisited." In: *Scattered hegemonies: Postmodernity and transnational feminist practices*, edited by Inderpal Grewal & Caren Kaplan. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Mahler, Sarah J. (1999). "Engendering transnational migration A case study of Salvadorans." *American Behavioral Scientist*, 42(4): 690–719.
- Mahler, Sarah J. and Patricia R. Pessar (2001). "Gendered geographies of power: Analyzing gender across transnational spaces." *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 7(4): 441–459.
- Marody, Mirłoslawa and Anna Giza-Poleszczuk (2004). *Przemiany więzi społecznych: zarys teorii zmiany społecznej*. Warszawa: Nauk. Scholar.
- Mazierska, Ewa (2008). *Masculinities in Polish, Czech and Slovak Cinema: Black Peters and Men of Marble*. New York: Berghahn Books.
- McClintock, Anne (1997). "No Longer in a Future Heaven': Gender, Race, and Nationalism." In: *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives*, edited by Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti and Ella Shohat. Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press.
- McIlwaine, Cathy, Datta, Kavita, Evans, Yara, Herbert, Joanna, May, Jon and Jane Wills (2006). *Gender and ethnic identities among low-paid migrant workers in London*. London: Queen Mary, University of London.
- Morris, Edward W. (2006). *An unexpected minority: White kids in an urban school*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

- Nagel, Joane (2003). *Race, ethnicity, and sexuality: Intimate intersections, forbidden frontiers*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Novikowa, Irina (2012). "Fatherhood and masculinity in postsocialist contexts – lost in translations?" In: *Fatherhood in Late Modernity: Cultural Images, Social Practices, Structural Frames*, edited by Mechtilde Oechsle, Ursula Müller and Sabine Hess. Leverkusen: Barbara Budrich.
- Osella, Filippo and Caroline Osella (2000). "Migration, money and masculinity in Kerala." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 6(1), 117–133.
- Pessar, Patricia R. (2005). "Women, gender, and international migration across and beyond the Americas: inequalities and limited empowerment." Paper presented at the Expert Group Meeting on International Migration and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, Mexico City.
- Siara, Bernadetta (2009). "UK Poles and the negotiation of gender and ethnic identity in cyberspace." In: *Polish migration to the UK in the "new" European Union: After 2004*, edited by Kathy Burrell. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Siara, Bernadetta (2011). "Construction around body within recent Polish migration to the United Kingdom." *Studia Migracyjne-Przegląd Polonijny* 37(1(139)): 111–128.
- Siuda, Piotr (2010). "Prowadzenie badań w Internecie–podstawowe problemy etyczne." *Ruch prawniczy, ekonomiczny i socjologiczny*, 72(4): 187–202.
- Sowa, Jan (2011). *Fantomowe ciało króla: peryferyjne zmagania z nowoczesną formą*. Kraków: Universitas.
- Stola, Dariusz (2010). *Kraj bez wyjścia?: migracje z Polski 1949–1989*. Warszawa: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu.
- Tereškinas, Artūras (2010). "Men and Social Suffering in Contemporary Lithuania." *Anthropology of East Europe Review* 28(1): 23–39.
- Titkow, Anna (1993). "Political Change in Poland: Cause, Modifier, or Barrier to Gender Equality?" In: *Gender politics and post-communism. Reflections from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union*, edited by Nanette Funk and Magda Mueller. New York: Routledge.
- Titkow, Anna, Duch-Krzyszczek, Danuta and Bogusława Budrowska (2004). *Nieodpłatna Praca Kobiet: Mity, Realia, Perspektywy*. Warszawa Wydawn: Instytutu Filozofii i Socjologii PAN.
- Urbańska, Sylwia (2008). "Transnarodowość jako perspektywa ujęcia macierzyństwa w warunkach migracji." In: *Migracje kobiet. Perspektywa wielowymiarowa*, edited by Krystyna Słany. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego.
- Urbańska, Sylwia (2015). *Matka Polka na odległość. Z doświadczeń migracyjnych robotnic 1989–2010*. Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK.

- Vertovec, Steven (2001). "Transnationalism and identity." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 27(4): 573–582.
- Vertovec, Steven (2007). "Super-diversity and its implications." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 30(6): 1024–1054.
- Wall, Glenda and Stephanie Arnold (2007). "How involved is involved fathering? An exploration of the contemporary culture of fatherhood." *Gender & Society* 21(4): 508–527.
- Wallace, Claire and Dariusz Stola (2001). *Patterns of migration in Central Europe*. London: Palgrave Basingstoke.
- Watson, Peggy (1993). "The rise of masculinism in Eastern Europe." *New Left Review* 1(198): 71–82.
- White, Anne (2011). *Polish families and migration since EU accession*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Wojnicka, Katarzyna and Ewelina Ciaputa, eds (2011). *Karuzela z mezczyznami. Problematyka męskości w polskich badaniach społecznych*. Kraków: Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls.
- Wojnicka, Katarzyna and Agata Młodawska (2011). "Polish boyfriend." In: K. Wojnicka & E. Ciaputa (eds.), *Karuzela z mezczyznami. Problematyka męskości w polskich badaniach społecznych*, edited by Katarzyna Wojnicka and Ewelina Ciaputa. Kraków: Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls.
- Yuval-Davis, Nira (1993). "Gender and nation." *Ethnic and racial studies*, 16(4): 621632.