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**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON**

FACULTY OF SOCIAL AND HUMAN SCIENCES

Division of Sociology and Social Policy

**The Educational and Career Aspiration of Young Polish Men in  
British Secondary Schools– a Case Study**

by

**Daria Małgorzata Tkacz**

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

May 2014





UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

**ABSTRACT**

FACULTY OF SOCIAL AND HUMAN SCIENCES

Sociology and Social Policy

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**THE EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER ASPIRATIONS OF YOUNG POLISH  
MEN IN BRITISH SECONDARY SCHOOLS– A CASE STUDY**

Daria Małgorzata Tkacz

May 2014 marked a decade since Poland had joined the European Union and gained full access to the British labour market. Since 2004, the number of Polish children in British schools have risen rapidly (Moszczynski, 2011), making them the biggest non-English speaking group in many educational institutions. This thesis is written at a significant point in history, offering a chance to revisit the picture ten years after accession with a particular focus on Polish families and their educational practices. The primary aim of this research is to explore the educational and professional aspirations of young Polish males and how their plans interact with parents' ambitions and abilities to support their children in the foreign schooling system. In this study, I explore the following research questions:

- 1. What are the attitudes to education and employment of young Polish males and their parents?**
- 2. What resources do Polish families have to support their children and how are these resources deployed to pursue educational aspirations?**

Through an original synthesis of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice and John W. Berry's theory of acculturation, the study explores the nuanced relationship between cultural, social and linguistic capital and its impact on migrants' position within the educational field. A particular emphasis is placed on the perspectives of young people, since these have been neglected in the research on Polish migrants in England so far. The study adopts a participatory, qualitative methodology involving individual and group interviews as well as visual methods.

In this thesis I argue that Polish families tend to have high educational aspirations and perceive England and its schooling system as a favourable environment to realise them. At the same time the stark differences in young Poles' integration with and attitudes to their English peers (reflecting masculine power struggles), significantly impact on their access to linguistic capital and information. Parents' knowledge of the English schooling system and their ability to support their children is also highly diversified. This places some migrants at a distinctly advantageous position while leaving others seriously marginalised and lacking information to pursue their aspirations.

The local institutions supporting migrants could play a key role in the provision of information on education in England. Furthermore, there needs to be an improvement of communication between the schools and parents. Finally, I identified a large group of pupils lacking understanding of the structure of post-16 education in England. This misinformation needs to be addressed as it could effectively lead the pupils to make uninformed choices, preventing them from realising their goals.

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## DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Daria Małgorzata Tkacz declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

The Educational and Career Aspirations of Young Polish Men in British  
Secondary Schools– a Case Study

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given.  
With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. None of this work has been published before submission

Signed:.....

Date:.....



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## Definitions and Abbreviations

A10– Ten countries which joined the European Union on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2004, including Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia

A8– Eight of the ten countries which joined the European Union on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2004 (this definition excludes Cyprus and Malta)

A2– Two countries which joined the European Union on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2007, including Romania and Bulgaria

WRS– Workers Registration Scheme. A scheme operating in the UK between 2004 and 2011 which aimed to monitor and restrict the migration from the A8 countries into the UK

CBOS- Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej. One of the primary opinion polling institutes in Poland, based in Warsaw.

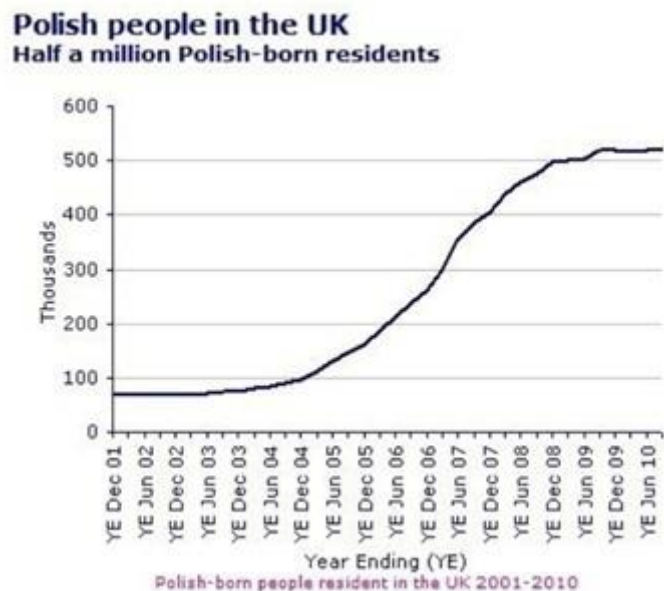
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## Chapter 1: Polish families in England– Context and Focus

1<sup>st</sup> May 2014 marked a decade since Poland had joined the European Union along with nine other states. Suffering labour shortages, the UK, Ireland and Sweden were at the time the only countries to offer the nationals of accession states unrestricted access to their labour markets. There was an existing Polish community in the UK, which formed after the Second World War, during the Cold War and during the political transformations of Eastern Europe in the 1990s but it was after 2004 that an unprecedented number of Poles migrated to the UK pushed by limited opportunities, low wages and high unemployment in their homeland (White, 2010, Trevena, under review). Migration from Poland was estimated to form nearly 70% of all the influx from A8 countries (Home Office et al., 2007, ONS, 2011b). According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS, 2011b) the number of Polish nationals in the UK rose from 75,000 in 2001 to 521,000 in September 2010 (Figure 1, page 1) and the 2011 Census found 579,121 Polish-born individuals to reside in England and Wales alone (ONS, 2011b). This significantly exceeded the estimations made prior to 2004.

It was expected that the new European migrants would take up short-term, seasonal employment and then return to their country. The early surveys suggested that the majority of Poles did indeed plan to return to Poland after



**Figure 1** The number of Polish people in the UK, Dec-01-Jun-2010  
Source: ONS, 2011

## Chapter 1: Polish families in England– Context and Focus

accumulating sufficient capital or were otherwise undecided about their intentions (CRONEM, 2006). More recent evidence suggests that returning is often seen as a precarious move, particularly for migrants who had a secure financial position in the UK (Lopez Rodriguez, 2010, Ryan et al., 2009, Trevena, under review). With little knowledge about the current labour market in Poland and an absence of tangible employment prospects thoughts of return were circumscribed. The ONS' (2011b) findings indicate that the rate of immigration declined significantly after 2007 (when it reached a peak of 96,000), and the rate of emigration decreased at the same time. This could suggest that the population flows between the two countries are currently not as fluid as they once were, with less seasonal and short-term migration, and more of those who appear to be staying in the UK for extended periods of time or permanently. Furthermore, contrary to the earlier expectations of young and single individuals, there has been significant family migration from Poland (White, 2009). Extending their family networks and educational investment here would suggest a growing confidence in and attachment to England.

The following thesis is written at a convenient time to revisit the situation ten years after accession, with a particular focus on Polish families. Looking at the educational aspirations will not only allow us to identify the inequalities and challenges to access, but it will also tell us about the migrants' future plans and their changing relationship to England. Given the current status of Poles as a significant migrant group within the UK and their apparent long-term settlement plans they are an important cohort to study. In particular it is right that we understand the emerging issues associated with Polish migration to the UK. Included here are the social inequalities they may face and the barriers to social integration they experience. Young people are a key to this. Having grown up in Britain they are unlikely to return to their homeland and their differentiated educational experience may determine their future social position.

## Chapter 1: Polish families in England– Context and Focus

I shall now introduce the key issues and questions which are the focus of my research and provide some contextual background. To do this, I will initially discuss the characteristics of these migrants including their education, occupations in the UK, their fluency in English and their housing conditions. Subsequently, I will show that migrants are not predominantly single individuals as was presented in early research and that, in contrast, family migration has been increasing over the past few years as has the number of Polish children in British schools. Once this background information has been provided, I will discuss the rationale and focus of my study, and then introduce the research questions.

### **1.1 Who are the post-2004 Polish migrants? Education, employment, language fluency and accommodation**

The characterisation of the post 2004 migration as a predominantly low-skilled influx cannot be sustained. There is evidence that a significant number of Poles hold degrees, although it had been suggested that these migrants are not evenly distributed across the UK and that their education does not necessarily translate into comparable work post migration (CRONEM, 2006). The most common roles performed by the A8 workers were factory worker, warehouse operative, packer, kitchen/catering assistants, cleaner, domestic staff, farm worker, waiter, maid, labourer and care assistants (Home Office et al., 2007). Focusing on A8 Polish migrants, the available data indicates that the majority are employed in hospitality and catering; construction and land services; manufacturing; retail; and administration (CRONEM, 2006). The nature of the work in these sectors implies that many Poles would be likely to work long and irregular hours. Research by Janta et al (2011) confirmed this. Their study of Polish workers in the hospitality sector found that many respondents complained about rotating shifts and physical exhaustion. For those with dependents in UK schools, such irregular shifts could possibly influence their availability to assist their

## Chapter 1: Polish families in England– Context and Focus

children's education and monitor their progress. Long working hours could also affect the parents' ability to attend school meetings, contact teachers and get involved in the life of the school more generally.

Further, there is some evidence that a large number of Poles lack fluency in English which may not only complicate their access to employment, but also influence their ability to participate in their children's education (Sales et al., 2008, Moskal, 2010). In areas with large Polish populations, such as Glasgow, the demand for interpreting services in schools and public institutions exceeded the available resources (Moskal, 2010). It is possible that the proportion of Poles lacking functional English has declined as many prolonged their stay in this country. Whereas learning a foreign language may not have been seen as cost effective for seasonal workers, it would be a necessary task for those who developed stronger ties to the country (McGhee et al., forthcoming).

Housing conditions present another fundamental issue to consider. Spencer's et al (2007: 38) survey of A8 migrants highlighted the importance of accommodation by pointing out that 'it may impact on health and provide or limit opportunities for work, study and leisure, as well as influence opportunities for social interaction with others living within the house and neighbours'. The report found that some of the A8 migrants were accommodated by their employers, usually living in large dormitories with many other workers (Spencer et al, 2007). The majority, however, lived in privately rented houses often significantly overcrowded, to reduce the costs. In the survey, 44% of the respondents said they shared a room with at least one person, other than a partner (Spencer et al, 2007). The research found cases of several families sharing small houses, sometimes infected with vermin. Poor housing conditions would inevitably limit privacy, which may be tolerable for single, seasonal workers but poses difficulties for families with children. Not only can it have a detrimental impact on family relationships but it can also deprive children of space and quiet conditions for studying (UNICEF, 2012). Moreover, Spencer's et al (2007) research found that

## Chapter 1: Polish families in England– Context and Focus

almost a third of respondents moved at least once within the past 8 months; this alone would be disruptive to children's learning. However, we must bear in mind that these trends could have changed since the research was conducted. Sharing rooms to reduce costs may be popular for seasonal migrants or those who are new to the country but it is likely that as migrants extended their stay they were prepared to spend more on accommodation to fulfil their basic needs for privacy. There is evidence of a widespread aspiration for good quality accommodation and ultimately home ownership becomes an important goal (McGhee et al., 2013a). Higher wages in the UK make this aspiration more tangible than in Poland, where 44.4% of 25–34 year olds still lives with their parents (GUS, 2011).

### **1.2 Preparing the nest for children– family migration**

Often the process of migration is initiated by individuals who leave their families and dependants behind in order to explore the new environment, find a reliable source of income and appropriate accommodation (Lopez Rodriguez et al., 2010, Ryan et al., 2009, White, 2009). Once these conditions are fulfilled, the children and partners are able to follow. Indeed, this pattern is evident among the post-2004 Polish migrants. Here social networks can play a key role, since having friends who already live abroad opens access to basic information and it can improve the chances of securing employment and housing. Sumpton (2009) argues that as the Polish minority in the UK grows in size, the cost of moving abroad faced by the individuals declines significantly. This argument finds support in Osipowicz's (2002) study of migration channels between the Polish town of Monki and certain cities in the United States.

In the case of those who moved abroad and with no intention of bringing their dependants too, social networks can also reduce the sense of risk associated with such a decision. White's (2009) study of



## Chapter 1: Polish families in England– Context and Focus

Polish migrants from the small towns of Grajewo and Sanok concluded that initially many parents perceived the decision to move with children as irrational and extremely risky. Most perceived economic insecurity and the language barrier as presenting too much difficulty to migrate with children. Leaving children behind either with a partner or the extended family was therefore a common strategy. In some towns the scale of the problem was high, triggering public debates about the downside of migration and coining the term ‘Euro-orphans’ to describe the left-behind children (Domagala, 2013). However, as the prospects of returning began to fade and migrants developed networks with other Poles, some of whom had brought children to England, many chose to take this risk (White, 2009).

The increase in family migration has been reflected in the increase in the number of Polish children in the UK. This is indicated by the Accession Monitoring Report based on the data from the Workers Registration Scheme (WRS) and the applications for National Insurance numbers (Home Office et al., 2007). The findings indicate that the total number of dependants rose from 8,525 to 44,120 between 2004 and the second quarter of 2007 (Home Office et al., 2007). However, the representativeness of the WRS-based data has often been questioned and the figure could be higher (Ryan et al., 2009). The Labour Force Survey, for instance, presents a more truthful picture as it suggests that in 2008 there were approximately 170,000 Polish-born children in the UK (IPPR, 2008, cited in White, 2009) and that they are now the biggest non-English speaking group in British schools. Table 1 (page 7) illustrates the rise in the number of pupils using Polish as their first language in Scottish publicly-funded schools between 2006 and 2009.

## Chapter 1: Polish families in England– Context and Focus

2006		2007		2008	
<i>Number of languages</i>	137	<i>Number of languages</i>	138	<i>Number of languages</i>	147
<i>Number of pupils</i>		<i>Number of pupils</i>		<i>Number of pupils</i>	
English	673,874	English	664,497	English	653,731
Punjabi	4,672	Punjabi	4,682	Polish	4,677
Urdu	3,771	Urdu	4,002	Punjabi	4,622
Cantonese	1,509	Polish	3,347	Urdu	4,207
Polish	1,508	Cantonese	1,508	Cantonese	1,506
Arabic	1,131	Arabic	1,277	Arabic	1,403
French	649	French	740	French	788
Gaelic (Scottish)	656	Gaelic (Scottish)	638	Gaelic (Scottish)	681
Bengali	532	Bengali	531	Bengali	539
German	391	German	473	German	496
Spanish	383	Spanish	412	Spanish	461

**Table 1** Main home language in publicly funded schools in Scotland in 2006, 2007 and 2008

Source: Moskal, 2009

Data from 2011 indicates that in London alone the number of Polish-speaking students in primary and secondary schools reached 16,305, an increase of 103% since 2006 (Moszczynski, 2011). The Polish community is dispersed and an increase in the number of Polish pupils has also been observed in other cities in the UK such as Leeds and London (Smyth et al., 2009, Sales et al., 2008, Ryan et al., 2010, Cook et al., 2008).

During the pilot stage of this research, I visited teachers in a number of primary and secondary schools and colleges in Hampshire. In all of these institutions Poles have become the largest minority within just two or three years. Polish pupils continue to arrive from Poland although the number of newcomers has declined as the economy constricts employment opportunities in the UK. As most of the post-2004 Polish migrants are at a stage in their lives when starting a family is an important consideration (CRONEM, 2006), the future school intake is likely to consist largely of Poles born in the UK rather than new arrivals. Initially, there was some speculation that many young, Polish parents were critical about the quality of British education and therefore would have gone back when their children reached the age of 6, which is the school enrolment age in Poland (Sales et al, 2008). However, this has not

## Chapter 1: Polish families in England– Context and Focus

yet been observed. Contrasting evidence suggests that many Poles appreciate various aspects of the British education system and perceive it to be a more meritocratic environment than at home (Lopez Rodriguez, 2010).

Once the child starts school in England, returning to Poland becomes more difficult due to curriculum differences. As a consequence, many of those who planned a temporary stay are actually committed to remaining in the UK, at least for the period of their children's education (McGhee et al, 2012). What we are witnessing is the long-term settlement of post-2004 Polish migrants in the UK. This is a surprising development considering the initial assumptions about the seasonal character of the influx. This triggers a number of questions relating to the identity of young Poles, their national attachments, their future position in the British labour market and their educational aspirations.

Further, interesting questions arise relating to these young migrants' gender identity, how, for instance, is it influenced by the host society and their home culture, and subsequently, how it shapes the pupils' school experience and attitudes to education. The impact of migration on gender has been explored in a number of studies (Timmons, 2014, Golash-Boza, 2014, Lin and Ghail, 2013). This research aims to contribute to this literature by studying young Poles' gender identities, how they are negotiated and how they shape their educational integration. The study focuses on young males, exploring the role of masculine identities in peer relationships and their impact on school performance.

### 1.3 The Focus

My intention is to explore what kind of aspirations young Polish males have for their employment and professional futures and how their plans interact with the parents' ambitions and importantly their ability to

## Chapter 1: Polish families in England– Context and Focus

support their children in a foreign schooling system. As I will demonstrate in the review of current literature, many studies have focused on the challenges and benefits of the sudden influx of Polish children into British schools, yet this focus has primarily centred on primary education. To date very little is known about the situation of secondary school Polish pupils and there is virtually no knowledge regarding their future plans and educational ambitions. It is axiomatic that many young Poles will settle in England and enrol at British universities or join the local labour market. I believe it is particularly important to explore their educational aspirations, as well as the relationship between the parents' and pupils' knowledge of the educational system and their goals within it. This will highlight the challenges of access and agency and provide a comparison to other migrant groups. One of the issues this thesis will consider is how Polish ethnicity influences integration and access to educational resources. These findings will I hope be useful in understanding the processes influencing social mobility among 1<sup>st</sup> generation migrants. Finally, the study will contribute to the contemporary debate on Polish migrants in England.

All of the young participants had been born in Poland, where most had started their schooling. For this reason they may have faced some additional challenges associated with the transition to a foreign educational system. Consequently, their experiences may differ from those of Polish children born in the UK. This offers me the opportunity to explore whether the length of time spent in the UK and the age at which the child left Poland have any influence on their performance and confidence within the school.

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The research questions are as follows:

- **What are the attitudes to education and employment of young Polish males and their parents?**

The primary goal of this thesis is to explore the educational and career aspirations of young Poles and their parents. The thesis will discuss how these ambitions are influenced by migration experiences, the parents' current social status in England as well as families' perceptions of the English labour market and what is achievable within it in comparison to Poland. Further, I aim to uncover how masculinity intersects with ethnicity to produce specific attitudes to education. Finally, I will discuss how a migrant parents' educational values are transferred to their children and to what extent the children shape their own expectations.

- **What resources do Polish families have to support their children and how are these resources deployed to pursue educational aspirations?**

A number of studies have highlighted the challenges faced by immigrant parents and their children in the British schooling system (Abbas, 2007, Crozier and Davies, 2006, Moskal, 2010, Ryan et al., 2010). These included, most notably, a lack of English language skills and knowledge of the system, together with the absence of social networks with more informed actors. So far, little attention has been paid to Poles' ability to utilize their existing resources to realise their educational and professional goals (Lopez Rodriguez, 2010). My thesis will attempt to fill this lacuna by considering how Polish migrants, both adult and adolescent, draw on their social, educational and cultural capital to fulfil their aims. I will explore if factors such as social class and length of residence in the UK have an influence upon attitudes to education and employment. And further if these in turn impact

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upon the Polish ability to understand and negotiate the educational system in the United Kingdom.

The thesis begins by exploring the existing literature in the fields of ethnicity, masculinity and minorities in British schooling and will then focus on Polish migrants specifically. I will then introduce my theoretical framework. Chapter 3 will highlight the study's methodology. This will be followed by five chapters of analysis, exploring 1) migrants' acculturation trajectories and their foundations; 2) migrants' perceptions of opportunities in England; 3) the educational aspirations of Polish parents and their children; 4) pupils' access to educationally useful forms of capital; 5) parents' ability to support their children in the realisation of academic aspirations. Finally, I will discuss my contribution to knowledge and present my conclusions.



## **Chapter 2: Ethnicity, Gender and Migrants in English Education– Exploration of Existing Literature**

Understanding the educational experiences of young, Polish men in the UK will draw together a number of strands within recent research, including studies of whiteness, masculinity and acculturation. In this chapter, I will critically engage with the literature in the relevant fields, challenge some of the existing ideas and offer my own contributions to the debate. The final section will introduce my theoretical framework which bridges elements of Bourdieu's theory of practice and Berry's acculturation theory.

Recognising that this thesis focuses on white males, the chapter will begin with a discussion of research within the fields of whiteness and masculinity. I will consider the privileged invisibility of whiteness and its socially constructed nature. Attention will be paid to the concept of racialization with specific reference to migrants from Eastern Europe. I will then discuss some of the central debates in masculinity studies including the fundamental notions of multiple masculinities and power relationships between them, and then explore the concerns over the educational underachievement of boys and its relation to masculine identities. Subsequently, I will look at the arguments about the place of men in the new service economies and finally move the focus on the debates over masculinity within an Eastern European context. I will then include a brief overview of multiculturalism in British education and engage with the debates in the following topic: 1) minorities in schools, 2) relevant legislation, 3) persisting inequalities and 4) the concept of ethnic capital. Finally, I will introduce the findings of earlier research into Polish migrants in British education, with the aim of identifying its main strands.



## **2.1 Race and Masculinity**

### **2.1.1 The privilege of whiteness?**

For white skinned people, whiteness often remains invisible. Critical studies of whiteness assert that whiteness is usually taken for granted (Gillborn, 2005) and is only occasionally recognised when in contact with the ethnic ‘other’ (Cabrera, 2012). As Katz and Ivey (cited in Mazzei, 2008: 1128) observe, ‘ask a white person what he or she is racially and you may get the answer ‘Italian’, ‘English’, ‘Catholic’ or ‘Jewish’. White people do not see themselves as white’. This lack of racial recognition of whiteness is evident in social research. As Byrne (2009) notes, the literature based on research where all participants are white often lacks any references to their ethnicity. She illustrates this argument with examples of several studies which looked at the preferences of the middle-class when making educational choices (for examples see: Butler and Robson, 2003, Power et al., 2003, Oria et al., 2007). She points out that ‘where all respondents are white, it appears to be not considered worthy of comment or even statement. This suggests that whiteness, or perhaps more particularly white middle-classness, is being constructed as a norm from which others deviate’ (Byrne, 2009: 429). To challenge the assumption of the normative character of whiteness, it is essential, as Dyer (1997: 10) argues, ‘to make [whiteness] strange’. This would also help to contest what Mac an Ghaill (Mac an Ghaill, 2000: 139) describes as ‘over-racialising’ the experiences of non-white people. There is a tendency to analyse the experiences of non-whites almost exclusively through their ethnicity while ignoring other factors, or the fact that these experiences may be shared by white people (Datta, 2009). When I conducted my fieldwork, I set out to ensure that the whiteness of my respondents was recognised during the data collection and considered in my analysis. This gave me a chance to verify whether and how this ethnicity could operate as a form of capital. Historically, the majority of migrants in English education

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have been of non-white descent. Looking at white Poles would provide data to compare with the experiences of those groups.

Without doubt, Britain can now be described as a culturally and racially diverse country. The twentieth century witnessed several waves of immigration, particularly from Europe and the Commonwealth. In the post-War period, in response to labour shortages, Britain opened its borders to migrants from the Commonwealth, most notably the Caribbean and Indian sub-continent. As nationals of British colonies they were granted full citizenship rights but, as McDowell (2007, 2009, also Miles, 1993, Paul, 1997) notes, they were in a much less favourable position than other, white migrants. While comparing them to white incomers from Europe, McDowell notes that ‘only the latter group– the Caribbean migrants– came to Britain with full legal rights as British subjects and yet they were to find themselves out of place in Britain where the population of people of colour in the pre-war years was tiny and subjected to a racialized discourse of ‘difference’ (2007: 92, also Smith, 1996, Kushner, 2005). Some of the British public were anxious and distrustful of this new migrant group, who represented a different race and culture. The colour of the skin became a crucial factor, marking the migrants as visibly different and exposing them to discrimination and racism. They were in a very different position from women from the Baltic countries, recruited through the Baltic Cygnet scheme, to work in the UK’s hospitals shortly after the Second World War (McDowell, 2007, Fox et al., 2012, Kay and Miles, 1992). The name of the scheme itself had a strong symbolic meaning as it brought the promise of innocence, purity and constancy (McDowell, 2007).

Even though, unlike the Caribbean workers, these Baltic state migrants did not have citizenship, they were perceived as perfect incomers due to their whiteness, perceived cleanliness, Protestant religion and the fact that many came from middle-class backgrounds (McDowell, 2007). Whereas it might have been difficult for both the Caribbean and Baltic migrants to move up from the jobs they were initially assigned to,

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(which were usually the jobs that British people did not want) the latter found it easier to be socially accepted (McDowell, 2009). This is a clear example of how, in specific historical circumstances, whiteness did clearly work as a resource. This being said, McDowell (2007: 86) fundamentally argues that ‘not all white skins clothe equally valued people’. She introduces the concept of ‘degrees of whiteness’ and argues that we can speak about the ‘hierarchy of whiteness’ (McDowell, 2007: 86). Dyer (1997: 12, also Kushner, 2005), similarly, talks about ‘gradations of whiteness’ and he argues that some groups, particularly the Irish, the Jews and people from Southern and Eastern Europe are less securely white than those from the North and from Anglo-Saxon countries. The distance and discrimination experienced by Irish migrants has been well-documented (Hickman, 1998, Dyer, 1997, Hickman and Walter, 1997, Curtis and Perry, 1971). Anglo-Irish colonial racism together with Irish Catholicism standing in contrast to British Protestantism have both played their part in forming pejorative views of the Irish (Hickman, 1998). They were stereotyped as dirty, drunken and unreliable and as a consequence in the post-War years they were perceived as less ‘appropriate’ workers than migrants from the Baltic States, recruited through the Baltic Cygnet scheme (McDowell, 2007).

Women from Slavic countries, the majority of whom were Polish, were also less desirable at the time. They were associated with rural backgrounds, poor hygiene and Catholicism (McDowell, 2007). McDowell (2007: 96) quotes internal minutes from a Ministry of Labour meeting in 1945 which asserted that Polish women were ‘of the peasant woman type’ and they may not be appropriate workers for British hospitals which require high levels of sanitation. What this example of Poles and Irish strongly illustrates is that whiteness, rather than being simply a biological category, is a social construct, its value being linked to ethnicity, social class, religion and has also an historical context. It is for this reason that the concept of different ‘shades of whiteness’ appears very helpful in the study of contemporary migrants from Eastern Europe. Whereas their whiteness can enable them to go seemingly

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unnoticed, social class, nationality, language proficiency or accent remain markers of difference, determining the value of their whiteness, deeming it a 'different shade'. As McDowell (2009: 27) argues, 'like their predecessors, the new Europeans are less visible because of their skin colour and have a European identity and heritage in common with their host population. However, unlike the post-colonial migrants.... they have no previous connections with the UK and often enter speaking relatively little or no English'. She goes on to say that despite the shared European heritage and the skin colour, these new migrants are still exposed to the 'nasty rhetoric of difference' (McDowell, 2007: 104, also Fox et al, 2012). It is particularly so within the contexts of such a sizeable migratory influx and fierce economic competition. What she does not consider, however, is the question of social background. As I found in my research, some migrants have certain dispositions which makes it easier for them to integrate and be accepted while others struggle to do so and remain marginalised and marked as different. As my analysis will demonstrate, these dispositions are closely associated with class disparities.

The concept of racialization is helpful here. McGhee (McGhee, 2009) defines it as a 'discourse that justifies selectivity through racialized, cultural and integrative criteria of desirability and undesirability'. Phoenix (2005) emphasizes the importance of positioning as being theoretically complementary to racialization as she argues that individuals position themselves based on the positions of others around them and their perception of how these others position them. Biological as well as cultural disparities are used as the basis for differentiation and justification for inclusion and exclusion of certain groups of people at different times (Fox et al, 2012). These processes are often rationalized as serving to protect the security and well-being of the state and its culture (Banton, 2005, McGhee, 2009, Kushner, 2005). Indeed, culture plays an important role here as it is framed as an 'inherent obstacle to integration', for example,

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‘the asylum-seekers, diverse though their origins are, have been homogenized and essentialized and thereby deemed to be un-British/un-English and hence threatening to the British/English sense of identity and ‘way of life’ (Kushner, 2005: 222).

Whereas McGhee (2009) explored racialization through the discussion of the restrictions applied to the non-EEA immigration into the UK (through the managed migration points system) at the time the UK opened its borders to migrants from the A8 countries, Fox et al (2012) examined the UK’s differentiated treatment of migrants from the A8 and A2 countries. They focused on Hungarians and Romanians to explore racialization in immigration policy and on the representation of these groups in the tabloid press. Whereas the A8 were able to enter the country without any restrictions, the immigration of the A2 nationals who joined the EU 3 years later was tightly restricted (Somerville, 2007). Despite their whiteness and European background (characteristics which were advocated as an advantage for the A8 migrants), Bulgarians and Romanians experienced different treatment as a consequence of British anxiety over a larger than expected influx of A8 migrants, particularly Poles (Somerville, 2007). Fox et al (2012) discuss how the tabloid press supported racialization through exaggerating cultural difference; adopting descriptions such as ‘floods’, ‘swamps’ or ‘invasions’ to communicate the scale of the migration. Fomina and Frelak’s (2008) study of the press representation of Polish migrants found similar trends. This is hardly surprising given the nature of the tabloid press, but it is nevertheless illustrative of how racialization focuses on difference and cultural distance, presenting migrants as alien (if not culturally inferior) and threatening (Fox et al, 2012). Furthermore, research shows the racialization of whiteness, which carries different values at different points in time, depending on a migrants’ origin (Nayak, 2005, Kushner, 2005). This racialization seems more likely to flourish at a time of economic recession when Eastern Europeans are sometimes accused of ‘stealing jobs’ and lowering wages and working conditions.

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It is important to recognise that, as Nayak (2005) argues, racialization is not simply a relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed. Instead he finds Foucault's understanding of power involving a 'multiplicity of force relations' more useful and stresses that 'where there is power, there is resistance' (Foucault, 1978, cited in Nayak, 2005: 143). Such an approach reduces the risk of generalising and projecting the experience of racialization onto the entire migrant group; and presenting them as victims who are deprived of the agency to challenge this situation. My study found that whereas some of the young participants claimed to have been discriminated against, they were sometimes provoking this situation, as well as racialising others. Other respondents were able to capitalise on their whiteness and integrate with the native majority without feeling marginalised in any way. Furthermore, the pupils who were fully integrated with their English peers were less likely to feel discriminated against than their parents, who would experience instances of this. Therefore, it must be recognised that not all migrants experience racialization equally. This thesis will contribute to this debate, as well as the debates on the differentiated value of whiteness by showing that it is not a universal privilege and that individual experience of it is disparate, intersecting with age, language fluency and social class. All of these factors can have an impact on the level of the migrants' agency and their experiences of racialization.

### **2.1.2 Educational Achievement, Employment and Cultures of Masculinity**

Masculinity has been studied extensively by sociologists and, given the focus of my thesis, I hope also to contribute to some of the central debates which I shall now review. Fundamentally, sociologists have moved away from a singular concept of masculinity and they now recognise that there are various versions of it depending on factors such as social class, ethnicity or sexual orientation (Connell, 1987, Connell, 1993, Connell and Connell, 2005, Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005,

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McDowell, 2002). Connell (1987) made a crucial contribution to the debate particularly through his distinction between hegemonic and subordinate masculinities and recognition of the power relations between these types of masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity carries the most cultural significance and power over all the other forms of masculinity. It is not a fixed phenomenon and does not necessarily involve characteristics commonly associated with masculinity, such as physical strength. As Carrigan et al (1985: 592) argue, 'it is a question of how particular groups of men inhabit positions of power and wealth, and how they legitimate and reproduce the social relationships that generate their dominance'. Although few men live up to the models of hegemonic masculinity, all men benefit from it through what Connell calls the patriarchal dividend: through the gender pay gap, for example.

This concept has been hugely influential in the theoretical work on masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Coles (2009) emphasizes that, rather than focusing exclusively on patriarchy, hegemonic masculinity is conceptually useful for understanding the lived experiences of men, their negotiation of power and struggles over masculinity and the diversity of its dominant forms. He finds Bourdieu's notion of fields useful for this. Echoing Connell (1993), Coles asserts that hegemony is something that is always contested within the spheres of social life and that there is a multitude of dominant and subordinate versions of masculinity. There are differences in the dominant masculinities among working-class or homosexual males, for example, and these are further influenced by age and ethnicity (Coles, 2009). Men operating in these various fields have capitals of different value at their disposal and draw on them to negotiate their dominance within these fields (Coles, 2009). The recognition of complex power dynamics and hierarchies implicated in masculine relationships is fundamental for studying the experiences of young males.

Currently, public debates on masculinity tend to be dominated by concerns over boys' educational underachievement and the crisis of

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manhood. In the UK, white working-class boys are identified as the lowest performing group (Ashley, 2009, Kassen and Kindon, 2007). The problem of boys falling behind girls educationally first came into focus in the 1990s after the introduction of school league tables indicating pupils' performance at GCSE (Francis, 2006, Gillborn and Mirza, 2000). Earlier, the underachievement was contextualised in relation to social class and ethnicity rather than gender (Ferguson, 2000). In 1996, Chris Woodhead, the Chief Inspector for Schools stated that 'the failure of boys and in particular white working-class boys is one of the most disturbing problems we face within the whole education system' (TES, 15 March 1996, cited in Ferguson, 2000). The issue was highly publicised by the press and became the point of attention and critique among sociologists (Mac an Ghail, 1994, Epstein et al., 1998, Francis, 1999). Some feminist scholars criticised this line of argument by pointing out that gender is less influential than ethnicity or social class (Francis, 2006). It has been established that the gender achievement gap is the widest among the lowest socio-economic groups (Ferguson, 2000). Others have expressed the view that the panic around boys is serving male privilege by allocating more educational resources to their needs, while neglecting the problems encountered by girls (Francis, 2006). McDowell (2002) directed her attention to exploring the reasons for boys' complicated relationship with their schooling. The underachievement of boys has been linked to changing notions of masculinity, the development of 'yob' culture and the rejection of middle-class educational values.

There is a body of research which argues that perceptions of traditional masculinity and associated peer-pressure can inhibit boys' propensity to achieve (Burns and Bracey, 2001, Ferguson, 2000, Ofsted, 1996, Woodin and Burke, 2007, Mac an Ghail, 1994, Willis, 1977). Burns and Bracey (2001: 158) assert that 'boys deliberately cultivate an air of indifference so as to avoid the jibes of their peers, placing much greater importance on being accepted than on achieving academic success'. Kimmel (1998) notes that distancing oneself from serious academic work (which is



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associated with girls), is one way of asserting one's masculinity. Archer and Francis (2005: 170) found some high-achieving boys 'cover up' their work by being naughty in the classroom while still paying attention and studying hard at home. On the other hand, more recently, Francis et al (2010) found that some high achieving boys could balance academic success with popularity by embodying the physical performance of masculinity and assertion of their heterosexuality. Within boys' heteronormative cultures, homosexuality operates as something distinctly non-masculine, a symbol of submissiveness which is not acceptable for a 'real' man (Pattman et al., 1998, Pascoe, 2005, Ward, 2012). Homophobic attitudes and comments have been well documented in research into the relationships between adolescent boys (Roberts, 2012, Pattman et al., 1998). Humour, in the form of jokes, can be used by boys to ridicule classmates and assert their own power and masculinity. My thesis will contribute to this debate by exploring how young, migrant males position academic achievement in relation to masculine identity. I will also discuss how some of them assert their masculine status through emphasizing ethnic differences, feminizing their English peers and labelling them as 'gay'.

Another interesting area of study explores the experience of young working-class males in contemporary, service-oriented labour markets. This body of work is a legacy of Willis' (1977) 'Learning to Labour' which showed that elements of working-class masculinities (such as standing up to authority, or having a 'laff') were compatible with, and indeed led boys into, working-class jobs. In contrast, service sector employment based on contact with customers requires 'emotional labour' (Hochschild, 1983) and interpersonal skills such as being attentive, friendly and able to monitor one's behaviour (Leidner, 1991). Some argued that these characteristics stand in opposition to the normative working-class masculinity which favours physical strength and non-conformity and that their sense of masculine identity would discourage these boys from seeking service work (for the discussion see Roberts, 2012). Lindsay and McQuaid (2004) and Nixon (2009) argued that young

working-class males are likely to choose unemployment over work in service sector.

However, other studies found these arguments somewhat simplistic. Lupton (2006) for instance points out that young working-class males often have no alternative but to take up such work and that they use a variety of strategies to protect their sense of masculinity or adopt more 'masculine' roles in these jobs (also Simpson, 2004). Similarly, Leidner's (1991) research found that the participants were able to stress the typically 'masculine' characteristics required in their service jobs, such as enduring long hours or persistence in sales work. In her study among working-class boys in transition from school to employment McDowell (2002) found that her participants placed work at the centre of their lives and that many of those working in retail gained satisfaction from direct contact with and being able to please customers. Similarly, a recent study of working-class boys working in a sports shop conducted by Roberts (2012) found that the majority claimed to enjoy interacting with customers. Arising from these studies is evidence of a complex and changing relationship between different class cultures of masculinity and employment. Manual labour is no longer perceived as a working-class masculine ideal in the same way as service sector employment is not seen simply as an affront to masculinity (Roberts, 2012). These arguments are important for understanding the relationship of young males to employment. By discussing their work aspirations and also the cultural perceptions of masculinity amidst these young migrants, I hope to offer an original contribution to this debate.

### **2.1.3 Masculinity Debates in Eastern Europe**

As in the West, the economic transformations in Eastern Europe have also been found to affect the cultural models of masculinity. In Russia, for instance, the shift from socialism to post-socialism has been found to challenge the tradition of patriarchy within the Russian family (Kiblitckaya, 2002). Kiblitckaya (2002) points out that older men in

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particular find it difficult to accept the loss of stability and status which their jobs had in the socialist labour market and that the established concepts of ‘real’ masculinity are now contested. In Poland, masculinity studies are still relatively undeveloped but there is a growing interest in the subject (Arcimowicz, 2011). Gramsci (2003) notes that the collapse of communism and the restructuring of the economy in Poland had a stronger impact on men than women since many industries traditionally providing men with respectable work were phased out or minimized. Stenning (2003, 2005b, 2005c, 2005a, Smith and Stenning, 2006) argues that the break from a policy of ‘full employment’ left many without work, and the (ideologically reinforced) status of manual jobs was undermined. The new economic order required different skills and offered more insecure contracts. Some were able to negotiate this new reality and realise their masculinity through entrepreneurship (which they could not do under socialism) (Eyal et al., 2001). Others struggled or faced unemployment. Stenning (2005a: 121) describes this as ‘polarization of opportunity’. She argues (2005a, 2005b, 2005c) that the new, post-socialist working-class is often demonized and presented as undeserving, passive and incapable.

Alternative perspectives focus on the Eastern European states’ attempts to reinforce patriarchy. Watson (1993b) argues that whereas socialism equalised gender relations by limiting opportunities for autonomous economic action and engaged women in employment, its rejection of a civil society invited sentiments over traditional gender roles. She points out that rather than arising from the interplay between an individual and social institutions (Giddens, 1991, cited in Watson, 1993a), in socialism the identities were constructed in opposition to these institutions. As such, the assertion of traditional gender roles (with a male breadwinner and female homemaker) was a way of resistance. As Watson (1993a: 484) observes ‘under the conditions of state socialism both sexes express their dissatisfaction with the state, not in terms of the state’s failure to undermine gender inequalities, but rather in terms of the extent to which the state has prevented some women from being

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‘normal’ women, and men from being ‘normal’ men’. This had provided the conditions for what Watson (1993a, 1993b) describes as ‘the rise of masculinism’ which implies the empowering of men in the public and economic sphere.

Watson (1993a: 485) argues that as socialism did not leave much space for men to realise their masculinity in the public sphere, the current ‘purging of the emasculation of men takes place at the expense of not only voluntary but also the involuntary exclusion of women from the new public sphere, and essentially the de-gradation of feminine identity’. Gerber (2011: 7) contributes to the argument by her exploration of how gender in Poland is often presented as a ‘natural’, ‘God-given’ phenomenon and rhetorically linked to different social roles. She discusses the archetype of ‘Mother Poland’ (Matka Polka) which is a representation of the feminine personalised in Polish womanhood which functions to preserve Polish culture, religion, and language, such activities ensuring the survival of the nation. Linking the welfare of the country to the idea of woman as homemaker is a strong cultural message which could marginalise women economically. Gerber (2011: 19) observes that Polish politicians reinforce this association by framing motherhood as a ‘collective schema’, by ‘rhetorically linking working women to the failed socialist regime’ and by policies such as those offering early retirement for women or extending the length of maternal leave.

According to Arcimowicz (2011) there are currently two paradigms of masculinity in Poland. The traditional view, as Arcimowicz asserts, focuses on male domination and emphasises the differences in gender roles. It also stigmatises male emotional expression. The modern paradigm in contrast, stresses equality and partnership and it allows men to explore both traditionally ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ characteristics. Arcimowicz (2011) and Laciak (2008) both argue that whereas the traditional model is still fully represented in the media, the modern paradigm is increasingly visible and becoming more popular.

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The Polish Centre for Research of Public Opinion (CBOS) found that the support for the “partnership” model of a family (where the home tasks are shared between both parents) increased from 35% to 56% between 1994 and 2004 while support for the “traditional” model (where the woman assumes the role of homemaker) decreased from 42% to 21% (CBOS, 2005, cited in Arcimowicz, 2011). It is increasingly common for men to share childcare and housekeeping responsibilities (Arcimowicz, 2011).

Over a decade ago Watson (1993a) argued that Polish society had very little feminist awareness and that it could be characterised by a deep-seated assumption that gender was not something that was contentious. This is no longer the case as the country currently witnesses a lively debate on the issue (SLD, 2014, Nasz-Dziennik, 2014, Rymaszewicz, 2013). On one side, there are those who emphasize the economic and cultural oppression of women and the fact that gender is socially constructed. On the other side, which is supported by the Catholic Church, the argument is that gender and its traditional roles are part of a ‘natural order’ which should never be challenged. It is clear that gender, which was very important during the transition from socialism, is still a culturally problematic, highly contested matter. It is particularly so now, as Poland has become a member of the EU which emphasizes women’s participation in employment and gender equality (Gerber, 2011). While there is evidence that women are economically marginalised and the model of a male breadwinner still has strong support (Gerber, 2011), women are more mobile than in the past and indeed as inclined as men to move abroad in search of employment (Dyer et al., 2010, Vertovec, 2006, Currie, 2007, Samaluk, forthcoming in 2014). Wojnicka and Mlodawska (2011) argue that many young, highly educated Polish women felt that the traditional archetype of the Polish male was very restrictive. They conducted interviews and content analysis of an internet forum entitled ‘I will never marry a Polish man!’ (2011). The participants tended to describe Polish men as family-oriented but intolerant, close-minded, conservative and passive in the

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sphere of love as well as career development (2011). Interestingly, they also noted that Poles do not pay sufficient attention to their appearance and neglect the issues of style and fashion trends (2011). The deliberate disregard for fashion and grooming was a finding that featured strongly among some of my adolescent respondents. My analysis will explore how this can be linked to class-influenced perceptions of heteronormativity.

The conflicting paradigms of masculinity and the struggle between patriarchy and the ascendancy of feminist awareness are markers of an important transformation in gender archetypes. Questions emerge with regards to the cultural construction of masculinity in Poland, particularly in the context of European cultural integration and large-scale migration. Young, Polish migrants present an interesting case study since, given the size of the Polish community in England, they are easily exposed to the conservative gender perceptions shared by many Poles, while at the same time being influenced by the more liberal values of English society. As Evans (2002: 245) argues, young people's experiences provide 'a prime field for the interdisciplinary investigation of the manifestations and effects of social change'. This thesis will explore how gender ideals are negotiated within the two cultural settings, and this in the context of European mobility. Despite the large number of Polish and other Eastern European migrants in the UK, little attention has been paid to their masculinities until recently (Datta, 2009, Datta and Brickell, 2009). Datta's (2009) study of Polish builders in London is one of the few which did so and it found that a Polish males' ideas of masculinity and self are constantly renegotiated in the new environment and 'always relational and constructed in opposition to the "otherness" of English builders' (Datta, 2009: 24). There are some parallels to these findings in my research. Regardless of their whiteness, the Polish migrants construct their 'otherness' through perceptions of gender and cultural difference (Datta, 2009, Datta and Brickell, 2009).

## **2.2 Education and Multiculturalism in Britain**

Having discussed the central themes in the debates on masculinity studies, I shall now focus more specifically on the educational setting. It would be salient, in this context to look at the British educational system and its relationship with minority students. I will then be able to discuss studies exploring the educational aspiration and agency which migrant families have within this environment. British schools can be described as increasingly diverse. According to the Department for Education's data for January 2011, 26.5% of pupils in English state-funded primary schools were ethnic minority students, an increase of 1% from a year before (DfE, 2011). For state-funded secondary schools, the figure equalled 22.2% which was also an increase of 0.8% compared to 2010. Ethnic minorities are not equally dispersed across the country and for some cities and LEAs the proportion is significantly higher. In London for instance, it is estimated at 66.7% in primary and 62.1% in secondary schools (Ryan et al., 2010). The LEAs with the highest number of ethnic minority secondary school students are Newham with 88%, Tower Hamlets with 85.8%, Lambeth with 82.5% and Westminster with 82.2% (Ryan et al, 2010a). British schools have a relatively long history regarding the reception of minority pupils, and the educational system has undergone a number of changes, which has defined its relationship with multiculturalism.

### **2.2.1 The Policy Background**

The issue of cultural diversity entered the public arena shortly after the Second World War due to immigration from West Africa and the Caribbean which continued into the 1950s and 1960s. Until the mid-1960s, the debate was dominated by an assimilationist approach (Bleich, 1998). In 1965, a Labour spokesman expressed his belief that only those who were willing to accept a British lifestyle and culture as their own should be allowed to stay in the country (Bleich, 1998: 84). Later, these attitudes began to shift into 'passive multiculturalism' (Bleich,

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1998: 85). In 1968, Roy Jenkins who was the Home Secretary at the time asserted that the policy aims should not be ‘a flattening process of uniformity, but cultural diversity, coupled with equal opportunity, in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance’ (Rex, 1996: 32). In the 1970s, the educational needs of ethnic minorities began to be recognised (Modood and May, 2001: 306). As Modood and May (Modood and May, 2001: 306) point out, at this time ‘education came to be identified as one of the principal sites of racial(ized) oppression’. Increasingly questions were raised over the neglect of ‘Black history’. The achievement gap was acknowledged together with a negative evaluation of the general relationship between black pupils and teaching staff (Modood and May, 2001: 306).

Subsequently, the Committee of Inquiry into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups was formed to look into the performance of West Indian pupils in comparison to native students and other migrants. The findings, based on research in six LEAs, was published in 1981, in the Rampton Report (DES, 1981). As Modood and May (2001:307) argue, the report ‘was significant for highlighting racism as a factor in the poor educational performance of African–Caribbean students although it failed to account for social class or acknowledge variations in educational performance between and within ethnic minority groups’. The research found some evidence of teaching staff having a racist and stereotyped view of minority pupils. It was noted too that there was a lack of appropriate training for staff working in multicultural environments (DES, 1981, cited in Modood and May, 2001:307). Due to its focus on discrimination, the report caused some consternation in the Conservative government and Rampton was replaced by Michael Swann who continued the investigation and published another report, entitled Education for All in 1985. The Swann Report acknowledged the existence of racism within schools but it stressed that rather than focusing on antiracist training and strategies, the emphasis should be placed on creating an atmosphere of ‘inclusive multiculturalism’ (Bleich, 1998: 307, DES, 1985, Modood and May, 2001). Swann (DES, 1985,



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cited in Modood and May, 2001:307) argued that multicultural schooling would allow ‘all ethnic groups, both minority and majority, to participate fully in shaping society... whilst also allowing, and where necessary assisting the ethnic minority communities in maintaining their distinct ethnic identities within a framework of commonly accepted values’.

Following this important report, there was a shift and the issues of racial inequality vanished from the political debates between 1990 and 1997, when Prime Minister Major argued that ‘policies must be colour blind... and must just tackle disadvantage’ (Major, 1997; cited in Tomlinson, 2005: 153). New Labour, which took power in 1997 was determined to adopt a different approach, one recognising ethnic disadvantage, and seriously aimed to address it (Tomlinson, 2005). A stream of educational legislation followed. Following the 2000 Race Relations (Amendment) Act, all schools were required to develop and implement Race Equality Policies. OFSTED took on the role of overseeing this process. Other important initiatives included the Sure Start programme (DfEE, 2003 cited in Tomlinson, 2005) and the Green Paper *Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2003b, cited in Tomlinson, 2005) both of which emphasize equality of opportunity and support for children regardless of their background and origin. The Labour government also addressed the problem of low achievement among some minority groups. In 1997, they created a unit to monitor the achievement of minorities, providing local authorities which had a high number of ethnic minority pupils with an Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (Tomlinson, 2005). As Tomlinson (2005) notes, all of the White Papers and legislation since 1997 included a section concerned with improving the achievement of minority students.

Despite these positive developments and the recognition of the need for a multicultural discourse, New Labour remained committed to the educational market introduced by Conservative policies. This market effectively led to an increasing racial and class segregation based on the hierarchy of more and less desirable schools, with migrant pupils being

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less likely to attend the former. In 1987, Lady Hooper, who was Secretary of State for Education, argued that ‘racial segregation may be a price to be paid for giving some parents more opportunity to choose’ (cited in Tomlinson, 1998: 215). Educational markets enabled white, middle-class parents to avoid schools with a high proportion of minority students and effectively turned pupils into commodities, some more desirable than others (Tomlinson, 1998). Further it is argued that the punitive treatment of ‘failing’ schools was also disadvantageous for minorities (Tomlinson, 1998).

Another important obstacle to the creation of a truly multicultural education policy was the lack of an appropriate curriculum. Tomlinson (2005: 165) points out that ‘arguably, the most serious omission concerning the education of all young people in a multiethnic society concerns the failure of successive governments to encourage curriculum policies that would combat cultural ignorance, ethnocentric attitudes and racism’. The Swann Report included a recommendation for reworking the national curriculum so as to reflect the UK’s multicultural character (Tomlinson, 2005: 165). However, the groups who worked on the development of the curriculum in 1988 were largely influenced by the Conservative government and Margaret Thatcher who wanted to prioritise traditional British history over multicultural education (Tomlinson, 2005). Over a decade after Swann’s suggestions, the Macpherson Report which followed Stephen Lawrence’s murder similarly recognised the problem and advised that ‘consideration be given to the amendment of the national curriculum aimed at valuing cultural diversity and preventing racism, in order to better reflect the needs of a diverse society’ (Macpherson, 1999, cited in Tomlinson, 2005: 165). The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority filed some broad, ideological recommendations after the report but little has been done to develop a concrete framework for teaching in a multicultural Britain (Tomlinson, 2005).

### **2.2.2 Inequalities of access and ‘Ethnic Capital’**

As demonstrated above, some efforts were made to improve the educational opportunities of minority students in line with the multicultural discourse. Nevertheless, there is evidence of persisting inequalities enforced by factors such as the lack of a multicultural curriculum and the operation of educational markets. In 2003, the government admitted that ‘opportunities are unequal for many of the one in eight pupils who come from a minority ethnic background’ (DfES, 2003, cited in Tomlinson, 2005: 161). A year later, the London Development Agency’s Education Commission found that minority pupils experienced lower teacher expectations, exclusion, and an unfair response in relation to behavioural challenges (2004, cited in Tomlinson, 2005). There is a body of literature documenting the persisting inequalities experienced by minority pupils, some very complex and covert (Ferguson, 2000, Parks and Kennedy, 2007, HussKeeler, 1997, Archer and Francis, 2005). However, at the same time there is also evidence of minority students’ increasing their application for university places in relation to their white peers (Modood and Acland, 1998). According to the Race into Higher Education Report the proportion of ethnic minority students in higher education nearly doubled between 1995/6 and 2007/8, rising from 8.3% to 16% which exceeds their share of the 18–24 year old population in the UK (Business-in-the-Community, 2010, also in Sellgren, 2010). Modood (2004) points out that they are about 50% more successful at securing entry to higher education than white pupils, although there are differences in the achievement between specific ethnic minority groups. For instance, it was found that South Asian pupils overall were the most likely to stay in post-compulsory education after the age of 16 (Shah et al., 2010). Indian and African-Asian males were the most successful at achieving degrees in higher education, and Pakistani and Bangladeshi males the least successful (Shah et al., 2010). Pakistani boys were also characterised by relatively low achievement at GCSEs but when both

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Pakistani males and females are considered as a group, they were still more likely to go to university than white pupils (Shah et al., 2010). However, Reay et al (2001) assert that higher education is socially stratified and that ethnic minority and white working-class pupils often enter the ‘new’ universities, unlike middle-class white students.

Ethnicity is likely to intersect with social class and therefore influence the minority parents’ ability to manoeuvre through a foreign system and obtain desired educational outcomes (Abbas, 2007, Shah et al., 2010). The literature generally illustrates that migration often comes with a loss of status (Trevena, 2011) and that a migrants’ cultural capital sometimes turns out to be in the ‘wrong currency’ and of little relevance for generating desired educational outcomes (Reay, 1998a: 16, Francis, 2005). Newcomers particularly are more likely to lack confidence and the knowledge to effectively communicate with schools (Reay, 1999). This can put them in a position similar to that of British working-class families whose educational disadvantage is widely documented, particularly in the competitive environment of educational markets (Ball, 1993, Ball et al., 1996, Ball and Reay, 1997, Reay, 1998c, Lucey and Reay, 2002, Paterson and Iannelli, 2007). On the other hand, there is a body of literature exploring the notion of ‘ethnic capital’, which implies that, due to the cultural characteristics of their communities, some ethnic minorities may in fact be more advantaged than native groups. ‘Ethnic capital’ has been defined as a ‘set of resources, norms, obligations and expectations, information channels and cultural endowments that inheres in the structure of social relations within an ethnic community’ (Shah, 2007: 29). Zhou’s (2000, cited in Shah et al, 2010) and Zhou and Bankston’s (1994) research into the achievement of Vietnamese and Chinese pupils in the US established that ‘intergenerational closure’ and ‘norms enforcement’ were especially influential for school achievement and possibilities of social mobility. Similarly, Modood (2004) recognised the importance of these factors and added a third one, namely the transmission of aspirations. The strength and cultural importance of family-child relationships provided

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some migrant parents with a level of control to exercise discipline and transfer educational and career ambitions onto their children. Moreover, the children who were very strongly attached to their families and migrant community networks were consequently less likely to integrate with native urban peers which could jeopardize their academic performance (Zhou, 2000, cited in Shah et al, 2010, Zhou and Bankston, 1994, Hidalgo et al, 1995 cited in August and Hakuta, 1997). This was enforced by the presence of a strong sense of community norms and values, which included obedience, industriousness and mutual help and rejected selfishness and individualism (Zhou and Bankston, 1994). Further, the tight social networks between Vietnamese migrants meant that information about a child's success or failure was spread quickly throughout the community. Where the family reputation was at stake, good conduct and academic achievement were even more important (Zhou and Bankston, 1994).

Zhou and Bankston (1994) made a statistical analysis of bivariate relations between Vietnamese cultural orientations and their academic aspirations. They found that traditional family values, commitment to a work ethic and involvement in their own ethnic community had strong effects on academic orientation as pupils who shared these characteristics tended to receive As and Bs and have clear aspirations to go to college (Zhou and Bankston, 1994). The study found that all participating parents, regardless of their own education, shared a strong belief in the importance of schooling and they desired higher education for their children (Zhou and Bankston, 1994, Zhou, 2000). The influence of Coleman (1988) and his notion of primordial organisations and shared norms can be noted here. The existence of shared values which are compatible with educational principles, such as hard work and respect for adults, can help migrant pupils to achieve success in foreign schools. As Zhou and Bankston (1994: 825) point out 'whether immigrant cultures are disadvantageous or advantageous can be considered in terms of whether these original cultures frustrate or enable upward mobility on the part of the second generation'. My study

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will contribute to the debate through an exploration of how Polish culture and migration experiences shape aspiration and how that is transferred from parents to children.

Strong family and community networks are another component of 'ethnic capital'. Firstly, they enable the operation of 'information channels' which serve to exchange valuable advice and knowledge regarding schools (Modood, 2004, Shah et al, 2010). These can be very important, particularly for parents who are not fluent in the host language and whose links to the native community are very limited. Another advantage of migrant networks is the proximity of many individuals with different skills which can contribute to the process of a child's education. This was demonstrated in Crozier and Davies' (2006) study of Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities in the UK. The research found that the extended family and community were very much involved in the education of their minority children and youth. Sisters, uncles, cousins and neighbours would often offer help with homework, translate school documents for the parents, discuss the future educational options with the children and provide them with inspiration (Crozier and Davies, 2006). Those with their own businesses could additionally offer practical opportunities, like work experience and internships. Thus community resources can be very supportive for academic achievement. This is also reflected in the findings of German research, quoted by Gang and Zimmermann (2000) which showed that the size of ethnic community networks has a positive influence on the educational attainment of migrant youth. However, as this thesis will critically demonstrate, close community ties are not a resource equally available to all minority groups.

The idea of ethnicity as capital has been criticised for assuming homogeneity of experience and position within a given minority group. Shah (2007) argued that the role of gender, intergenerational hierarchies and extra-familial social influence should not be neglected in this consideration. She also emphasized the importance of social class in

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creating differences between the families' operationalization of shared, community values (Shah et al, 2010). Class inequalities are widely perceived as the most important determinant of academic achievement and attitudes to education among native populations. These ideas are strongly influenced by Bourdieu's notions of education as a site for cultural reproduction (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). Reay's (1998c) study of English mothers and their involvement in primary schooling, illustrated how social origin can influence their confidence within the educational system and their relationship to their children's schooling more generally. Reay argued that the middle-class mothers who participated in the research were merely engaged in reproducing the strategies that their own mothers employed to improve their educational opportunities. These involved, for instance, reading to children, paying for extra tuition and negotiating with teachers. Crucially, they possessed the desired form of cultural capital, which informed their ability to move through the educational system. In contrast, working-class mothers, many of whom had had negative experiences in school, were not able to exercise their rights and support their children's schooling with such ease (Lareau and Weininger, 2003, Reay, 1998). Some also argued that having high ambitions for social mobility and pushing children to achieve could be perceived as 'getting above your station' (Shah et al, 2010). Further, considerable attention has been paid to the ways in which British educational markets and the emphasis on choice can act to the disadvantage of less-knowledgeable, working-class parents when trying to access well-performing schools (Ball, 1993, Ball et al., 1996, Ball and Reay, 1997, Lucey and Reay, 2002, Glatter et al., 1997).

In contrast, the social origin of migrants appears not to influence their educational aspirations. This is because newcomers tend to be determined to achieve social mobility and they recognise the importance of education for fulfilling this goal (Modood, 2004, Tomlinson, 2005). They are therefore often perceived to possess what could be described as 'a middle-class attitude' to schooling. However, their social background and the level of accumulated cultural capital are believed to

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influence their ability to pursue their aspirations within a foreign system (Abbas, 2007, Shah et al., 2010). Abbas' (2007) research on British South Asians produced evidence that many parents had high aspirations to enrol their children into selective schools, irrespective of their social background. However, as he points out, it was the middle-class migrants who 'were not only highly motivated but also possessed the economic, social and cultural capital to ensure successful selective school entry' (Abbas, 2007: 75). He found social class to be the strongest determinant for the likelihood of securing a place in a selective school. Similarly, Shah's et al (2010) research into British Pakistani youth established that whereas education was generally perceived to be important by the parents who often used economic capital to support it, the middle-class parents also possessed a level of cultural capital, which they could mobilize to enhance their children's educational opportunities. These parents were more likely to have come from urban areas of Pakistan and to work as professionals in the UK (Shah et al, 2010). My analysis of Polish aspiration and resources, and the processes of their accumulation and negotiation of cultural capital, will provide a timely contribution to these debates.

Cross-class social networks can ease the accumulation of useful cultural capital among migrants (Kao, 2004, Shah et al., 2010). Such networks can be made available through various community initiatives or social centres as was the case in Shah's et al (2010) study. My research will consider the role of Polish community centres in facilitating such group resources. Children and young people can also generate cultural and social capital. Their own agency is often ignored in research as young people are presented as mere recipients of capitals generated by their parents and other adults (Leonard, 2005, Crozier and Davies, 2006, Shah, 2007). As Morrow (1999, cited in Shah, 2007: 43) observes, young people can 'actively generate, draw on, or negotiate their own social capital, or indeed make links for their parents, or even provide active support for their parents'. My study recognises this and explores the ability of young people to accumulate various forms of useful capital.



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Modood (2004) highlights the importance of networks stretching beyond the ethnic community. Shared values, mutual help and information channels within minority groups can be a very useful resource, but the absence of networks reaching outside the group can significantly limit opportunities for social progression. Modood (2004) illustrates his point with the example of Gujaratis in Leicester who had achieved social mobility and Pakistanis in Bradford who have not. The former were engaged in networks with their co-nationals as well as native groups, whereas the latter limited themselves to their ethnic community (Modood, 2004). Access to cross-ethnic networks can enable the exchange of information with regards to education and the labour market (Shah et al, 2010). It can also provide young migrants with career opportunities which would not otherwise be available (Shah et al, 2010). Some evidence suggests that middle-class migrants access these networks with greater ease which further influences their position in educational markets (Shah et al, 2010). My study will explore how the predispositions and forms of cultural capital possessed by middle-class Polish adult migrants make them more inclined to learn English and engage in nationally-mixed networks.

It has been noted that, rather than focusing on internal community values and projecting them onto whole groups, ‘ethnic capital’ should be considered as the ‘interplay of ethnicity, class, gender and religion within specific space/time dimensions’ (Shah et al, 2010: 1110). Conceptualised in this way, ‘ethnic capital’ appears an appealing concept which offers the opportunity to explore and explain the educational success of certain minority groups. Its various components, such as the enforcement of norms or community ties, illustrate how the cultural characteristics of different national groups can benefit them in an educational context. However, in my analysis I will be able to contrast these arguments with my own findings and demonstrate that the notion is not equally relevant to all ethnic groups. The Polish community possesses certain elements of what is known as ‘ethnic capital’ but fundamentally lacks others which impacts on its agency within British

schooling. Despite a growing interest in Polish migration, and in educational contexts too, this has not been explored in the literature. As a recent, sizeable, white migrant group, Poles present an interesting case that can offer a significant contribution to the debates on the aspirations and inequalities experienced by minority groups in English educational system, and the role of ethnicity, gender and social class for determining these. As I will now show, existing studies have mainly focused on challenges associated with the reception of Polish pupils; the initial feelings of trauma experienced by the pupils due to dislocation; the communication problems between the school and Polish parents; and the confusion caused by the differences between Polish and British educational systems.

### **2.3 Polish Pupils in the UK's Schools**

The unexpected influx of Polish children into British schools has generated considerable interest from academic researchers. Below, I present an overview of the current debate and endeavour to identify the gaps in knowledge. The following overview will help to place my research questions in context and justify the reasons for my study.

#### **2.3.1 The initial challenges of large-scale migration**

The numbers of Polish pupils in British schools has increased rapidly over the past few years. The admissions have not been equally dispersed across the country, and some schools located in areas widely occupied by A8 migrants have been put under intense pressure to accommodate the needs of the new arrivals. Cook, Dwyer and Waite's (2008) research on A8 migrants in Leeds noted that in some inner city schools, 20–25% of pupils hailed from Eastern Europe. In Brent LEA the figure for the same group rose from 250 in 2003 to 1,300 in 2008, with the majority coming from Poland (Ryan et al., 2010). Similar trends were observed in Scotland (Moskal, 2010, Ryan et al, 2010a). Polish, alongside Urdu

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(96,610), Punjabi (83,030) and Bengali (60,980), is one of the four main languages spoken by pupils in English schools, with approximately 40,700 speakers (DfE, 2010, cited in Ryan et al, 2010a). The number has increased from 26,840 in 2008 (DfE, 2008). This unexpected, sudden rise in the number of Polish pupils created challenges for schools, which were largely unprepared for the situation and lacked access to the children's educational records from Poland and information of any special educational needs (Moskal, 2010). One of the primary challenges identified in this research relates to language fluency and the problems of communication.

Lack of language proficiency is often recognised as the greatest obstacle to the integration and academic success of immigrant pupils. Not only can it limit a child's access to the curriculum and prospective progress (Keogh and Whyte, 2003, Vekic, 2003) but it can also have a negative impact on their self-esteem (Vekic, 2003). At the junior and primary level, lack of English can complicate the process of mastering numeracy and literacy whereas at the secondary level when language becomes more complex, children can struggle with acquiring subject-specific knowledge (INTO, 1998 cited in Smyth et al, 2009). There is no available data on the proficiency in English among young Poles. The studies suggest that the vast majority of new pupils came to England without any functional English (Sales et al, 2008, Smyth et al, 2009, Ryan et al, 2010a). Initially this challenged their ability to follow the content of lessons, understand the organisation of the school and find friends. Their confidence was further undermined by the foreign environment, where they were far away from home (Sales et al, 2008). Studies found a number of examples of good practise where schools developed their own strategies to ease the problem (Moskal, 2010, Sales et al, 2008, Ryan et al, 2010a). Employing Polish-speaking teaching assistants or adopting the 'buddy' system were not uncommon. A Polish teacher in Sales' et al (2008) research described how she prepares extra homework for the migrant pupils, to encourage them to learn vocabulary that will be required in the upcoming lessons. The same study found examples

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of schools which designed ‘welcome packs’, providing newcomers with a basic explanation of the way the school worked, information on available activities and the necessary vocabulary (Sales et al, 2008).

Many teachers in Ryan’s et al (2010a) research stressed that language is not a permanent obstacle and that usually minority pupils pick up English relatively quickly. They also noted that English could be problematic not only to immigrants, but also to British-born students, especially white, working-class boys. Teachers in Moskal’s (2010) study found Poles generally well-motivated to learn English quickly and achieve high grades. There are however some arguments pointing to the fact that whereas children can learn to communicate quickly, it can take as long as nine years to achieve the proficiency of a native speaker (Collier, 1987, August and Hakuta, 1997). It has been commonly assumed that younger students could learn the language quickly and soon become proficient (August and Hakuta, 1997). However, these conceptions have been contested as some have argued that while older learners may have less chance of acquiring the native accent, they are nevertheless able to learn complex linguistic structures. Consequently, older individuals embrace the syntactic, lexical and morphological aspects of language quicker than younger students (Collier, 1987, Epstein et al., 1996). One of the explanations is that older learners have to master complicated grammar and vocabulary much earlier in order to be able to communicate at the level corresponding to their age (August and Hakuta, 1997). They are also more likely to face the challenges of communication without the support of a teacher (August and Hakuta, 1997).

Other arguments relate to the importance of fluency in the mother tongue. August and Hakuta (1997:38) point out that ‘second-language acquisition is faster and easier if continued development in the first language is supported through mastery of the basic grammar in the first language, around the age 6’. This is supported by the findings of Moll and Diaz’s study on Spanish students learning English (1985, cited in

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August and Hakuta, 1997). This research found that those who could read well in their mother tongue were also more likely to do well at reading in English and the same was so for writing (Moll and Diaz, 1997, cited in August and Hakuta, 1997). On the other hand, the OECD PISA report concluded that pupils who spoke their mother tongue at home were achieving lower grades than those who spoke the language of school instruction (2006, cited in McDaid, 2011). My data indicates that the vast majority of Poles speak Polish with their children at home and many send them to a Polish Saturday school. The English teachers were not always enthusiastic about this. Whereas they all understood and appreciated that it was important that children preserve the language and culture of Poland, some pointed out that this was evidently slowing their progress in English and in the case of younger children, seemed to cause some linguistic confusion.

Some studies have noted that the parents' indecision with regards to migration plans can sometimes impede a child's progress in the acquisition of English. Sales et al (2008) illustrate how such uncertainty is sometimes reflected in the pupils' attitudes to learning English and schooling in the host country more generally. Some students may be convinced that their return to Poland is only a matter of time and investing effort in language learning is unnecessary. The study found that a number of parents adopted strategies to ensure that their children could re-enter Polish education. This involved, for instance, sending children home to take exams in Poland. Sales et al argue that such strategies can 'reduce children's commitment to progress within the British system' (Sales et al, 2008:15). However, it is questionable whether such practices predominate as more recent research contradicts these findings (Lopez Rodriguez, 2010, Trevena, under review). It could be that this trend was more characteristic of an earlier period when migration flows were more fluid. My thesis will provide a case for the argument that as families develop increasingly strong attachments to the UK, they are unlikely to hold dual loyalties and instead focus their efforts on achieving success within the British schooling system.

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There is some evidence to suggest that the sheer scale of immigration from Poland could delay language acquisition due to the possibility of migrants 'sticking together'. Continuous interaction with native speakers is crucial for students if they are to learn English as a second language (Kao, 2004). The availability of co-nationals in a new environment may be a source of security and comfort but in the long run, it can slow down the progress of language acquisition. Sales et al (2008) study found that some Polish children preferred to spend their time with English pupils. Research conducted by Tower Hamlet's EMA team (cited in Sales et al, 2008) established that foreign students with no English often prioritize finding English friends. However, it has generally been argued that the majority of Polish pupils spend significant time both inside and outside school within their own language circles and have little chance to hear correct English (Sales et al, 2008, Ryan et al, 2010). My research explores the formation of social networks within the context of a school with a very large proportion of Polish pupils. It also provides thorough analysis of the impact of convertible social capital on the accumulation of linguistic capital as well as other resources, such as access to information.

Staying in a closed group and speaking Polish at school can provoke conflicts and lead to divisions between native and immigrant students. It has been argued that, after gender and age, language and ethnicity can be the most powerful source of division within a school (Thorne, 1993). August and Hakuta (1997: 93–4) point out that 'language can be the basis for categorization and the formation of ingroups and outgroups, especially within an institutional context in which the languages spoken have unequal status. Whenever ingroups and outgroups form, stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination develop'. This linguistic separation can also push minority students further away from the native community and create tensions which my analysis will address. In the absence of positive relations and familiarity with each other, inter-group hostility and racism would be more likely to occur (Smyth et al, 2009). Ryan's et al (2010) study found some examples of negative stereotyping

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against Eastern Europeans in Irish schools. This behaviour was thought to be emphasized during the economic crisis, when the competition for employment became fierce (Ryan et al, 2010). The problem was also noted in Smyth's et al (2009) research. On the other hand, Sales et al (2008) noted that some Polish pupils displayed racist attitudes towards other ethnic minorities. Poland is not a multicultural country and most of the children would not have had much experience of diversity before coming to England. Schools face an important challenge when addressing the gaps in multicultural education and developing strategies to address the problem of racism. I found evidence of these attitudes among the pupils and parents I interviewed and, given the impact this may have made on provoking conflicts and fuelling racism in schools, it is surprising that so little attention has been paid to this issue in the literature on Poles.

There has been a notable interest in the initial experiences and perspectives of Polish pupils, shortly after migration. Studies have discussed the feelings of fear and alienation experienced by the children in an unfamiliar environment, coupled with the trauma of leaving friends and family behind (Sales et al, 2008, Smyth et al, 2009, Moskal, 2010). Some pupils would initially display negative attitudes to schooling in the UK (Sales et al, 2008). Problems arose in relation to the different classroom structures, the emphasis on the 'creative curriculum' (Ryan et al, 2010:15) and with communication in English generally. Importantly, with the exception of Moskal (2010), no studies explored the perspectives of children and young people, instead drawing on interviews with adults. Parents and teachers can have valuable knowledge, but only talking about young migrants' experiences and feelings without consulting the individuals in question is a significant omission. My research is original in terms of its recognition of the young persons' agency, as it gives them a chance to voice their own views. Young people are not merely passive followers of their parents' choices, they often take an active, and sometimes dominant, part in making educational decisions. They can possess more agency than their parents

and their preferences can in fact influence the adults' migration plans (Ryan and Sales, 2011). It is essential that this is recognised in research and policy.

### **2.3.2 Polish Parents**

Parents play an essential role in the schooling of their children. As August and Hakuta (1997: 99) point out, they 'are seen as providing them with motivational resources, including self-esteem, agency, and self-control, and as helping to instil in them high expectations and good work habits'. However, the parents' ability to provide academic support and to get involved in education can be limited by factors such as ethnicity, linguistic capacity and social class. Up to date research suggests that Polish parents, like other minorities, can face significant challenges to providing their children with the desired level of education. In this section, I will look at the literature exploring Polish parents' experiences with schooling in Britain; the difficulties related to language limitations and differences in the systems; the schools' response; and the parents' educational aspirations, generally.

Ryan et al (2010: 14) found that 'several key informants suggest that Poles and Latvians, for instance, coming from well-established and well-funded European education systems, have very high expectations of schooling and tend to be confident in asserting their rights as EU citizens, which impacts on their interaction with schools and teachers'. I would argue that this is an oversimplification, neglecting the disparity in families' resources, confidence and knowledge. Firstly, a lack of proficiency in English can significantly complicate communication with the school and limit access to relevant information. For instance, some studies have found that Polish parents who could not speak English sometimes relied on their children as 'go-betweens' in their communication with the school (Moskal, 2010, Sales et al, 2008). This introduces obvious problems for parents as it makes it difficult to gain a realistic picture of a child's performance and behaviour in school. As a



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consequence, they may not be able to identify problems and act to address them promptly. They also may not be aware of provisions and services that they are entitled to. This is a serious challenge that could leave some parents excluded from the education of their children. Research has shown that schools often try to facilitate communication with parents by engaging interpreters or providing leaflets in the mother tongue (Moskal, 2010, Ryan et al, 2010, Sales et al, 2008). Some schools in Ryan's et al (2010: 21) research developed 'creative, personal strategies' aiming to provide migrant families with a key worker who introduces them to the school and assists with communication. Other strategies involved distributing leaflets with information on the curriculum, school standards and expectations – in different languages (Ryan et al, 2010). However, in institutions with large numbers of migrants from different countries the need for such resources may be bigger than the available provision.

As I previously argued, drawing on social networks can be a useful strategy to improve access to information and educational resources. Kao (2004) argues that migrant children whose parents sustain networks with other parents, and particularly with parents who are well-informed about the educational system, are likely to achieve better results. She goes so far as to argue that one's ethnicity can determine the kinds of schools that a child is likely to go to depending on the status of a given community, their access to information and the strengths of social networks within it. There is a body of literature, which illustrates how social networks can help Poles make their way to Britain, find employment and accommodation (Ryan, 2011b, Janta et al., 2011, Ryan et al., 2008b, Osipowicz, 2002). Some initial arguments have also been made with regards to social capital easing the process of moving abroad with children (White, 2009) however the notion remains relatively unexplored in the context of education and Polish migrants. Initially, the social networks between Poles have often been taken for granted and not explored in great depth (Sumpton, 2009). Recently, a few scholars have begun to question their strength and argue that internal

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community divisions, class differences, competition and mistrust must be recognised in the discussions of social networks among Poles (Gill and Bialski, 2011, Ryan et al., 2008b). Investigating the functions of social networks that seem to improve educational opportunities for migrant children is a subject which will be addressed in my research.

Another important challenge, which attracted attention in academic debates, relates to the parents unfamiliarity with the British educational system. Polish schooling varies significantly from the British model. One important difference between the Polish and English systems is the school starting age. In Poland, children are obliged to enter formal education at the age of 6. They must stay in school until the end of lower secondary school and are then expected to remain in education until the age of 18, either in upper secondary schools or vocational training. Some argue that this can cause complications for migrants who are not aware of the differences between the systems and whose children may start school with no experience of schooling while being placed in a classroom with children who have already been at school for a year (Lopez Rodriguez et al., 2010, Sales et al., 2008). As Ryan and Sales (2011: 17) note *‘the ease of movement between member states may lead to hurried, unplanned migration, with migrants ill-prepared for the difficulties they encounter upon arrival’*. If these arguments were plausible a few years ago, when many newcomers were arriving ‘straight from’ Poland, they may not apply now, as currently most Polish parents have spent a few more years in England. This is an example of the changing dynamic of Polish migration.

However, other differences between the Polish and British educational systems can still cause considerable confusion. For instance, some migrants are not aware of the importance of school attendance in the UK (Sales et al, 2008). Another issue is that in Poland, unlike the UK, parental involvement in the school life through activities such as volunteering is not promoted. Rather, parents are encouraged to get involved through monitoring their children’s progress and they have

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easy access to information about this (Smyth et al, 2009). Homework and frequent, unannounced tests are an important part of the Polish system. Their role is to provide a constant overview of a child's development, identify problems and mobilise pupils to learn systematically. Studies by Sales et al (2008) and Ryan et al (2010) found that some Polish parents found it difficult to accept that schools in the UK operate in a different manner. As a result, many complained that they did not know how their children were progressing at school as they did not get much homework (Sales et al, 2008). At the same time, their ability to get involved in school events was often limited by long working hours and irregular shifts a phenomenon which was highlighted in other reports (Janta et al., 2011, Spencer et al., 2007). In the absence of language proficiency these challenges could lead to frustration and leave parents feeling excluded from the education of their children. This thesis will discuss these issues and explore the factors influencing parents' cultural capital and agency within schooling.

Migrant parents may also lack information about the process of applying to secondary schools and colleges, and the differences in school reputations (Sales et al, 2008). Sales et al (2008) observe that Polish schools have less power over the curriculum and consequently the competition for places is not as strong as in the UK. They argue that markets in education and the emphasis on choice are virtually absent (Sales et al, 2008). This may indeed be the case in primary education, but Polish secondary schools are increasingly differentiated, with categories including vocational education, technical schools, and comprehensive schools. Only comprehensive schools and some technical schools provide diplomas which enable entry to higher education (Eurydice, 2010). Vocational schools are often stigmatised. Moreover, comprehensive schools which are generally seen as most desirable, are very differentiated in their specialisation and reputations. League tables, prospectus' and open days are currently part of common practice in Poland. It should be noted however, that smaller towns still offer significantly less choice than large cities and this could potentially

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be a factor which places some Polish migrants in a disadvantaged position.

Some migrants may be unaware of the heterogeneity of the British secondary education system which may limit their ability to make informed choices about their children's school. This being said, Lopez Rodriguez's study draws some interesting and novel conclusions with regards to Poles' educational aspirations (2010). She acknowledges that Poles face challenges with their involvement in their children's education, particularly due to the lack of language proficiency and limited contact with native communities. However, she then goes on to say that 'this insecurity might in fact generate intensified parental engagement and positive 'intensive parenting' (Ball, 2003) leading to the desired results, while carers do all to prevent their children from falling behind educationally' (Lopez Rodriguez, 2010: 355). In her interviews with Polish mothers, she found that the majority held strong educational values and were very determined to transfer them to their children, which connects to the concept of 'ethnic capital'. At the same time, many mothers perceived the UK's schooling as very meritocratic which provided diverse opportunities for those who were motivated to succeed. Lopez Rodriguez (2010: 355) points out that these beliefs, together with their positive attitude to education 'originating from their home country's educational practices, may place them in a privileged position educationally and possibly professionally in comparison with some other minority groups and may position them ahead of white British working-class pupils'. This is an extremely interesting argument, which adds depth to the debate on Polish parents in British education. Rather than viewing them primarily as powerless recipients of educational provision, whose access to it is highly disadvantaged by language and nationality, Lopez Rodriguez highlights Poles' agency, motivation and educational capital which can empower them in the British system. However, the arguments about Polish educational values and a favourable work ethic should not be separated from the consideration of differences in the migrants' agency, cultural and social

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capital, and their ability to operationalize them. This introduces the risk of over simplification and generalisation.

As the above review has illustrated, the literature made an important contribution to our understanding of some of the challenges experienced by Poles (both children and adults), most notably those related to language limitations or differences in the educational systems. However, most of the research was based in primary schools, it focused on the problems of new arrivals and it tended to neglect the views of young people. The nature of the influx has been changing and whereas undeniably there are still new arrivals, their number is significantly smaller than a few years ago. Polish pupils attending English schools are increasingly likely to have been born in the UK or otherwise had spent a few years here. Consequently, it is likely that some of the arguments that have appeared in these early studies are less compelling now. In the light of a prolonged stay in England, there is a need for a more in-depth investigation of these issues. Very little is known about how Polish migrants' exercise agency within the English educational system, how they use cultural and social capital and how this varies between individuals. Similarly, the issues of aspiration and its transmission to the younger generation (which is well-researched among other minority groups) have so far been neglected. A study of educational aspirations and resources will provide an important contribution to the debate and set out a new branch of research into this minority. It will be useful for mapping out the inequalities among a major white migrant cohort and the findings could be compared to other minority groups to explore the importance of ethnicity or the relevance of concepts such as 'ethnic capital'. A further contribution will be made through a discussion of gender and the interplay of the migrants' masculinity, social network formation and attitudes to schooling. The thesis aims to extend our knowledge in the relevant fields and provide a contemporary picture of Polish migrants in English education, which transcends the earlier challenging conditions. To do so, I adopted a complex methodological approach, which recognised the agency of

young people. All the data was analysed through the novel theoretical framework introduced below.

## 2.4 Theoretical Framework for understanding the educational experiences of Polish migrants

Prior to the start of the ethnography I had some initial ideas regarding the theoretical framework which could be used to analyse the material. However, these did not determine the data collection process as throughout it I attempted to explore all the variables which I recognised as having a potential impact on career aspirations and kept an open mind. It was not my objective to find evidence for an existing theory but to explore my research questions with the most effective tools. As a consequence, after completion of the ethnography and preliminary analysis, my early ideas have been reappraised. I found that combining elements of Berry's theory of acculturation and Bourdieu's theory of practice provided me with a unique framework which worked very well to explain the educational aspirations of migrants and the differences in their ability to realise them. I shall later discuss how I applied the two but first, I will introduce and define the concepts and engage with their critique.



**Figure 2** The relationship between maintenance of home culture and participation in host

#### **2.4.1 John W. Berry: The trajectories of acculturation**

After the initial analysis of the collected data it emerged that there was considerable diversity in terms of the participants' orientation to England, other Polish migrants and non-Poles too. I found this to be important because it appeared to be in a mutually reinforcing relationship with the participants' access to various resources, such as English language skills. I identified three groups with assimilative, integrational and separationist attitudes and found that John W. Berry's theory of acculturation provided a good foundation for categorising and understanding the scope of these attitudes. The theory of acculturation has been widely applied in psychological research to conceptualise the ways in which immigrants interact with host societies, and what psychological and socio-cultural outcomes this may bring to the individuals. I found that his theory could be helpful in sociological investigation. Fundamentally, Berry is interested in whether people who migrate keep their deep-rooted culturally shaped behavioural patterns or whether they change them under the influence of new social and cultural encounters to those which are acceptable and dominant in the new environment. He thus distinguishes two main factors determining the response, namely: (a) cultural maintenance; that is the level to which individuals consider their own culture and its preservation to be important and (b) contact and participation; that is the extent to which migrants remain in their national groups or engage with other people. Arising from these are four different strategies, that of assimilation, separation, integration and marginalisation (Figure 2, page 51). Assimilation defines individuals who do not consider their home culture to be an important part of their identity and who regularly engage with people outside this culture. Separation can be described as the opposite of assimilation. In contrast, we can speak of integration when migrants indicate a level of cultural maintenance while displaying a positive attitude and willingness to interact with other cultures. Marginalization occurs when individuals do not engage with or maintain their own

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culture (which may be forced upon them) and they then separate themselves from the host community. Acculturation can occur at the group-level, resulting in an alteration to the group culture, and at the level of the individual where there is an impact on their psychology (Graves, 1967). Importantly, acculturation does not merely lead to assimilation as it can be reactive and influence the culture of both the migrant and host groups; creative when it leads to the development of new cultures distinct from the original and host culture; and delayed when the cultural shifts become apparent years later (Berry, 1997).

Berry distinguishes between psychological and socio-cultural adaptation. The former is dependent on individual personalities, life events and the level of social support. The latter is related to the scope of cultural knowledge, social engagement with people of other cultures, and the attitudes between these groups. The successful adaptation on these levels tends to generate an integration acculturation strategy. In their research on migrant adolescents, Berry et al (Berry et al., 2006) defined four acculturation profiles: the ethnic, the national, the integration and the diffuse profiles. The youth in the ethnic profile were characterised as displaying a tendency to stay within their own national group, having high ethnic identity and predominant use of the first language (Berry et al., 2006). As such, they 'endorsed the separation attitude and scored low on assimilation, national identity, and contacts with the national group' (Berry et al, 2006: 313). Their attachment to family values was reported as much above the average. In contrast, the individuals in the national profile spoke the host language more often than their own, and built their social networks primarily with native individuals. They scored low on ethnic identity and high on national identity and assimilation (Berry et al, 2006). They also had minimal attachment to family values. The integration profile involved people who were engaged in and built their identities on the basis of two cultures. As Berry et al (2006: 314) describes them, 'they strongly endorsed integration and gave low endorsement to assimilation, separation, and marginalisation. They reported high national language proficiency and



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average ethnic language proficiency; their language usage suggested a balanced use of both'. The remaining group, the diffuse profile was characterised as being highly proficient in the ethnic language and non-proficient in the national language; having low ethnic and national identity and limited contact with native individuals. Berry et al (2006) suggest that this group consists of people who are often new to the country, who may be willing to be part of the host society but lack the language skills and cultural knowledge to do so. The integrational profile is generally associated with the most positive outcomes in terms of personal psychology and adaptation (Kealey, 1989, Berry et al., 1987) although there are some contradictory findings with studies suggesting the benefits of maintaining one's own culture and others claiming that contacts with the host society are more useful (Berry, 2006).

Berry (1997) notes that factors such as length of residence in the host country, age, religion, gender and the family's socioeconomic background are all likely to influence the level of adaptation and to determine which acculturation strategy would be adopted by the individual. The length of residence and age have been found to be particularly significant. Berry's et al (2006) research suggests that integration and national profiles are far more likely to occur among migrants who have been in the host country for long periods of time. They found that the proportion of those fitting the two profiles more than doubled for people who were born in or had over 12 years residence in the host country, in comparison to those with under 6 years residence. In their study, as many as 45% of the individuals who resided in the host country for less than 6 years fitted the diffuse profile. They did not find significant variations in the proportion of those who were of the ethnic profile which related to the length of residence. With regards to age, the findings suggest that when acculturation begins before primary school, its adaptation is smooth and less problematic (Beiser et al., 1993). Berry (1997: 21) points out that 'the reasons for this are not clear; perhaps full enculturation into one's parents' culture is not sufficiently advanced to require much culture shedding or to create any

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serious culture conflict; or perhaps personal flexibility and adaptability are maximal during these early years'. The adolescents were found to be particularly prone to struggle with adaptation, possibly due to generational conflicts and the challenges of the normal transition from childhood to adulthood (Sam and Berry, 1995, Aronowitz, 1992). Furthermore, the ethnic composition of a neighbourhood is also recognised as playing a role in adaptation (Galster et al., 1999, Berry et al., 2006). No attention is paid to the possible effects of social background.

Berry's basic typology of acculturation profiles provides a useful tool for classifying migrants according to their orientation to the receiving society and their own ethnic community. The level of integration is likely to have a significant impact on factors determining the migrants' quality of life. Acculturation theory has not really been applied in sociological research on education even though it could function usefully considering that one's level of contact with natives and attitude to the host society will certainly impact on access to high-volume social capital and other resources useful in the educational field. Notably, Berry (1997) recognises that the acculturation trajectory is influenced both by background factors from the country of origin and the experiences in the country of migration. However, his terminology and distinction between ethnic and national is confusing at times. For this reason, while I drew on Berry's typology to analyse the features of particular groups, I have developed my own scheme. I began by classifying the pupils into categories as 'the isolated', 'the assimilated' and 'the integrated' which corresponded accordingly to the ethnic, the national and the integrational profiles in Berry's terminology. The absence of the diffuse profile is discussed in the analysis. This nomenclature is clearer and more descriptive of the nature of the groups. Overall, the acculturation theory offers a useful starting point for understanding migrants' educational aspirations and their ability to realise them but it is not a sufficiently thorough schema for the purposes of my study. A qualitative analysis would give us a more incisive understanding of the problem.

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Bourdieu's theory of practice can fill the conceptual gap as it adds depth to Berry's ideas and allows for a more nuanced analysis. Its strength lies in its potential for assessing how migrants' personal and cultural histories impact on their acculturation trajectory, and how these generate diverse educational practices.

### **2.4.2 Between agency and structure: Bourdieu's habitus**

Bourdieu's theory of practice is premised upon his conceptual triad of habitus, practice and field. Habitus is described as a personified history, which is 'internalized as second nature... [it] is the active presence of the past of which it is the product' (Bourdieu, 1990, cited in Crozier et al., 2008). It is shaped from early childhood by one's social position together with the opportunities and restraints associated with it and it subsequently shapes one's expectations of objective reality and ability to pursue these expectations. As Bourdieu argues:

'in reality, the dispositions durably inculcated by the possibilities and impossibilities, freedoms and necessities, opportunities and prohibitions inscribed in the objective conditions... generate dispositions objectively compatible with these conditions and in a sense pre-adapted to their demands. The most improbable practices are therefore excluded, as unthinkable, by a kind of immediate submission to order that inclines agents to make a virtue of necessity, to refuse what is anyway denied and to will the inevitable' (Bourdieu, 1990b: 54).

Habitus exists both at the level of an individual, where it is shaped by one's experiences and at the level of the collective where it arises from family and class history (Reay, 2004). There is a level of ambiguity around this distinction since Bourdieu argues that every habitus is unique as is an individual's history, but he also maintains that there is some uniformity in the habitus of individuals occupying the same social position (Reay, 2004). As Oliver and O'Reilly (2010b: 51) argue 'habitus acknowledges a limited extent to which an individual's actions can

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significantly vary from the usual activities of their social group'. This can be explained by the fact that those occupying the same locus share certain experiences and face similar opportunities and restraints. With relation to Berry's arguments, this helps to explain the homogeneity within acculturation profiles and heterogeneity between them.

Habitus offers a framework for identification and interpretation of external constraints, internalised by individuals and which influences what practices they perceive as possible. This has proved very relevant for educational research, with a number of studies adopting Bourdieu's theory to explain educational inequalities, different levels of individuals' agency in schooling, school choice and parental attitudes and involvement with their children's education (Reay, 1999, Vincent et al., 2012, Lopez Rodriguez, 2010, Lehmann, 2012, Lee and Kramer, 2013, Dumais, 2002, Crozier and Davies, 2006). Habitus is fundamental in Bourdieu's theory as it bridges the gap between agency and structure. As the internalised social structure, habitus 'regularly excludes certain practices, those that are unfamiliar to the cultural groupings to which the individual belongs' (Reay, 2004: 433). Lacking examples of these practices in the family or collective history deems an individual highly unlikely to engage with them and to consider them as plausible. As such, individuals tend to reproduce practices characteristic of their cohort and those which they were exposed to in their social milieu. Habitus restrains the scope of available actions although it does not always do so in a predictable and definitive way. Bourdieu (1995: 87) argues that 'habitus is a kind of transforming machine that leads us to 'reproduce' the social conditions of our own production, but in a relatively unpredictable way, in such a way that one cannot move simply and mechanically from knowledge of the conditions of production to knowledge of the products'. He recognises that social actors have a level of agency and that habitus is both enabling and constraining. Individuals have a choice of actions although he tends to stress that this choice is limited since agents are predisposed to act in familiar ways. As such, while the concept of habitus is an attempt to negotiate the

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disparity between agency and structure, Bourdieu tends to emphasize its constraining nature. Other than influencing the agents' perspectives and their expectations of objective reality, habitus is also embodied in their physical hexis. This is manifested in speech, posture, ways of walking and 'thereby of feeling and thinking' (Bourdieu, 1990, cited in Reay, 2004: 432). This externalisation of habitus, constrains and enables agents in their access to various resources and opportunities as well.

Bourdieu has been criticised for being structurally deterministic (Jenkins, 2000, cited in Walker, 2011). Habitus, as an internalised social structure, considerably limits the scope of practices which an individual may be expected to perform. Nevertheless, it does not deem social actors completely predictable or deny them agency. Indeed, despite constraints, individuals can be very creative and to some extent unpredictable in generating practices (Ostrow, 2000, Sweetman, 2003). Furthermore, some sociologists argue that habitus has a capacity to change (Bloomer, 2001, Ecclestone, 2004). They emphasize that, being continuously influenced by the past and the present, the habitus can be altered and produce different dispositions and practices (Walker, 2011). Importantly, these changes are not random as there is some continuity in the process. As Walker (2011: 32) points out, these scholars recognise that 'dispositions are simultaneously rooted in past experiences whilst also being responsive to the new situations and changing opportunities that young people confront over the course of their "learning careers"'. Hodgkinson et al (1996) has argued that these changing contexts impact not only on the way young people project themselves into the future but also on the way they see their own past, effectively 'reconstructing' it so that it fits with their current understanding of self. Understanding that habitus is not entirely rigid but involves some fluidity is helpful in the exploration of how both the past and present educational and employment experiences from Poland and the UK influence the perceptions of opportunities of Polish adolescents and their parents.

### **2.4.3 Practice: the instinctive product of habitus**

Habitus can only be observed through the agents' practices and their interactions with each other and with the field (Jenkins, 2002); and it generates these practices, which are always located in space and time. As Jenkins (2002: 78) argues 'practices are produced in and by the encounter between the habitus and its dispositions, on the one hand, and the constraints, demands and opportunities of the social field or market to which the habitus is appropriate or within which the actor is moving, on the other'. As such these practices are rooted in one's habitus and indicative of it. They arise from the conditions and processes which are neither totally unconscious or conscious and they are usually far from calculation or rational consideration since the actors know how to act based on their history. The practices only lose their instinctive nature and become rational when there is a mismatch between the habitus and the field, that is, when one finds oneself in a strange environment and when the social routine is disrupted. The unconscious nature of practice is fundamental to social life with all its complexity. It would be impossible for the actors to manoeuvre through it if it required a constant evaluation of the rules rather than these rules being taken for granted. Thus, through their habitus, the agents develop a practical sense, 'a feel for the game' which Bourdieu (1990a: 61) defines as

'the practical mastery of the logic or of the immanent necessity of a game– a mastery acquired by experience of the game, and one which works outside conscious control and discourse'.

Bourdieu believes that individuals do not tend to reflect upon and plan their practices and he conceptualises this as doxa. 'Doxic experience' refers to the situation where the internalized structure of the agent corresponds to that of objective structure which results in a sense of familiarity that subsequently phases out self-reflexivity and the questioning of reality (Jenkins, 2002).

#### **2.4.4 The location and assets of the social game– fields and capitals**

This brings us to the third element of Bourdieu's conceptual triad: field. Essentially, a field is the arena where agents struggle over resources to enhance or preserve their social locus. It is not to be understood as a geographical or institutional entity but as a structure of social relations and positioning. As Jenkins (2002: 85) points out, a field 'is also a system of forces which exist between these positions; a field is structured internally in terms of power relations. Positions stand in relationships of domination, subordination or equivalence to each other by virtue of the access they afford to the goods or resources (capital) which are at stake in the field'. Fields vary with regards to their assumed practices and rules and they both create and are created by the habitus (Jenkins, 2002). Bourdieu argued that habitus is structured by the field as it is 'the product of the embodiment of the immanent necessity of the field (or of a hierarchy of intersecting fields)' while at the same time 'habitus contributes to constituting the field as a meaningful world, a world endowed with sense or with value, in which it is worth investing one's energy' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 44). Individuals and institutions occupy different locations within a field, depending on their possession of capitals which are valued within that field and their position determines their situation (Emirbayer and Johnson, 2008, Jenkins, 2002). Individuals with a particular type of capital can be highly respected within one field and disregarded in another (Bottero, 2010). As such, the concept of capital is essential for understanding field and indeed for the functioning of the social world (Bourdieu, 1986). It enables individuals to gain profits and to further reproduce this capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu compares capital to 'aces in a game of cards' and defines it as resources which enable the agents to appropriate the goods which are at the heart of struggle within a given field (Bourdieu, 1990a: 3). He recognises three major types of capital: cultural capital, social capital and economic capital.

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For Bourdieu, the economic capital fundamentally defines other forms of capital in a way that these are only of high value if they ultimately enable the agents to access economic capital. As he asserts, ‘economic capital is at the root of all the other types of capital’ (Bourdieu, 1986: 54). Within the context of this thesis, economic capital exists symbolically in the sphere of aspiration, that is in what young Polish people are hoping to achieve professionally (and consequently–financially) in the future and how they use other forms of capital to pursue these ambitions. It also relates to the material means already possessed by Polish families, used to support educational and career aspirations (for instance by engaging tutors in preparation for GCSEs).

Cultural capital can be seen to be embodied, objectified and institutionalized. In its embodied form, cultural capital relates to deep-seated dispositions of the body and mentality (Bourdieu, 1986). It takes time to accumulate and it is usually transferred from parents to their children (Bourdieu, 1986). Objectified cultural capital refers to the possession of goods which are culturally valued within a given field, such as collections of art. Such goods can be gained materially through economic capital but the symbolic, meaningful possession, understanding and knowledge of how to use them is conditioned by embodied cultural capital. The institutionalized form is linked to institutional recognition of cultural capital, such as through academic qualifications. It allows an estimation of the value of the agents’ cultural capital in economic terms by connecting specific qualifications to expected monetary outcomes (Bourdieu, 1986, Walker, 2011).

That cultural capital can be challenging to define, is particularly evident since Bourdieu himself used alternate meanings for the term. He used it to indicate informal academic standards, class attributes, sources of social selection and as a power resource (Lamont and Lareau, 1988). The dominant indicator of cultural capital in social research has been linked to involvement in highbrow culture (Dumais, 2002, Roscigno and Ainsworth–Darnell, 1999, De Graaf et al., 2000). Lamont and Lareau



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(1988: 153) point out that the concept has also been conceptualised with relation to ‘educational attainment (Robinson and Garnier, 1985a), the symbolic mastery of practices (Martin and Szelenyi, 1987) and a capacity to perform tasks in culturally acceptable ways (Gouldner 1979)’. Lareau and Weininger (2003: 583) operationalized cultural capital as familial confidence in interactions with schools and their ability to ‘play the game’. Similarly Reay (1998, cited in Lareau and Weininger, 2003: 583) defined it as ‘confidence to assume the role of educational expert, educational knowledge, effectiveness in getting teachers to respond to complaints, and ability to compensate for perceived deficits in children’s schooling’. My research adopts a similar perspective, linking cultural capital to the migrants’ knowledge of the educational system, their ability to negotiate this system, their assertiveness in communication with schools and their sense of entitlement. This is herein referred to as accumulated cultural capital to indicate that this form of cultural capital is partially acquired after migration (in the form of knowledge and an understanding of the system) and to differentiate it from other forms of cultural capital such as engagement with highbrow culture or institutionalized educational credentials (which are also recognised as cultural capital in this thesis).

The concept of social capital is most prominently associated with three social scientists, namely Putnam, Coleman and Bourdieu. Putnam (2000) defines it as norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness benefiting the entire community by, for instance, lowering crime rates. As such he conceptualises it more as a communal resource, a view which is useful for studies in political science. In contrast, Coleman (1988) and Bourdieu (1986) focus on the resources which social capital can generate for individuals (Leonard, 2004). Bourdieu’s conceptualisation is the most convenient for the study of migrants. Both Putnam (2000) and Coleman (1988) emphasize continuity of social networks and argue that migration undermines social capital (Ryan et al., 2008b). This view does not allow for an exploration of how individuals form networks in new environments and what it is that influences their ability to do so.

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Furthermore, their view is somewhat simplistic, assuming that having high levels of social capital can alleviate economic problems (Ryan et al., 2008b). Whereas this may sometimes be the case, Bourdieu provides a much more sophisticated and critical framework for accessing the value of social capital and the migrants' ability to accumulate it, by linking it to other types of capital. Hence, the social capital is of high value if it enables an agent to accumulate other forms of capital, most notably economic (Wells, 2011, Morrow, 1999). This is usually achieved by connecting the agent to individuals who possess other forms of capital valued in a given field (Patulny and Svendsen, 2007). In the case of migrants, this often implies establishing networks with people outside their own ethnic group.

This brings us to the distinction between 'bridging' and 'bonding' social capital (Putnam, 2000). Putnam defines the former as networks which are 'outward looking and encompass people across diverse social cleavages' and the latter as 'inward looking [networks that] tend to reinforce exclusive identities and homogenous groups' (2000: 22). Bridging social capital may connect individuals of a different social class, ethnicity or economic position whereas bonding social capital exists between people who already share such characteristics. It is widely acknowledged that bonding social capital can be a source of emotional and practical support, ultimately allowing individuals to 'get by' (Briggs, 1998). However, it is bridging social capital that enables people to 'get ahead' (Briggs, 1998), access useful resources and achieve social mobility. Bridging social capital is often associated with 'weak ties', connecting diverse, more distant individuals and providing them 'with access to information and resources beyond those available in their own social circle' (Granovetter, 1983: 209). In contrast, 'strong ties' imply intimate, close relationships between friends or family (Granovetter, 1983). It has been recognised that in the absence of 'weak ties', bonding social capital can have detrimental effects on individuals, for instance by limiting their access to information and employment options. Putnam's distinction is a useful critique of the earlier 'dominant

celebratory view of social capital’ (Portes and Landolt, 1996: 21). Social capital as a concept has been successfully adopted in a number of studies of young people in the context of its impact on sexual behaviour (Crosby et al., 2003), the social positions of migrant and ethnic minority youth (Deuchar, 2011, Reynolds, 2013, Zontini, 2009, Wells, 2011), access to higher education (Holt, 2011) and employment (Vorhies et al., 2012, Lorenzini and Giugni, 2012), as well as its role in resolving alcohol and drug dependency (Yugo and Davidson, 2007, Winstanley et al., 2008, McPherson et al., 2013, Green et al., 2012). It has however been criticised for lacking conceptual clarity (Morrow, 1999, Patulny and Svendsen, 2007). Further it has been argued that many studies still do not differentiate between its bonding and bridging form and fail to clearly appraise it (Patulny and Svendsen, 2007). In this thesis, I adopt a Bourdieusian definition of social capital, while recognising Putnam’s distinction. The categories for assessing the bridging and bonding capital among Poles were based on ethnicity and social class. The parents and pupils were asked if they were involved in networks with other Poles, with non-Poles and people inside and outside their occupational circle. I also asked them what sort of support they could draw from these networks, for instance, emotional, informational or instrumental support (lending money, providing child-care etc.). In the educational field, having connections to those of a more powerful social position and to non-Poles is likely to open up access to other resources, involving linguistic, cultural, and ultimately economic capital.

#### **2.4.5 Explaining Acculturation: Berry and Bourdieu**

I have highlighted two theories which have much potential for analysing the educational aspirations and resources of immigrant groups. Berry provides us with a useful typology to make sense of migrants’ interactions with each other and the host society. However, while he recognises the importance of factors such as length of residence and education as an influence on acculturation pathways, his conceptual tools are largely categorical rather than explorative, and as such they

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cannot serve to perform an in-depth, qualitative analysis of the underlying processes causing variations in migrant strategies and the implications of these strategies. Bourdieu's theory of practice offers a major contribution in this respect. Habitus, as an empirical tool, helps to illuminate the ways in which migrants' background and personal and cultural histories influence their settlement and adjustment in the host country. It is useful for explaining why certain actors appear to cross the national and cultural boundaries with ease while others do not and why people in specific acculturation profiles have similar experiences and backgrounds. While Berry does not go so far as to explain this, Bourdieu offers the tools to explore the elements of individual histories which help or impede them from integrating with the native majority.

Rather than conceptualising academic ability as a fixed and exclusively psychological quality, Bourdieu recognises the significance of social background and personal history on an individual's sense of what is possible. Habitus emphasizes a level of continuity (rather than a randomly changing attitude to learning) while also acknowledging that identities are not fixed and are indeed subject to renegotiation in changing contexts. The theory of practice enabled me to account for how the past experiences influenced the dispositions of both the adult and adolescent participants while recognising that these are continually shaped by new experiences and encounters. As I will discuss in the analysis, migrant acculturation is very important for the ability to successfully position themselves in the educational field and Berry's categorisation and discussion of variables of impact was clearly reflected in my data. This framework enabled me to gain insight and understanding and to present my findings in a more comprehensive way than if I was only drawing on the concept of social capital. However, it is Bourdieu's theory of practice which enabled me to *explain* acculturation by gaining an in-depth understanding of how the individuals' habitus and possession of capitals impacts on their choice of different acculturation pathways and how this impacts on their access to various forms of capital.

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The concept of field and capitals helps to explore how belonging to different acculturation groups influences an individual position and access to useful resources which ultimately determine the ability to realise goals and aspirations. Bourdieu's theory also helps to understand why, for instance, migrant working-class pupils may have higher educational aspirations than their host counterparts. Migrant parents who are determined to improve their economic conditions are likely to influence the ambitions of their children. Furthermore, the unconscious and habitual nature of practices which only become rational and reflexive once an agent finds him or herself in an unfamiliar field helps to clarify why national and integrational profiles include very small proportions of newcomers. Migrants who are new to the host country usually have to learn a different set of cultural codes which requires consideration and calculation. The subsequent differentiation in acculturation trajectories, the fact that certain migrants are able to internalise these codes, invest in language learning and social networks outside their ethnic community while others remain within the ethnic profile regardless of the length of residence, can be understood with reference to their habitus and the different forms of capital which they possess. Further, different acculturation trajectories determine an agent's access to specific types of capitals which then yield various outcomes in the educational field. I argue that the two theories combined generate a useful conceptual framework for analysing what influences migrant acculturation, how it translates to educational aspiration and how it enables or restrains their ability to pursue it.

### **2.4.6 The theoretical approach to studying social class**

While selecting the sample I ensured its diversity with relation to social class, education, the length of residence in the UK and English language skills. This has enabled me to explore the relevance that these factors could have for my research questions. In line with my theoretical framework, I have adopted a Bourdieusian approach to social class and looked at cultural capital, taste and the use of the first language to

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make sense of the participants' background. This approach has been adopted in a number of other studies (Rye, 2011, Oliver and O'Reilly, 2010a, Skeggs, 2009b, Skeggs, 2009a) and it has been advocated by Outhwaite and Ray (2005) as appropriate for understanding social class within the context of post-communist countries. Rye (2011: 175) argues that

'Bourdieu's emphasis on cultural capital is fruitful as an analytical counterpart to the concept of economic capital. The economic foundation of class is important, and in its deeper sense may even be the defining aspect of class. In social practice, however, class expressed through processes associated with cultural capital has just as much influence on actors' action and their location in the class structure...'

Savage (2000: 107) argues that such an approach

'leads not to an emphasis on class as heroic collective agency, but towards class as implicit, as encoded in people's sense of self-worth and in their attitudes to and awareness of others– on how they carry themselves as individuals'.

Within the context of my study, the economic and professional indicators would not be an appropriate marker of social class for a number of reasons. The class differences were clearly noticeable in the sample but they were not expressed through economic position. The majority of my respondents shared the experience of economic disadvantage in Poland. The class system in Poland does not correspond to that found in England. The War followed by decades of communism has virtually removed the upper class intelligentsia and largely homogenised economic relationships (Rada-Ochrony-Pamięci-Walk-i-Męczeństwa, 2009, Wardzyńska, 2009). After the fall of communism in 1989, some pursued the opportunities that capitalism presented; however, the country's economy was in crisis, under the pressures of reconstruction (Szczygiel, 2009, Paczkowski, 2005). In the 1990s and

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2000s there was an increasing trend to enter higher education but large number of graduates, particularly those in the humanities and social sciences, found it difficult to find employment corresponding to their education and skills (GUS, 2008, PARP and CEiAPP, 2012). In the light of Polish history and the economic transformations of recent decades, we cannot really trace social class merely by looking at one's family background or current economic status. The contemporary Polish class system is a relatively new and dynamic phenomenon and it would be far more useful to consider it with reference to cultural capital, as is advocated by Gdula and Sadura (Gdula and Sadura, 2012) who researched the issue of social class in Poland. I found it very appropriate as an indicator of social differentiation. The disparities were evident on a cultural level and they fuelled conflicts and distance between Poles. Bottero (2010) asserts that a Bourdieusian approach to class and the concept of habitus enables us to understand its impact on identity and aspirations, which is relevant to my study.

I found that language codes (Bernstein, 1971) were the most immediate indicator of social background. Some respondents used elaborated codes, expressed themselves using complete sentences, sophisticated vocabulary and grammar constructions in Polish; whereas others who used restricted codes had a far more limited lexis, appeared more informal in their expression and occasionally used racist or homophobic language, assuming that I shared a similar perspective based on our common status as Polish migrants in the UK. The criteria of language codes proved to be well-integrated and overlapping with the other two, which provided me with good grounds for assessing the social background of the participants. In terms of the adolescent participants, in most of the cases their parents were interviewed so that I could establish their social background on this basis. However, in the case of the pupils whose parents did not agree to participate, I based my analysis on the information provided by the pupils with reference to their parents' cultural tastes and ways of spending their free time; and on the language codes learnt at home and used by the pupils in

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interviews. I did not consider the pupils' taste and ways of spending their free time as indicative of their social class since they tended to engage in popular culture and take up similar youth activities.



## **Chapter 3: Exploring the Lives of Young People through a Participatory Methodology**

When conducting fieldwork, there is an evident need to adopt a flexible and considerate approach. This is the more so when working with institutions as opposed to individuals alone. Designing methods, negotiating access to the schools and thinking through the ethical challenges of my research with young people took considerable time and effort. I was aware that I only had one chance to collect the data and to develop a good relationship with my respondents. I shall now discuss the approach, motivations and research methods. Subsequently, I will briefly discuss my own background and then consider my position in relation to the participants and discuss how it may have shaped the data collection. Finally, I will discuss the ethical issues which I came across while planning and conducting my research.

### **3.1 The approach**

Given the nature of the issues which my study focuses upon, a qualitative approach was most appropriate. My goal was to explore how migrants' educational aspirations are shaped and determined and how the nuances of these practices and orientations influence the ability to realise them. Quantitative methods of inquiry would not be appropriate for this. To gain an in-depth understanding of the issues, it was essential for me to recognise the perspectives of parents, teachers and pupils. I was interested in parents' aspirations for their children, and what resources they use to support their children in achieving the preferred educational outcomes. I looked at how parents' ambitions compare with the plans of the pupils and how these are reflected in the dynamics of decision making and negotiation in the family. These processes are important to consider, since they can influence children's aspirations and expose who plays the role of an educational expert– the

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child or the parent? The expertise of the teaching staff and first-hand experience of work with Polish pupils offered a wealth of information regarding Poles' academic performance, their English language skills and the level of integration with other peers and the school overall. The accounts of the school staff were also essential for gaining a picture of the parents' interaction and communication with the school. Finally, recognising the accounts of young people was essential to the research. Despite a notable interest in the experiences and academic performance of Polish pupils in British schools, studies to date, as noted in chapter 2, have tended to prioritise the voices of adult migrants and teachers (Ryan et al, 2010, Sales et al, 2008). Very few have engaged in fieldwork directly with the pupils (Moskal, 2010) and there are virtually no studies drawing on data collected with young Poles in the UK. Although it is recognised that child's education plays a vital role in a family's migration decisions (Ryan and Sales, 2011), little is known about the extent to which young Poles exercise agency in educational choices. Children and young people are not only capable of active involvement in the process of determining their future; they can take the dominant role and act as educational experts.

Throughout the process of planning my fieldwork an important objective was to adopt a methodological approach that would reflect the pupils as legitimate social actors, who have a level of agency but who also need to face the limitations of social structure. I chose to use participatory methods. Recognising the participants as 'experts in their lives' (Mason and Danby, 2011: 185) is very important in research with young people. I was confident that making the students feel that their suggestions and opinions were heard and appreciated, and actively involving them in the making of the study would yield better quality data than a study based on a rigid design where the participants simply provide the researcher with answers to questions (Schubotz, 2012, Hill et al., 1996). Each stage of the study was discussed with the participants and I was always open to feedback and ready to change my focus to ensure it was in tune with pupils' perspectives and priorities. As the students were involved in

determining the direction of the research and the methods used, the study retained its participatory character. At the same time, I would acknowledge that an entirely equal relationship between the researcher and the participant is not possible. This will be discussed in the section on a researcher's positionality (section 3.4).

## 3.2 Methods

The majority of the research, with the exception of stage 1, focused on one site– an all-boys Catholic secondary school in the South of England, herein referred to as Newman. The school is relatively small, with 480 pupils in September 2011. According to Ofsted's data from 2011 the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic background and those who speak English as a second language is higher than the national average. The inspection report is not referenced here as it would lead to the school's identification. In the past 6 years Polish pupils became the largest minority, with numbers exceeding 60. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals and the percentage of pupils with special educational needs are both close to the national average. The school was rated as Good during the Ofsted 2011 inspection and 58% of pupils achieved 5 or more A\*–C grades in Key Stage 4, in 2010.

The choice of a Catholic school is not random. Poland is a Catholic country and there is evidence that Catholic schools are a popular choice among Polish parents (Ryan, 2010). One of my motivations for the choice of such a site was that it would provide me with a bigger sample and more data. I had to be realistic and negotiate the best solution since schools tend to have a busy schedule. After contacting all the city schools, I decided that involving just one Catholic school where Polish pupils were the largest minority, would provide me with rich data. Further, it gave me a chance to investigate the strength of social networks between Polish pupils and their parents and evaluate how these are created within the school. Finally, I was interested in what

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motivates Poles to choose a Catholic school: whether it is an element of familiarity in a foreign country; an expectation that it will stress Catholic values; or something to do with discipline and the reputation of such schools. I thought that this might tell me something about the Polish attitude to and expectations of the educational system. At the same time I recognise that the faith and single sex status are particular features which shape the functioning of the school, teacher–pupil relationships, as well as its peer relationships.

Miss Pérez– the teacher who was my initial point of contact with the school– played an important role as a gate–keeper and collaborator. It was with her that I negotiated the access to the school. She introduced me to the Polish pupils and she accompanied me in the classroom during the first meeting, when I explained the purposes of the study. Most importantly, Miss Pérez played a crucial role in helping me select the sample. Ensuring a variety of individuals was very important and therefore the sample was purposively chosen. The characteristics which were taken into account while picking the sample included academic achievement, socio–economic background, length of residence in the UK, and family situation (lone–parent and two–parent families). Due to privacy issues, Miss Pérez was not able to reveal this sort of information to me. We discussed what characteristics were important to me and she created a list of prospective participants. The number of those who could take part was influenced by the constraints of the school timetable. Twenty one participants were selected and I arranged to meet them before the fieldwork began to explain what was involved, answer any questions and gain their formal consent. Since the pupils were under the age of 16 the consent forms were also distributed to the parents. One student did not gain parental consent and two refused participation, which left the total number at 18. Miss Pérez’s input has been very significant for shaping my data. Before meeting the participants I was concerned that the teacher would be tempted to select only the high–achieving pupils who would represent the school in the best light. However, I think I can confidently say that this has not been

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the case and the sample selected was indeed highly diversified in terms of its characteristics. It should be acknowledged that she provided me with a wealth of information on young Poles, both during an audio recorded interview and during our informal discussions.

The data collection process, consisting of three stages, took place between May 2011 and June 2012. Below I discuss each of the stages and present the research methods.

### **3.2.1 Stage 1: Pilot Stage**

Stage 1, which was a pilot study, took place a few months earlier than stage 2 and 3 and was extremely helpful for defining the direction of my study, identifying emerging issues and preparing the ground for fieldwork with parents and pupils. It consisted of semi-structured interviews conducted in five schools, including one primary school, two secondary schools and two Sixth Form colleges. The sample included the school which later became the main research site. I interviewed Polish teaching assistants and teachers who worked directly with young Poles. I also spoke to a Polish EMAS co-ordinator who visits schools in the South to support newly arrived Polish pupils. In addition, I spoke to Peter, a key informant who runs a local charity organisation helping migrants from Eastern and Central Europe to settle down. The primary objective here was to explore the teachers' perspectives on the conduct, performance in, and attitude to education among Poles. I also wanted to explore the schools' perceptions regarding communication with Polish parents, and their involvement in their children's education. Interviews with teachers from the five schools have been very useful but in the analytical chapter I draw only on the quotes from staff working at the research site and the two key informants, the EMAS co-ordinator and Peter, in order not to confuse the data.

### 3.2.2 Stage 2

This part of the fieldwork took place at the chosen research site. Firstly, 67 questionnaires were distributed among students in years 8, 9, 10 and 11. These consisted of two parts: one for the pupils to complete, and one for their parents. To facilitate choice, the questionnaires were printed in both English and Polish versions. They are attached as Appendices M (page 311) and N (page 319). The response rate was 100% from the pupils and 46% amongst the parents. The primary aim of the survey was to gather background information on English language skills, to ascertain the duration of their time in the UK and to explore their educational experiences in Poland. I used this information during my negotiations with Miss Pérez, to form a sample which reflected the school's population.

The main part of stage 2 began in mid-February 2012 and finished four weeks later. After negotiations with the school, it was agreed that I would be working with four groups of pupils from years 9 and 10, meeting each group once a week, so that the work was divided into four sessions. Unfortunately I was unable to work with year 11 pupils due to their busy timetable. I decided that each of the groups should have no more than 5 pupils, being concerned that working with bigger cohorts would compromise the quality of the research. The primary objective was to explore the complexity of pupils' views and experiences, and due to time constraints this would have been extremely challenging in large groups where I could not dedicate as much attention to individuals and where the pupils would find it harder to voice their opinions. This worked perfectly to accommodate the eighteen students who agreed to participate and enabled me to pay attention to every participant.

The first session involved semi-structured group interviews. These interviews focused primarily on the pupils' perceptions of the school, the available support for career guidance, their preparation for GCSEs, and the pupils' views on the career opportunities available to them in

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Britain. The objective was to explore the views of people who share a similar position and to investigate if this commonality induced group solidarity. The questions were not of a sensitive or personal nature though some students chose to reveal how emotional the experience of migration had been for them. A lively group discussion can illuminate unforeseen aspects of the topic (Frey and Fontana, 1991). I wanted to ensure that the students had an opportunity to lead the discussion into areas which they found salient and into areas I may not have anticipated. The group interviews also served as an 'ice-breaker'. Given the short time I had to get to know the pupils, I can now assert that I would not have been able to build such a positive rapport without first opening up with a group discussion. The company of friends and peers was essential for creating a comfortable environment for pupils to engage and open up.

In the following two sessions the pupils worked on a 'Wall of Life' art project. They were provided with a long sheet of paper illustrating a wall and asked to divide it into three parts focusing on their past, present and future. I asked the pupils to begin their story by illustrating what they perceived as the most important people and events that had influenced their lives. The next section focused on how they saw themselves in the present. Finally, the last section was dedicated to pupils' aspirations for future with a condition that their scenarios were realistic. The aim was to find out what were their 'imagined futures' (Roberts, 2013, Thompson and Holland, 2002) and how were they connected to their perceptions of men's role in the domestic environment. This method was borrowed from Rassool (2004), who used a 'river of life' in her research on race and gender issues amongst immigrant pupils in an inner-city comprehensive. She argues that the method enables the participants to construct a 'narrative of the self' (Giddens, 1999, cited in Rassool, 2004: 234) and that it facilitates an insight into young people's 'personal and cultural histories' (2004: 235). The task involves an assessment of the past and projection into the future and it puts the participants in the centre as experts in their own

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lives and ‘agents of personal change’ (2004: 235). This chimed with my approach as I wanted to highlight the pupils’ agency in making educational and career choices. Visual methods, including artwork and photography, have been widely applied in research with children and young people to facilitate participant-led research (Allen, 2008, Young and Barrett, 2001, Darbyshire et al., 2005, Wells, 2011, White and Green, 2012, Schaefer, 2012). The method was useful because it helped me to put the pupils’ educational aspirations into their specific, socio-cultural context.

To ensure the participants found the task enjoyable and engaging I offered them a choice of three forms of expression; collage, drawing or writing. The majority chose to create collages; two pupils made drawings and three opted for writing. We discussed the projects during the final session when the pupils explained what appeared on their wall and why. Initially, I was slightly apprehensive that the method would not be so appropriate for the respondents given their age and gender but the artworks turned out to be very revealing. The project has provided me with a wealth of interesting data and it offered an insight into the ways that pupils reflect on the dynamic of their goals, their strengths and experience.

#### **3.2.3 Stage 3**

The final stage of the fieldwork took part in participants’ homes involving individual in-depth interviews with Polish parents and their children. The sample was restricted to the school I have been working with and to Year 9, 10 and 11 pupils. Involving families from the three different year groups enabled me to look at Poles’ aspiration, access and engagement at different points in time. 11 families were recruited. The process was challenging due to the small size of the study population, the parents’ limited time resources and participatory hesitancy. All the families received £20 vouchers in gratitude for their time involvement. I recruited the parents through letters attached to the questionnaires,



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through the pupils who took part in the study, and through snow-balling.

Despite the small sample size, the group was highly diverse in terms of marital status, education, occupation, English language proficiency and the child's school performance. The details are illustrated in Table 2 (page 79). The aim of the interviews with the parents was to establish what expectations they had of their children and whether these were culturally influenced, and the degree of confidence they felt about their understanding of the educational system and their contacts with the school. I also wanted to find out if they adopted particular strategies to achieve a preferred educational outcome, and to what extent they supported their child's schooling. Interviews with pupils served to explore their feelings about the future; motivations which drive their educational choices; and factors which they take into consideration while making their plans. Finally, I wanted to explore the various aspects of peer relationships and their impact on the boys' aspirations.

Stage 3 of the data collection has been extremely important for addressing the second research question. The interviews proved to be an appropriate tool for exploring the complexities of educational decisions and challenges to Poles' engagement and agency in schooling.

All of the Polish participants (both during stage 2 and 3) chose to communicate with me in their mother tongue, although they would borrow some English words when it was more convenient. I was happy to use English should they prefer to, but given their relatively short-term residence in England, it appeared natural that they preferred using their mother-tongue in conversation with their co-national.

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Participant	Place of residence in Poland <sup>1</sup>	Relation to child	Relationship status	Education	Partner's education	Proficiency in English <sup>2</sup>	Partner's proficiency	Social Networks <sup>3</sup>	Occupation in Poland	Current occupation	Length of residence in the UK
1 Sylwia	City	Mother	Married	Polish matura <sup>4</sup> (chemistry)	Vocational qualification	Communicative	Communicative	Limited (mostly Poles)	Laboratory worker; factory worker	Housekeeping in a hotel	2004
2 Grazyna	City	Mother	Single	Polish matura+ 2.5 years of complementary occupational training (accountancy)	-	Unable to communicate	-	Very scarce (only Poles)	Accountant at public insurance; long-term unemployed	Cleaner (self-employed)	2010
3 Kamila	Town	Mother	Married	Vocational qualification (dressmaking)	Vocational qualification (electro-mechanic)	Fluent	Communicative	Well-developed (mostly Poles)	Dress-maker	Housewife	2007
4 Monika	Village	Mother	Married	Vocational qualification (dressmaking)	Vocational qualification (confectioner)	Unable to communicate	Unable to communicate	Very scarce (only Poles)	Running own business	Cleaner	2011
5 Kasia	City	Mother	Married	Vocational qualification (trade)	Vocational qualification	Communicative	Communicative	Well-developed (mostly Poles)	Running own business; shop-assistant	Cleaner (supervisor)	2007
6 Ania	City	Mother	Divorced (father lives in the UK)	Master degree (arts)	Vocational qualification	Fluent	Communicative	Well-developed (mixed, avoids Poles)	Did not work	Line manager at a major chain retailer	2006
7 Aniela	Village	Mother	Married	Master degree (theology)	Vocational qualification	Unable to communicate (learned English a long time ago and forgot)	Unable to communicate in English, works in Germany	Very scarce (prefers to spend time with family)	Primary school teachers; running own business	Cleaner	2011
8 Paulina	City	Grandmother	Single	Vocational qualification (dressmaking)	-	Unable to communicate	-	Very scarce (only Poles)	Dress maker	Currently unemployed (seeking a job)	2007
9 Patrycja	City	Mother	Married	Master degree (management)	Master degree (accountancy)	Fluent	Fluent	Limited networks (prefers to spend time with family)	Resources manager at a private language school	Teaching assistant in a primary school	2004
10 Tomasz	Town	Father	Married	Vocational qualification (plumbing)	Bachelor degree (French)	Fluent	Communicative	Limited (mixed)	Plumber	Plumber	2008
11 Przemek	City	Father	Married	Polish matura	Polish matura	Communicative	Communicative	Well-developed (mostly other migrant from the same city in Poland)	Transport/deliveries	Transport/deliveries	2004

**Table 2** Parent participants' characteristics

- 1) The differentiation between village/town/city is based on the Polish definition of the places quoted by respondents. The status is defined by administrative decrees.
- 2) and 3) The category is based on participants' self-assessment.
- 4) Matura is a Polish equivalent of the A-levels. It is required to enter Higher Education

### **3.3 Researcher's migration biography**

This short biography will inform the following subsection which explores issues of positionality and my relationship with the respondents.

I was born in southern Poland in 1987. I was baptised in a Catholic Church but I am not practising any faith. I would describe my background as working-class and my family's financial situation as average for Polish standards. I spent the first 18 years of my life living in a block of flats, in a small town of Czeladź, which has just under 35 000 inhabitants. Despite its size, the town is located in an industrial conurbation and is surrounded by a number of larger, economically and historically significant Polish cities. As such, I never felt that my study opportunities, future options or access to cultural events were limited.

I went through state education and learned English from a young age at school and during extra tuition. At the age of 14 I attended a summer language camp where I met an English native-speaker with whom I corresponded for the following four years. She then invited me to visit England before I began the final year of college. This was in 2005, at the time when the Polish public recognised that a huge number of people were moving to the UK. After my first exciting visit to England I decided to leave Poland. I stayed in my family home for one more year to finish school and take the Polish equivalent of A-levels, arriving in England in May 2006.

My experiences have been quite unique as from the very start I found a source of information and support from native English people, rather than the Polish community. My English friend, together with her husband, offered to accommodate me for the first few weeks. They helped me find a house and provided me with a range of practical information on anything from finding employment to applying for a place at the university and getting a student loan. I quickly found a catering job and moved into a house shared with English and Canadian

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people. At this point I did not seek the company of other Poles. Communicating in English, despite studying it for years, was of course very challenging and highly frustrating at times but I wanted to practice it as much as possible to eliminate the language barrier. A couple of months after my arrival in the UK I was offered a place at the University and accepted it. I carried on working part-time and started a relationship with a non-Polish speaker. After finishing my undergraduate studies I enrolled for a Masters degree at the same University, where I later received a scholarship to do a PhD.

In some ways my migration experience differs from those of many other Poles. I did not have pre-established Polish networks in the UK and I relied largely on the support and information of English people. I never lived in a house where Poles were the majority and most of my social networks with Polish people consisted of other students. I could communicate in English rather well when I first arrived which allowed me to be quite independent. I came to England to experience something new; meet people from different countries; and to become financially independent of my family. There was also the thought that, in the long-term, the UK would offer greater opportunities for work, travel and developing my hobbies. I have never sent remittances back to Poland and do not have dependants in the UK.

I was always open about my experiences with the respondents when they asked about it. My social background, age and education are all likely to have influenced my relationship with the participants. I will now move on to the consideration of how my position shaped the rapport between us.

### **3.4 Researcher's positionality**

The impact of a researcher belonging to a studied group has been debated for decades, particularly in relation to studying minorities. Initially, the literature tended to emphasize a strong polarity between the status of the insider and outsider, focusing on the particular advantages and drawbacks of the two. Contemporary literature replaced this polarisation with the idea of positionality, based on the argument that 'all cultures (including subcultures) are characterised by internal variation' (Aguilar, 1981: 25). It is now widely acknowledged that the matter of commonality and belonging to a group is complex and multidimensional, implicating gender, race, age, sexual orientation and class, to name a few. A number of studies exemplify how researchers seemingly carrying an insider status based on ethnicity, found themselves to be considered outsiders on other levels, such as educational status (Villenas, 1996, Johnson-Bailey, 1999, Mullings, 1999). As a Polish, female doctoral student in my 20s, I must reflect on how my characteristics have influenced the dynamic of data collection and potentially, the participants' responses.

#### **3.4.1 Nationality**

From my perspective, the factor that proved the most influential in my relationship with the participants has been my nationality. Merriam et al (2010: 407) argue that 'when interviewing 'away from home', the mutually perceived homogeneity can create a sense of community which can enhance trust and openness throughout the research process'. I found that a shared cultural background and my status as a Polish immigrant in the UK, helped to break the ice and establish good rapport with the majority of the pupils fairly quickly. Prior to my first visit I was aware that as a stranger and as a woman, I would find it challenging to motivate the boys to share their personal experiences and views with me. However my nationality seemed to mitigate this perceived distance

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and almost immediately introduced a degree of openness to the exchange.

On many occasions the pupils asked me questions about my own background such as where I lived in Poland, why did I move or how did I find my first months in the new country. I was honest with them and in this way the group interviews took on a form of mutual exchange which would not be possible in this context if I were not a migrant myself. I believe that this made the participants more inclined to share their own experiences. Similar observations were made by Bhopal (2010) when she conducted research with Asian women. Furthermore, even though the majority of the pupils could communicate in English, my ability to speak Polish was certainly beneficial for facilitating a more meaningful dialogue and enabling the participants to express themselves fully. Pavlenko's (2005) work illustrates that speaking about emotions in the second language can be particularly challenging, even for those who are fluent. In addition, using the mother tongue at school during lesson time, when the pupils were normally expected to speak English, evidently made the participation more attractive and generated a lot of curiosity and enthusiasm about the research. As a consequence, the access and recruitment were largely simplified. This was not the case with the parents, who generally indicated much less interest in the study. Similar remarks were made by Bhopal (2010) and Phoenix (1994, cited in Bhopal, 2010) who conducted research among other minority groups. However, my fluency in Polish enabled me to draw on a differentiated sample of parents and access those who could not speak English. This was important since those who lack English language proficiency were likely to experience additional challenges to their communications with the school and an involvement with their children's education.

Migrant status and shared cultural background contributed to establishing the rapport. In the majority of interviews, the parents appeared to assume that there was a level of understanding between us

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based on the fact that we were both Polish migrants. This was especially evident when we were discussing the parents' perceptions of life in the UK and in Poland, as well as their views on other Polish migrants. There was also an expectation that I was aware of the reality of life in Poland and it is perhaps for this reason that the interviewees were generally quite open about their past and their reasons for leaving. Many interviewees would use the word 'us' to refer to themselves and me as members of the same group. Sometimes this was problematic because some parents seemed to assume that as adult migrants from Poland, we must have very similar experiences and perspectives and therefore some things could just go unsaid. To address this on the spot I asked them further questions so as to clarify their arguments and ensure that I understood them. I was very attentive during the conversations to pick up issues which were important but which parents would perhaps consider too obvious to discuss with another Pole. Finally, I observed that some of the interviewees attempted to find out what 'kind of Pole' I was, for instance with regards to my views on England or other Polish migrants. I was honest about my perspectives, while articulating them respectfully so as not to offend anyone. I tried to stress the elements of my identity which I shared with the respondents. Mullings (1999) advocated this strategy as a way of making participants more comfortable and open. Quite often the interviews would turn into a discussion, as parents asked me questions about my background. Thanks to exchanges like this the interviews felt more like a natural conversation which made the respondents more relaxed and comfortable.

### 3.4.2 Gender, Age and Education

Prior to the start of the fieldwork I was anticipating that, given that my research was based in an all-boys school, my gender would play an important role in shaping my relationship with participants. I expected that the pupils would hesitate to reveal some of their experiences and views, particularly if these were gender-specific. It is very likely that they

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chose not to share certain aspects of their masculine relationships and experiences with me, because of my gender. On the other hand, particularly in individual interviews, a number of pupils were talking about their emotions and feelings and it could be that they found it easier to speak about such issues with a woman. Gender certainly shaped the dynamic of our co-operation but it seemed to do so in different ways, depending on the individuals.

Initially, I noticed that some pupils tried to impress me. This could be part of a normal peer dynamic, when confronted with a stranger and especially a female stranger. During the second session the attempts to impress were much less evident and the pupils were acting in a more relaxed way. However, at times I felt that the pupils were objectifying me based on my status as a young female working in an all-boys school. This was evident during the first two sessions when for instance, one of the respondents joked that he would like to live with me in the future. Pascoe (2005) had similar experiences in her fieldwork with adolescent males. Whereas I was careful not to encourage it, I anticipated that this was an aspect of young males' performative identity and an unavoidable element of the dynamic. Within this context, the participants were in a position of relative power, particularly since they were in the majority. The sexualisation seemed much less evident after the first two meetings as the pupils got used to me and began accepting me as a researcher writing about their lives.

Disparity of age between the pupils and I was not a barrier and I believe it made it slightly easier to establish a positive rapport. I did not pretend to be younger than I am nor put myself into the participants' shoes and bond with them on the basis of my school experiences. As Heath et al (2009: 46) argue 'merely by virtue of having once been young themselves, adult researchers cannot claim any privileged insight into the nature of what it is to be young today'. I recognised that their experiences were very different from my own but I was quite comfortable with their language, the technologies they used and the



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music they listened to. When I introduced myself I told the pupils that they could address me by my first name. Despite this they chose to address me as 'miss', 'miss Daria' or 'miss Polish'. My goal was to establish as much of an equal relationship as possible. The position of a researcher working with young people can be quite complicated on these grounds, as Haudrup Christensen (2004) points out. Even though the format of our meetings was more relaxed than a typical lesson, the pupils had a clear expectation that I would take control whenever the behaviour of the group was thwarting effective communication. Therefore, even though my position was different from that of the teacher, I sometimes had to draw on a teacher-like authority. At the same time, it should be acknowledged that power relations in the interview process are very complex and it should not be assumed that the researcher is always the one who dominates. As Bhopal (2010) argues, participants have power too which they can exercise, for instance, by controlling what they share and choosing to keep certain information to themselves. I also found that the location of the research has influenced power relationships in favour of the pupils. They were familiar and comfortable within the school space, they knew the staff and they had knowledge about organisational issues, such as the bell times. On many occasions, they would lead me through the maze of school corridors or tell me where to find a particular teacher or resources. Furthermore, they were knowledgeable about the reality of British secondary education which I was interested in. By sharing this knowledge with me they took on the role of experts and in this context, the power was on their side.

Age did not seem to influence the dynamic of the parents' interviews in any significant way. As for gender, eight out of eleven parent of interviewees were female. In common with the findings of British researchers, this reflects more involvement with schooling amongst Polish mothers compared to Polish fathers. They tended to be better informed about schooling than their male partners. I reflected on my position as I was transcribing the interviews after each meeting and I did

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not find gender to provide any basis for division or solidarity, or to influence respondents' in any apparent way. My educational status, conversely, has proven to have had an impact on the interviewer–respondent relationship when I have interviewed adult Poles in past projects. Whereas I had to inform the participants that the research was part of my PhD, I did not return to the subject unless it was prompted by the interviewees. At the beginning of the interviews, some respondents seemed slightly anxious about being recorded but this always disappeared as the discussion progressed. One of the questions focused on the participants and their partners' qualifications. It was at this stage that I noticed that some parents felt the need to explain that their vocational courses involved a great deal of hard work and to justify why perhaps they did not go to university. I intentionally left this question till the end so that it would not impact on the interview dynamic. Similar observations were made by Merriam et al (2010), who discuss the graduate work of Youngwha Kee and Mingh-Yeh Lee (co-authors of Merriam's et al article) among Chinese–Taiwanese migrants in the US. Throughout the process I remained alert and reflective and I made all efforts to ensure that the participants were aware that I was genuinely interested in their views rather than only making judgements. My educational status did not appear to put any pressure on the pupils, as they were still in full-time education and had yet to exercise their further educational options.

Coming from a similar cultural background and sharing migrant status established rapport, but on the other hand, my gender, age and educational status inevitably distanced me from the participants' positions. Positionality as well as power negotiation are a natural element in all interactions. Making field notes and transcribing the interviews promptly enabled me to reflect on my position in relation to the participants and to consider how it shaped the dynamic of our communication. I was thus able to see what could be improved (for instance the phrasing or ordering of the questions) to create a comfortable atmosphere in which the participants would happily share

their experiences. The field notes were also useful for parts of the analysis as they provided me with a fuller picture of the respondents' background and taste. I was aware that the analysis is influenced by the fact I share nationality and cultural background with my respondents . While analysing the data, I was careful to avoid forming assumptions and hasty judgements. At the same time, having the shared background and experience of migration provided me with an understanding of certain cultural nuances which I could otherwise have missed.

### **3.5 What did the participants gain from the research?**

It would be wrong to assume that the research process was productive for the researcher alone. The respondents also benefited from taking part in the study. Many parents and pupils appeared to be pleased that their perspectives would be heard and represented and that someone considered them important. It was visible, for instance, when some parents discussed their perceptions of schooling in Britain compared to Poland. Even though the parents knew that this was not the focus of my study as such, it was clearly an important issue for them.

I observed a similar case with the pupils. This was especially pronounced in the group interviews, when they spoke about their relationships with teachers and other peers; the things they liked and disliked about school and their concerns regarding exams and college. Furthermore, it was clear that spending time in a friendly atmosphere and being able to speak Polish was a rewarding experience for the pupils who often asked me if we could extend the session by an hour. There was also the 'feel good' factor as some pupils responded very positively to my encouragement during the art project. For instance, after seeing his short essay, I told one of the pupils that he was a gifted writer and that he should keep up the good work. Later his mother told me that he came home and started to work on short stories.

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Another benefit for the participants, particularly the parents, was an opportunity to get practical information and advice from me. I was often asked about my experiences of studying at a British university or living in particular areas of the city. There were a couple of cases where respondents asked me for advice regarding employment and legal issues but as I was not able to help, I told them about a local organisation providing free consultations in Polish. Sometimes, just the opportunity for social contact in one's mother tongue seemed to be important. Grazyna, a single mother who lived in a shared house, in one room with her son, told me after the interview as she saw me getting ready to leave: 'oh, but don't go yet! Please have a cup of tea, we don't have many visitors here... and it's always nice to chat to someone'. Finally, in terms of the benefits for the school, we agreed that I would provide a summary of my findings. Miss Pérez, as the school representative, was very enthusiastic about the school's participation, telling me she did not have many opportunities to involve her students in such projects. I believe that the process of data collection, like many human interactions, was very much a process of exchange and that both the researcher and the participants gained something from the study.

### **3.6 Ethical Issues**

Given that my research was formed of three stages, involving a variety of methods and some of the respondents were under the age of 16, the study required a careful consideration of the ethical concerns and strategies for addressing these. This subsection will discuss the main issues, such as gaining access and informed consent, preserving the anonymity of the participants, protecting their well-being and ensuring the researcher's safety. For a more detailed consideration and copies of the questionnaire and interview questions see Appendices G (page 277), H (page 283), I (page 293), L (page 306).

### **3.6.1 Gaining access and informed consent**

Schools participating in stage 1 of the fieldwork were invited via letter, which included the details of the study and conditions of participation. There were two versions of the letters: one for the Principals (who were asked permission for the schools participation); and one for the teachers (who were invited to take part in an interview). I visited the schools which replied to me and met with the principals or other members of staff who were assigned to liaise with me. During these first meetings I provided further information on the study, answered questions and negotiated the conditions of my access. This involved arranging an interview with one or two members of staff in each of the schools, within the school premises.

Stage 2 involved the pupils and was therefore more complex. The Principal of Newman chose Miss Pérez to collaborate with me and she kept him informed throughout the process. Prior to the start of the fieldwork we met three times to negotiate the access and discuss the conditions of participation (we discussed in detail which activities the pupils would undertake; we agreed on the times and rooms to be used for our meetings and we negotiated the sample characteristics). We also arranged for a CRB check. I met the pupils with Miss Pérez's supervision, I distributed surveys and all of the pupils seemed happy to fill them in. I then met with the selected sample of students to begin the main part of the fieldwork, which consisted of four sessions incorporating art activities and group interviews.

When conducting the research with parents, I met them in their own homes and at a time of their own choosing.

I have tried to ensure that all the participants were able to make an informed judgement before giving consent. All of the letters sent to schools in Stage 1 included information on the study, its aims and the conditions of participation. In both Stage 1 and 2 the principals (or staff designated by them) and the interviewed teachers signed consent forms

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and they were verbally briefed about the study and encouraged to ask questions. In Stage 2, which focused on Newman, Miss Pérez took copies of all the documents (including the questionnaires) for the school record. All the pupils who took part in the survey received a verbal explanation of the study and their role as participants, as well as written information to take home and share with their parents. They had an opportunity to ask questions and the information for their parents included contact details for me and my primary supervisor. Further, those who took part in group interviews and art activities received consent forms for their parents to sign. These listed all the activities involved (see Appendix F, page 274). Only those who returned both forms were able to participate. Finally, the parents and young people taking part in individual interviews received information sheets and consent forms. I ensured that all of the respondents were aware of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. I also provided them with in-depth information and was always willing to address any questions or concerns. As such, I am confident that those involved were indeed able to provide informed consent.

#### **3.6.2 Anonymity**

One of the major ethical issues was to ensure the anonymity of the participants and institutions. The names of all schools and individuals, including those mentioned by my respondents in their stories, have been changed. I decided not to reveal the name of the town where my research was conducted as this could have identified those involved in the study. Any references to specific landmarks or places have been extracted from the quotes. I also made efforts to minimise the risk of internal identification by avoiding the quotes that would clearly reveal the identity of pupil participants to others attending the same school. Preserving privacy and anonymity can be challenging during group interviews where a members identity cannot be disguised. The pupils were informed that they did not have to reveal aspects of their lives which they did not feel comfortable sharing in a group context. I also

asked the students to respect each other's privacy and to refrain from discussing details with people from outside the group.

Finally, transcripts of all interviews, pupils' artwork and details of the research site, all the supporting documents and my fieldwork diary have been stored securely in a locked cupboard at the university.

### **3.6.3 Emotional well-being and participants' safety**

Although my research does not focus on sensitive issues I anticipated that some of the themes discussed in the interviews could be difficult for the respondents. The teachers were asked to describe some of their work experiences and reflect upon them. I was aware that this could involve discussing emotional and stressful situations which could potentially cause discomfort. I ensured that the interviewees knew of their right to refuse to answer questions and I was ready to terminate the interview without suggesting re-arranging it if the participants became distressed. Additionally, prior to the interviews I asked my key contacts for details of a school counsellor or other person who could provide emotional support. All of the teachers appeared comfortable throughout the interviews and no emotionally difficult situations arose.

The risk of touching upon sensitive and personal issues was higher in the interviews with parents. This could include for instance, their reasons for moving to the UK or their current socio-economic position. I remained alert to the respondents' reactions to my questions and also their composure as they told me their stories. In the rare situations when I felt that the interviewee was finding it difficult to talk, I offered to change the subject. In most cases, the respondents continued their story. I did not find anyone who experienced any adverse emotional reactions during the interviews.

Similarly, individual interviews with the pupils did not appear to be emotionally challenging. Those who worked with me at the school were generally more confident to discuss their experiences than those for

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whom I was still a stranger. It was clear that when the young participants did not feel like talking about something they simply did not or they just provided me with a very short answer. There were a few incidences when the young respondents did not want to talk about their first weeks at a new school and one of them avoided talking about bullying incidents which his mother had told me about. When I felt that the young participants were reluctant to speak about something, I did not push them to do so. The group discussions were slightly more challenging because I had to take on the role of moderator and ensure that the pupils respected each other, avoiding upsetting confrontations. There were indeed situations where the pupils made fun of each other or when they tried to ridicule each other in front of me. I would always stop this by confronting them, changing the subject or telling the pupils to change their seats. There was one instance, when a pupil kept throwing pencils at his classmate and I asked him to sit at a different table which was enough to stop his behaviour. It is reasonable to say that making fun of each other is a normal element of school interaction. At no point did I observe any aggressive behaviour or bullying and the atmosphere during our meetings was friendly and relaxed. As such, none of the pupils appeared to experience any emotional discomfort.

In terms of the safety of the respondents, stage 1 and 2 of the fieldwork took part in school premises. A receptionist and a member of staff were always informed of the time and location of our meetings. I was informed where to go in case any problems emerged or there was an emergency. During stage 3, which took part in the participants' home, there was always a parent present at home during the interviews. As such, the risks have been kept to the minimum.

#### **3.6.4 The researcher's safety**

To ensure my own safety at school, I was informed where to go and who to contact if the behaviour of the pupils became too challenging. This was not the case. Furthermore, I always told a friend where I was going



and what time I should be back when I was going to a school and to the participants' homes.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

All interviews were transcribed in their original languages. The passages from the interviews in Polish quoted in my thesis were translated so as to represent the participants' message, content and style as closely as possible. I recognise that the person interpreting the data unavoidably shapes its meaning (Armstrong et al, 1997, cited in Bhopal, 2001). Whereas I acknowledged this from the beginning, it was my intention to ensure that my interpretation reflected the participants' perspectives and problems. Because ideas communicated through art forms can be ambiguous, I asked the pupils to talk me through their projects, explain why they chose to put specific pictures on their collages and what these signified. During the discussion, I asked a number of tangential questions to contextualise the work. With the pupils' consent this was recorded and later transcribed and analysed in a way similar to the interview transcripts.

When I identified the research questions and began designing the study, I did not have a specific conceptual framework in mind. I was aware of a number of themes which could be relevant to my research (these included, for instance, the impact of masculinity, social class, language fluency, and length of residence), so I ensured that the interview questions allowed me to explore these. Stage 1 of the study enabled me to establish some of these early themes. However, throughout the process of data collection, I wanted to keep an open mind and 'let the data speak for itself' (Gould, 1981). I carefully listened to and pursued any themes which arose during my interactions with the participants.

When I began the preliminary analysis, a few important topics emerged immediately. The group interviews with the pupils and the observation

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in class illustrated that social class was influential in shaping their different ways of acting and speaking. The interviews with both them and their parents gave evidence of how past experiences encouraged positive attitudes to education. At the same time I could see that the parents in particular had differing levels of confidence in their interactions with the school, and different expectations of their lives in the UK. This was most powerfully illustrated by the sensed responsibility to learn English but conversely some parents exhibited no such desire or pressure to speak English. I found that Bourdieu's theory of practice offered very useful tools for making sense of this data. When I engaged further with it, I observed that the pupils were differentiated in the terms of their orientation to the host and their ethnic communities. This was reflected in how they conversed about and how often they interacted with their Polish and non-Polish peers. It became apparent that there was a relationship between their orientation, their level of confidence at school, their plans after GCSEs and their criteria for choosing higher education. I could also see how their attitudes were influenced by those of their parents. I found parallels with Berry's theory of acculturation which provided me with succinct basic categories and variables for assigning the pupils into these cohorts.

The process of analysis is illustrated on Figure 3 (page 98). After deciding upon the theoretical framework I went back to analysing the data in depth. Using Berry's variables (orientation to the host and ethnic community; host and ethnic language proficiency; importance attached to host and ethnic identity) I assigned the pupils into three acculturation profiles (the diffuse profile was absent). The orientation to the two communities was assessed by the degree of social interaction with Poles and non-Poles and pupils' attitudes to these groups. The importance of host and ethnic identity was explored with the question 'Would you describe yourself as Polish, English, European or other? And why?'. Next, I looked at the pupils' family background. Where possible, this was done through direct interviews. In the case of the parents who refused to participate, I collected information from the pupils. Through an

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approach exploring cultural practices and taste (discussed in the previous chapter), I considered the parents' social class, and I also looked at their length of residence in England and motivations for migration. I then analysed the parents' attitudes to their co-nationals, English residents and migrants from other countries and considered whether these attitudes had been transferred to the young. Furthermore I looked at the parents' level of confidence when interacting with teachers, and their inclination to learn English. This enabled me to distinguish three groups of parents characterised by different levels of agency and engagement with their children's education. Applying Bourdieu's framework I considered how personal histories and class shaped Poles' practices, I also looked at their orientation to England, their expectations, assertiveness and their level of agency. I then looked at how pupils in different acculturation profiles had been influenced by their family histories and if there were many similarities in the habitus of pupils from the same profile. I explored their confidence in interactions with teachers and peers, their attitudes to the future, how they used school resources and how well they did at school. The concept of capitals (economic, cultural, social and linguistic) was applied to make sense of how both pupils and parents use their resources to realise their ambitions.

I shall now explore the outcome of this analysis. The discussion will begin with a consideration of Poles' class background together with its relationship and attitudes towards ethnic and host communities. I will illustrate how messages received at home shape the views of young people, and consequently influence their orientation to Polish and non-Polish peers. On this basis, I will introduce the three acculturation profiles which developed in the school. Chapter 5 will explore the migrants' biographies, their motivations for moving to England, future plans and perceptions of opportunities in England and Poland. I will illustrate how these criteria shape the migrants' aspirations. The penultimate and final chapters will observe and comment on the relationships between pupils' acculturation and their access to useful

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capital; and to the parents' possession of this capital. This will address the question of Poles' propensity to realise their aspirations.

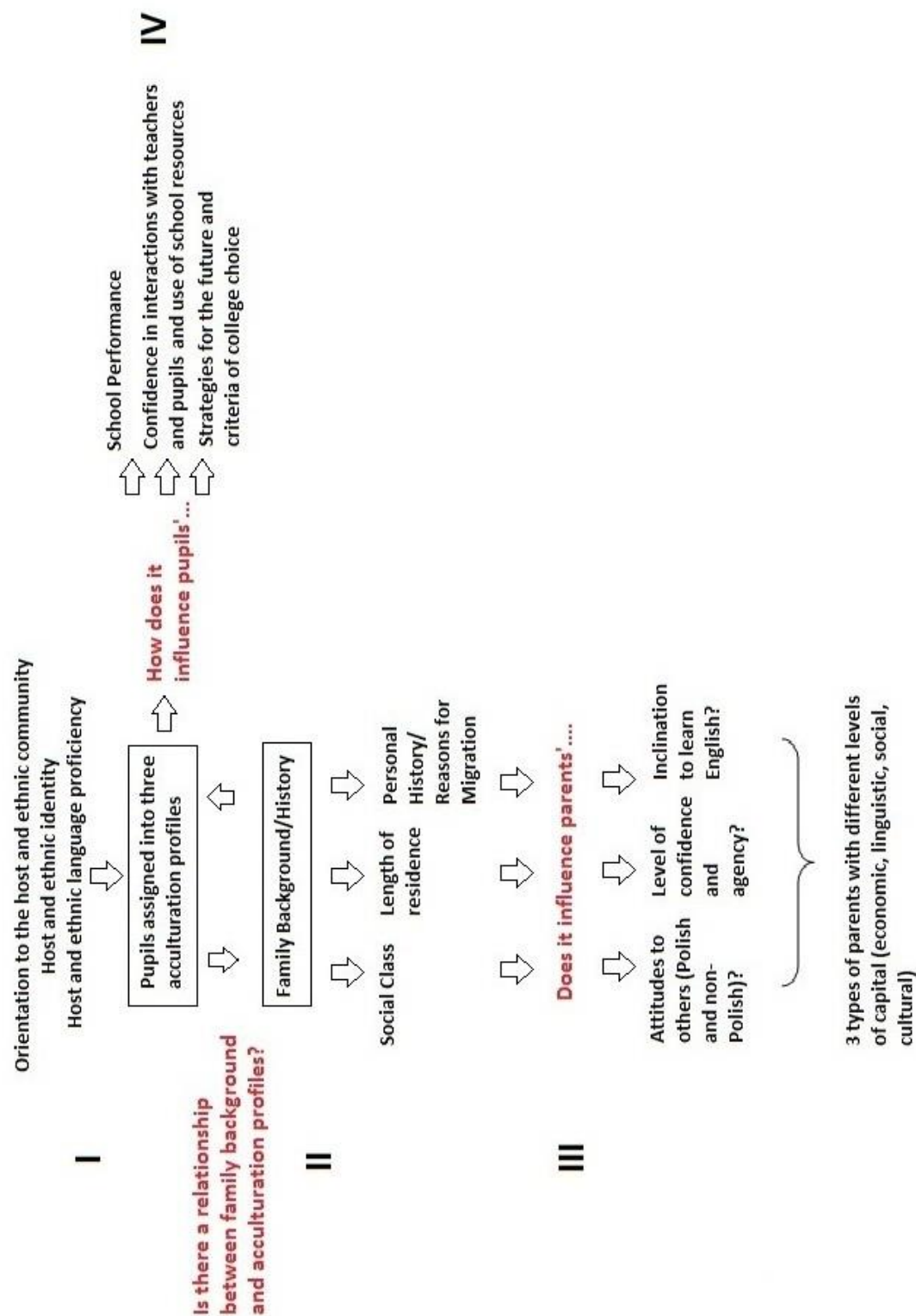


Figure 3 Process of Analysis

## **Chapter 4: 'They wear skinny trousers!': Habitus, Inter-group Diversity and Negotiation of Attitudes to non-Poles**

I will now turn my attention to the analysis of the collected data. This chapter will introduce the respondents and illustrate the diversity of their social background and attitudes to England. Primarily it will illustrate the three acculturation profiles found amongst Polish pupils and discuss the characteristics of each cohort. This will provide the foundations for further analysis of Polish aspiration and agency in the English educational system.

### **4.1 'Where do you come from?' Family Background and Habitus**

The principal findings discussed in this section relate to the relationship between social class, messages on diversity received from their parents at home and the pupils' attitudes to their non-Polish peers. Young Poles were clearly influenced by their parents' orientation towards English society and their levels of integration within it. Unsurprisingly, the parents and children who were relatively recent arrivals to the UK were more likely than long-term migrants to struggle with communication and avoid or limit their contact with English-speakers either by choice or as a consequence of the language barrier. Seeking the company of co-nationals would therefore seem like a natural strategy. However, even at this early stage some migrants indicated their interest in English society and a willingness to integrate when their language allowed them to, whereas others expressed a clear preference to stay within their national circle. The differences in the parents' attitudes to non-Poles were better assessed among those who had migrated to England more than 2 years ago, since this group was more capable of making a choice. They had had time to accumulate linguistic capital and the experience of diversity,

#### Chapter 4: 'They wear skinny trousers!': Habitus, Inter-group Diversity and Negotiation of Attitudes to non-Poles

a requirement so as to engage with those from outside their national group. It was noticeable that the pupils who avoided contact with non-Poles and who built their friendships exclusively among their co-nationals often came from working-class families, where the parents did not speak English and were either very isolated or only socialised with Poles. In many cases these families lived in areas where there was a high concentration of Poles and other minorities and who often displayed a lack of trust towards other nationalities, sometimes using racist language.

*When we first got here, the city was... when we were on the bus and we got to London, the first district was black, no? And we're getting in there and there are only black people- all black! So I ask myself- where did we go, to South Africa? (Teresa, 53, working-class mother)*

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*I don't know how this city is... I don't really like it. What is there to like? There's no... this country is funny and cold. I don't know about the people because I'm not interested in the world of the English people because I'm not into this subject. (Monika, 45, working-class mother)*

A number of pupils demonstrated xenophobia and separation in their comments during the group interviews. The sons of both of the respondents quoted above built their friendships only among Poles and often referred to cultural differences between themselves and non-Poles. This is not to say that all the young participants necessarily conformed to their parents' views. The pupils' views were influenced by their own experiences and their school environment. I witnessed a situation where one of the pupils challenged his mother when she spoke unfavourably of racial diversity in her area. Furthermore, having to attend school, the pupils tended to speak better English than their parents. They were also naturally more exposed to interactions with non-Poles and consequently,

#### Chapter 4: 'They wear skinny trousers!': Habitus, Inter-group Diversity and Negotiation of Attitudes to non-Poles

more at ease with them. Their habitus was influenced by school experiences in ways which were not available to their parents, who did not encounter cultural diversity during their own education in Poland. Consequently, the pupils became more familiar with and gained a predisposition to manoeuvre through the multicultural landscape more skilfully than their parents. Nevertheless, there were notable differences in their attitudes to their peers and the level of interactions with non-Poles which they engaged in. It was clear that the pupils whose parents encouraged them to integrate were more inclined to do so. Kamila's quote illustrates her positive attitude to diversity, which was successfully transferred to her son Tomek.

*I keep explaining to him [Tomek] that he cannot just stick to the Poles, that he must integrate- mostly because we live in England! With everyone... there are a lot of different nationalities around and we must speak to everyone! (Kamila, 39, middle-class mother)*

During the group interview with pupils, Tomek challenged his classmates when they stressed the differences between Polish and English pupils and asserted that it is the personality and not nationality that makes friendship. Another middle-class mother admitted in the interview that she deliberately separated herself from the Polish community as she disliked what it represented and she preferred to socialize with non-Poles. Interestingly, her son displayed the same approach and even declined to participate in the research because he did not want to mix with Polish students and be part of a project which focused on them. These attitudes appeared to be strongly influenced by social class. Anna, a middle-class mother who had only been in England for a few months at the time of the interview, could not speak English and did not have social networks stretching beyond her family. Yet, she was very motivated to learn the language; she was enthusiastic about England's cultural diversity and very supportive of her son integrating with everyone at school. This is illustrative of a certain type of habitus. All of the other middle-class participants in the sample spoke English



#### Chapter 4: 'They wear skinny trousers!': Habitus, Inter-group Diversity and Negotiation of Attitudes to non-Poles

competently even though none of them did so at the time of their arrival in the UK. Typically they would have learnt German, Russian or French at school since English was rarely taught in public education until relatively recently. Nevertheless, all of them thought that being able to communicate freely was a priority and they embarked on attending language courses or taught themselves at home. Their habitus predisposed them to take the initiative and to develop cross-national social networks. Their level of integration with the Polish and English community varied, but they all expressed the wish that they did not want to limit themselves to the company of their co-nationals.

In contrast, the majority of working-class parents were either unable to communicate in English or had very basic language skills which allowed them to manage in everyday situations but limited their access to more meaningful, sustained relationships with non-Polish speakers. As a consequence their social networks consisted either of other Polish migrants or were limited to their families, and their attitude to English people and other minorities was characterised by distance and a lack of trust. These participants were unsure about the cultural norms of English people and often based their opinions on stereotypes presenting them as cold, double-faced or simply culturally awkward. Even though not all were satisfied with their relationships with co-nationals, they did not express motivation to engage in contact with non-Poles. The native inhabitants and migrants from other countries were generally recognised as physically moving through the same spaces in the city but living different lives which these respondents did not desire to learn about or be part of. This attitude of geographical proximity coupled with mental distance is vividly illustrated by Monika's reference to the 'world of English people' quoted above. The phenomenon resembles what Cante (2008, Cante, 2001) described as 'parallel lives', the concept which he developed to describe a separation between Asian and white communities which lived alongside each other but had little contact and therefore did not have an opportunity to share experiences and develop common values. This lack of positive interrelation not only introduces

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the risk of inter-group hostility and stereotyping but also significantly impacts on a migrants' access to information and their position vis a vis the field of education, which I will explore in the next chapter.

All of the parents faced similar challenges upon their arrival. These included, for instance, understanding cultural differences and finding their way in a foreign environment usually without pre-established social networks and English language skills. Importantly, almost all of the parents expressed a desire to migrate long-term or permanently. Some were able to invest in learning English, exploring other cultures and developing social networks with the native population whereas others separated themselves from the majority, failed to overcome the language barrier and did not establish useful social networks (sometimes even within the Polish community) which put them in a highly marginalised position. Moreover, migrants' expectations of life in the UK, internalised in their habitus, further influenced their orientation to the host society. They had different needs regarding their social life, entertainment and the nature of the residential areas where they lived. The working-class participants often accepted their peripheral socio-economic position. Many appeared to believe that social degradation was a natural consequence of migration and that given their age and lack of language proficiency, not much could be done about it. The middle-class respondents perceived integration and learning English as basic requirements of a 'normal' life in the UK, an antidote to marginalisation. (Parents' differentiated linguistic capital will be discussed in chapter 8.) After the initial period of adaptation, the middle-class parents also tended to be more confident and assertive about their rights than working-class respondents. Patrycja is an example:

*Because when we speak in our language, they think we're talking about them. I am the only Polish person in the school I work for, but there was a Polish university student visiting so I spoke to her in Polish and my colleagues said straight away- speak English. And I*

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*said to them- you won't tell me how to speak! I have inclusion policy, I have equal opportunity policy and I can report you, that you prohibit me from speaking my own language!* [laughs] (Patrycja, 39, middle-class mother)

This quote powerfully illustrates the attitude which I found to be quite prominent among middle-class participants. They were aware of their rights as EU citizens and not scared to defend them which is a demonstration of their cultural capital. At the same time, they did not express a desire to overemphasize their national identity and they wanted to develop positive relationships with non-Poles. In contrast, the working-class participants, who usually lacked English language skills and remained separated, appeared much less confident about their position within English society and searched for comfort and support within their family and fellow nationals.

These attitudes were reflected in the pupils' upbringing and transferred as cultural capital. The young men were also influenced by their schooling but it was the home which appeared to have a more significant impact. I observed this by looking at the disparities of the pupils' cultural capital and connecting them to home interviews with the parents and information that the pupils provided about their families. I found that social background was of significant influence. Like their parents, the pupils faced a range of challenges as well as opportunities after arriving in the UK and entering English schools. Being in a minority, all of the respondents experienced some disadvantages, particularly in the early stages of their stay in this foreign country. The language was certainly a significant concern for the new arrivals and even those who had spent a few years in the UK occasionally found it difficult to express themselves clearly, particularly in the context of school conflicts. Confrontations involving banter, arguments or fights are a common element in the social life of adolescent pupils (Miller et al., 2011, Miller, 2003).

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There was also the psychological burden; the majority of the pupils across the three cohorts admitted that when moving abroad, they feared becoming outsiders and failing to find friends. This was also found in Moskal’s research (2013). Friendships are fundamentally important for the psychological well-being of individuals and perhaps even more so during adolescence (Biggs et al., 2012, Way, 2013). Bourdieu (2000, cited in Crozier et al., 2008: 175) stressed their significance for one’s perception of self and described it as

‘the feeling of counting for others, being important to them, and therefore oneself in finding in the permanent plebiscite of testimonies of interest– request, expectations, invitations– a kind of justification for existing...’.

The pupils had to leave their extended families and friends behind and initiate new friendships outside their established social and family networks. During the group interviews, some admitted that this was a very difficult experience.

*I didn’t want to move here and I told my mum I’m staying in Poland. But she said if I don’t come, she’s gonna give me to a foster family and that I have no choice. I cried for a few days and we had to leave my older brother behind. You know, he used to annoy me but now I really miss him. (Robert, 15, working-class pupil)*

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*I was terrified. How will it go. If, for instance... if I will find any friends in this school or not. Because if I didn’t meet any, it would be much harder for me. (Adam, 14, middle-class pupil)*

Furthermore, the parents of the pupils often worked in low status jobs which could make some pupils feel inferior, particularly with some of the negative press coverage surrounding Polish immigration. Many of the parents could not speak English or did so at a very basic level which placed additional pressure on the pupils to provide translation and help

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their parents to deal with administrative issues. This exchange between a mother and son (who had been in England for 1.5 years) at the beginning of the home interview illustrates the tension involved in the problem. Robert was a 15 year old pupil, and Grazyna, was a 48 years old single mother from a working-class background. The two lived in one room in a shared house.

Robert: *You need to learn...* [to speak English]

Grazyna: *Yeah I have a problem! Whatever I learn, I forget if I don't repeat. If I have to put a sentence together, I just forget everything. And you don't want to help me... you just get annoyed [laughs] if I ask you about anything...*

Robert: *Well how long have we been in England, huh...?*

Grazyna: *But I don't go to school and you do.* [She turns to the interviewer] *You see, he doesn't want to be a translator, he finds it irritating.*

Robert: *Yeah, very much!*

Some of the pupils were clearly frustrated that their parents were not conversant and therefore not independent. Others were embarrassed about their parents' accents or incorrect English. In her research with Polish families, Moskal (2013) found that the parents' downward mobility coupled with their limited English language skills and knowledge of the domestic educational system was a source of family conflict and alienation from their relatively more knowledgeable and linguistically-capable children. All of these factors have the potential to undermine the pupils' self-confidence and their status within the school. On the other hand, the Newman as well as the primary schools which the pupils previously attended usually offered a range of options to support language learning and the development of positive relationships with peers. Many pupils spoke of the opportunities they had to make friends with English peers, about their interest in the culture of young

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Poles as well as the kindness and helpfulness of some of the teachers. However, not all of the Polish pupils were able to grasp these opportunities and use them to their advantage. The pupils' different cultural capital and habitus, influenced by their family history and school experiences, interacted with these opportunities and constraints and produced different acculturation trajectories. I found evidence for the existence of groups corresponding to three of Berry's acculturation profiles: the ethnic, the national and the integration profile. The absence of the diffuse profile could be a consequence of the fact that the school had a very large Polish population and the incoming Poles were likely to attach themselves to the established groups of their co-nationals for immediate company. It could also be due to the smaller sample size and the fact that this was not a quantitative study conducted with thousands of respondents across the country. The acculturation trajectories determined how pupils' related to their own community and the English majority and how they dealt with the power struggle. I will now introduce the three identified groups – the *isolated*, the *integrated* and the *assimilated* – relating them to Berry's classification and consider how each responded to the challenges of a new environment.

### 4.2 The 'Isolated' Pupils

The pupils in this group could be characterised primarily by very limited social networks with non-Poles and a more physical performance of masculinity. They corresponded to Berry's ethnic profile and they were highly attached to their own ethnic group, maintained their ethnic identity and used predominantly their mother tongue (Berry et al., 2006). Ten participants fitted this profile making the group the largest in my sample. Five of them had been in England for less than five years. They tended to have an ambivalent relationship to Poland, sometimes expressing that they would like to live there in the future, but to then contradict themselves by saying that the country does not offer any

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career opportunities and the quality of life is below their expectations. Any serious discussion of the possibility of moving back revealed that Poland was considered more of a holiday destination than a feasible option for the future. There was however a strong sentiment shared by the pupils based on a picture of homeland as a place where they were born and where some of their family members and friends still live. The majority of the *isolated* pupils were also interested in Polish music, particularly hip hop and some of them described themselves as members of youth subculture based around these bands (labelled as 'the people of the street') and tagged the walls of the school playground with graffiti in their mother tongue. The messages typically expressed by these bands included disrespecting authority and the police in particular; being tough and able to cope on the street; and thinking independently of the perceived majority. The pupils used the internet to stay up to date with music trends among their peers in Poland and they subscribed to the ideologies represented by these bands. I would be reticent to assume that belonging to these subcultures was class related since some of the middle-class *integrated* pupils also signed up to these ideas. It seems more plausible to consider this phenomenon with reference to the participants' gender and age, in the way that Macdonald (2001) did in her study of the graffiti subculture amongst youth in London and New York. She argued that at the times when male identities are less certain and more fragmented, young people involved with graffiti can affirm their masculinity through taking up the risks associated with creating graffiti in prohibited places. Similarly, the values promoted by 'the people of the street' were very much based on the ideas of performative masculinity, which could offer some pupils a safe gender reference. Furthermore, Macdonald argued that by separating themselves from the external world and opposing mainstream society, the members of the graffiti subculture were asserting their individuality and identity (2001).

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In the case of the *isolated* pupils, identifying with a Polish subculture so strongly and emphasizing masculinity indeed appeared to be a way of justifying the distance and asserting their individuality and, implicitly, their superiority. This was not the case amongst those who integrated and who did not draw on subcultural references to present themselves as better than non-Poles. I hope this will become clear in light of the argument regarding Poles' performance of masculinity.

Fundamentally, the *isolated* pupils built their social networks almost exclusively among their co-nationals and separated themselves from non-Poles. They displayed a strong propensity to emphasize similarities between Poles based on their life experiences and mentality, and the differences between Poles and everyone else in the school. Their approach was very much based on the 'us' and 'them' rhetoric. Dominik's comment during the group discussion, illustrates the attitude very well:

*Because we are Polish and we prefer to chat to people who we understand well than with those who we practically cannot understand. I mean, I don't know, I simply like being with people who I understand- with Poles for instance. Because they come from the same country...* (Marcel, 15, working-class pupil)

Further discussion clarified that he related to perceived cultural differences rather than simply communication in English. The cultural ideal of masculinity was a particularly strong differentiator. These pupils' construction of masculinity was more conservative than among the two other groups and their manifestation of it, embodied in their *hexis*, stood out in comparison to those who integrated and assimilated. The *isolated* pupils tended to keep their hairstyle simple and they did not engage in discussions about fashion trends as some of the pupils in the two other groups did. They were much louder in their speech which was particularly evident during one of the group interviews where these pupils were in a majority, accompanied by an *integrated* pupil. The latter



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spoke calmly, listened to questions and while he was not intimidated by the louder majority, he did not try to shout over them. The other pupils tended to be very competitive when seeking attention and making sure their opinions were heard which they often tried to achieve by shouting over their classmates, bantering and making jokes. This echoes findings of other studies into working-class masculinities (McDowell, 2002) and is clearly illustrative of embodied cultural capital. The *isolated* pupils were the ones who occasionally used racist language and they were also more likely to speak about their interest in girls although they did not make explicitly sexist comments, which could have been a consequence of working with a female researcher. However, it was the homophobic comments and jokes which featured more prominently than references to race and gender. These were usually made to ridicule English pupils although sometimes young Poles also made jokes about each other. Whereas the use of homophobic language among adolescent boys is rather well-documented (Pascoe, 2005, Pattman et al, 1998), the *isolated* pupils in my research drew on it to distinguish between themselves and other national groups, implying their own dominance. The pupils in this cohort were inclined to generalise non-Poles and particularly English peers who were very often described as 'unmanly' or 'gay'. The comments regarding their feminine style of clothing and preoccupation with appearance featured strongly in two of the group interviews and these behaviours were criticised by the *isolated* pupils as inappropriate for 'real' men.

Interviewer: *How do you see your English peers?*

Andrzej (15, working-class pupil): *They're different! They wear different clothes.*

Maks (15, working-class pupil): *They're just so gay!*

Maciek (15, working-class pupil): *They wear skinny trousers!*

Pupils shouting together and laughing: *Skinny trousers!*

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Krzysiek (15, working-class pupil): *How stupid.*

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Interviewer: *Do you think English boys have a similar style to Polish pupils?*

Sebastian (14, middle-class pupil): *Yeah!*

Rafal (14, working-class pupil): *They're different, you can see that...*

Piotrek (14, middle-class pupil): *Yeah, for instance in Poland guys wear their trousers on their hips and here they pull it down.*

Rafal (14, working-class pupil): *You can see their asses!*

Interviewer: *So what do the Polish boys wear?*

Adam (14, middle-class pupil): *Just more chilled-out...*

Sebastian (14, middle-class pupil): *It's varied. Depends.*

Adam (14, middle-class pupil): *But looking at the English it's a bit weird... skinny jeans.*

Sebastian (14, middle-class pupil): *Or chimmers. They are the sort of looser ones, that go down more. I like those.*

Rafal (14, working-class pupil): *It's not very boyish. And they have these funny hairstyles.*

Through this characterisation of their English peers, the Poles were attempting to disempower them, compensating for their own disadvantaged status. They were thus performing a form of protest masculinity which symbolizes a struggle with 'making a claim to power where there are no real resources of power' (Connell, 1995, cited in Roberts, 2012: 3). Their protest was of ethnic nature, unlike the class protest of Willis' lads (1977). Nayak and Kehily (1997) argue that humour is crucial in establishing heterosexual hierarchies and Dolby et

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al (2004) perceive it as an important tool for gaining power. The cultural capital of *isolated* pupils limited their confidence and ability to build friendships outside their own national group. On rare occasions, a few participants made comments which suggested that they would have liked to have been able to do so. For instance, one of the respondents who previously voiced his disrespect for English males told me with enthusiasm and pride that someone on the school bus thought he was English. In the face of this limited confidence and ability to establish nationally mixed social networks, rather than admitting to what could be considered a weakness, the group presented their separation as their own choice. In Bourdieu's words, they 'made a virtue out of a necessity' through making fun of non-Poles and presenting them as unworthy of their interest and friendship. The demarcation of English masculinity and the presentation of traditional Polish masculinity as hegemonic was a way of exercising power from a relatively disadvantaged position. The *isolated* Polish pupils constructed their non-Polish classmates as softer, less experienced and more dependent, and more preoccupied with "girly things" such as taking care of their looks. This rejection of style and fashion is distinct from Willis' lads (1977) who put effort into maintaining their image, as English working-class subcultures generally have (Hebdige, 1979, Weight, 2013, Brake, 1985).

However, similarly to the lads (Willis, 1977), the masculine ideal of the *isolated* Poles was based on being tough and able to cope with life and being oblivious to what others might think. Some of the pupils in the group represented their migration as something that has made them stronger and more mature. They described Polish school as much more difficult and intellectually demanding, so as to prove to their English peers that they have it easy, and also they found it easy to manipulate their teachers who would praise them for minimum effort. In contrast to the Poles in the two other groups and similarly to Willis' lads (1977) they often alluded to drinking alcohol or smoking cigarettes as something that real men do. This has been recognised as a popular assertion of

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manhood among young working-class males in the UK (De Vissier and Smith, 2007, Gough and Edwards, 1998, Tomsen, 1997, Willis, 1977). In his study of Polish migrants in London, Garapich (2010) argued that drinking alcohol plays an important role in bonding rituals among Polish men. Whereas there are clearly parallels between the two national groups, some of the pupils presented drinking alcohol, and particularly being able to drink large amounts of it, as a distinctly Polish characteristic which not only added to their adulthood but supposedly differentiated them from the English majority.

Rafal: *Poles are different... like just more into more adult things. They're more adult.*

Interviewer: *What do you mean by that?*

Rafal: *Like more into drinking alcohol and adult matters. The English are more childish.*

Another example of the way in which the *isolated* pupils asserted their power was their persistence in using the Polish language in the company of non-Poles, including teachers. This has caused some tensions in the school and the teacher whom I interviewed admitted that other pupils and teachers found it intimidating and put pressure on teachers to stop this behaviour. They kept trying to do so during the lessons but preventing Poles from speaking their mother tongue during the breaks was much more problematic and morally questionable. The Polish pupils were very aware of the impact it had on other students and they actively used it to their advantage to make others confused and uncomfortable. They were also conscious that the school cannot really prevent them from speaking their language.

Interviewer: *What do you like the most about your school?*

Rafal (14, working-class pupil): *Probably that... well, for me it's that nobody understands you when you speak Polish. And nice subjects too. And that's it.*

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Interviewer: *Why is it good that nobody understands you?*

Rafal (14, working-class pupil): *Ah, for instance, if one of them says something mean to you and you can answer for instance, with something nasty in Polish and he can't understand you... and if he asks what you're saying, you just say something else in English.*

Other pupils asserted that they do not use their language to be openly offensive very often but it was enough that they spoke Polish a lot and usually very loudly. When I asked them if they did not think it was unnerving for other students and teachers, they replied:

Robert (15, working-class pupil): *If they want to speak to us, why don't they learn Polish...?*

Maks (15, working-class pupil): *Yeah, they should.*

Andrzej (15, working-class pupil): *Exactly, what about when we were new and the teachers talked to us in English and we didn't understand?*

Andrzej's quote in particular illustrates the group solidarity which, in this case, could have a detrimental impact on the pupils' English language development. It is evident, that the *isolated* pupils were involved in an 'ethnic' rather than 'class' conflict and they based their claims to power on heteronormativity and language use. The majority of the pupils who fitted this profile had working-class backgrounds and they usually came from families which were far removed from English society. The fact that they responded to their position by reinforcing rather than challenging it was influenced by their habitus, limited family support and cultural capital (the issue of capital will be considered in the following chapters). They lacked confidence and cultural understanding and flexibility which some of the other Polish pupils in the school evidently had. They were not able to enter mixed social networks with ease and they did not challenge this position but framed it as their own choice in response to the alleged inferiority of English pupils. This

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illustrates the complexity of their position. Their initial separation from the English majority was a consequence of their language limitations and being new in a foreign environment. The availability of other Poles around provided a comfortable and safe solution even though in the long term, it was not necessarily beneficial. Attaching meaning and a sense of agency to their separation appeared to be a defence mechanism or what Bourdieu (1990: 54) would refer to as 'willing the inevitable' and in turn it reinforced this separation. Their strategy was partially their choice and partially influenced by their cultural capital and the internalised structure of their habitus. This had significant implications for their position within the educational system, as I will explore in the following chapters.

Interestingly, in contrast to the findings of some other studies into working-class masculinities (Archer et al., 2001, Archer and Yamashita, 2003, Connell, 1989, Reay, 2002, Renold, 2001), the Polish pupils did not stigmatise academic achievement. Rather than constructing masculinity through conflict with school (Connell, 1989), high achievement was recognised as a skill and a way of being able to manage one's life successfully and thus it was respected as a legitimately masculine feature. The only instance I witnessed where the pupils made fun of their hard-working classmate was in the case of a boy (not a participant of the research) who studied extensively but failed to achieve good results. On a few occasions he cried about his bad marks and often pleaded with his teachers to give him better marks which made his peers disrespect him. The pupils who succeeded at school were not teased. Indeed, those who were involved in the Polish networks helped their co-nationals. These were typically the *integrated* pupils since the majority of *isolated* respondents were not high achievers. Despite being able to communicate in English, their language skills still lagged behind their counterparts in the two other groups. Importantly, the discussion of college choice plans revealed strong group solidarity and little evidence of strategies oriented towards

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individual goals. Almost all of the participants intended to go to a local vocational college to be where their friends were. I will elaborate on this in the following chapters when I discuss how the acculturation profiles correspond to academic aspiration and ability to pursue it. The *isolated* pupils also had a rather distanced relationship with their teachers. The majority were quite positive about the teaching methods in the UK, but these pupils did not approach teachers to gain additional advice or support. In contrast to the two other groups, they also mentioned that the teachers are racist because they prevent them from speaking Polish during the lessons. Further discussion revealed that this was not a serious accusation but rather part of the 'us' and 'them' rhetoric.

### 4.3 The 'Assimilated' Pupils

The pupils in this cohort were the very opposite of the *isolated* pupils. This group resembled Berry's et al (2006) national profile, characterised as being highly attached to the society in which they lived and proficient in its language; largely assimilated culturally; and not attached to their ethnicity. The Poles who fitted this profile displayed all of these features. It was evident that they wanted to have a 'normal' school life, which meant being perceived as pupils rather than 'Polish pupils' and to become part of a majority population. They prioritised friendships with English peers and succeeded at challenging their outsider status. Only three participants in my sample fitted this profile but their accounts have been so prominent that they must be recognised and discussed here. All of these pupils expressed a preference for English music and television and they did not follow the trends popular with their peers in Poland. As in the case of the previously discussed group, these pupils did not see their future in their homeland. In contrast to the *isolated* pupils, however, they were not very sentimental about Poland. Even though two of the respondents did speak about the relatives left behind, they did not idealise their country and they rejected the idea of

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returning, instead describing England as their home. When I asked whether they felt themselves to be Polish, English or European during the group interviews, one described himself as English and two said that they feel both Polish and English. Neither felt like they needed to highlight their ethnic identity. Heniu's quote is an illustration:

*I feel like... somewhere in between a Pole and an Englishman... because... almost everyone... knows that I am Polish. But at the same time, not many people, even from Poland, say that they would think that I was Polish. It's like... they don't see me as a sort of Pole who is stereotyped. I don't know why, probably because I spend all my time with English guys so... most of the Poles at school stick together. There are only some, who like me, are only with English people. (Heniu, 14, middle-class pupil)*

It is interesting that Heniu speaks about 'a sort of Pole who is stereotyped'. The *assimilated* pupils were aware of and sensitive to the fact that there are some negative associations attached to their co-nationals, partially inspired by the tabloid press and partially provoked by Poles who isolated themselves from the host nation and used their language in the company of non-Polish speakers. The *assimilated* pupils did not want to be associated with the label of a Polish immigrant. The two other participants in this profile, spoke very negatively about their co-nationals. Alek's account is an example:

*I don't like my school because it's so full of Poles now. It used to be better... But now I get so annoyed because... they just talk rubbish in Polish all the time. And I stay away from them. But then... my mates ask me sometimes 'oh, what did they say? Translate it for us'. And I just tell them 'don't bother, they're stupid'. (Alek, 14, middle-class pupil)*



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His mother added:

*He keeps saying that the more Polish boys are there, the more racist the school becomes. That there are conflicts. At the moment, he's forced to go there. I keep telling him- not long left! At one point he had problems with his stomach... he would be sick before going to school... some kind of stress. (Kasia, 37, middle-class mother)*

Ania, a mother of a boy who chose not to participate, provides another illustration:

*No, no, he doesn't have Polish friends. He doesn't integrate with them. He does not accept their company. He has... everyone but Poles. He doesn't want to be perceived like this. He says that... for example, he finds it annoying when the teacher... last time I was at school I told them... he doesn't want to be a translator. Because the teacher says- this boy doesn't understand, translate for him please. He doesn't want to do that. I went there and said- nobody can force him. If he could go and learn English then another child can too. (Ania, 38, middle-class mother)*

Ania's comment illustrates the tension between the two groups of Poles. A similar situation was described by Patrycja, a mother of a pupil who was also in this profile. In both cases, the English teachers and pupils wanted to use the pupils' ability to speak Polish to deal with specific problems. This was putting pressure on the pupils who felt frustrated about being forced into interactions with their co-nationals. The *assimilated* pupils actively avoided the company of other Poles, distanced themselves from the Polish minority and, in two cases, they also stereotyped their Polish peers. This was evidently enforced by the fact that the school had such a high number of Polish migrants which generated some tensions between them and English pupils.

It was striking that the group also embodied a less physical form of masculinity. They appeared less preoccupied with manifesting it and

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they did not use homophobic language or describe their classmates as unmanly. Being fully integrated with the majority at school, they did not feel the need to ridicule their peers or present them as weak or inferior. As such, the *assimilated* pupils did not advocate for any dominant type of masculinity and they did not think taking care of one's appearance as unacceptable for a man. They were at ease with English style and in fact they adopted it. The extract below comes from a group interview and it is an exchange between two cousins, one of them fitting the *assimilated* profile and the other the *integrated* profile (which will be introduced in the following section).

Adam (14, middle-class pupil): *He is an Englishman now, I'm telling you.*

Interviewer: *Why so?*

Adam (14, middle-class pupil): *Because he acts like one, I remember him from Poland...*

Alek (14, middle-class pupil): *Stop moaning...!*

Adam (14, middle-class pupil): *The way I remember him from Poland... he was different. When I came to England and saw him, I didn't know who he was.*

Interviewer: *But what is it? Clothes, hairstyle, behaviour?*

Adam (14, middle-class pupil): *Yeah. He all changed!*

Alek (14, middle-class pupil): *The best was when grandma came to England. She was here... dunno, about a year ago. I entered the house and she didn't recognise me.*

[pupils laugh]

Adam (14, middle-class pupil): *It's like when you came to Wa... to our aunt. His grandma was there too... I entered first and she*

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*recognised me. Then he came, and the grandma thought it was my friend... She didn't recognise him again!*

Alek admitted that since he moved to England he has grown his hair to match the trend among his friends and changed his style of clothing. He began following English music and television and both he and his cousin claimed that his behaviour had changed, although they struggled to specify how this was manifested. The bodily hexis of the *assimilated* pupils differed from that represented by the *isolated* group. All of the three pupils had longer hair and they were rather calm in their speech, rarely raising their voice to gain attention. This was one of the features which distinguished them from that of the previously discussed cohort. All of the pupils came from a middle-class background, and their families had a positive orientation to English society. In two cases the parents spoke English. The cultural capital of these respondents did not constrain them from developing positive relationships with non-Poles, they were confident in approaching both their peers and teachers. The pupils in this group were able to take advantage of the opportunities and support offered to them by the school and they did not seek the company or help of their co-nationals.

It must be noted that all of these pupils have been in the UK for more than five years and began their English education in schools which had a very small number of Polish pupils. To find friends, they were forced to learn the language quickly and they were supported by the schools which usually coupled them up with an English buddy. They all had positive experiences when receiving support from English pupils which must have contributed to their attitude to the native community. Nevertheless, this alone is not sufficient explanation for their assimilative attitude since some of the *isolated* pupils had similar experiences and still failed to reach beyond their national networks. Whereas the longer length of residence in the UK could encourage integration or assimilation, it does not appear a convincing factor alone since even among the *isolated* cohort, there were pupils who had been

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in England for more than 5 years and failed to move beyond their national circles. Indeed, Berry et al (2006) made a similar observation and argued that the integration and national profiles emerged more often among those with greater residence (the proportion more than doubled among those with 12 years of residence in comparison to those with 6 years), but the proportion of those from the ethnic profile was quite stable regardless of the length of stay. Berry et al did not attempt to explain the reasons for this and this is where I found Bourdieu's concepts to be particularly relevant and helpful.

The *assimilated* pupils had the parental support and the cultural capital which enabled them to engage in nationally mixed social networks. They had a level of flexibility and cultural open-mindedness which allowed them to incorporate aspects of English culture into their identities and move away from Polish cultural archetypes, including those of masculinity. The family influence was very important. The parents of *assimilated* pupils were very positively oriented towards English society and most importantly, they wanted to be legitimate inhabitants of the country and have a 'normal' life, not necessarily marked by their nationality in every aspect. Of the three parents of *assimilated* pupils, who participated in the interview all were middle-class, all spoke English and two had a background in higher education. Two engaged in nationally mixed social networks with both Poles and non-Poles, and one actively avoided Poles and spoke about them very unfavourably, criticising them for not mixing, not learning English, swearing and having no ambitions. All of these parents encouraged their children to develop friendships with non-Poles and conveyed positive messages on racial and cultural diversity. As a result of their own ability to speak English and mix, they felt quite confident in England and they could inspire this confidence in their children. These attitudes and the cultural openness of their parents were transferred to the *assimilated* pupils as a form of cultural capital. Like their parents, the *assimilated* pupils did not want always to be perceived as (first and foremost) Polish migrants but

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wanted to be seen for who they were as individuals. This was sometimes problematic in school with such a high proportion of Polish migrants, the majority of whom stayed within their own national circle. The *assimilated* pupils feared being associated with this group since they felt different to them. They criticised the *isolated* pupils for speaking Polish loudly, for swearing, being aggressive, conservative, racist, unambitious and altogether for confirming the negative stereotypes surrounding the Polish community.

The two groups had different social backgrounds, different orientations to the life in England and different capabilities. Their habitus differed significantly which resulted in tensions between the groups and the *assimilated* pupils' willingness to cut themselves off from the Polish minority altogether. This is similar to Oliver and O'Reilly's (2010) research among adult English migrants in Spain which found significant divisions among them, based on social background and habitus. I would argue that it was this tension rather than simply ambivalence to Polish heritage which pushed these pupils to assimilate rather than integrate. This in itself is a good illustration of the ways in which the pupils' habitus was negotiated between home and school, rather than simply being constituted within one of these spheres. Two of the parents of these pupils, were *integrated* rather than *assimilated* themselves and they did not encourage negative attitudes towards co-nationals among their sons. It was the pupils who developed these orientations as a result of their frustration with being associated with people so different from themselves. The *isolated* pupils in turn, accused the *assimilated* of becoming English, perceiving themselves as better and separating themselves from their national group. The class backgrounds and habitus of the two groups were not compatible which generated tensions in the environment where they could easily be labelled as the same under the name of Polish migrants (Eade et al., 2007). Similar conflicts were observed in a number of other studies, both among Poles and other minorities, including sexual minorities (McGhee et al.,

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forthcoming, Simpson, 2012). Whenever there is a minority which is internally heterogeneous in terms of habitus, taste, behaviour and class and there is a tendency to downplay these differences and homogenise group characteristics, these tensions are likely to occur.

Unlike middle-class English boys 'real Englishmen' in Mac an Ghail's (1994) study the *assimilated* young Poles did not approach teachers in an arrogant or superior manner. Rather, they used the teachers' knowledge as a resource, by asking for information on local colleges, examinations and additional learning material. Feliks, for instance, took private music lessons with his school teacher and often discussed his college options with her. She provided him with leaflets and a lot of advice on local art colleges. He was able to access expert information and to take full advantage of the resources available. The issue of private tuition and the economic capital of parents will be discussed further below. Similarly, Heniu was aware of the available resources and able to draw on these.

*I was the best in my school in the tables... and... well... the teachers treat me differently, they push me more to learn because they know I can.* (Heniu, 14, middle-class pupil)

Heniu had very good relationships with his teachers, who were clearly impressed with his abilities. He was very motivated to study and he collaborated with them to receive additional material. The ability to build positive relationships with teachers was a great asset for these pupils particularly since even when their parents were relatively well-informed, they did not have their own experience of the English schooling system and as such they lacked the knowledge that English middle-class parents would have (Mac an Ghail, 1994). Informed by their own and their parents' expectations, the *assimilated* pupils were conscious of the opportunities in the UK (a subject explored in the following chapter) and were determined to pursue them. Their middle-class background, the support of their parents and consequently the confidence with which

they engaged with cultural diversity provided these pupils with advantages which were unavailable to the *isolated* pupils.

#### 4.4 The 'Integrated' Pupils

In their research on adolescent migrants, Berry et al (2006) found that a large number were involved in both their ethnic and host cultures. They rejected assimilation, separation and marginalisation, and showed a balanced use of their mother tongue and the language of the society they lived in. I found that a group of my participants displayed very similar characteristics to this integrated profile, as Berry et al labelled it. Six pupils fitted the profile and they had all been in England for more than 5 years. They recognised their Polish background as part of their identity but they did not manifest it in the ways that the *isolated* pupils did. To them it was personal history linking them to family soil and early upbringing, rather than a reason to differentiate themselves from other peers and build group solidarity. The group and individual interviews revealed that these pupils built their identities flexibly around the two cultures. When asked whether they felt Polish, English or European, three of them said they were Polish, one felt himself to be European and one said that he felt both English and Polish depending on the company he was in. They watched English television and listened to both Polish and English music. One identified with the aforementioned subculture linked to the Polish hip-hop band but he did not speak about it as much as some of the *isolated* pupils and he did not appear to absorb this subculture so readily. Neither did he place any reference to it on his Wall of Life.

The *integrated* pupils recognised England as their home, they showed no intention of returning to Poland and they were fluent in English. When it came to more sophisticated ways of expression and communication, involving writing and reading they preferred using

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English since this was the language used more often in the context of their education, but they still enjoyed using Polish in social situations. Three of the pupils admitted that they were worried that their ability to speak and write in their mother tongue was deteriorating and that they wanted to prevent this. Interestingly, one of these pupils said that keeping in touch with Polish peers was part of his strategy to ensure that he did not forget the language. All of the *integrated* pupils started their education in schools which had a small proportion of Polish migrants which could have contributed to their openness to English peers, as I discussed in the case of the *assimilated* pupils. Early positive experiences, for instance receiving support from English pupils often facilitated by the buddy system adopted by some schools, would seem important as regards a migrants' perception of his native peers.

The *integrated* pupils were able to build their social networks among both their co-nationals and the non-Polish students. The point which frequently surfaced in our discussions about the choice of friends was that personality was a far more important factor than origin. They did not separate themselves from the majority like the *isolated* pupils did, and neither did they actively avoid the company of their Polish peers, as in the case of the *assimilated* pupils. A selection of quotes from the group interviews illustrates their attitude. Below is an exchange which took place between Tomek, who was *integrated*, and Andrzej who only socialised with Poles.

Tomek (15, middle-class pupil): *Some people stick together and stick to their races and others mix.*

Andrzej (15, working-class pupil): *No, I'm telling you, there are groups- Poles, English and black people... We talk together, we understand each other well.*

Tomek (15, middle-class pupil): *But you can understand an English guy too, it just depends on their character.*



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In contrast to the two other groups, I found no evidence of the 'us' and 'them' rhetoric in their comments. The pupils did not try to prove themselves as different from their fellow Poles and they were not involved in a power struggle against native pupils. Interestingly, unlike the *assimilated* pupils, they were not threatened by the idea of being associated with other Polish pupils. They appreciated their cultural heritage, and whereas they did not feel the need to manifest it, they did not reject it. Undoubtedly, it was partially due to the importance their parents attached to preserving the national culture. All the parents of the *integrated* pupils whom I interviewed, celebrated Polish culture and wanted to ensure that their children remembered their inheritance. One mother (and her husband) was very involved in the local Polish club and often took her sons along to events and social evenings. The *integrated* pupils attached value to their cultural roots and felt confident enough to distance themselves from the challenging behaviour of some of their co-nationals. In all cases at least one of the parents of these pupils was able to communicate well in English and as a consequence they were able to engage with the schools and provide the pupils with more support. As I previously discussed, their motivation to learn the English language was a basic requirement for a 'normal' life originating from their habitus. Consequently, their linguistic capital helped them to access nationally-mixed networks, gather positive experiences and build up confidence in their contact with non-Poles. This they projected onto their children through sending positive messages about diversity, encouraging mixed friendships and learning the language. These parents accumulated bridging social capital which added to their sense of comfort in England and put them in a position where they could support their children's acquisition of this capital more easily. The economic capital did not appear to play a significant role in facilitating social capital acquisition, since the families lived in various districts, both ethnically-mixed and those occupied by large numbers of other Poles. A couple of the *integrated* pupils and their parents spoke negatively about some of their co-nationals, criticising their provocative

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and rude behaviour. This was a result of class and habitus differences, as previously discussed. They did not however distance themselves from other Poles altogether, as some of the *assimilated* pupils did.

The *integrated* pupils appeared to be comfortable and confident about their status at school and as such, they did not draw on physical performances of masculinity to assert their position in the ways that the *isolated* pupils did. The 'wall of life' illustrated that three of these pupils still perceived being able to provide for a family as part of their masculine objectives. They were family-oriented and they conceptualised masculinity in relation to independence, their ability to consume and to be responsible for the financial well-being of a family. The remaining three pupils did not express any strong views on what they thought defined being a man. The *integrated* pupils did not stigmatise their English peers as non-masculine; they did not mock their style or joke about homosexuality. Their hexis resembled that of the *assimilated* adolescents. They were calm in their responses and did not engage in verbal fights to get attention. They were also relatively diverse in terms of their styles, with the majority keeping their hair simple but expressing a choice for their favourite brands of clothes to wear outside school.

The *integrated* pupils had a neutral or positive relationship with teachers. None of them reported experiencing unfair treatment and they did not question the reasons for being asked not to speak Polish during lessons. Three of the pupils said that they felt they received all the support and motivation they needed, while they admitted they rarely approached the school staff and did not feel this was necessary. The group involved two high achievers, three pupils whose scores were average and one with low scores. I found that this group was confident and relatively knowledgeable about the opportunities of further education. Their involvement in both the Polish and English social networks was beneficial for the pupils' sense of self-esteem and comfort at school. They perceived their cultural background and ability

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to speak Polish as a potential asset but they did not feel the need to manifest their distinctiveness and to separate themselves from any particular national group at school. Their habitus incorporated elements of both English and Polish culture and enabled them to move through both of the communities with ease. They were open to diversity and able to distance themselves from the negative stereotypes within the Polish community. As such they did not engage in the conflicts between the *isolated* and *assimilated* students. Their orientation has put them in an advantageous position in terms of their access to information, educational resources as well as social and cultural capital. These implications will be explored in the following chapters.

So far, I have argued that there was a variety in the types of habitus embodied by the Polish pupils which have generated different acculturation trajectories. The factors such as length of stay and the experience of early schooling in England appeared to influence the pupils' levels of confidence and attitude to England but they proved insufficient to explain the diversity, particularly among those who had been in England for longer than five years. The habitus differences shaped by social class and family background were evident and these were clearly reflected in the pupils' hexis, their performance of masculinity, their orientation to their ethnic community and their native peers, as well as their approach to post-16 choice. They were also played out in the relationships between the Polish adolescents of different profiles and occasionally created tensions between them. I will now turn my attention to an exploration of the implications which the different acculturation trajectories had on the pupils' educational aspirations and their ability to realise them.

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## **Chapter 5: 'In Poland you have to work hard for little return. In England... you have to work hard too, but it gets recognised'– the Perception of England as the Land of Reward**

While for most of the parents whom I interviewed the decision to migrate was largely motivated by economic factors, it would be simplistic to consider this only in relation to higher wages and standards of living. This chapter will consider the perspectives of Polish parents and children on educational and employment options in the UK and Poland. I will begin by introducing the respondents and draw their profile by discussing the migrants' biographies. This will involve looking at their reasons for migration; future plans; and perceptions of opportunities for adults and young people in the homeland and in England. I will illuminate shared characteristics and internal variations in the group. I will also argue that Polish families have a largely positive view of the English educational system and tend to see it as a good environment in which to develop. This will inform chapter 6, where I will focus on aspirations and demonstrate how Polish aspiration is structured with reference to the experiences in Poland and expectation of England, and how these are negotiated between generations.

### **5.1 Introduction: What brought us here? The motivations for migration**

As has already been discussed, my study group consisted of migrants who arrived after May 2004 and who moved to the UK with their children. In most cases this involved transferring the children from a Polish to an English education. In this respect, their experiences with schooling are already very different from migrants whose children were

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born in England and started primary education here. Similarly, my respondents' life circumstances cannot really be compared to those of some early post-accession migrants who were often characterised as single and young Poles, who came to the UK to gain independence, travel, learn the language or for just adventure (Garapich et al., 2009, Home Office et al., 2007, Janta et al., 2011). Due to the risks and responsibilities involved, the decision to migrate with children of school age is unlikely to be motivated simply by the desire to learn a language or gain valuable personal experiences. The frustration with economic conditions, standards of living and career opportunities in Poland repeatedly surfaced in the interviews but only for some respondents was it a direct reason for leaving the country. The parents spoke about particular situations or one event which led them to migrate (Benson and O'Reilly, 2009), four interviewees spoke very explicitly about their 'difficult situation' in Poland as being a 'push factor':

*I had a business for 12 years. But then they built a big road and we had to close down. So in one moment we were left... we never anticipated it, never saved money... And then in one moment we were out of business. Without any means or a chance to survive with a family in Poland for 1000zl per month. In one moment we didn't have money for bread. And so we were forced to go. (Monika, 41, working-class mother)*

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*I haven't had a job in Poland for a long time. Me and Robert rented flats for the past few years and it was not great with all these different landlords... And life was very expensive, the rent, very little work... We couldn't survive there any longer. (Grazyna, 48, working-class mother)*

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*I am Piotrek's grandmother. I had to take him, his parents split up, my son wasn't very good... The mother stayed with no means for survival. He's got a brother and with two children in Poland... on your own, without a proper job, with 600zł per month... no way to survive with two children. Social services had their eyes on them and I was scared that they might take him to a foster home. It's much easier for her [the mother] with one child, so I decided to get him to join me here. (Paulina, 56, working-class grandmother)*

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*In Poland it was me who was the breadwinner... Of course, my husband worked, but it was a seasonal job... And dressmaking gave me a good income. But later he started to lose his job, he was making less and less money... And it was no longer enough to pay the bills, I physically couldn't work anymore than I did and this was the reason I left... My husband couldn't do it at first, he was scared of moving, scared of what was abroad... (Kamila, 35, middle-class mother)*

Kamila, quoted above was the first one to leave, while her husband took care of the children in Poland. He then swapped with her but could not take the pressure of being estranged from his wife so he asked her to join him while the children stayed temporarily with grandparents, until they eventually joined their parents in the UK, a few months later. This example illustrates the complexity of the migrants' biographies and the ways in which they juggle childcare responsibilities. To reduce the risk, it was usually the case that one or both of the parents moved first before taking the decision to stay and bring children. In three cases it took at least two years before couples were reunited. Family reunion was indeed another crucial reason for taking the decision to migrate.

*I came to the UK to join my husband, he was here for two years and we came to him. I was in Germany with my younger son, and my*

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*older son was in Poland with grandparents. So the only reason really was so that we could all be together.* (Ania, 38, middle-class mother)

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Aniela (49, middle-class mother): *My son got a really good job offer from France. So he decided to work there for a year, save some money and then... start the university in Poland. And then it turned out that my daughter is coming here (England), because they decided so with her husband, and my husband has been working abroad since two years.*

*Interviewer: In England?*

Aniela: *No, in Germany actually [laughs]. So with my older son in France, and daughter in England, I decided I won't just stay on my own with my youngest son because we would be very lonely... So we came with my daughter, and my son's job ended and he's here with us now.*

Kamila's and Aniela's stories illustrate the intricate, transnational connections of many Polish families who are highly mobile and dispersed across Europe. One could argue that the underlying reason for this is the desire for financial security but the reality is much more complex. Aniela, quoted above, was nearly 50 years old and did not speak English. Her decision, motivated purely by the need to be close to her family, was actually economically risky and involved the hazard of becoming an outsider, socially isolated and dependant on others to help her get by. It also involved transferring her son into an English school at the age of 14. Before even coming to England, Aniela had decided that she would be moving permanently and her two older children are now planning to start university in the UK. Achieving physical co-presence with immediate family members is for many Polish families a primary concern (McGhee et al., 2013b). Living together, sharing meals and

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being present in each other's lives on a daily basis is an important element of a 'normal life' and this was very evident in the participants' accounts. While I was present, one of the respondents talked to her son's girlfriend about buying a bigger table so that the whole family could gather around it in the evenings rather than being dispersed around a sofa and chairs. While interviewing Poles I have found that "family" is still culturally very important both for the adults and young people. The Polish Public Opinion Research Centre (CBOS) found that a 'happy family' was the most important value among Poles, with 84% of respondents quoting it as such (CBOS, 2010). Being geographically distanced from a spouse, children or even wider family is generally perceived as a heavy psychological burden, seriously impacting on the quality of life (McGhee et al., 2013b). However, there are always counter points and one mother had quite an original motive for moving, the desire to protect her family by gaining independence from controlling relatives.

*Well, to be frank we ran. My husband's mother is really possessive, she was omnipresent and very controlling. I'm sure that if we didn't move far away from her we would eventually divorce. Here, our relationship flourished and we can have a normal life. (Sylwia, 38, working-class mother)*

The desire for a 'normal life' was often quoted as a reason for migrating, which echoes Ryan's et al findings (2008a, McGhee et al., 2012, Rabikowska, 2010). The "normal" represents a migrants' expectation of what they assume to be the basic requirements for a decent life. Implicitly this indicates "better" than back home. There is some resemblance here to the motivations of lifestyle migrants. However, in contrast to the participants of this study, they tend to be affluent or financially secure prior to migration and often quote the need for further improvement, better weather, quality of life, safety or escape from the rat race as their motivations (Casado-Díaz et al., 2004, King et



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al., 2000, Oliver and O'Reilly, 2010a). As such, their employment in the host country is often perceived as simply a means of funding a new lifestyle (Benson and O'Reilly, 2009). My respondents were in a more tenuous position and, when speaking about Poland, many talked about the unfair employment relationships, lack of appreciation at work, stress and general discontent. Patrycja and Slawek's arguments illustrate this view really well.

*People are often surprised and say 'you had a job, a flat, you had everything so why did you come here?' Yeah, we had jobs but so what? My husband... heard from his boss everyday: 'there are ten better people to take your place'. And his wife did the same, it was a small, family company. When I went to hand in his resignation, when he decided to stay in England, his boss said 'oh, it's such a shame! We had great hopes attached to your husband... he was so good, so progressive'. And I said to him 'well, shame you have never told him this before. Now it's too late. Thank you and please accept my husband's decision. (Patrycja, 39, middle-class mother)*

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*I had a good job in Poland but I was always under tremendous amount of pressure! It struck me even more when I saw the work conditions here. I'm happy, I have a good job here. (Przemek, 41, working-class father)*

Patrycja and Slawek as well as a number of other participants really appreciated that their employment was less stressful and that there were generally more opportunities than in Poland. England was perceived as a place where you could not only have a decent income even when working in low level jobs, but where hard work and effort is recognised and pays off. A few interviewees also spoke about the differences in lifestyle. They were able to travel, develop hobbies and enjoy their free time more than most of the people of their age could in

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Poland (McGhee et al., 2012). Some participants also argued that they experienced more freedom than in Poland which is still a conservative country with deeply rooted ideas about acceptable behaviour. Peter, a key informant, an Englishman working closely with the local Polish community and providing support to A8 migrants told me that he often hears this argument.

*A lot of the people say they have more freedom here. Recently I've met a couple of Polish gay guys who moved here just so people stop bothering them. They came from a small town you see and here they can just mind their own business and be happy without anyone commenting or judging. (Peter, key informant)*

Homosexuality is still a controversial issue in Poland and whereas the big cities are gradually becoming more liberal, small towns in particular are very prone to conservatism. According to CBOS survey in Poland, in 2010 47% of respondents thought that homosexual couples should not have the right to civil partnership and 89% that they should not be able to adopt children (2010). Furthermore, 63% considered homosexuality to be a deviation which must be tolerated and 44% believed that there are professions from which gay men should be banned (CBOS, 2010). This illustrates the social controversy surrounding the issue in Poland. It was also noted that English streets are very diverse in terms of styles and people are less judgemental. This was usually presented as a positive thing, with a number of respondents arguing that in Poland one almost has to dress up to pop out to a local shop to avoid the scrutiny of neighbours and passers-by. As such, Poland was commonly presented as a conservative place with strictly prescribed ideas on what is appropriate for a woman or a man. Some respondents however disapproved of this diversity and reproduced the same archetypes through their critique of English society and particularly, through their comments regarding the self-presentation and femininity of English women.

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*And the girls, women... they shouldn't be called women, girls who don't take care for themselves and this 'comfort before beauty' which just depresses me! That she can wear a potato bag and still look cool, and there's nothing to worry about. On one hand this relaxed attitude to life is good... But on the other, I'm thinking 'woman, think a little, what is this about'? Shopping in pyjamas?! UGG boots for £200. Great, but how do you look in them? Because they all just drag their feet. And it's just ugly. My husband says the same. They can have beautiful faces, but if they don't look after themselves then they just end up looking like scarecrows. They don't care about anything, not their homes, not how their gardens look like. (Patrycja, 39, middle-class mother)*

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*I'm not even talking about obesity but the lack of taste and self-care. Dirty, stained, messy hair... these young girls. The boys just wear tracksuits, dirty and stained and they go out in the street. It's a shock to me, I haven't seen this on the streets in Poland. In Torun [Northern Polish city] you wouldn't see a girl in dirty clothes in the street. When I see a girl dressed like this, trousers don't fit, the dress is maybe fashionable but just doesn't fit her... They don't look after themselves. Not even mentioning the behaviour at the shops, the clothes on the floor, people walk on them... The young mothers, kids drag the clothes from the shelves and they don't care. I cannot accept this, the dirty street and this attitude to everything. Not caring about anything. (Grazyna, 48, working-class mother)*

The above quotes illustrate a set of expectations that many participants had about acceptable appearance in the street, particularly in relation to women. Both Grazyna and Patrycja as well as for a few other parents voiced their belief that women must 'take care of themselves' otherwise they could be criticised for being unfeminine and ugly. Patrycja

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extended the argument to the appearance of houses, implying that it was a woman's responsibility to ensure that the home looked presentable. Men, on the other hand, were generally expected to be able to support and protect the family, respect women and have practical abilities. There was also a subtle expectation that they should not be too emotional, which is starkly presented in Kamila's statement:

*When he was little, he cried a lot. He was a bit of a sissy. And I thought that maybe if he goes to school with boys only... he will become a bit more manly [laughs]. That he will need to toughen up. Because Catholic school with boys only is a little bit like an army. Later I started to think that maybe it was a bit of a mistake. Because once there are girls around, the boys are a little bit more delicate, they are not as naughty because they want the girls to fancy them... And in an all-boys school you just have these male, animalistic and brutal behaviours! [laughs] But I'm not complaining, I like the school. (Kamila, 35, middle-class mother)*

Kamila's quote conveys a whole range of interesting messages. Firstly, by referring to her son as a 'sissy', she makes a powerful distinction between what is acceptable for a girl and a boy, implying that 'crying a lot' and being generally emotional is not appropriate male behaviour. By admitting that sending her son to an all-boys school was partially motivated by the hope that he would 'toughen up', she vividly illustrates her deep-rooted expectation of what being a 'real' man involves. The absence of some level of toughness is therefore problematized. While I visited Kamila's house and observed her interactions with her son outside the individual interviews, I noticed that she teased him a lot and picked up on the fact that he does not have any manual skills or that he never stays out late with his friends but always come back home in the early evening. This was not done in a degrading way, rather it seemed that they had a very playful relationship and made each other laugh. She was evidently aware that her son was quite 'soft' for a boy of his age. At

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the same time, she did say that she did not necessarily like the behaviour of some of the other boys at school, which she described as 'animalistic'. This illustrated her hope for a balanced version of masculinity. She wanted to save her son from the problems of being perceived as too effeminate while at the same time keeping him out of real trouble. I found that many participants shared these perspectives regardless of their social class. This strong sense of the aesthetics of gender and the expectations of masculinity and femininity appear to be influenced by the cultural context of their upbringing and shared across the generation (Boski et al., 1999). It was perhaps even more pronounced in a different cultural context, one perceived as more relaxed and diverse.

The adolescent Poles whom I interviewed did not necessarily display the same attitudes. Across the three groups identified in the previous chapter, it was masculinity rather than femininity that was more readily discussed. This could be a consequence of the respondents' age and the fact that they attended an all-boys school and did not come into frequent contact with their female peers. The *integrated* and *assimilated* pupils were evidently influenced by Western conceptions of masculinity. Not only were they verbally more accepting of a diversity of masculine performance (as discussed above), many of them visibly adopted the styles of their English peers by for instance, growing their hair longer. They also happily engaged in discussions about men's fashion. The *isolated* pupils on the other hand, were more prone to express the conservative views of their parents and to discuss masculinity with relation to particular capabilities and physical characteristics, as I have already demonstrated. During our interactions in the classroom they were also much more physical in their gender performance than the pupils from two other cohorts. They were competitive, often raising their voices to grab attention, undermining each other and engaged in banter. Thus, adding to the arguments from the previous chapter, there were evident differences in the negotiation of gender roles between the

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groups. Those who came into frequent contact with non-Poles consequently adapted their characteristics and outlook into their habitus (to different extents), whereas those who remained in their national circles were more likely to reproduce the views of their parents and Polish peers. This illustrates how the structure, in this case of gender positions, is internalised within habitus.

## 5.2 Young Poles' representations of Poland and England

Unlike their parents, while speaking about their homeland, the Polish pupils did not discuss cultural expectations or conservative ideology. It is likely to be of little concern for them at this stage, particularly for those who left Poland as young children and who perhaps did not talk about such issues with their families. On other levels, their perceptions of Poland were somewhat similar to those of their parents. A few boys mentioned missing their old school friends and grandparents; or the landscape of the Polish countryside where they used to live. However, these sentiments were always overthrown by arguments about the harsh reality of life in Poland which was perceived as a place offering no prospects to young people, even for those who were highly educated; and where the standards of living and quality of life were lower. The following quote from group interview 3, with 15 years old pupils, illustrates this dichotomy.

Interviewer: *So after you finish colleges, what do you want to do? Do you want to go back to Poland?*

Maciek (15, working-class pupil): *Yeah, to Poland!*

Interviewer: *And what would you like to do there?*

Maciek (15, working-class pupil): *I don't know...*

Robert (15, working-class pupil): *Poland is poor!*

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Maciek (15, working-class pupil): *I have friends and family there, but there is nothing to do.*

Marcel (15, working-class pupil): *Yeah, here you know a language and you're good at maths and you get a good job... it's unlikely in Poland.*

Robert (15, working-class pupil): *And it's too expensive.*

Interviewer: *Do your families plan to go back?*

(a number of boys altogether): *No!*

The above extract illustrates that their sentiments contrast with economic reality. Maciek, despite feeling nostalgic about the friends and relatives left behind, said on many occasions that returning was not an option. The young Poles tended to share stories about the difficulties of life in Poland, the rising prices and lowering standards of living. This tendency to constantly contrast the shortcomings of the place left behind and the advantages of the new location has also been found among lifestyle migrants who would describe their migration using terms such as 'getting out of the trap' (Helset et al, 2005; Karisto, 2005; Salv Tom s, 2005 all cited in Benson and O'Reilly, 2009). This appreciation for the new location could potentially add confidence and motivation to realise goals but it is unlikely to have any tangible effects without the awareness of the actual competition in education and labour markets. It could actually be counter-productive by providing migrants with an illusion that achieving success is easy and does not require much effort. The adolescent respondents stressed the downside of Polish life rather than its reality. Benson and O'Reilly (2009) made similar observations in their discussion of lifestyle migrants arguing that the representations of the new location are 'often romanticised' while descriptions 'of the ills of their home society are often overstated'. Rafal and Robert exemplify the tendency to exaggerate in their discussion of the prices of food.

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*In Poland, for instance, from what I remember during the holidays- if you don't have a really good job and a lot of money then you won't buy bread. Because it's nearly 10 zlotych [equivalent of 2 pounds]. And here...it's just easier. You work.... for instance at a shop.... you will be able to afford food. England is more comfortable. In Poland we didn't have a car, two-storey house... For me it's luxury. (Rafal, 14, working-class pupil)*

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*Poland is nice, but so expensive... you have to pay 1 zloty [equivalent of 20 pence] for 1 egg... (Robert, 15, working-class pupil)*

Such stories circulated among the pupils and reinforced their view of Poland as economically hopeless. The general pessimism as regards economic prospects in Poland was indeed the main reason why, with one exception, none of the pupils considered moving back to their homeland in their adulthood. The only adolescent participant who stated that he wants to return was Rafal, a 14 year old working-class boy who has had difficult migration experiences, having moved between Poland and England 5 times. He moved from a small village school in his homeland to a large one in England, where he was bullied by English peers. Rafal also missed his grandparents who played a crucial role in his upbringing when his parents first migrated. Even in his account during an individual interview there was a lot of uncertainty and contradiction, since he was not sure where he would like to study or work, saying that he does not want to leave his parents, who plan on staying in the UK. The majority of the pupils were clear about their intentions to remain in England and indeed described it as their home. Below are extracts from group interview 1, followed by group interview 4 and 3.

Interviewer: *So would you like to stay here? Is it your home?*



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Sebastian (15, middle-class pupil): *Yes. It's my home; I have friends here now, don't I?*

Przemek (15, middle-class pupil): *There is nothing to go back to in Poland.*

Sebastian (15, middle-class pupil): *Practically most of the family is here...*

Interviewer: *What do you mean, do you have uncles or cousins...here?*

Sebastian (15, middle-class pupil): *Yes, sure. All of them are in this city. It's good like this.*

Przemek (15, middle-class pupil): *Same for me, only my grandmothers are in Poland.*

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Interviewer: *Do you consider this city to be your home?*

All 5 boys say 'yes' or nod.

Adam (14, middle-class pupil): *Until not long ago I missed Poland, because I spent a lot of time there... but now I got used to this place.*

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Interviewer: *And do you visit, do you go to Poland on holidays?*

Andrzej (15, working-class pupil): *No.*

Robert (15, working-class pupil): *He [pointing at Tomek] goes every half-term!*

Tomek (15, middle-class pupil): *What every half-term?! Every now and then, for holidays. Not all the time because it's boring.*

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During the fieldwork at home and school, many respondents mentioned that they no longer had flats or houses to return to in Poland. For the majority, the physical home, with all its material belongings and sentimental values was not located in their homeland. Tomek's quote regarding holidays in Poland demonstrates the decreasing connection to the country. In fact, such comments were not uncommon and a few of the young Poles and their parents stated that whereas they liked short visits, they found it uninteresting and tiring to stay in Poland for longer. Sylwia, a mother of the boy who expressed that he would like to go back, is an example.

*So I used to miss it a lot, and now it's enough to visit once a year for short vacation, see the family and then I'm happy going back. When I'm there, I actually miss my home in England. And the kids do too! Generally speaking. Even though Rafal misses Poland so badly, he will visit all his old friends and then say 'let's go back now!' (Sylwia, 38, working-class mother)*

It is interesting to note the development of Polish social and family networks within England. At the same time other forms of connectivity were emerging, including geographical pathways– environments where migrants' interacted every day, where they shopped or spent their free time. This tended to happen more rapidly among adolescent respondents, who were quicker to refer to their English city as their home, though the parents had strong connections too. All the adult participants intended to stay in the UK for a long period or permanently, none admitted having plans to return to Poland. More than this, nearly half the respondents had originally planned to stay in the UK for long periods, even before they had arrived. Those who took the risk of moving their children to English schools took a committed approach to migration, so as to avoid disrupting their education again. It is important to recognise this, as this will have an impact on their attitudes

Chapter 5: 'In Poland you have to work hard for little return. In England.... you have to work hard too, but it gets recognised'– the Perception of England as the Land of Reward and expectations of education in England, as well as their long-term plans and strategies.

### 5.3 The Parents' Hopes for Social Mobility

By and large, the parents had quite high expectations and hopes for their children's future in England. The country was generally described, in marked contrast to Poland, as a 'land of opportunities' for those who were willing to put a little effort into reaching their goals. It was very evident in the pupils' group interviews and in the discussions following the Wall of Life project, that the boys were very optimistic about their prospects in England. They believed it to be a country where hard work was recognised and rewarded.

*I see myself in England, certainly [original emphasis]. There could be some travelling involved in my dream career but it depends how good I am. I've heard it's not so easy any more to find a job here... But I doubt... If you study well, there won't be much problem... it all depends on the results. (Heniu, 14, middle-class pupil)*

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*Why would I go back to Poland? Here, I'm pretty good with Maths, I speak an extra language and if I do well with my exams I will be in a really good position! Maths and language and you can do anything! But in Poland, that doesn't matter. (Marcel, 15, working-class pupil)*

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*In Poland, you work hard and you get very little. Here you work... hard too, but you get a lot more than in Poland. Comparing the wages... English are better than Polish. (Adam, 14, middle-class pupil)*

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The pupils would have no experience of searching for employment in Poland, so it seems that this way of thinking was very much influenced by their families. This was confirmed in the home interviews. The parents, many of whom had experienced economic hardship at first-hand, were generally very appreciative of the lifestyle that they could afford in England. Even those who were still new to the country and not yet financially secure, were hopeful and enthusiastic about the possibilities available to them in England. They evidently tried to make their children aware of the opportunities they had as Kasia's comment illustrates.

*I keep telling him- 'think about it, you will not have to do a physical job. You can sit behind a desk... and do an easier job, you will make money and you won't have to live on benefits... You will have future. Training, training, training. Think about this, because England is offering it to you right now.'* (Kasia, 37, middle-class mother)

Her last sentence puts the opportunity within the specific socio-economic context of England, emphasizing the promise of fair reward for hard work, which was generally seen as unrealisable in Poland. Parents tended to see their migration as a long term investment which would yield greater benefits for their children than they could access themselves. This finding is consistent with the literature both on Polish (Ryan et al., 2008a) and other minority parents who often cite greater opportunities for their children among the primary reasons for long-term settlement (CBOS, 2010, Reay et al., 2007). Byrne and De Tona (2012: 26) argue that 'education is central to a migrants investment in future generations. It is both a reason to leave and a reason to remain' (Byrne and De Tona, 2012: 26). Regardless of their social class, most adult participants admitted that because of their age, language difficulties and accent their prospects for professional employment and careers were limited. At the same time, they believed that, after entering the English educational system, their children would be able to enjoy full

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access to these prospects. As a consequence, even those who found it difficult to settle in England were happy that their children would have access to a much better future than they would have had if the family had stayed in Poland.

*You can really do interesting things here and then... only, looking at us, how we came to England and started life later, and everything later, education here and work.... We say with my husband that we are 20 years behind. But our son, he follows the normal path so to speak, school and everything here. So if he wants to achieve something, he's got big chances. Big chances. He will go up quickly. We won't, because how? Our time is running out. (Patrycja, 39, middle-class mother)*

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*I'm not particularly happy having to change my life around at this age... I'd say it's just for him [youngest son]. He's got great opportunities. It's all about him. (Monika, 41, working-class mother)*

It is interesting how Patrycja describes coming to the UK as starting life later. It is as if their life in Poland was a mere rehearsal for a more complete future in England. Although she may not have thought so when they still lived there, she is now reframing the experience. At the same time, Patrycja considers herself and her husband as part of a transitional generation, one that will never be able to have full access to the benefits of the UK, but one which would enable their children to do so. Many parents expressed a similar view and asserted that they would be able to sacrifice much so as to ensure their children had this chance. The opportunities for good employment, fair wages and a comfortable life for their offspring were extremely important. This is different from lifestyle migrants who were found to often focus on themselves or to discuss the health and safety of their children and opportunities for more family time (Benson, 2010). Sylwia is another example, going as

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far as to assert that it may take two generations to really have equal opportunities.

*I wouldn't like my sons to work as hard as we do... But my sister once spoke to someone from India I think, or some other country... I don't know what situation this was, but that person told her that 'you now go through what we went through 20 years ago'. So I think our children, or maybe not even them to the full extent, but the children of our children will have mixed relationships, right? So maybe they will be able to live a normal life, like every Englishman.*  
(Sylwia, 38, working-class mother)

In this quote, Sylwia idealises the opportunities that present themselves to the English working-class, assuming language fluency is all. It is very evident that some Poles feel humiliated by the mundane nature of their work and their perceived lowly status within English society. Unlike lifestyle migrants, who were found to detach their status from their occupation (Oliver and O'Reilly, 2010), Poles who experienced downward mobility often felt inferior, which tended to undermine their confidence. Monika, quoted above, is an example. She ran her own business in Poland and became isolated socially after migration to England, due to her lack of language fluency and inability to network. She was depressed about having to stay but she believed that it would bring long-term benefits to her family, particularly her youngest son. A number of other parents expressed a sense of shame with their occupations and status in England. Kasia did so very explicitly:

*I started from work at, let's call it a kebab place, then a hotel for a very short time... I started pretty much from cleaning. Which was always so humiliating for me. To work in a public place, with a cloth, with a mop... I was really uncomfortable. I still feel a bit... suppressed in it. But well, honest work is nothing to be ashamed of. We are in this country and we must earn a living... They quickly saw my potential, what I can do... I became a team leader... Soon I*

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*will probably get a promotion again. So... I'm going ahead all the time. But I've never cleaned. And I don't want this for my children. They are here to get educated so they don't need to work with a mop. It's so degrading for me. But you have to start somewhere, from cleaner to manager (laughs). But it depends on people, ambition and motivation. I don't want my child to always have to say- my mother is a cleaner. I don't want this. I simply don't want this.* (Kasia, 37, middle-class mother)

Back in Poland, Kasia had co-run a business with her father. The loss of status has been tremendously hard for her and while she tried to rationalize it, it was clear that she felt being a cleaner was beneath her. A few other parents, both from middle and working-class families, spoke about this sense of embarrassment and unease although not as explicitly as Kasia. Table 2 (page 79), illustrates the occupational changes experienced by the migrants and shows that many of them had jobs of higher status in Poland. Even if their economic situation had improved, they have lost occupational status and their social position, which had been established within their networks in Poland. Those who could not speak English were particularly prone to being socially marginalised. This helps us to understand why they had high aspirations for their children. The downward mobility of migrants is well-documented among Polish and other Eastern European migration in the UK (Trevena, 2008, Trevena, 2010a, Trevena, 2010b, Trevena, 2010c, Currie, 2007, Grabowska-Lusinska, 2012) migrants in the UK as well as among other migrant groups in the US (Mattoo et al., 2005).

Their loss of status was seen as a sacrifice and an investment expected to yield long-term benefits for the future of their children. The prospect of them gaining respectable employment and enhanced social status provided justification and helped them to rationalize their uncomfortable situation, it thus fuelled hope and aspiration.

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#### **5.4 Perspectives on the British educational system: are Polish schools really seen as superior?**

The parents tended to perceive the English educational system as providing a number of opportunities for their children to fulfil these aspirations. A few pointed out that English schools are more encouraging; the lessons are more engaging; the children are under less pressure; and there is an emphasis on rewarding achievements. A few parents expressed the concern that their children would have learnt more in a Polish school, but only one was worried about this. This contradicts the earlier arguments that Polish families tend to perceive education in Poland as superior and are generally discontent with the level of schooling in England and that some even send their children to take examinations in their homeland to keep their options open (Sales et al., 2008). The majority of my respondents thought that English schools made the experience of learning more enjoyable and that they were ultimately more effective at motivating pupils and stimulating genuine interest in the acquisition of knowledge.

*I think it's a very good school, they have a high level of teaching, they expect a lot and I like it. The homework is... I would describe it as creative. The child needs to show not so much his knowledge, what he learnt at school and read but his creative invention which is good. I am very pleased.* (Ania, 38, middle-class mother)

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*When he was learning about the War, they went to some museum, they got to dress up and did like a role play, run, hide, like soldiers. He was so excited, told me all about it! I think this is a great way to learn!* (Patrycja, 39, middle-class mother)

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*At the end of last year, Robert got a reward, actually two... He grew wings after this! He was sent on a trip. God, he was so proud! Or the other day, he got commend from religion, he got a little diploma... Last December, he came back from school with this. It's really motivating, when someone approves of you. (Crazyna, 48, working-class mother)*

There was also a popular perception that English schools were offering a more practical education and that by working hard within the curriculum would eventually lead one into desirable employment. The majority of parents were in favour of streaming according to ability, arguing that it allowed children to develop in areas of their interest. Earlier literature claimed that many Poles perceived the Polish educational system to be superior, choosing to return once their children reached school age or transferring the early years of primary school (Sales et al., 2008). Some studies have argued that many Poles are still uncertain about their future settlement plans which could have an adverse impact on the children's education and acculturation (Ryan, 2011b, Fihel et al., 2006). This was also a concern among some teachers whom I interviewed in the pilot study. In contrast, my findings suggest that a number of parents were actually convinced their children had better educational opportunities in England, and that returning to Poland could have negative effects on their schooling due to differences in the curriculum and a less supportive atmosphere. A few Poles were surprised in the knowledge that their sons were performing much better in their English schools than they had in their homeland. Monika illustrates this attitude:

*I'm happy he managed to adapt so well. That he's not stressed. In Poland, the pressure is huge both on the parent and child. Thank God for him, that we came here because.... in Poland he would never be able to achieve what he will achieve here... I think, God give! I see he has motivation. Back home, he would finish primary school, vocational school... And for sure he would stop at this. So*

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*here, we could say he has 100% better opportunities.* (Monika, 41, working-class mother)

However, this was sometimes a misconception, resulting from the parents' limited access to information and cultural misunderstandings when communicating with the teachers. Some of the parents did not understand the streaming system and overstated the performance of their children (this issue will be elaborated in the following chapters). In the quote above, Monika refers to another important factor which other parents had alluded to, namely the stressful nature of Polish education.

*Polish school is all about learning by heart. What's the point? The kids learn... without understanding just to pass the test, so many of them [tests] and unexpected... They need to carry all the books, heavy bags on their backs and sit all afternoon doing homework... And you've got to do it because if you don't, you repeat the whole year. It's not really encouraging, they learn by being scared and not by being engaged.* (Przemek, 41, working-class father)

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*I liked the school straight away because it was just so friendly. It wasn't hostile like in Poland- naked walls, locked classrooms and corridors. That's how I imagined it will be because I studied and worked in a Polish school and I know what it looks like. And here, it was just nice, colourful and lovely and these little kids in uniforms which I really, really liked!* (Patrycja, 39, middle-class mother)

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*Here, the teachers treat the children in a different way, they take care of them, I saw it when he went to primary school. They will give a hug and be friendly. That won't happen in Poland.* (Aniela, 49, middle-class mother)

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Parents tended to speak favourably about the teachers' approach to pupils in England and about the school-home relationships, often asserting that the pressure of Polish school can easily discourage children from learning. These positive perceptions of the English educational system together with belief in the opportunities and rewards for hard work established high educational aspirations. Similarly to their parents, the pupils were also content with their schooling and described it as less stressful and more enjoyable than in Poland. Smaller amount of homework and less frequent testing were reasons which illustrated the ability of the system to induce this confidence in learning. For many pupils, the recognition of effort and the emphasis on creative learning were equally important.

*It's even a pleasure to learn sometimes. I have some cool lessons, really cool. I like science the most because it's the first time I see how you can make, for instance carbon dioxide, how things explode etc... I do better here, the teachers praise me more here than in Poland. And this is good...* (Marcin, 15, working-class pupil)

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*The lessons are more useful for life here. It's not just learning by heart.* (Piotr, 15, working-class pupil)

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*At least we don't get warnings for parents, no red-marked copy books when you don't do homework. It's irritating in Poland! Instead, you get an assignment to do during the lunch break. And the whole break you do it. It's better, because for instance like I didn't understand the task, I spent my lunch there, with this guy from Maths. I didn't do the homework. And he actually explained everything to me. And I did it.* (Robert, 15, working-class pupil)

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Whereas arguably these quotes illustrate a positive attitude to their education in England, this was not always reflected in the participants' school performance (Table 3, page 187). In contrast to pupils in Moskal's (2013) study, who were doing very well at their English school, a number of my respondents were in lower sets. Their positive attitude to schooling could leave some parents (particularly those who did not speak English) deceived as regard the apparent ease of education in England. This will be discussed in chapter 8.

## **Chapter 6: 'Back home, he would never have achieved what he can achieve here': the Educational Aspiration of Polish Parents and their Children**

So far, I have discussed the motivations for Polish migration to Britain, migrants' perceptions of Poland and England, and the opportunities offered by these countries' economies and educational systems. All these factors combined have had a significant impact on the migrants' hopes and their determination. This was illustrated by the degree of educational aspiration among the parents, regardless of their social class. This aspiration is herein understood as hope, desire and objective which do not necessarily translate as action. A number of studies confirmed this phenomenon among economic migrants and ethnic minorities from different countries (Abbas, 2007, Strand and Winston, 2008, Shah et al., 2010) and it was generally argued that their high motivations for life improvement were translated into aspiration for education and careers of their children (Moskal, 2010, Moskal, 2013). In comparison, social background appears extremely important in shaping parental aspirations amongst the indigenous community and studies have found that white working-class natives tend to lack this strong drive for social mobility and consequently prioritise their children's happiness over academic achievement (Archer and Leathwood, 2003, cited in Shah et al., 2010, Irwin and Elley, 2011, 2013). On the basis of research in America, Lareau (2003, 2006 cited in Irwin and Elley, 2011, Bodovski and Farkas, 2008) made similar observations and argued that the middle-class adopted 'concerned cultivation' and saw their children as developmental projects whilst the working-class believed in 'accomplishment of natural growth', allowing children more flexibility and choice. My exploration of the past and how the experience of Polish

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migration has influenced their perceptions of the opportunities available to them in England is shown above. I have also illustrated how this sentiment was reproduced in pupils' accounts. I will now consider the issue of aspiration and argue that Polish parents indicate high academic aspiration in common with other migrant groups (Abbas, 2007, Strand and Winston, 2008, Shah et al., 2010, Crozier and Davies, 2006, Archer and Francis, 2006, Francis, 2005). This will be explored through a discussion of the parents' attitudes to higher education; and their hopes with regards to their children's schooling. The later concerns of this chapter will focus on the aspiration of young Poles; their goals and preferred pathways for achieving them. This will address the first question of my research, namely the Poles' career aspirations and their attitudes to education in England. The ability of Poles to actualise their aspirations and their resources for doing so, will be addressed in the following chapters.

### 6.1 Parents' Dreams of a Respectable Job

Having developed a sense that England offers opportunities and prospects which are commonly unavailable in Poland, the participating families appeared very determined to encourage their children to make the most of them. Almost all the interviewed parents had aspirations for their children to enter higher education. Patrycja who was the only exception, had a Master's degree from Poland and was currently enrolled on a Master's programme in England.

*Overall, I don't have any expectations of him because it's his choice and if he wants to be a hairdresser, he can be one as long as he does it well. But generally, when we talked to him, and my husband agrees, it's probably better if after he finished his A-levels... to not go to university straight away but start work, see what interests him and only then go in this direction... But if he wants to go to*

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*university right away, he will. Although he now says that he's off to the States and he will study there. The most recent news [laughs].*  
(Patrycja, 39 years old, middle-class mother)

Both Patrycja and her husband used their educational qualifications in their careers in Poland but they did not find their work satisfying at the time. Her husband worked as an accountant in England while she became a teaching-assistant (her degree at an English university was within the field of education). Their son was a high-achiever and they had great confidence in his ability to take the right decisions in his life. The family presented an interesting contrast to British middle-class families which, as research suggests, tend to have a much more controlling approach to their children's future (Irwin and Elley, 2011, Reay, 1998c, Reay and Ball, 1998, Ball et al., 1996, Reay and Lucey, 2004, Lucey and Reay, 2002). Patrycja prioritised her son's happiness and did not want to enforce her own ambitions on him. She accepted that a high-powered job would not necessarily bring fulfilment and she pointed out that whereas in Poland higher education is absolutely necessary to gain any reasonable income, in England it is still possible to be financially independent and successful without a degree. Indeed, this view was shared by most of the adult participants. One of the respondents joked, that in her homeland a Master's degree is required just to join the queue in front of the job centre. This is partially a reflection of the way higher education has developed within post-socialist Poland. It became cheap and widely accessible which expanded the market for it. There was a clear contrast between the descriptions of the realities of labour markets in Poland and England.

*Well, in this country, because here there are better perspectives and more opportunities... Because in Poland it's quite hard- there you need to know 4 languages to start with, right? [laughs] So it's harder there, you need to have studied a given university course,*

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*depending on the job. And here [in England], I think it's actually much easier. I think so. I don't know because... I don't have that much work experience here, just a laboratory and a hotel. But if you want to, you can develop.* (Sylwia, 38, working-class mother)

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*England, as a Western country, has lots of opportunities, different trainings and other things, which everyone can do and become a specialist, not necessarily with a Masters or Doctor title before their surname...* (Patrycja, 39, middle-class mother)

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*In Poland, you need to be educated for specific profession. Not here. It's about luck, relationships with co-workers and your personal charisma. It's not about education. Look, so many Poles have university diplomas and work as cleaners, just to make money... And others don't have anything and they're directors, managers. So I think university is not necessary for this. Unless you want to achieve something in academia... But I would be really sad if he didn't go, if he wasted his skills... The time at university is the most beautiful time, there's lots going on and one can express oneself creatively and generally...If you have a diploma, your personal value is increased.* (Ania, 38, middle-class mother)

Ania, quoted above, was one of three participants who had postgraduate degrees. Her comment illustrates that despite her background she too did not have an entirely realistic picture of England since she claimed that high-powered jobs did not always require a corresponding degree. She projected her own retail experience where the managers did not always have degrees, onto other professions, assuming that achieving high status employment in England was easier than it may appear. However, in contrast to Anita, Ania was very keen to see her son go to university. While she believed a diploma was not that helpful for a



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career, she perceived it as a value in itself and also a memorable life experience for a young person. Ania viewed having a higher education as a marker of personal achievement and an indicator of ambition and the ability to work hard. For her, going to university was seen as a goal in itself, an element of her biography and an individual strategy for personal development, and not merely a means to achieve professional success. She said she would like her son to do something that he enjoys and as such she would not persuade him to take any particular university course. Anita and Ania were quite unusual in this sense, since the majority of parents tended to be more pragmatic and to have some ideas about profitable careers which they shared with their children to a greater or lesser extent. They emphasised the marketable aspects of higher education. In the light of the previous discussion regarding parental concerns over their own low-rank employment, many stressed that they would like their children to do 'white collar' jobs: 9 to 5 high status work was their aim. Higher education was perceived to be a near guarantee for this kind of employment in the UK. Many parents were under the impression that the English were not as well-educated as Poles, and that in this supposedly less competitive environment, an academic diploma would make one stand out:

*It's not like in Poland, where every other person has a Master degree and no work. I like it here. From my short observation, I noticed that generally speaking not many English people finish university, at the Master level? I think that... having finished university he will have unbelievable work perspectives. Anyway, we [Poles] are used to learning.* (Aniela, 49, middle-class mother)

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*I would really not like him to work physically, like we do. So it's easier... well, no job is easy but let's say that he would have fixed working hours, from 9-5, weekends off... more time for family... I*

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*would like to protect them from hard work, like ours.* (Kasia, 37, middle-class mother)

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*It's well-known that if you're more educated it's easier to find a job... And here people are less educated. I wouldn't like him to do physical work... Firstly, because he's no good at it [laughs]. But he wants to be a chef, and it's really hard work...* (Kamila, 35, middle-class mother)

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*He's definitely going to a college and then I would like him to go to university. He mentioned polytechnic, engineering... I think that would be very good degree. Or computer science maybe, it's needed.* (Grazyna, 48, working-class mother)

Aniela's comment about being 'used to learning' referred to her perception of Poland as a place where there is a strong expectation of a university education. The respondents appeared to have brought the economically and culturally rooted expectations of higher education from their homeland into the UK, which they saw as a much more favourable environment for these professional qualifications to yield real advantages. A few parents thought that their children were more likely to go to university in England due to the engaging and encouraging atmosphere within the English educational system. The perception that technical subjects such as engineering and computer science offered better job opportunities made some adult participants try and convey this view to their children. The processes of persuasion and negotiation which took place at home will be discussed towards the end of this chapter. It is interesting however, that the two mothers who had Masters degrees from Poland and who were the most professionally successful in my sample, one being a teaching assistant and another working as a line manager in a retail shop, were the ones who did not emphasize the

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instrumental aspects of higher education, that is its ability to increase chances of better employment. This contrasts with Aniela, who also had a postgraduate degree but worked as a cleaner. It is difficult to draw broad conclusions on the basis of these two cases but it appeared that Patrycja's and Ania's relatively higher status within English society added to their confidence, and allowed them to focus more on their children's happiness rather than their future status. Those who worked in manual jobs were perhaps keener to ensure that their children would not share their experience and considered higher education to be the answer.

So far, I have argued that Polish parents, driven by their frustration with the economic conditions in Poland and a desire to improve their lives, tend to have a positive (and sometimes unrealistic) perception of the ease of access to opportunities in England. Whereas the majority are aware that due to their language limitations, age and short employment history in the UK, their own prospects were limited, they hoped that their children would benefit from migration more fully. These hopes and desires are often coupled with the parents' sense of frustration at their own position within the English labour market. Respondents aspire for their children to have a well-paid and high status job. Higher education was not necessarily perceived as essential for a high income, but the majority of parents saw it as a very important indicator for respectable employment. So we could say that Polish parents have high academic aspirations and they see England and the English educational system as a promising environment to realise these. However, their optimism can be something of a double edged sword, at once encouraging this hope but also giving a false picture of the amount of effort required to succeed. Furthermore, it can only yield tangible effects in combination with the right resources, such as access to information and the ability to navigate the educational system. It is also essential that these

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aspirations are shared with the young people involved. I will now focus on the pupils and address this question.

## 6.2 'I will have a car because I will have a family': Pupils' Aspiration

The research with pupils gave evidence of more diversified educational aspiration than among parents. The Wall of Life illustrated a range of desired future scenarios. Themes emerged in many artworks related to having a family, a good job and being able to embrace a lifestyle of consumption. A number of pupils made reference to owning a good car, a house and other material goods on their collages. For many, starting a family of their own was also a significant goal and an essential element of adulthood which echoes findings of a study among English young men (McDowell, 2002).

**Figure 4** Sebastian's collage

This work illustrates references to date of birth; school in Poland; migration to the UK; going to a new school; currently being in Year 10; having chosen GCSEs subjects; going to college in the future; taking A-levels; going to university; finding a job; buying a nice house

This was often linked to their masculine roles, as I will shortly demonstrate. While these objectives were widely shared, the boys



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presented a range of trajectories towards fulfilling them. Some of the collages illustrated very organised, academically oriented pathways focusing around College, A-levels, university and a good job that would lead to financial security. These however were in a minority, and pupils who chose to present their future this way were predominantly high-achievers who would be taking many extended GCSE's.

Sebastian's collage, illustrated on Figure 4 (page 161), is an example of this type of structured view of the future. Sebastian was a 15 year old, middle-class pupil with an integrative attitude to non-Poles, fluent in Polish and English and was one of the school's best pupils. In the section dedicated to his past, Sebastian focused on his place of birth and school, rather than more personal issues or hobbies as some other pupils did. He then referred to migration and his current school, listed the subjects of his upcoming GCSEs and wrote 'Pass GCSEs A\*-C' as his goal. College, where he wanted to do art, IT or 'maybe history' was the next step and Sebastian mentioned two renowned local colleges (names anonymised) as his preferred options. Further, he stated 'Then I want to go to university. Which one depends on the subjects'. He was aware that the status of universities varies and he explained that whereas he wanted to study in the UK, he was happy to go to another city to get to the best institution for his specialisation. He concluded with the words 'I want to be an architect or an IT technician. I want to have a family and lots of money'. Family was very important to him, which was evident in his discussion of the artwork as well as in the group interview and financial stability was the means to underpin this before having children. This was something that appeared in a number of other collages and I will discuss its link to perceptions of masculinity in the latter part of this section. It is worth noting, that Sebastian's comments were initially in Polish but then in English, following the reference to moving to this country. While describing his artwork, he was confident about his future.

For Sebastian a university education was assumed and he was convinced that he would be able to access this.

This work illustrates references to English primary school; Polish language; Polish teacher teaching English; current school; being in Year 10; having chosen subjects to take at GCSEs; going to college in the future; going to university and finding a good job

The posters are as follows (from top to bottom):

- Poster 1:** A drawing of a graduation cap with a yellow tassel. Text: "I am going to have to give the tassel at the end of the day".
- Poster 2:** A drawing of a black graduation cap with a yellow tassel. Text: "I am going to have to give the tassel at the end of the day".
- Poster 3:** A drawing of a black graduation cap with a yellow tassel. Text: "I am going to have to give the tassel at the end of the day".
- Poster 4:** A drawing of a black graduation cap with a yellow tassel. Text: "I am going to have to give the tassel at the end of the day".
- Poster 5:** A drawing of a black graduation cap with a yellow tassel. Text: "I am going to have to give the tassel at the end of the day".
- Poster 6:** A drawing of a black graduation cap with a yellow tassel. Text: "I am going to have to give the tassel at the end of the day".
- Poster 7:** A drawing of a black graduation cap with a yellow tassel. Text: "I am going to have to give the tassel at the end of the day".
- Poster 8:** A drawing of a black graduation cap with a yellow tassel. Text: "I am going to have to give the tassel at the end of the day".
- Poster 9:** A drawing of a black graduation cap with a yellow tassel. Text: "I am going to have to give the tassel at the end of the day".
- Poster 10:** A drawing of a black graduation cap with a yellow tassel. Text: "I am going to have to give the tassel at the end of the day".



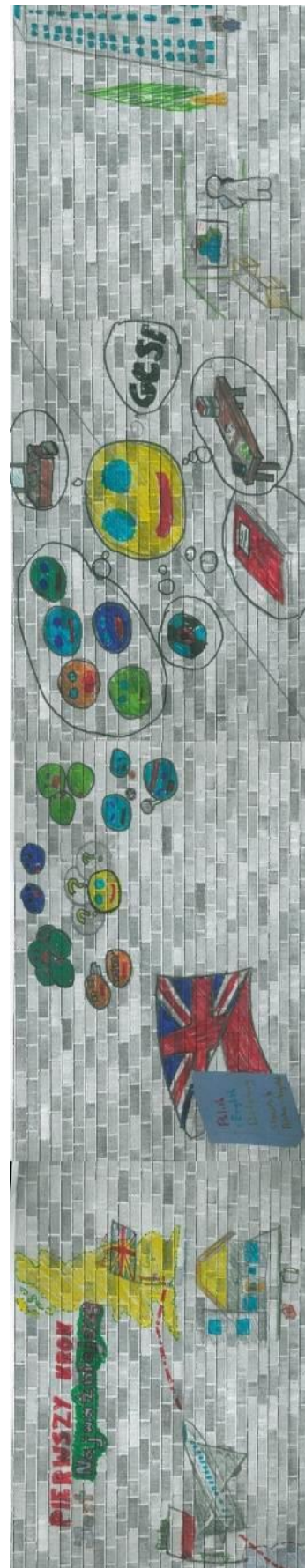
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**Figure 6** Heniu's collage

This work covers the themes of migration to England; learning new language; finding friends; dividing the time between friends and preparation for GCSEs; studying to become an architect; designing a remarkable building

Heniu's collage (Figure 6, page 164) begins with a reference to his migration to England and highlights the initial challenges of learning English and deciding which group of pupils he would like to make friends with. The section dedicated to his present illustrates how he tries to divide his time between socialising and recreational activity and necessary tasks such as homework and preparing for his GCSEs. The final section, focusing on his future, refers to his dream of being an architect. He was extremely ambitious, which is illustrated by the comment he made while discussing his collage:

*University is necessary for me. When I think about the future and who I would like to be, and what I would like to do... err... I imagine myself as an architect. And what I would like to do... maybe not be famous but do something big. That people will know about. When they look at some building in 20 or 30 years, my*



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*name will be there. Not like someone, who has their name under some small houses. I aim high, because if you don't, you will only achieve this and it won't get you anywhere.* (Heniu, 14, middle-class pupil)

Like the two other pupils, Heniu was one of the best-performing pupils in the school who did not entertain the idea that he would not go to university and was indeed very confident that, providing he does well at school, he will be able to realise his dreams. He was 14, had a middle-class background and separated himself from other Polish pupils, choosing friends only among non-Poles.

**Figure 7** Norbert's collage

This work illustrates past and current hobbies involving interests in dinosaurs, motors, and computers; the future section refers to working in the police or army as became clear in the discussion of the work.

Other pupils' artworks displayed less structured, less academically-oriented plans for the future and they tended to focus on their interests and hobbies, for instance, running a BMX shop, designing weapons, working in the army or the police, and designing computer games. One example, Norbert's collage, is presented on Figure 7





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(page 165). Norbert, a 14 years old middle-class pupil, was a student of average ability with an integrational orientation to his peers. He wrote his comments in Polish and rather than revealing his personal experiences or referring to the time he spent adjusting to his English school, his 'past' section focused on his interests in dinosaurs and motorbikes. He then illustrated his present with reference to leisure activities involving riding motorbikes and playing computer games. The picture of the man with the gun was labelled 'I like army and going to the army'. During the discussion, he clarified this, saying he took part in army youth training activities every week. He worked on his stamina and hoped to become a professional soldier or a policeman in the future, which is what the final picture and comment refers to. All of the activities he referenced could be considered to be typically masculine pursuits. This choice could have been influenced by his family and the fact that he socialised primarily with male peers. Norbert was not among the pupils who emphasized their masculinity to gain power. The picture of the car is accompanied by the comment 'I will have a car because I will have a family' which illustrates the strong expectation which Norbert, and indeed many other pupils, had with regards to financial security as a prerequisite for starting a family. The group discussion revealed that a good car was the ultimate symbol of financial and geographical independence, a vital material goal, and a prerequisite for a family man. The pupils' frequent references to car ownership in their discussions about starting a family of their own, powerfully demonstrates their sense of masculine obligation to be the provider.

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**Figure 8** Adam's collage

This work illustrates being clumsy as a child; currently spending most of the time at school or playing computer games and sports; having a family, a good job and a car in the future

Adam's collage (Figure 8, page 167) includes the same reference. He begins with a general comment about his childhood and the fact that he was very clumsy. His present is described in the context of attending school, doing sports and playing computer games. In the 'future' section, he writes: 'In the future I would like to start a family. I would like to acquire a good job and a house. When I have money I will get a driving license'. He also adds a picture of a young family, with a man protectively embracing his wife and child. Again, this is a powerful illustration of his expectations regarding the man as head of the family. Adam was a relatively new arrival, having arrived in England 1.5 years ago and he was not yet sure about going to university. He was a 14 year-old *integrated* pupil with a middle-class background.

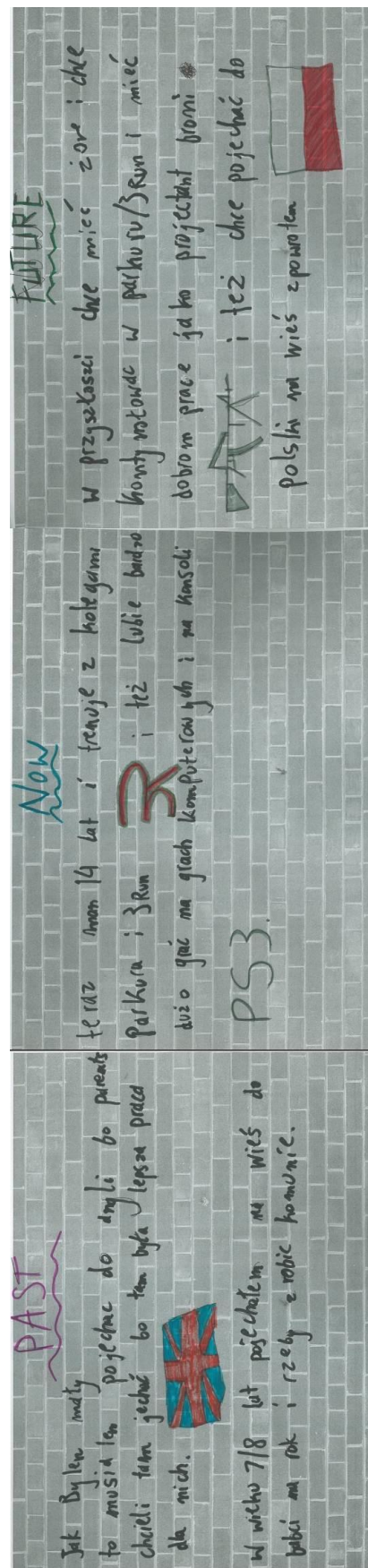


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**Figure 9** Rafal's collage

This work illustrates the fact in the past he had to move to England as his parents needed a better job; then returning to Poland for a year; currently spending time playing computer games and training Parkur with his friends; in the future having a family; continuing with his hobbies; designing weapons and going back to Poland.

Rafal's artwork (Figure 9, page 168) also includes references to family life. He was the only pupil who wanted to move back to Poland which is illustrated by the fact that he placed the British flag in the 'past' section and the Polish flag in the 'future'. He wrote 'When I was little, I had to move to England because my parents wanted to go there because they could get a better job. At the age of 7/8 years old I went to countryside, to my grandma for a year and to get First Communion'. Rafal was fairly religious and he certainly missed his grandmother and the quietness of a pastoral life. He was still unhappy about being forced to move to England. Like Adam and a few other pupils, he described his present with reference to his hobbies and computer games. Henceforth he wrote 'In the future I want to have a wife and continue with





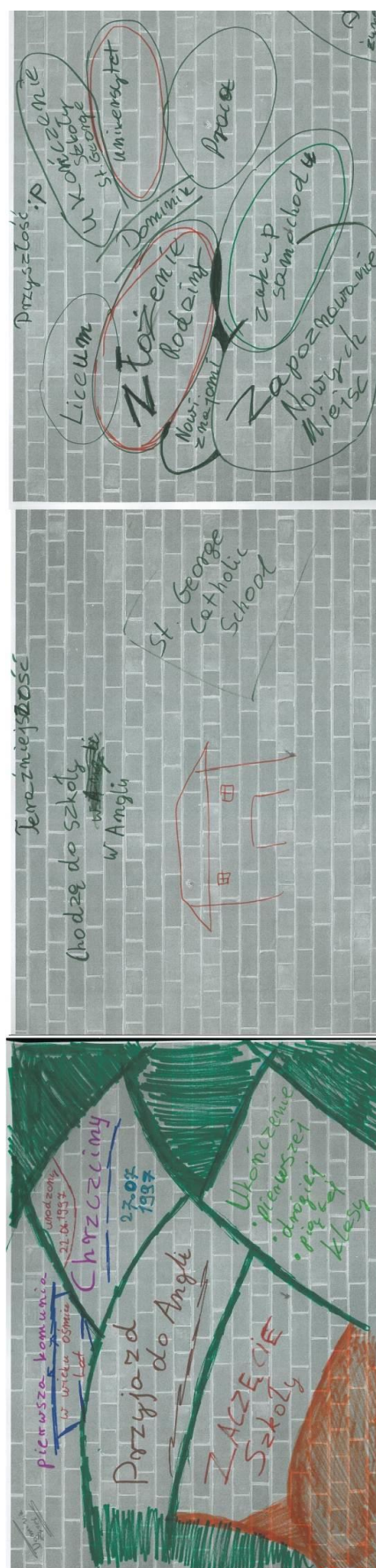
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Parkur/3Run and to have a good job as a weapon designer and I also want to go back to Poland, to the countryside'. Similarly to Norbert, he described typically masculine activities. Unusually, he did not explicitly link starting a family with financial security. Rafal's school performance was slightly below average and he was deemed an *isolated* pupil, as he separated himself from his English classmates. He was 14 years old and came from a working-class family.

**Figure 10** Marcel's collage

This work includes references to being baptised, getting First Communion, starting school, finishing 5<sup>th</sup> year in primary school and moving to England in the past; currently going to secondary school; and in the future finishing his school, going to college, university, finding a job, starting a family, getting a car, getting to know new places and new people.

Like Rafal, a few other pupils referred to their Catholic faith in the collages demonstrating its importance for their identity. Figure 10 (page 169) illustrates Marcel's work, where in the 'past' section, along with starting school and moving to England, he lists his



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christening and first communion as significant events. He does not say much about his present but lists a number of objectives for his future. These include finishing secondary school; going to college; going to university; starting a family; finding new friends; buying a car and getting a job. Again, the family was linked to financial security. Marcel had an average performance in school and came from a working-class background. He was 15 and built his social networks exclusively among Polish classmates.

In the discussions of the artwork some of the young Poles, like Norbert, revealed that they were already involved in activities that could help them turn their hobbies into careers. One of the pupils was running a website for fans of a particular computer game; and another was working on his BMX skills and looking for sponsors to get him more equipment. Some of these pupils still intended to go to university, an issue which was discussed following the art project, but not all have marked this on the collages. Many of these pupils were confident about their future and they tended to be optimistic about it, as Marcin is quoted below.

*I would really like... lots of people earn their money this way, they get new bikes, they represent brands... I like this and I would like something like this... Lots of people say- 'oh, you won't make it, you won't make it'. And I say-'we'll see at the end, who will have it all and who won't'. Because lots of people like to show off and don't have anything. And I will go slowly, step by step to get there.*  
(Marcin, 15, working-class pupil)

This youthful optimism is not surprising among 14 and 15 year old adolescents (Johnson, 1987). But the discussion of the artwork and the group interviews provided complementary evidence that these pupils regarded England as a place that gave them better opportunities to realise their dreams than their homeland would. These attitudes were

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certainly received from their parents, as I discussed earlier. Additionally, the fact that they were encouraged by their teachers to develop their hobbies and diversify their skills to a greater extent than in Polish secondary school, reinforced the idea of expansion post migration.

Seven pupils said that it was too early for them to think about their plans and they did not put anything in their 'future' section. Tomek's collage (Figure 11, page 171) is an example.

**Figure 11** Tomek's collage

This work illustrates the trauma and anger associated with moving abroad, the peace and acceptance of the situation at present, the big question mark regarding the future and a comment (in Polish) which can be translated as: 'I don't know what will happen. I hope nothing bad'.

His explanation of the work revealed that the first section explored the rage he felt when he was told he had to leave his friends behind and move to England. The middle, referring to the present, illustrates that he now feels at ease in his new environment. He then put a question mark over his future and commented 'I don't know what will happen but I hope nothing bad'. Indeed, he



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reinforced this attitude in the group and individual interviews and he repeated on many occasions:

*'I don't think too much into the future... I'm just trying to do the best I can for now and we'll see'.*

Tomek was 15 years old and middle-class. His educational performance was average and his orientation to the school integrational. He considered taking up cookery training after his GCSEs but he did not reject the idea of going to university to which his parents were trying to persuade him to do.

The group interviews provided additional information about the pupils' motivations. 14 out of 19 stated that they intended or considered going to university. This included both well-performing pupils and those who were as academically inclined. The main reason for this intention, as with many of the parents, was its route towards better job prospects, but a few pupils also mentioned the charms of student life.

*Better job, better qualifications...you find a job quicker... I think so, I'm not sure... but usually it's like this, the one with higher ed...education, gets a job faster, no? Than someone with lower education.* (Przemek, 15, middle-class pupil)

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*I want to study! You can get a proper job afterwards. And I heard a lot about the student life from a guy who used to live in our house. I want to experience it.* (Robert, 15, working-class pupil)

For these pupils, higher education served as a means to achieve financial stability and to realise their professional ambitions. Those who performed well at school, like Heniu, Sebastian or Przemek were generally more confident about their ability to study at university than these who currently struggled at school. There were pupils who aspired

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to go to university from both working-class and middle-class families although the proportion was higher for the latter, which is evident in Table 3 (page 187). However, on average, the pupils from a middle-class background were more likely to do well at school. Seven pupils were unsure about their plans and three said they did not want to go to university. Nevertheless, all of the students wanted to go to college and get further vocational qualifications. It was evident that they valued the academic route to adulthood and stigmatized physical, manual jobs and schools which prepared students for this kind of work. There were however some contradictions in their statements, exposing a degree of misinformation (which will be discussed in chapter 7). One of the groups in the group interviews appeared particularly interested in a local vocational college (herein referred to as Fairfield's College). It seemed that almost all the pupils from this cohort wanted to go there in order to be surrounded by their friends. At the same time, when I asked these pupils about vocational courses it became evident that they applied a certain hierarchy to their choice of pathways, with these courses being at the bottom.

Interviewer: *But this college, it offers vocational qualifications, no A-levels, right?*

Robert (15, working-class pupil): *Practical stuff?*

Interviewer: *So you're after this?*

Marcel (15, working-class pupil): *But what does it mean?*

Interviewer: *Work courses, vocational training.*

Marcel (15, working-class pupil): *Ah, it's like the lowest, like trade school! For a car mechanic or something! Just a job training.*

Krystian (15, working-class pupil): *Yes, it's for people like .... Stefan and Jacek, who can't manage!*



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It is likely that these hierarchies and perceptions were transferred to the pupils from their parents. While interviewing parents I encountered this attitude, particularly focusing on those occupations which involved hard-work. This is just one example:

*What I mean is that Mateusz would like to be a chef.... And this is a bit limited for me... In Poland catering school is among.... well, it's rather a worse type of school, for people who don't want to learn, or don't have the skills to learn. And he doesn't realise that it's hard, physical work. (Kamila, 35, middle-class mother)*

Vocational schools in Poland tend to have a bad reputation and are often perceived by the public as serving troubled youth and those who failed at school. Polish parents applied these assumptions to the British vocational colleges. At the same time pupils' hierarchies are also influenced by their school environment which tends to prioritise academic achievement.

### **6.3 Who chooses? The processes of negotiation over school choice**

The home interviews gave me an insight into the processes of negotiation that took place within Polish families. In most cases, the parents had picked their children's secondary schools, only in two cases was the choice made by the pupils. Seven of the parents admitted that a Catholic school was a priority. They hoped that, besides covering the curriculum, the school would also teach their children what one of the parents referred to as 'Catholic values'. Some also thought that such a school would be a safe disciplined environment for their children. The faith status of the school offered these parents a promise of cultural maintenance and increased safety in an environment where they had no

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or little control. For those who were new to England at the time of their children's enrolment at secondary school, it also provided a level of familiarity, as Monika's comment illustrates.

*It makes one feel a bit more confident, doesn't it? I think it's about it. It was an instinct, I don't know why. But maybe... some sort of shared understanding? I don't know how to describe it but when I heard it was a Catholic school it was an impulse to go and check.*  
(Monika, 41, working-class mother)

The majority of the parents also said that it was important for them that the school had a good reputation and was elevated in the league tables. Some gained this information from Poles, whereas others approached English people or did their own research. Regardless of their class and length of residence in England, the parents were concerned about the quality of their children's education and the potentiality of negative behaviour. As such, they tried to minimise the risk by accumulating knowledge of the educational system. They were able to do so to different extents, which I will explore in the next chapter. Choosing which college to enrol in was left to the pupils alone.

As I stated earlier, almost all of the interviewed parents wanted their children to go to university, but this was not always the case among the pupils who took part in the interviews (which was not solely the same group who participated in the fieldwork at school). The majority of interviewed parents admitted that the final decision at this stage would belong to their sons. This would be the likely scenario if the choice was made in Poland. They tended to see them as young adults who could not have their lives determined by parents. Only one interviewee said that she would probably choose the college for her son because she thought he was expecting this from her. However, this family had only been in England for a few months and possibly this would change as the son gained more confidence. Almost all the parents stated that, while they could not decide for their children, they would give them advice and try

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to influence their choices to ensure the best possible outcome. Some were already involved in discussions and negotiation, and used various strategies to encourage their children to follow the academic path. These included for instance, repetitive warnings about the hardships of physical work and the risks of unemployment; or by encouraging them with descriptions of wealth and other rewards which would become more accessible after gaining a diploma.

*I can't decide for him. It's a boy who will soon be 16, it's his life, his choice. He must choose what he loves, what will make him happy. If he did everything I wanted he would be miserable. (Ania, 38, middle-class mother)*

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*I'm trying to explain it to him... What education will give them [both sons], that they won't have to clean the streets. That they won't need to work for a minimum wage. That's why they're here, they can get education so that... if they dream about Mercedes they will have one! [laughs] So let's hope... Kasia, (37 years old, middle-class mother)*

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*I was investigating a bit, what colleges there are, where... I know where I don't want him to go! He doesn't know what he wants to do yet... He mentioned he would like to be a chef and that he would like to go to this very college I don't like. The problem is it doesn't offer A-levels, just courses... So two years of cooking course, and after this the A-levels aren't an option. Then it's too late. So I try to explain to him- 'come on, go to a college, doesn't matter which one... Then if you want to be a chef you can do this afterwards'. If he does it, then he can always go to university if he wants to. If he*

## Chapter 6: 'Back home, he would never have achieved what he can achieve here': the Educational Aspiration of Polish Parents and their Children

*doesn't, then he will not have this option...* (Kamila, 35, middle-class mother)

The parents generally tended to see their children as being capable of making choice about their future, although as Kamila's quote demonstrates a few were still concerned about whether they could make the right choices. These issues will be further explored when I discuss the migrants' access to information about post-16 options in the following chapter.

### 6.4 Discussion

So far, I have argued that the social background did not appear to influence the sense of educational aspiration among Polish parents. This is confirmed by the conclusions of other studies into different migrant groups (Abbas, 2007). Taking the risk of moving to another country was linked to a strong desire and determination to improve one's life circumstances and England was popularly perceived as a place offering great opportunities to do so. The parents were however aware of their own limitations and hopeful that their children, being in an advantageous position due to their young age and English education, would reach for these opportunities and utilize them. I have shown that the majority of parents had a pragmatic attitude to higher education and perceived it as the most effective way of ensuring financial stability and especially as a way of ensuring status. Their insights into the opportunities in Poland and England were largely reflected by the pupils' accounts. Almost all of them linked their future to England and depicted Poland as a place with very limited prospects. They were more heterogeneous in terms of their aspirations. The majority did consider or hoped to enter higher education but their confidence varied significantly depending on their school performance. Masculinity was emphasized through the representation of future ambitions on the Wall

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of Life and most notably, it was demonstrated through the pupils' aspirations towards hegemonic masculinity expressed by their perceptions of the role they will have to fulfil in a family. Almost all of them premise having a family on financial stability and being able to provide for their relatives, symbolically expressed through the idea of owning a car.

The thrust of this chapter has been to explore the aspirations of Polish migrants in the context of their experiences within Poland and their socioeconomic position in England. The discussion then centred on how these aspirations are negotiated between parents and their sons. Acculturation profiles were not influential as regards educational aspiration. However, when it came to the consideration of the pupils' access to useful information and support, they became very significant.

## Chapter 7: THE IMPACT OF PUPILS' ACCULTURATION ON THEIR ACCESS TO USEFUL CAPITAL

Having explored the educational aspirations of Polish families, this chapter will look at young Poles' ability to actualise their educational goals, accounting for the factors which influence it. Firstly, I will discuss the extent and the role of bridging and bonding social capital among Polish pupils. I will then consider the disparity in strategies for college choice with reference to the pupils' acculturation profiles and explore the relationship between social and linguistic capital. Finally, I will analyse pupils' use of language and their embodied cultural capital. The goal of this chapter is to shed light on the emergent processes of stratification amongst young Polish men making transitions to adulthood.

### 7.1 Bridging and bonding social capital: the implications for access to information

As a consequence of disparities in the orientation to the host society of pupils in the three acculturation profiles, the adolescent Poles had differentiated access to bridging and bonding social capital. Understandably, shortly after arriving in England, the majority of the respondents (except those who went to schools which had no other Polish pupils) relied on their co-nationals which generated bonding social capital. In the absence of English language skills, such contact proved an essential source of information and support. Many respondents spoke about the help they received and provided to other Polish pupils.

Group interview 2: *At the beginning, we didn't understand anything. At least I didn't. And I spent the first year with two friends, two Poles, they are also in this school... And they helped me*

*from the start, translated everything and then after a year when I got to know English better I stopped being friends with them so much... and now I mostly spend time with English boys. (Heniu, 14, middle-class, assimilated pupil)*

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*First weeks... they were a bit... I felt a bit weird because of... the new school and I didn't know how to behave because... it was weird, new people, new school. I didn't know the language. But there were a lot of Poles and they helped me so it was ok after all. (Marcin, 15, working-class, isolated pupil)*

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*Me, for instance, when I started to understand what's going on, at the beginning, you know, the language... First Poles were arriving and they didn't understand anything. So I helped them, sort of. (Rafal, 14, working-class, isolated pupil)*

The pupils often referred to sharing practical information, about the organisation of their English school; teaching each other basic vocabulary and providing translation and help during the lessons. However, whereas the *assimilated* and *integrated* pupils, after gaining basic language skills, felt more confident to move beyond their Polish circles, those isolated failed to accumulate bridging social capital. I have already looked at the reasons for this and I can now consider the implications. There was a significant level of mutual-help between *isolated* pupils. They continued to support newly arrived Poles or those with particularly poor English language skills and they helped each other with assignments and homework. Equally importantly, they provided each other with friendship and comfort which was essential for their psychological well-being. It is not my intention to paint an idealised picture of their relationships as there were of course conflicts among

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them and a few pupils reported instances of being bullied by their co-nationals, especially when they were new to the school. Nevertheless, their bonding social capital functioned as a helpful resource which also took a bit of pressure off the school, particularly with reference to translation. In the absence of bridging social capital, however, the close-knit networks between young Poles can become something of a double-edged sword. An example of its adverse consequences was the fact that pupils shared and reproduced incorrect information regarding one of the local colleges, where most of the *isolated* pupils intended to go to. The college, referred here as Fairfields College, did not offer A-levels, which these pupils, including those who wanted to go to university, were unaware of. This linked to the fact that unlike the pupils in the two other profiles, the *isolated* pupils indicated a very collective approach to choosing a college. When asked what would be their main reason for choosing an institution, the vast majority responded that they would go where their friends are enrolled.

Interviewer: *So which college would you like to go to?*

Tomek (15, middle-class, *integrated* pupil): *I still don't know...*

Maks (15, working-class, *isolated* pupil): *Fairfields!*

Piotr (15, working-class, *isolated* pupil): *Yeah, Fairfields.*

Robert (15, working-class, *isolated* pupil): *Yeah.*

Interviewer: *Why so?*

Robert (15, working-class, *isolated* pupil): *It's nearby...*

Piotr (15, working-class, *isolated* pupil): *Everyone is there.*

Krzysiek (15, working-class, *isolated* pupil): *All of my friends are there. They can smoke!*

Maks (15, working-class, *isolated* pupil): *We are all going.*



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Considering that, as I have argued before, these pupils avoided contact with non-Poles so as to not put themselves in a situation where they had no perceived control, these collective strategies are likely to be the result of their lack of knowledge and confidence. Through their separation from the majority, they created their own enclave and venturing out of its comfort when contemplating their transition to college must have appeared frightening. This is why it was so important for them to go to a college with many Poles, especially Poles they were already friends with. Due to their complex relationship with non-Poles which was characterised by a lack of familiarity, little contact and low-level hostility, these pupils mutually reinforced the collective enthusiasm for Fairfields College without considering how this choice of college would impact on their long-term goals. Indeed, the pupils were mistakenly convinced that they would be able to go to university straight after Fairfields (this transition was possible from all the other collages). As the home interviews also illustrated, many of the parents of these pupils had very little knowledge of the education system and were unable to advise their children on their educational options. Altogether, this has put the *isolated* pupils in a disadvantaged position with regards to access to credible information. As a consequence, some of them, through their educational choices, may unknowingly be depriving themselves of a chance to go to university. This was compounded by a poor relationship with their teachers which led to misinformation and an advice deficit; they rarely approached them for career guidance or information about college choice.

In contrast, the *integrated* and *assimilated* pupils both had access to bridging and bonding social capital. The former the more so, through their mixed contacts at school. The latter avoided their co-nationals in the school environment but still accessed bonding social capital through their families. Whereas for *isolated* pupils the bonding social capital was absolutely essential and an exclusive source of information and support, it did not appear to be as important for these other two groups. The

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*integrated* pupils drew on bonding social capital to establish some of their friendships and maintain their culture and language whereas for the *assimilated* pupils it was hardly relevant beyond their family ties. Bridging social capital, on the other hand, offered the *integrated* pupils increased access to information on the British educational system. For example, the majority of the *integrated* pupils knew about the rise in university fees, in contrast to the *isolated* pupils, many of whom were unaware of UK university fees, some believing that higher education in the UK was probably cheaper than in Poland, where public university education is free.

### Group Interview 1:

Przemek (15, middle-class, *integrated* pupil): *If everything goes well... I would definitely like to go to university, although it's expensive but I heard that they help. £9000 per year is a lot... But in 4 years, a lot can change, the government may come up with something new... It can go up or down.*

Sebastian (15, middle-class, *integrated* pupil): *But you can get a student loan.*

Przemek (15, middle-class, *integrated* pupil): *So we will see.*

### Individual interviews:

*I would like to study in Poland... It's easier... but England is cheaper...* (Rafal, 14, working-class, *isolated* pupil)

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*I don't know if I will study, it's too far ahead. I don't know how it all works yet, it's not the time yet.* (Adam, 14, middle-class, *isolated* pupil)

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*There are student loans so if my parents can't pay for it, I can borrow money for the fees because it's quite expensive now. (Feliks, 14, middle-class, assimilated pupil)*

The *integrated* and *assimilated* pupils also spoke about the specialities of different universities and the diversity of courses on offer. In marked contrast to the *isolated* pupils, they were also very specific in their approach to the choice of college which was made with reference to their needs, interests and future plans rather than choosing the college their friends were going to. The high-achieving pupils were more likely to consider what the college had to offer them, thus they positioned themselves as clients who were searching for a college that would best enable them to develop their future careers. Furthermore, having mixed social networks, these pupils had much more confidence in the pursuance of their own goals without relying on the support and advice of the wider Polish community. By spending time with English students, these pupils acquired strong language skills which generally improved their understanding of educational material as well as access to information. *They* also accumulated a valued form of cultural capital as they formed an understanding of the system, and availability and diversity of options at different colleges in various areas. At the same time, as Table 3 (page 187) illustrates, on average these pupils were in higher sets and all came from middle-class families, who themselves were more informed and engaged in their child's education. Below, there are a few quotes exemplifying this individualistic approach.

*I am not entirely sure yet... I thought about it a bit, to go to the Abbey College. Because I heard it's really good. I don't know yet. I will look at which college specialises in my course (Sebastian, 15, middle-class, integrated pupil)*

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*I am going to look at what interests me and which college is good for me... I'm not gonna go somewhere just because everyone else does.* (Tomek, 15, middle-class, *integrated* pupil)

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*It all depends on what it specialises in, whether it specialises in my area, no? And also how far it is from home...* (Przemek, 15, middle-class, *integrated* pupil)

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*What course... I look at what course I want to do and which college specialises in it, and that's where I will go...* (Sebastian, 15, middle-class, *integrated* pupil)

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*My secondary school is really bad because there are so many Poles so I want to go to college with the least number of them and I heard this one [local college] is good and there aren't many Poles.* (Alek, 14, middle-class, *assimilated* pupil)

The question remains why the well-informed *integrated* pupils did not transfer their accumulated cultural capital to those who were deemed isolated, through a sharing of knowledge. This could be because for many of these young Poles moving to college still seemed a long way off and they simply did not talk much about it with each other. This could change as final examinations approach. Furthermore, despite the availability of much information on the different colleges in the area and what they specialised in at the school, the *isolated* pupils seemed to ignore this information. Their choice of college was determined by short-term 'network maintenance' criteria, rather than through their long-term educational plans and career pathway. The differences in the young migrants' access to information are illustrative of the detrimental effects of the dearth in bridging social capital. It has been widely argued

that close-knit, ethnic networks and over-reliance on 'strong ties' could deprive the migrants of various resources, opportunities and access to information (Anthias, 2007, Portes, 1998, Ryan, 2011a). Furthermore, whereas I illustrated that these ties can, to some extent, be a source of emotional and practical support they are also associated with ghettoization and internal provocations of conflicts (Crowley and Hickman, 2008, Ryan, 2011a). This is evident in the school through the tensions between the isolated Polish pupils and their English peers– a problem that the teachers were struggling to address. Access to 'weak ties' is essential particularly if they cross social distance and connect people who are in a position to share this useful knowledge (Granovetter, 1983). The lack of these 'weak ties' among some of my participants is likely to have serious implications, as in the case of their choice of college. Even so there was no evident levelling effect in terms of group expectations since the pupils still aspired to go to university: the levelling effect is likely to occur later, when their aspirations would be affected by their poorly informed choice of college.

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Participants' Pseudonym and (Age)	Social Class	Acculturation Profile	English Language Skills	Achievement	Aspiration	Year of Arrival*
1. Przemek (15)	Middle Class	Integrated	Fluent	High achiever	HE	2004
2. Szymon (14)	Middle Class	Integrated	Fluent	Average	HE/ unsure	2004
3. Sebastian (15)	Middle Class	Integrated	Fluent	High achiever	HE	2007
4. Tomek (15)	Middle Class	Integrated	Above communicative	Average	Vocational/ unsure	2007
5. Norbert (14)	Middle Class	Integrated	Fluent	Average	HE	2007
6. Adam (14)	Middle Class	Integrated	Below communicative	Low	HE/ unsure	2011
7. Heniu (14)	Middle Class	Assimilated	Fluent	High achiever	HE	2007
8. Alek (14)	Middle Class	Assimilated	Fluent	Lower average	HE/ unsure	2007
9. Feliks (14)	Middle Class	Assimilated	Fluent	High achiever	HE	2004
10. Filip (14)	Middle Class	Isolated	Above communicative	Lower average	HE	2006
11. Maciek (15)	Working Class	Isolated	Above communicative	Low	HE/ unsure	2004
12. Maks (15)	Working Class	Isolated	Communicative	Low	HE	2009
13. Marcel (15)	Working Class	Isolated	Communicative	Average	HE	2007
14. Piotr (15)	Working Class	Isolated	Below communicative	Low	Unsure	2010
15. Andrzej (15)	Working Class	Isolated	Communicative	Low	Vocational/ unsure	2009
16. Krzysiek (15)	Working Class	Isolated	Communicative	Low	Vocational	2004
17. Rafal (14)	Working Class	Isolated	Communicative	Low	HE/ unsure	2007
18. Robert (15)	Working Class	Isolated	Below communicative	Low	HE	2010
19. Marcin (14)	Working Class	Isolated	Communicative	Lower average	Unsure	2011

**Table 3** Pupil participants' characteristics

\*Fieldwork took place in March 2012

## 7.2 The interaction of linguistic and social capital

The differentiated access to bridging social capital has another crucial implication– that is its close connection to linguistic capital. Even though the majority of pupils, except the three who had been in England for less than 2 years, could communicate in English there were differences in their proficiency, accent and confidence when communicating in the host language. This is evident in Table 3 (page 187) which clearly shows that the majority of the *assimilated* and *integrated* pupils were fluent English speakers whereas those who were isolated were more likely to be communicative. By this I mean that they were capable of dealing with everyday situations at school and understood most of the instructions from their teachers but they were not always able to understand the school material, including exams and other ‘tests’ and they were often hesitant in speaking English due to the fear of sounding childish.

Interviewer: *Do you feel fluent now? Do you understand everything at school?*

Marcel (15, working-class, *isolated* pupil): *Not everything...*

Tomek (15, middle-class, *integrated* pupil): *Not always, but if I don't understand something then I will just ask.*

Krzysiek (15, working-class, *isolated* pupil): *More or less.*

Marcin (15, working-class, *isolated* pupil): *Sometimes on a test I may not be able to understand the task and if I can I ask Miss Nowak but she's not always there. Or she can't always help.*

This would understandably have implications for their achievement in school, further limiting their access to information and undermining their confidence, reinforcing their separation from the majority. In contrast, the pupils in the two other profiles could build on their

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bridging social capital to constantly increase their linguistic capital which in turn made it easier to access information, progress at school and accumulate more of the benefits of bridging social capital. Therefore they could be described as being in a positive mutually reinforcing trajectory which partially explains why they were more likely to do well at school (although the issue is more complex since they also came from middle-class families and had different personal characteristics and abilities). The recognition of this nuanced and complex interconnection between these forms of capitals and the educational outcome for Poles and access to information too is part of my contribution to this debate. Two of the *assimilated* and two of the *integrated* pupils spoke English without a Polish accent which, combined with their white European appearance, made them virtually indistinguishable from their white English peers. All of these pupils have been in England for longer than 5 years.

The ability to speak Polish must also be given some attention in the consideration of language capital. It was important for the majority of pupils and all of the parents to ensure that the adolescents remembered their mother tongue, and this was for a number of reasons. Cultural preservation and the ability to communicate with extended family members were often cited as reasons. But, some of the participants also considered it to be an advantage in the labour market. Firstly, it was seen as an extra language to put on the CV and secondly, knowing two languages with different grammar structures at such a young age was perceived by some parents to be an indication of cognitive development which would make it easier to learn more languages in the future.

*The more languages you know, the easier it is to learn another one and it's very important that he doesn't forget Polish.* (Tomasz, 43, middle-class father)

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*For sure it's easier to find a job if you know Polish as well and not just English. It's an extra language. (Maks, 15, working-class, isolated pupil)*

All of the families spoke Polish at home, some watched Polish television and accessed Polish books and newspapers. A few of the adolescents also attended Polish Saturday School where they had Polish language lessons and learned about Polish literature and culture. In addition, two of the *integrated* pupils stated that they socialised with their co-nationals specifically to preserve their mother tongue.

*At first I didn't hang around with Poles because there weren't any at school... Err, I learnt English quickly, by being with English people and in half a year I could speak. And I remember I used to go to a Polish school on Saturdays. So I could understand some English and Polish... err... Now I'm at this school and I spend more time with Poles because I started to forget Polish... even though we speak Polish at home. (Szymon, 14, middle-class, integrated pupil)*

It was evident that some of the pupils struggled with their proficiency in two languages which was particularly apparent in their spelling problems, both in English and Polish. Even among those who were fluent in English, a few still made spelling mistakes which I observed in the 'writing task' during fieldwork. Furthermore, the pupils created their own language, based on a combination of the two languages in a way that made it comfortable and easy for them. They mixed Polish and English words depending on the contexts in which these words were most frequently used: their Polish home or their English school. This is consistent with Bakhtin's (1981, cited in Mabardi, 2010: 248) belief that 'each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life...'. Effectively, we are witnessing a form of creolization of the two languages. In linguistics, creolization happens when new forms of language are created through the interaction of two

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languages (Cohen and Toninato, 2010). The creolization of the English and Polish language was more common among the *isolated* pupils. The *integrated* and *assimilated* pupils would also mix the languages but to a lesser extent and the majority did make an effort to speak good Polish, at least in their conversations with me which shows that they were capable of it. The *isolated* pupils spent a lot of time together, and developed new words which they reinforced with use amongst each other. The *assimilated* pupils on the other hand, avoided the company of the *isolated* pupils, used English predominantly in school and were therefore not as exposed to this new form of language.

The familial impact was certainly relevant too. The *assimilated* and *integrated* pupils tended to come from middle-class families who, as I observed during the home interviews, generally spoke a more stylistically and grammatically correct version of Polish than the parents of the *isolated* pupils. The implications of this are such that the pupils spoke their mother tongue at different levels of competence. Polish was influenced primarily by their families and, particularly in the case of the *isolated* pupils, by their peers. Overall, it was the *isolated* pupils who appeared to use the most basic level of Polish despite paradoxically speaking it extensively on a daily basis. Whereas the pupils' mastery of their mother tongue was unlikely to directly help them in the English labour market, there is evidence that continuous development of the native language is linked to a more successful acquisition of the second and following languages (Collier, 1995). Therefore, those who understood the grammar and lexical rules of their mother tongue would be more capable of developing their English skills to an age-appropriate level. It is likely that the *integrated* and *assimilated* pupils would be able to expand their English language usage which, particularly in the case of the latter, may happen at the expense of their Polish. Those who were isolated however, faced challenges to achieve fluency in English, which was likely to impact on their employability and educational options, in the future.

### 7.3 Embodied cultural capital and whiteness.

I will now explore the issue of cultural capital, with a specific focus on embodied capital. I do not consider cultural taste within the context of the pupils as there were no significant disparities between the three groups on these grounds. Regardless of their class background, the Polish adolescents embraced popular youth culture, enjoyed TV shows and listened to hip-hop, metal and pop music. The differences in taste only became apparent and relevant in the case of the parents and this will be discussed later. Among the adolescents, it was the embodied form of cultural capital that was evident; most notably through the pupils' relationship to their whiteness; and their manifestations of masculinity.

The discussion of the notion of "whiteness" in the literature review demonstrated that it is widely recognised that whiteness tends to be unmarked, neutral and normative which accounts for its power (Dyer, 1997, Gillborn, 2005, Cabrera, 2012, Mazzei, 2008, Byrne, 2009). If we consider the whiteness of Poles, one would assume that potentially they would be in a favourable position as more likely to become 'invisible' and escape prejudice and stereotyping which is well-documented among other, non-white minorities (Abbas, 2007, Gillborn, 2005, Strand, 2012, Ferguson, 2000). My findings suggest that the issue is far more complex. I found that whiteness was not a universal privilege and the Polish experience of it varied. Their race enabled all young Poles to avoid being immediately noticeable. However, it was the *assimilated* and, to a lesser extent, the *integrated* pupils who were able to blend in seamlessly and become 'invisible' among the white English majority. The *integrated* pupils valued their Polish identity but they did not draw on it to differentiate themselves from other social groups, furthermore, they were not threatened by the idea that their new life in the UK had re-shaped their sense of self. The *assimilated* pupils actively distanced themselves from the Polish community and wanted to be perceived as

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English. As I will demonstrate through the course of this discussion, in the case of *isolated* pupils, the role of whiteness as a resource was rather questionable. These pupils intentionally highlighted their distinct national identity through their separation and loud use of the Polish language, and also through their style and physical manifestations of masculinity. Furthermore, the different level of contact with non-Polish peers has influenced not only their English language proficiency but also their ability to speak with an English accent.

The *isolated* pupils, including those who had arrived in England at a young age and had been in the country for more than 5 years, failed to speak English with an English accent. The intensity of their Polish accent varied but none of these pupils managed to get rid of it. In contrast there were two *assimilated* pupils and two *integrated* pupils who sounded like native speakers when they used English. All of these pupils had been in England for more than 5 years and this long exposure and frequent contact with native peers made them virtually indistinguishable from the white, English majority. Their accent, combined with their whiteness and expression of masculinity which was not constructed in opposition to English boys, enabled them to pass as natives (Butler, 1993, Ahmed, 1999). They could appear English to then express their Polish identity if they chose to (Butler, 1993). This could indeed be beneficial for them since they are more likely to escape racialization and exclusion, particularly in contemporary times, when migration from Eastern Europe is becoming a controversial political issue and when Poles are presented in some media as job and benefit thieves (Fomina and Frelak, 2008, Doyle, 2013, Slack, 2007, Hickley, 2008, Slack, 2013). Speaking with a British accent could also be an advantage for accessing certain jobs within the labour market. It is difficult to estimate whether the pupils who arrived in England at a later age would be able to acquire the accent but it is reasonable to expect that those who regularly engaged in contact with natives would have greater chances to do so. This again, illustrates the importance of 'weak ties' (Granovetter, 1983,

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Portes, 1998). It is important to recognise that speaking with the native accent is an aspect of embodied cultural capital which impacts on the migrants' ability to capitalise on whiteness. The interaction of linguistic and bridging social capital (discussed earlier) can produce this form of embodied cultural capital acting as a potential advantage in the field of schooling and employment.

The type of masculinity embodied and manifested by the young Poles is another expression of embodied cultural capital which has implications for the differentiated value of whiteness. The impact of masculinity on labour market opportunities has been explored in the literature with reference to white middle and working-class males in Britain (McDowell, 2003, Nayak, 2006, Richardson, 2010). My study offers a chance to explore this issue within the context of a white minority group. Earlier, I argued that the pupils' from the three acculturation profiles manifested their masculinity in different ways. Whereas the *integrated* and *assimilated* pupils defined masculinity in relation to financial independence or being able to support a family; the *isolated* pupils drew on performance of a more physical form of masculinity to gain power from their relatively disadvantaged position. This contributed to the teachers being wary and somewhat distanced from the *isolated* pupils. Before my first meeting with a group dominated by the *isolated* pupils I was warned by a teacher who said I should be careful because 'even though they are not bad boys, they are a loud and noisy bunch who may give you a hard time'. Through actions such as laughing and speaking in Polish in the company of English peers they were highlighting their distinctiveness and encouraging distance and hostility. As such they were rejecting the potential benefits associated with the invisibility of whiteness and reinforcing their position of the 'other'. This was not an entirely conscious choice but rather a predisposition of their habitus. In contrast, the integrated and *assimilated* pupils who all came from middle-class families and who received positive messages about the

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benefits of diversity, were much more at ease with accumulating bridging social capital. Both groups expressed similar ideas and embodiments of masculinity. They were much less vocal and physical in their performance than the *isolated* pupils and as such the integrated and assimilated groups could as a consequence appear more approachable than the isolated group. The fact that they did not feel the need to manifest their distinctiveness is likely to enable them to capitalise on their whiteness in a way that is inaccessible to *isolated* pupils.

It is worth considering how the pupils from different profiles may be advantaged or disadvantaged from these manifestations of masculinity in the labour market. The behaviour of *isolated* pupils and the image of self they were projecting could be seen as aggressive and off-putting in a service work environment, particularly in comparison to the pupils with more sophisticated 'social skills' from the two other profiles. The lack of the favoured type of embodied cultural capital among *isolated* pupils could potentially disadvantage them in the competition for service sector jobs. It is however possible that these pupils will be able to downplay the more aggressive aspects of their masculinity or negotiate it as participants of some other studies successfully did (McDowell, 2002, Roberts, 2012, Milkman, 1997). However, their embodied cultural capital together with a more limited linguistic capital as well as low level bridging social capital certainly put them in a more disadvantaged position in relation to the *integrated* and *assimilated* pupils. This was especially so since the combination of defensive overt masculinity, restricted social capital and poor linguistic skills will negatively impact on their educational attainment.

## 7.4 Discussion

This chapter contributes to an exploration of the complex relationship between different types of capital and their impact on the ability to access to information and opportunities. I have illustrated that whereas bonding social capital was useful for providing initial support and an exchange of knowledge, in the longer term, in the absence of bridging social capital it had adverse effects. The lack of weak ties deprived the *isolated* pupils of information about the English educational system which was powerfully demonstrated by their uninformed choice of college which could ultimately prevent them from entering university, which some intended to do. The friendships between middle-class *integrated* pupils and their working-class isolated peers did not present a form of bridging social capital since they did not facilitate an exchange of information or concrete educational benefits, beyond help with homework.

I have discussed the mutually reinforced relationship between bridging social capital and English language development and argued that in combination with embodied cultural capital, it generated significant differences in the pupils' positions. The combination of whiteness and an English accent, which some of the *integrated* and *assimilated* pupils had, made them virtually indistinguishable from the white, English majority. In contrast, through the negative attitude to non-Poles combined with their expression of masculinity, the *isolated* pupils actively differentiated themselves from others which impacted on their relationships with teachers and could also affect their position in the labour market. They remained what McDowell (2009) referred to as 'different shade of white', which could make them more vulnerable to racialization and prejudice.

In this chapter I hope I have demonstrated that the nuanced combination of adjusted accent, approachability and a more open

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attitude to other social groups– together with strong linguistic capital and an orientation to bridging social capital, places the *integrated* and *assimilated* groups at a distinct advantage in the UK education system. This contrasts with the accumulation of 'poor' social skills, manifested as negative characteristics and low social capital amongst the isolated pupil groups.



## **Chapter 8: ‘MERITS–SHMERITS AND WHAT NOT...’: POLISH PARENTS’ ABILITY TO REALISE EDUCATIONAL GOALS**

Economic and linguistic resources, as well as cultural and social capital are crucial determinants of a parents’ ability to support, stimulate, monitor and engage with the education of their children. As I have explored the educational aspirations and imagined projections of opportunity in England held by the parents, I can now move on to consider their actual ability to realise them. I have found that there were considerable differences in the Polish parents’ ability to understand and manoeuvre through the English educational system. As I will explore in the following section, their ability to do so was determined by the possession of useful resources: namely economic, linguistic, cultural and social capital. Consequently three groups of parents emerged, all characterised by different levels of engagement with their children’s schooling.

### **8.1 Economic capital**

Access to economic capital amongst the parents was characterised by relatively small disparities, compared to other forms of capitals. Economic capital is hereby defined as the living conditions and financial resources which can be mobilized to support a child’s education through, in particular, extra-curricular activities but also through providing children with books and other means for supporting their interests. The most significant differences appeared at the level of accommodation. Of the eleven participating families three owned their own houses, four rented houses (with only their relatives), two rented flats and two rented rooms in shared accommodation. One of the

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families currently renting said that they were looking into buying their own property and another spoke about this as an aspiration for the future. Having private family space was generally perceived as a priority and the majority of parents secured it before moving their children to the UK. Two families lived in shared housing with their children before moving into private accommodation and two, as I mentioned, still shared at the time of the interview. The latter, Grazyna and Paulina, were single carers, a mother and grandmother, both past the age of 45 with uncertain prospect for employment. One rented two rooms for her and her grandson Krzysiek, and the other shared one room with Robert, her son. The lack of space and having to negotiate noise with other tenants who have different lifestyles could have adverse effects on a child's learning. Similarly a lack of privacy, unstable living arrangements and alternating housemates could undermine young people's sense of safety and psychological well-being (Spencer et al., 2007, UNICEF, 2012). Paulina and Grazyna's position was very disadvantaged since, unlike most of the families who took part, they were the only ones in the household who could earn money and, despite Grazyna having a sister and Paulina an older son in the city, they could not rely on them for financial support. Furthermore, they had no concrete plans for changing their situation in the near future. The other parents in the sample were in a more comfortable position. Most of the families could afford to live in houses, either rented or owner-occupied and were pleased with their living conditions which were usually better than they had in Poland. Patrycja, Ania and Kamila mentioned that they lived in areas of their UK city which had bad reputations but had not experienced any unpleasant or dangerous situations. Their children were in a much more advantageous position than those who lived in shared housing. Considering that the majority of those interviewed at home and at school lived in private housing, my findings differ from earlier suggestions made by Sales et al (2008) that migrants often live in inadequate accommodation with little space for their children to study.

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Apart from the living arrangements, economic inequalities were not as striking. There were discrepancies in family expenditures on major items such as cars, or annual holidays but smaller, weekly–expenses such as club membership, were the same. Some participants, like Kamila, Kasia, Ania and Patrycja, had cars and could afford holidays in exciting destinations whereas others, like Sylwia, Monika or Grazyna, could not. However, if we consider what they were prepared to spend on their children's education these differences were not so pronounced. Sylwia, Kamila, Kasia, Ania, Aniela, Paulina, Tomasz and Patrycja sent their children to some form of extra–curricular activity such as Maths and Arts tutorials, Polish Saturday school, capoeira (Brazilian martial art) and football. Sylwia, Kamila, Ania and Aniela had also sent their sons to additional English lessons shortly after their arrival in the UK. Social class did not appear to influence the parents' willingness to spend money on their children and neither did it affect the types of activities. Parents would normally prioritise support for school subjects and English lessons, whereas the sport–related activities were usually their children's choices which they were happy to support.

*I have to try really hard to get him to go to extra Maths lessons... So he spends an extra hour on it, it's hard. I'm trying, I push him. He can hardly be bothered. Of course he's more pleased about being in the school's rugby team. If he has to stay extra time at school for that- he's thrilled!* (Kasia, 37, middle–class mother)

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*My son is very talented artistically, he's such an actor! And he can sing as well... I regret I didn't send him to dance classes when he was really young. He goes to art club now. And with his brother they also did some martial arts before, but you know, kids get bored easily!* [laughs] (Sylwia, 38, working–class mother)

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## Chapter 8: 'Merits–shmerits and what not....': Polish Parents' Ability to Realise Educational Goals

*He goes to football every Saturday which I think is good for his development, physical and mental. A sound mind in a sound body, as they say. (Tomasz, 43, middle–class father)*

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*We do capoeira together, it's really fun. We even go on competitions abroad sometimes. (Patrycja, 39, middle–class mother)*

Regardless of their material circumstances the parents were motivated and prepared to save money on other things in order to spend money on their children. Paulina, the unemployed grandmother who lived in shared accommodation actually asked me if I would be able to tutor her son in Maths in exchange for money. Furthermore, Ania, who sent her son to private singing lessons was a single parent of two children, working part–time and living in council housing. She also said that she would like to finance her son's higher education.

*As long as I can, I will support him... I would rather he focused on studying and the student's life which is so great, than on making burgers for someone in McDonalds! And then study for 2 hours after coming back from work at night instead of going out with his friends! So as long as I can... and if it's too much, then we will think about it. (Ania, 38, middle–class mother)*

It seemed, that the parents who would have experienced some financial hardship in Poland, were generally pleased with their circumstances in England and able to manage even on a relatively tight budget (McGhee et al., 2012). Naturally, not all invested in their children's extra–curricular activities but those who did not, did not do so because they experienced financial hardship in the UK; but simply because they thought that it was not necessary on top of regular school activities or said their children did not want to. Some of the pupils interviewed at school whose parents did not participate in the research, were also involved in extra–curricular activities. The adult respondents were happy

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with their ability to buy books and other materials for their children if they needed them but the adolescents rarely asked for such resources. In conclusion, economic capital did not appear to be a source of any significant inequalities in the access to education since the parents who wanted to invest in their children's extra-curricular activities were able to do so, regardless of differences in household income. This contrasts with the findings of studies into class difference in educational and extra-curricular activity expenditure among the non-migrant population (Covay and Carbonaro, 2010, Lareau, 2003, Bianchi et al., 2004, Bodovski and Farkas, 2008, Chin and Phillips, 2004), as well as some studies into other minority groups (Abbas, 2007).

### 8.2 Cultural capital

The inequalities became more evident when cultural capital was considered. In this section, I will discuss cultural capital as an attitude to 'high-brow' culture, the parents' ability to encourage it in their sons, and its potential impact on the child's education (Bourdieu, 1990b, Jenkins, 2002). I will also consider its institutionalized form. It was this form of cultural capital, rather than embodied cultural capital (which was my focus among the pupils), that proved more pertinent in the case of parents. There were evidently differences in taste and the types of activities they engaged in during their free time. This was the more so than among the children. Finally, methodologically, whereas the more ethnographic research with the boys allowed me to observe embodied cultural capital, this would not suffice with the single interviews of parents. The differences in the parents' possession of accumulated cultural capital (the ability to manoeuvre through the English educational system) will be considered towards the end of this chapter.

The Polish parents in the sample had different ways of spending their free time, had diverse interests, and different preferences for music and entertainment. Those, whom I categorised as middle-class, would

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typically express interest in art, classical literature and music. Anna enjoyed playing classical music on the piano and Patrycja played the clarinet. While talking about ways of spending their free time, many of these parents would talk about going to museums, visiting historical sites in England or going to the theatre. Ania, Anna and Patrycja also had institutionalised cultural capital in the form of higher education diplomas. In contrast, the working-class parents were far less engaged with culture, expressed no interest in literature or the arts and tended to spend their free time relaxing at home after work or socialising with family and friends during house parties, shopping trips, barbecues in parks or pub visits. They were excluded from many mainstream activities, such as going to the cinema, due to the language barrier. I did not find these tastes to be shared among the pupils who were preoccupied with popular, youth culture. At this point, the parents' attitudes towards cultural capital were not being directly transferred to the adolescents and as such they were not, at least in a literal sense, being operationalized as a practical asset or deficit which would have the potential to be identified or favoured by teachers.

I have found that there were also differences in the ways the parents spoke Polish. Using Bernstein's (1971) terminology, some used 'elaborated' and others 'restricted' language codes. Some parents built their sentences eloquently, taking care of the style and making sure that the context was clear. Others were more preoccupied with expressive value, not always finishing their sentences, describing their feelings with single words, using slang and assuming a shared perspective on the basis of my nationality. In contrast to taste, these codes have been largely transferred to their children, which resulted in the variation discussed earlier. There was a strong correlation between language use and taste which enabled me to form a fairly coherent class categorisation. As such, language and taste have been symptomatic of differences in social class and they have been further linked to attitudes to cultural diversity and perceptions of masculinity. I will not discuss this at a great length as I have already explored these issues in chapter

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4, while considering the parents habitus. I would however like to bring some arguments together and assert that working–class Polish parents have not only been more distant to non–Poles, which was at least partially linked to their English language limitations, but also far more likely to use racist or homophobic language. Three of the parents used words such as 'pedal' to refer to homosexual people and 'spotted' to describe Indians and Pakistanis. They did so as if it was a natural way of referring to these groups and they assumed that I too used these terms which is illustrative of restricted language codes. Whereas this is not evidence that middle–class parents did not have homophobic or xenophobic attitudes, if they did, they did not consider it appropriate to share with me. Some of these participants, like Patrycja, Ania and Kamila were outspoken against intolerance and talked about their own experiences of travel abroad, familiarity with ethnic music or literature in different cultural contexts. They clearly gained cultural understanding and tolerance from their family's values and their own experiences while growing up. Access to these resources has enabled these parents to accumulate a sense of cultural sensitivity and open mindedness which was not typical of the context in which working–class parents grew up with.

### 8.3 Linguistic capital

Possession of language capital has been another marked source of difference and inequality amongst the parents. Table 2 (page 79) illustrates the disparities, some participants being fluent, others less so and a few being unable to communicate in English. Interestingly, whereas the longer length of residence in the UK facilitated better language skills, social class appeared to be a stronger determinant of proficiency. The only middle–class parent who could not speak English had only been in the country for five months at the time of the interview and admitted that she was planning to take language lessons as soon as

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she was finished renovating the rented house which the family has just moved into. What emerged from the interviews with parents was an overall sense of embarrassment and shame caused by the loss of independence and having to express themselves at a level which was below their educational ability. This was particularly pronounced in the accounts of the middle-class parents, although two working-class parents expressed similar feelings. The difference was, however, in the way they responded to their situation. The middle-class respondents were far more likely to be active about addressing the challenge by taking lessons and forcing themselves into interactions with the host community. In contrast, working-class parents more often avoided these uncomfortable situations, remained dependent on interpreter's services or their children's help and lacked an active approach in dealing with their communication problems. A selection of quotes illustrates these differences well:

*It hurt me very much, that some lady, I mean the boss shouted at me that I'm an 'empty head' and all that [laughs] and I was thinking- 'not empty, I just can't speak English!'. And this motivated me to learn. It gave me such a kick- I cannot defend myself?! I cannot argue or at least express my stance or justify myself?! When I went back to Poland, I went back to learn English and in my entire life I haven't studied as hard as I studied English then! [laughs]. In effect, I could speak English when I came back. I don't understand people who are here for years and years and can't speak English. I don't know how one can live like this. (Kamila, 35, middle-class mother)*

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*First parents' evening, September, then we had a translator, who worked there as bilingual. So she came, but it was the only one time. After that I never asked anyone, we coped by ourselves. Because I was ashamed, that someone has to do things for me. My*



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*husband is the same. But only this one time, this parents' evening. Afterwards we did everything independently, going to the office to sort something out for the child, getting uniform, you name it. I don't even remember how we did it, but we did. My husband says that we are strong species! [laughs] (Patrycja, 39, middle-class mother)*

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*Miss Nowak talks to me at parents' evening because I don't know English [laughs]. I just get the results and if I have any questions... But Robert doesn't report anything, that anything is wrong at school, so it seems fine. But it's not as great here as people may think... it's hard if you don't know the language... hard to do anything by yourself... and to ask anyone is also hard, because it doesn't really fit... it doesn't always work. We just need to wait. (Grazyna, 48, working-class mother)*

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*I just ask my son to translate for me, like documents etc., whenever I see him. Him or one of the housemates. (Paulina, 56, working-class grandmother)*

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*It's true that my access to information here is a bit limited... I haven't thought about it much, but it's true. Even if there was like a digital contact book, where I could access information about him I wouldn't know what it means [laughs]. So it's more difficult. But it's my fault, because I simply don't know the language. For sure, when we're finished renovating the house and we settle here, we agreed with my daughter that we will pay someone, who will have patience for me, to speak English with me and teach me. So I will develop. (Aniela, 49, middle-class mother)*

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These disparities could be understood with reference to habitus which would explain why some respondents had the confidence to face a new situation, take an active approach and learn whereas others felt uncomfortable and unable to do so, hence they withdrew themselves from the field as much as they could. There were clearly differences in the sense of responsibility. This is illustrated, for instance, with Aniela taking the blame for not knowing English and planning to invest in lessons, and Grazyna saying that they 'just have to wait' which is a much more detached and passive approach. Three of the five working-class respondents in my sample could not communicate in English and a few working-class pupils whose families did not participate claimed that their parents did not speak English at all. These discrepancies can have important repercussions for the parents' ability to access information about their child's progress, their ability to communicate and collaborate with the school as well as their access to information about educational options. This will be explored in the latter part of this chapter.

### **8.4 Social capital**

Unavoidably, linguistic capital had further repercussions for the parents' ability to form mixed social networks. The lack of language competency, lack of confidence and the negative attitudes to cultural diversity resulting from some of the parents' habitus had limited their bridging social capital (Ryan, 2011a). Table 2 (page 79) illustrates the intensity and type of social networks developed by respondents. I focused on whether the participants felt they knew people in their locality who they felt they had ties with and on whom they could rely on for practical and emotional support. I did ask about the time they spent socialising with other people but this was not indicative of their actual social capital. A parent of two children, working full-time would often prefer to spend their free time with their family and only occasionally meet on a social

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basis with other people. This did not necessarily mean that they did not have useful social networks. With regards to their efficacy, I distinguished well-developed, limited and very scarce social networks amongst the participants. The former corresponds to respondents who were confident that they had many friends and acquaintances who they could rely on. Those with limited social networks had fewer such connections and were less certain of their reliability. Finally, respondents described as having very scarce social networks were those who felt they only had their family to rely on. In terms of the type of social capital, I found that some parents had both bridging and bonding capital, others only the latter while four participants were withdrawn both from the Polish and non-Polish communities. Ania stated that she only socialised with non-Poles and avoided her co-nationals.

*Well, I have a lot of friends. Just as I say, not Poles. So I meet them either at their homes, or at mine or we go out together so... I have social contacts just not like most of the Poles do. They're mixed. Not just English people. English people are, obviously, in majority. But also a lot of people from Morocco for instance, a lot from India, just mixed company. Very nice, friendly people. (Ania, 38, middle-class mother)*

Patrycja, on the other hand, had mixed social networks.

*Sure, I have friends both among other Poles and English people. Like there's this English woman, I met her through university. She's my good friend and her husband gets along with mine... they're both into car mechanics so they do this. And our children are similar age and they also like each other. (Patrycja, 39, middle-class mother)*

Kamila was more engaged with Poles but she did have some English friends and was not afraid of establishing mixed networks.

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*It's more often with Poles because... at first, when we first came- I cannot say- my husband's boss and his wife took great care of us. So we wouldn't be bored or isolated. They always invited us to bars, dancing, barbecues etc. We still keep in touch with them. I used to with some parents too, when I dropped my younger one at school. But I don't do that anymore and have less contact. But I have a lot of friends among other Polish parents and I am very involved in the Polish Parish and the Polish Club. (Kamila, 35, middle-class mother)*

Whereas Patrycja, Kamila and Ania had well-developed social networks and all gathered some level of bridging capital, Grazyna did not feel as confident about the reliability of her networks.

*I had to manage on my own... There are some people, acquaintances... If I ask, they can drop a word, say what to do... It's not like I am here completely, absolutely alone, no... And there are quite a lot of Poles in the city, so I can ask for help... of course within reason. The worse is nostalgia behind those who we left behind. (Grazyna, 48, working-class mother)*

Paulina was in an even more disadvantageous position, with very scarce networks.

*I don't know many people, really. Mostly I see the people we live with and my older son who lives in the city. (Paulina, 56, working-class grandmother)*

These extracts demonstrate the disparities in parents' confidence in their networks as well as their size and nature. It was apparent that the middle-class parents in my sample accumulated social capital with greater ease. Kamila, Kasia, Ania and Patrycja had well-developed networks which in the case of Patrycja, Kasia and Ania were also nationally mixed. Kamila spoke English and did not hesitate to approach teachers but chose to invest in relationships with Poles through her active involvement in a local Polish Club. Tomasz (middle-class father)

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had limited but mixed social networks, based in his work place and Aniela (middle–class mother) had minimal connection since she had only been in England for a few months when she was interviewed. However, she was able to mobilise other forms of capital which granted her access to information and, considering her short time in England, a relatively good position in the educational field. I will discuss this in the latter part of this chapter. In contrast, three of the working–class parents, Grazyna, Monika and Paulina had very scarce networks thus lacking bonding capital. Among the two remaining working–class parents, Przemek had limited networks with Poles only, and Sylwia had well developed networks but again only with her co–nationals. None had accumulated bridging social capital. This resulted from the language limitations and habitus with its associated lack of confidence and empathy with non–Poles, in turn reinforcing a lack of trust (McGhee et al., forthcoming, Ryan et al., 2008b). In addition, disparities in the levels of social capital have influenced access to information. Connections with a diverse range of people could enhance access to accumulated cultural capital as well as reliable information on schools and education in general. The Polish community networks can be very helpful in this respect and those involved in them did share their experiences and knowledge with each other. I have found some evidence of mutual help, for example through translation or providing information about schools.

*All the time, all the time! All the time, sometimes I'm fed up of it! [laughs] Sometimes I say to myself- God, why do I know English for! Application forms, translation, lots of people ask me... Maybe I will charge them [laughs]. But no, to be frank it gives me pleasure... Sometimes it's tiring. When I get back home I would like to rest. But someone comes - 'Kasia, you need to help me, can you call somewhere...'. Unfortunately, it's a must. Generally... but I like it, I can't say I don't, because I do. (Kasia, 37, middle–class mother)*

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*Yes I helped, like with school enrolment... Finding school... In terms of education, quite often someone will call and ask how it looks like- what a given school is like... or college. (Kamila, 35, middle-class mother)*

Another example was that many of the respondents expressed negative views on one of the local, co-educational secondary schools which also had a high proportion of Poles. It was clear that the perception of its low standards of discipline and learning was spread within the Polish community.

*I have heard very bad opinions about this school, about the discipline and Poles. We have Polish friends, whose children go there. So very negative opinions, that there are trouble makers etc... A friend's daughter went there and she got her tooth broken and got a black eye! [laughs] I've never been there but I didn't like this school straight away. (Przemek, 41, working-class father)*

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*I heard about this school... And I didn't have it in high regard. Jan [Polish housemate] also told me- anywhere but there because this is just a place for all those who can't get to any better school! Then I got information that he got admitted there and Jan called City Council for me to say that I don't agree. And at the end of July they said they will take him to Newman instead. (Paulina, 56, working-class grandmother)*

This is an illustration of how some information and perceptions were spread amongst the Polish community. Whereas this could be a helpful resource, sharing knowledge within a closed group increases the risk of reproducing limited or misleading information. Culturally and occupationally diversified social networks offer greater opportunities for verification and access to a wealth of different experiences and points of view which again illustrates the importance of weak ties (Portes and

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Sensenbrenner, 1993, Portes, 1998, Granovetter, 1983, Ryan, 2011a). The most disadvantaged with regards to this, were those with limited bonding capital. Their access to information was significantly restricted which had serious consequences for their position in the educational field. The local Polish Club could potentially play an important role in stimulating these connections but only two respondents went there regularly. The majority have either never been there or had negative experiences, like Tomasz.

*I've never been there, but my wife went there once. We rented a room which was exactly opposite the Polish club. She went once but didn't feel welcome at all, she said they didn't welcome her well and since then we keep distance. My son also went there and said he's never going back. It was for a children's carnival party. He didn't feel good there. He never went to the Polish Saturday school and didn't know these children. And he brought his English friend. Nobody talked to them, everyone just looked at them strangely, so they left feeling miserable. (Tomasz, 43, middle-class father)*

Similarly, the Catholic Church played a limited role in creating bonds between the Polish parents. Many of the respondents attended Catholic Church services in Polish but none had made any durable connections through it. Research among other ethnic minority groups illustrates that the community and faith organisations can be crucial for facilitating social networks and mutual help (Archer and Francis, 2006, Zhou, 2000, Modood, 2004, Shah et al., 2010). Shah et al (2010) emphasise that such institutions can generate cultural and social capital by enabling cross-class relationships. Their research also found that close co-ethnic networks protected young people from 'assimilating into the underclass, provide resources that facilitate access to good schools and promote academic achievement through the enforcement of familial and community norms' (Shah et al., 2010: 1112). Studies into networks among various minority groups support this argument (Crozier and Davies, 2006, Shah, 2007, Zontini, 2009, Zhou, 2000). This has not

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really been the case amongst Poles. Recent research among Polish migrants in Britain and other countries found a considerable level of distance and mistrust within this group (Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2005, Pietka, 2011, Ryan et al., 2008b, 2008). A good illustration of it is the quote of participants of other studies who said that a 'Pole is a wolf to another Pole' (Toruńczyk-Ruiz, 2008, McGhee et al., forthcoming). I have come across this paraphrase of the latin 'homo homini lupus' (a man is a wolf to his fellow man), during my own research projects in the past. In my interviews with parents for this study a few of those with scarce or mixed networks have said that they did not trust other Poles. The post-2004 Polish migrants are diverse in terms of age, in their reasons for coming, in background and social class (Garapich, 2006a). These differences, often coupled with financial problems and economic competition have the potential to fuel group divisions among Poles who fear being associated with people who may be very different from them but share the same nationality. As such, there are limitations to bonding social capital in this community. Most importantly, the existing networks did not really cross classes and were often short-lived and random which contrasts with the findings of Shah et al (2010). This prevented the flow of differentiated, useful information within the community and consequently disadvantaged the groups which were reliant on co-ethnic networks alone.

### **8.5 Parental engagement with the school**

I have discussed the different types of capital among parents, defined what they involved and considered their role in the educational field. I have also highlighted the disparities in migrants' access to these capitals, arguing that social class was a particularly influential factor as it affected the parents' acquisition of linguistic and social capital. The possession of these capitals very much defined the participants' ability to gather accumulated cultural capital which influenced their position in



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the educational field and consequently their ability to realise their goals. A prominent example of the differentiated levels of accumulated cultural capital was the parents ability to effectively communicate with the school. The contact between parents and schools is different in Poland. There, parents are expected to attend parents' evenings where they have an insight into all their children's grades and get a detailed account of any arising problems or areas that should be improved. And together with this, they are usually notified by tutors or individual teachers if their children are not progressing at an anticipated level. They are expected to monitor their children's homework and collaborate with the school to ensure the best results. If any problems arise, the parents are informed and invited to take action. Most importantly, communication is more direct and any concerns are openly laid out for the parents. This is illustrated in the quotes below, presenting different perspectives: of a mother and of an EMAS co-ordinator who used to work as a teacher in Poland.

*In Poland, it's completely crazy. I could have 10 children, if it wasn't for these schools. In Poland. So much pressure on the parent. Stress, non-stop! (Monika, 41, working-class mother)*

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*Polish school is a pain in the neck. So if I have problems with a child, a Polish teacher like me will automatically think: 'Ok, there wouldn't be problems if everything was well at home'. So for me... And I know it's like this in every Polish school... If there are problems with a child, first thing we do, we immediately inform the parent, with honesty. Tell them everything like it is. Whether it's about learning or conduct. The parent knows the truth. We don't put it in a silver packaging, just straight in the face. And then either we collaborate or often it ends up in conflict. Here, it doesn't happen like this. (Natalia, EMAS co-ordinator)*

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Research on white British working-class parents found that they are likely to experience difficulties when reading between the lines in their communication with teachers (Gewirtz et al., 1995, Lareau and Weininger, 2003, Lareau, 2003, Reay, 1998b). As immigrants, Poles are similarly disadvantaged with regards to picking up on the subtleties of a school's messages, particularly if we consider that their understanding of the relationship between parent and school is culturally-shaped and based on their socialisation and experiences of Poland. Nevertheless, I found that whereas some parents struggled to grasp these cultural differences, others were very aware of them. Having linguistic and social capital, particularly in its bridging form, made it easier to access the accumulated cultural capital through enabling migrants' to mix with more experienced and knowledgeable individuals and learn from them. Altogether, the combination of different forms of capitals put participants in very different positions in the educational field, affecting their ability to engage with their children's schooling and to realise their aspirations. While analysing their capability to do so, I observed and distinguished three groups of parents with different levels of agency which I labelled as the 'engaged', the 'withdrawn' and the 'reserved' parents.

### 8.6 The 'Engaged' Parents

There was a small group of parents who felt highly confident within the British educational system and who did not have any trouble engaging with the system to ensure the best outcomes for their children. Only Patrycja, Kamila and Ania fitted this profile. They could all be described as middle-class; two of them had Master's degrees and Kamila had vocational training. They have all been in the UK for at least 5 years and all were fluent in English although none of them knew the language when they first arrived. They learnt it when they migrated which indicates their high motivation to be independent and socially engaged.

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Kamila was a housewife, Ania a line–manager at a chain retailer, and Patrycja a teaching assistant who had the advantage of an insider's knowledge, personal contacts with teachers and understanding of the ways in which British schools work. Kamila and Patrycja owned properties in England and Ania was a single parent living in council accommodation. All of them had some links with so called highbrow culture– they enjoyed classical literature, Patrycja played clarinet and Ania has studied art and painting. In terms of social capital, Ania and Patrycja had mixed social networks, with Ania actively avoiding her co–nationals. Kamila preferred the company of Poles and was indeed very engaged in the Polish community. However, she was confident about contacting teachers and still had access to mixed networks, through her husband.

Therefore the *engaged* parents had high levels of linguistic and cultural capital. Their high volume social networks and access to bridging social capital enabled them to gain accumulated cultural capital, through learning about the educational system from other migrants and non–migrants. As such, they had a good understanding of the English educational system and they were able to critically assess the messages received from school.

*You know, they say he's a lovely boy, he's a lovely boy but it doesn't mean anything. Or the kids get these merits etc., but this doesn't mean much either, you can get it just for giving an answer to teacher's question. (Patrycja, 39, middle–class mother)*

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*The system is different in Poland. There, the teacher... if the child cannot manage with something the teacher will simply tell you about it and say- 'he must improve at this or this'. This doesn't happen here, nobody will tell you straight, no, just 'everything is great, everything is good'. They have grades, but they don't reflect much. He's got good grades. But then, he just had mock GCSEs and*

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*he did very poorly. And then when I spoke to the teacher, she obviously told me 'don't worry, it's only mock exams, he will do better for sure'. (Kamila, 35, middle-class mother)*

These quotes illustrate that Kamila and Patrycja understood the cultural differences in the school–parent relationship which provided them with greater agency. In the absence of effective communication between the school and the parents, the pupils may withhold information about their problems at school from their families. Kamila's accumulated cultural capital enabled her to take action when such an incident happened.

*There is this group in Newman... what was it called... It's for the kids who need help to adapt at the school. I didn't know anything about it, I didn't have a clue that it exists. And now, can you imagine my anger, when I drive my child twice a week for extra English lessons, I pay for it... And after a month I find out that my son starts the school by going into this group?! Because he's supposed to adapt at the school! He was losing two hours of English, Maths, History, and one easier lesson... I was shocked! Nobody informed me about it! This would never happen in Poland! He knew that his mommy won't like it so he didn't say anything. Especially since he loved it- they got tea, cakes, and spent time relaxing! It was just a slip of a tongue and I sensed something was wrong. Because he mentioned he was in a group with someone, and I knew he just came to England and didn't speak English. (Kamila, 35, middle-class mother)*

At this point, Kamila and her son Tomek had already been in the country for two years and she did not think that he was in need of special assistance. She went to the school and found out that his primary school tutor described him as lacking confidence which was then taken as an indication that he needed support. This conclusion was justified on the grounds that Tomek was always asking a lot of questions. In fact, he was very confident and did not shy away from getting into conversations

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with teachers. Kamila demanded to have Tomek removed from the group immediately. With her knowledge and understanding of the English educational system and her linguistic capital she was first able to identify the problem and then to be assertive and take action. Patrycja and Ania were similarly confident and active in their relationship with the school and they did not hesitate to approach the teachers to get additional information.

*I have a good access to information. Yes. I have a very good contact with the school, with teachers, no problem. Whenever I need something, because I am generally a very obtrusive kind of parent and I do it with pleasure [laughs]. So no problem, I always have access to the head of Year 10. I go and I talk as much as I need. (Patrycja, 39, middle–class mother)*

When choosing a secondary school they had all looked at league tables and Ania and Kamila had consulted the teaching staff. In two cases it was the mothers choice of secondary school, whereas Patrycja negotiated and followed her child's preference. Kamila described what variables she took into account while making her choice.

*We don't live in a very nice area. But kids from here go to the local school, because it's easier for their parents. Those who go to Newman are usually from around there. And now, if there are kids behaving badly [in Newman], they will stay there, in their neighbourhood, far away. My son will only be in contact with them at school, but not in the afternoons because they live in a different area. And he won't make friends with the troublemakers from our neighbourhood because they go to a different school. This is how I deducted it [laughs]. (Kamila, 35, middle–class mother)*

Kamila's quote is an example of a strategy for ensuring the best educational outcomes and protecting the child from the bad influence of 'troublemakers'. In terms of the choice of the college, the mothers were already aware of league tables and different educational pathways, with

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some colleges providing vocational and others an academic education. They were all inclined to discuss the choice of college with their children and encouraged them to make the best choice but they all stated that the decision was ultimately their sons'. They also knew about the costs of higher education in England and the recent increase in fees. They were able to monitor their children's progress and provide assistance although in two cases they did not think it necessary as the sons were performing very well at school. This group resembles skilled-choosers identified by Gewirtz et al (1995) in their study of primary school choice. Gewirtz et al (1995, Reay, 1998, Reay and Ball, 1998) characterised the group as predominantly middle-class parents who were confident in their understanding of the system and their ability to 'play the game'. They were also assertive and able to approach and negotiate with teachers to ensure the best opportunities for their children. In contrast to Poles and the English working-class, they also had the economic capital to move into the preferred catchment areas.

Given the longer length of residence, their habitus, characterised by a desire for independence and the ability to be active and to get involved predisposed them to acquire linguistic and social capital with greater ease than some other parents. The acquisition of these capitals and the accumulated cultural capital provided them with the agency to critically verify information about their children's progress and to get engaged in their schooling. Consequently, they felt comfortable approaching teachers and asserting their rights to be informed. They were therefore the most privileged among my respondents and indeed, particularly for rather recent migrants, they had an informed ability to manoeuvre through the system and take action to increase the chance of fulfilling their child's educational aspirations.

### 8.7 The 'Withdrawn' Parents

The majority of interviewed parents did not have as much knowledge and agency to pursue their goals. I identified two further groups, one of which was particularly detached from the English schooling system. The group involved Grazyna, Monika and Paulina. Grazyna and Monika had been in England for less than two years. All had vocational educations. Monika was married and living with her spouse; Grazyna and Paulina were single carers who shared housing with people they had not previously known. Monika also lived in shared accommodation until a few months before the interview. She was employed full-time, while Paulina and Grazyna were searching for work. All of these participants were identified as working-class. None of them could comfortably communicate in English which has put them in a particularly vulnerable position. At the same time, none expressed any concrete plans for learning the language and Monika in particular seemed to have an expectation that it is the responsibility of the school to respond to this challenge.

*I got angry, because he was ill, you know, and then there was this you know, penalty. She [teacher] told me there's a penalty, that for instance... And me... I call her and say that I want to speak to Miss Nowak, because I don't speak English and that Marcin will not go to school. She wasn't there. I say this and then it turns out... I don't know if someone passed it wrong or how they understood it. I tell her [Miss Nowak] to check that I did it. She said that if I call it's ok, but not if I write it in the contact book. And this book is for communication. And the teachers write there to me in English even though I don't understand it. So I wrote there [in Polish] that at this day Marcin was ill. For me, this contact book is to justify absences.*  
(Monika, 41, working-class mother)

On the one hand, Monika expected that Miss Nowak would be translating and facilitating communication between her and the school

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but on the other, she was not actually very assertive in expressing it. On another occasion, she said that the Polish TA was usually busy and that she did not feel that she should ask her for anything. There was a sense of bitterness about the lack of support but Monika did not do anything to challenge her situation and seemed to have accepted it. Her reaction was very different from the *engaged* mothers described earlier, who felt it was their responsibility to learn the language and therefore did not have any trouble in asking teachers for help.

All of the *withdrawn* parents spent their free time almost exclusively with their families thus lacking both bridging and bonding social capital.

*I don't really have friends here, and don't really know anyone who could for instance speak English. There're little Polish people here who can. And when they can, then I don't know them that well, to ask for help. We don't have the kind of contact where I could call and ask for a favour. Everyone lives their own lives. (Monika, 41, working-class mother)*

As a consequence they did not have access to reliable sources of information about the educational system. Their lack of bonding and especially bridging social capital hindered their opportunities to acquire accumulated cultural capital. A couple of respondents admitted that they tried to gain some advice from random sources, such as work colleagues, housemates or other Polish parents that they would meet in the street. In the absence of other resources, this may well be the only strategy for these Poles yet such information may be unreliable. Monika recalled an instance where her housemate provided her with misleading information regarding the meaning of catchment areas. The interviews revealed a considerable lack of information among the group who struggled to understand how English schooling works. Many, like Monika, were surprised how well their children were doing in Newman, compared to their schools in Poland. In reality, this was not always the case (Monika's son was actually in bottom sets) but the parents took the



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positive feedback, merits and diplomas, acknowledging the progress as an indication of actual achievement and not effort. Some simply assumed that education in England is easier and more engaging and that as a consequence their children are able to cope better. As a consequence of their lack of accumulated cultural capital, they were thus unable to 'read between lines' which could have serious consequences for their ability to gain a realistic picture of their children's education and to take action when needed. An example of this was provided by Natalia, the EMAS co-ordinator.

*Look, one of the boys I support, Szymon [not a participant], I'll tell you he's a very intelligent one! He's at the bottom, well below the target. He can't go any lower, at all of his subjects. So... hello?! In a Polish school, his parents would be called in as soon as he would be here... [pointing on the table, slightly under the target]. I got angry and I talked with the teachers, I demanded that his parents are called in. So in the end we called the mother... I cannot say anything at the meeting, I'm just there interpreting. It went like this- 'Ok, so... Thank you, thank you very much for coming! I'm so sorry we had to ask you for extra time but... We are a little bit concerned about Szymon'. And then 'He's a lovely boy, very nice... However he's got slight problems with learning and sometimes his behaviour is a bit different from the norm... But! We should remember that this is absolutely normal for a teenage boy. So everything is all right really, not much reason to worry, thank you for coming!' We left the classroom and the mother tells me 'why the hell did they call me for? To tell me that my son is typical and there's nothing to worry about?!' (Natalia, EMAS co-ordinator)*

To British, middle-class parents, the message would be clear. Being called into the school would most likely be a sufficient indicator that there are reasons for concern. For a Polish parent, socialised in a different way and used to different styles of communication it could be very challenging to read the school's intentions. Those who did not

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speaking English experienced further disadvantages. Natalia informed me that the pupil was later accused of sexual harassment at school. It is possible that this could have been avoided if the parents were involved and able to take action from an early stage.

There was also a level of uncertainty about streaming, the organisation of GCSEs, or even grades.

*To be honest, the only thing I heard is that he will have some tests in 3 months. But I still don't know... these merits-shmerits and what not, some levels, what is it, I haven't got a bloody clue! Even when they send me his grades, I haven't got a clue what this is about!*  
(Monika, 41, working-class mother)

Monika quoted above, did not understand her sons' grades and claimed that she was never offered any explanation or advice. She did not push the school or the Polish TA to provide her with information. It was her son who translated the letters from the school. This left her virtually excluded from his education. The interviews also exposed the fact that the parents in this group were not aware of different educational pathways and that not all colleges provided access to higher education. This was a concern considering that all of them said that they would like their children to go to university. Grazyna explicitly stated that she would like her son to go to one of the local colleges where many of his peers were planning to go to. She assumed, that the school's popularity indicated its good reputation. Whereas she stressed how important it was for her son to go to university, in contrast to the parents in the first group, she was not aware that this very college provides vocational training which does not grant access to higher education. Further, none of the parents in this group knew about the costs of university courses. There was also evidence of their lack of knowledge about educational entitlements, such as free school meals. Paulina told me how she found out about it randomly.

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*Krzysiek was bullied at school because I gave him sandwiches and a drink to take. So they wanted his sandwiches, those older ones. After the parents' evening I went to Miss Nowak to talk about it and she told me- but don't you know that Krzysiek is entitled to free school meals? And she helped me to sort it out, fill in the application and all that. So now he eats at school. (Paulina, 56, working-class grandmother)*

The respondents in this cohort were clearly in a vulnerable position. The *withdrawn* group stands in stark contrast to the *engaged* and it resembles Gewirtz et al's (1995) 'disconnected choosers'. In their study of primary school choice, Gewirtz et al (1995) identified a group of predominantly working-class parents who had very little information on the educational system, left the choice to their uninformed children and struggled in their communication with teachers due to a lack of confidence in contacts with authority. Within the UK context, there is evidence that working-class parents experience significant challenges in their ability to get engaged with children's education, and these are linked to the lack of economic, social and cultural capital (Bianchi et al., 2004, Bodovski and Farkas, 2008, Lareau, 2003, Ball et al., 1996, Lareau, 1987). The disadvantage of my participants was however enforced by the fact that they had moved to a foreign country. They lacked the experience of an English education, which they would have had in their homeland. Their lack of linguistic capital combined with a lack of bridging and bonding social capital deprived them of access to accumulated cultural capital. They were unable to communicate with teachers without the help of a Polish TA, unable to 'read between the lines' and unaware of the functions of the educational system in England. Consequently, they lacked agency which likely undermined any sense of confidence and assertiveness in pursuing their goals. This, despite their high aspirations, made them virtually excluded from their children's education.

## 8.8 The 'Reserved' Parents

Finally, the last group involved five parents, Kasia, Aniela and Tomasz who were middle–class and Sylwia and Przemek who had working–class background. At the time of the interview, Sylwia and Przemek had both been in England for 8 years, Kasia migrated less than 4 years ago, Tomasz 3 years ago and Aniela had only done so a few months before we had talked. Aniela still had very scarce social networks mostly due to her short time as a resident. Tomasz had limited mixed networks and Kasia well–developed networks mostly with Poles. The two working–class parents had bonding but not bridging social capital, Przemek's networks were limited and Kasia's well–developed. The parents in this group had a basic understanding of the system including issues such as grades, streaming and the organisation of exams. They would usually gain this knowledge as their children went through the system. Four of the parents could communicate in English and were therefore capable of contacting the school. Aniela who could not yet speak English claimed that she still felt able to communicate with the teachers, either through the Polish TA or the help of her older children, both of whom were fluent in English. She was indeed a quite remarkable illustration of the importance of class influenced habitus. Despite being in England for only a few months and thus having limited opportunities to gather accumulated cultural capital, Aniela was already familiar with the costs of higher education, student loan opportunities and the ranking position of the local universities. She established a very positive relationship with Miss Nowak and she did not hesitate to contact her about her son's progress or the options after the GCSEs.

*I am sure Miss Nowak will be able to advise me in terms of colleges etc. She has the knowledge. She's such a nice person, really! So kind! I was surprised when we first came, because in Poland they would be colder. (Aniela, 49, middle–class mother)*

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She knew how the school worked and even said that the choice of her son's college was down to her, since being so new to the country, he must expect this. She was very optimistic about the opportunities available in England, committed to a permanent stay and able to invest in language learning and had the confidence to seek information and assert her rights. However, she was not yet aware of the cultural differences in school–parent communication which was most likely a consequence of her short residence, lack of proficiency in English and lack of nationally mixed social networks. Most probably, she would become an *engaged* parent after spending more time in the country and accumulating linguistic and social capital, which she was motivated to do. However, at this point in time, her lack of understanding of the cultural differences in the working of schools could limit her ability to understand her son's actual progress and address any simmering challenges. The remaining parents either lacked this understanding or simply did not think it was necessary to get involved, beyond attending parents' evenings. The *reserved* parents could be compared to Gewirtz's et al (1995) semi-skilled choosers. They were not so lacking in confidence as the *withdrawn* parents, most had the linguistic capital but, as they expected the school to let them know if any problems arose, they did not see any benefit in chasing the teachers for additional information or adopting other strategies used by the *engaged* parents. I would argue that this group illustrated the relationships between length of residence and social class. Both of the working–class parents in this group had been in England for almost a decade and their ability to get involved was comparable to that of middle–class parents who arrived less than 4 years ago. This contrasts with the middle–class *engaged* parents who were all resident in England for more than 5 years and the working–class *withdrawn* parents who tended to be relatively new to the country. What this suggests is that the longer the length of residence the better the impact on the parents' level of resources and accumulated cultural capital, such as access to information and their ability to engage

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with the educational system, but class–influenced habitus determined the scope of the resources that were ultimately obtainable.

### 8.9 Discussion

The aim of this chapter is to consider to what extent Polish parents, whom I found to share relatively high educational aspirations, are capable of realising their goals. At the outset all of the migrants experienced difficulties and faced challenges associated with entering an unknown field with limited economic, social and linguistic resources. However the response to these challenges together with the capacity to develop strategies to cope had been strongly determined by the respondents' habitus and its ways of thinking and acting. Their predisposition to gather linguistic and social capital had particularly important effects on the parents' access to information about schooling, their ability to gain accumulated cultural capital and to realise their aspirations. I would question the importance of the parents' involvement in highbrow culture in this context and argue that it was a symptom of class and habitus difference rather than a resource in the educational field.

Whereas the longer length of residence would largely allow the parents to get a better understanding of the ways in which the English educational system worked, it was social class which proved most significant. Middle–class Polish parents were more confident in their encounters with non–Poles and more assertive and active about improving their position, which enabled them to learn English quickly and develop helpful, mixed networks. For these migrants, achieving language proficiency was a basic requirement to live with dignity in England and they saw it very much as their own responsibility. In contrast, the working–class parents were more inclined to rely on translation which was provided by the school or their children and, I have argued, was a consequence of their lack of confidence and a more

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passive orientation. Altogether, class featured prominently in the consideration of the parents' agency within English schooling which resulted in significant disparities in their parents' ability to get engaged with schools, to access information, assert their rights and make informed choices. Some possessed the type of cultural capital which enabled them to gain a very high awareness of the system and its cultural context and to engage in sophisticated strategies to achieve the best outcomes for their children. Others lacked the necessary cultural capital and were ambivalent as to the ways school worked and unknowingly made plans which contradicted their aspirations. Ong (1999) argued that we need to pay attention to structural factors enabling or preventing the realisation of imaginations. I have argued here, that migrants in different structural positions, despite sharing the imagination of the possibilities available to their children in England, differ significantly with regards to their ability to realise this imagination. For some of these families, lack of information and access to social and linguistic capital would have dramatic consequences.

## Chapter 9: **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

The above presentation and analysis of the data has addressed the research questions posed at the introduction to this thesis. I would now like to place my findings within the context of the wider debate and identify my contribution to this knowledge. This thesis adds to the research on the topics of masculinity, whiteness, Polish immigration and minorities in British education.

### **9.1 Masculinity**

#### **9.1.1 Masculinity and Culture**

Despite the visible presence of Poles, who are currently among the largest foreign-born population in England (ONS, 2011a), the issue of their cultural perceptions of gender roles and negotiation of masculinity within the new environment has not been explored in the literature (Datta, 2009, Datta and Brickell, 2009). As Datta argues ‘masculine identities and gender relationships as they take shape among Polish male migrants in the UK today are connected to their wider socio-political, historical and geographical contexts– the socialist state, the Polish Republic and the UK labour market’ (Datta, 2009: 5). Faced with the new reality of free movement within the capitalist labour markets in Europe, Polish migrants come into contact with different cultural archetypes and different economic realities. As such, their identities are influenced by both the cultural upbringing prior to migration and their new context and relationships after settlement. By exploring the perceptions and negotiation of masculinity among adolescent Poles my study offers a contribution to our understanding of these processes. While they were certainly being shaped by their parents and their



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cultural practices, they also came into everyday contact with their non-Polish peers who often represented different archetypes. Not only were they more exposed to diversity than their parents, their adolescent identities were also more fluid which offered a unique chance to explore the cultural negotiation of gender perceptions. I have discussed how young Poles' acculturation trajectories and their level of integration with non-Poles corresponded to their manifestations of masculinity. As such, one of the primary contributions of this work is an exploration of the dynamic processes of the migrants' negotiation and reconstruction of gendered identities, illustrating intergenerational differences and the importance of social class, the level of integration and, to a lesser extent, the length of residence in England.

The study found that the perception of man's role in the family and most notably the deep-rooted image of the man as breadwinner and provider were strongly marked in the pupils' aspirations for the future. This was particularly evident in the Wall of Life project where a number of participants linked their expectations of having a family to the condition of the financial security which they were hoping to achieve. This sense of responsibility for relatives surfaced in the accounts of pupils from different social backgrounds. Importantly, family is culturally very significant in Poland (Gramsci, 2003, Datta, 2009) and the majority of respondents referred to having a family of their own and being able to provide for it as one of the primary aspirations for the future. As such, having a career and good income rather than being goals in themselves were usually linked to establishing a family and being able to consume. This is illustrative of heteronormative aspirations towards hegemonic masculinity. There are some parallels here with the literature on British working-class youth (McDowell, 2002, Lloyd, 1999, Thompson and Holland, 2002). My study contributed to the research exploring the importance of employment for men's identities (McDowell, 2003, Willott and Griffin, 1997, Collinson, 1992) by looking at a new, previously unexplored migrant group.

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The desire to assume the role of breadwinner influenced the pupils' perception of academic achievement. The *isolated*, *integrated* and *assimilated* pupils shared similar aspirations for the future but had different resources to actualise them. The *assimilated* pupils had all the hallmarks of other dominant groups such as Mac an Ghail's (1994) 'Real Englishmen' but lacked the cultural ease and were characterised by the more open 'work ethic' of the academic achievers. Thus, unlike 'Real Englishmen', they did not claim superiority over the teachers but instead drew on them as sources of information and advice. The *isolated* pupils too did not reject education. Their open pursuit of hard academic work was a cultural pattern shaping their masculinity. A number of studies in England asserted that good academic performance is problematic for masculinity, which tends to mock effort and frame academic work as 'girls work' (Ferguson, 2000, Ofsted, 1996, Burns and Bracey, 2001, Jane Burke, 2007). Academic success is accepted if it appears to come effortlessly (Mac an Ghail, 1994). In contrast, my respondents recognised good academic performance as an ability to manage one's life and an ability that deserved respect. This did not mean that all of the respondents did their best to do well at school but they certainly did not ridicule those who worked hard to do so. I have argued that these attitudes have been largely inspired by their parents who installed this respect for hard work. In contrast, within the English working-class context, Burns and Bracey (2001: 163) argued that 'the parents of boys, particularly fathers, may seem to be compounding the matter by placing greater emphasis on the importance of employment and regarding academic success as less significant and in some cases, almost an effeminate trait'. As such, at least at the level of stimulating aspiration, some of the working-class Polish boys might be in a relatively advantaged position in comparison to their English counterparts. Similar observations have been made with regards to other minority groups (Shah et al., 2010, Modood, 2004, Archer and Francis, 2005).

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Another aspect of the culture of masculinity relates to its assertion of adulthood and heterosexuality. Masculinity is often constructed and reasserted in comparison to femininity and homosexuality (Pascoe, 2005, Pattman et al., 1998). A number of studies illustrate how homosexuality is presented as a threat to masculinity and how adolescent males use homophobic humour to secure their own status and position in peer relationships (Pascoe, 2005). I have demonstrated that the *isolated* (but not the *assimilated* or *integrated*) pupils made fun of the style and grooming that their English peers adopted, and described them as gay and not really masculine. This was contrasted with their own, 'pure' masculinity which valued only basic grooming and ruled out a preoccupation with fashion or hairdressing trends. Wojnicka and Mlodawska's (2011) research with Polish women found that they thought Polish men were ambivalent about their appearance and rejected an engagement with practices aimed at improving their appearance deeming this as feminine. Whereas there are certainly shifts of perception in the amount of grooming acceptable for a heterosexual man, notably expressed, for instance, in the advertising of the cosmetic industry, these changes are slower in Poland than in Western countries (Wojnicka and Ciaputa, 2011, Arcimowicz, 2011, Dzwonkowska-Godula, 2011). The *isolated* pupils emphasized their cultural distinctiveness on numerous occasions and they indeed defined their masculine identity in opposition to that of the English boys. Datta's (2009) study of adult Polish men working on London's building sites reached similar conclusions. She found that they constantly contrasted their own masculinity with that of English men although they constructed themselves as more sophisticated rather than more masculine (Datta, 2009, Datta and Brickell, 2009). Datta did not consider the issue of power whereas I argue that it was at the very centre of the process. The fact that the *isolated*, *integrated* and *assimilated* pupils perceived masculinity in different ways was not exclusively a result of a variety of archetypes linked to disparities in social class. Rather it was intrinsically

linked to the pupils' level of confidence and their positioning in the hierarchies of peer relationships, which I shall now discuss.

### 9.1.2 Masculinity and Power

Power struggles are certainly crucial in adolescent males' relationships (Foster et al., 2001). It is no coincidence that those of my participants who were isolated from the majority and dependent exclusively on their friendships with other Poles were the most vocal about asserting their distinct (and implicitly superior) masculinity. Their limited linguistic, social and accumulated cultural capital affected their ability to venture out of the comfort zone of their Polish group, in which they felt most powerful and hence inclined to emphasize this power. This was also the reason for their plans for college, which were driven by the desire to remain among their friends. There is some similarity here with research on the choices of British working-class youth, where it was argued that locality, familiarity and a sense of community were crucial as they offered security, comfort and a sense of connection (Gewirtz et al., 1995, Reay and Ball, 1998). Group solidarity can be a substantial resource for cohorts who experience disadvantage. In her study of British Indian women Bhopal (2011) too found that they preferred to stay in their national group as this offered security, support and comfort in a strange environment which is an understandable strategy. My study demonstrates that some of the pupils had the linguistic and cultural capital which predisposed them to leave their comfort zone and engage in mixed relationships. Those who did not, however, were not passive about their position and asserted their power using their bonding social capital. As a tight-knit group they shared practices, such as speaking Polish to intimidate others. This is a good illustration of Whitehead's (2002, cited in Coles, 2009) argument that men with less power draw on various capitals which they possess in order to get it. As such, the *isolated* young Poles could be described as displaying a form of protest masculinity which was based on ethnicity. Unlike Willis' (1977) lads who

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were protesting against middle-class order, the *isolated* Poles appeared to be protesting against their ethnic marginalization.

### 9.2 Whiteness

One of the primary aims of my study was to focus on a white minority group and simultaneously recognize their whiteness. The absence of whiteness is emphasised in the debates on race (Byrne, 2009, Dyer, 1997, Mazzei, 2008). It has been argued that whiteness is 'unmarked', it is the 'absence of colour' (Dyer, 1997), which cements its normative position and ultimately, its power. By recognising my middle and working-class participants as white, I contribute to the debate which challenges the normalization of whiteness.

Furthermore, by looking at a white minority I am able to make a contribution to the debate on white privilege. Lareau and McNamara Horvat (1999, cited in Byrne, 2009: 433) described whiteness as 'a type of cultural capital' and 'a cultural resource' which can be extremely helpful in the educational field. Interestingly, Eade et al (2007) found that recent Polish migrants consider their race to be an advantage which they expected would put them ahead of black and Asian workers competing with them in the labour market. My study shows that whereas whiteness can certainly act as a privilege (Archer, 2012, McDowell, 2009, Dyer, 1997) it is not universally advantageous, even within one ethnic group. I have shown that some of the migrants were able to successfully use their whiteness and benefit from the advantages of not being immediately noticeable. There was no expectation of behavioural problems or academic failure in ways that some of the non-white minorities have shown (Gillborn, 2005, 2000). Furthermore, these pupils (who tended to be middle-class) could enjoy their status without questioning their background. In contrast, while discussing non-white minorities, Archer (2012: 142) pointed out that 'minority ethnic middle-classness was described as a precarious position, one that was

## Chapter 9: Discussion and Conclusions

constantly being misrecognized by white society, as “working-class” due to the dominant equation of minority ethnic identity with poverty and social disadvantage’.

Others however, through their separation from non-Poles and conscious differentiation from the English majority, actively emphasized their distinctiveness and consequently placed themselves in the position of ‘the other’, inviting the creation and consolidation of stereotypes. This not only affected the way teachers viewed this group and put them further apart from their non-Polish peers, but it also increased the distance between themselves and their *assimilated* co-nationals who found these behaviours troubling. In her study of Polish builders, Datta (2009: 25) found that they too highlighted their ‘otherness’ through ‘gendered experiences of a socialist past, and migrant experiences within capitalist labour markets in the EU’. Her study and my own support Mac an Ghail’s (2000) critique of over-racializing the experiences of non-white minorities and the tendency to rule out the racialization of white minorities. While racialization was not the focus of my study, I found that pupils across the three cohorts were aware of the stereotypes about Poles and that teachers also had set views on the three groups. Some of the more recent studies have also found evidence of racialization as regards the new European migrants (Ryan et al., 2010, Smyth et al., 2009, Fox et al., 2012). Those of my young respondents who chose to highlight their distinctiveness may be particularly vulnerable to the experience of racialization despite their whiteness.

One of the conclusions arising from this argument is that whiteness does not privilege all migrants equally. This finding supports McDowell’s (2007) argument on different shades of whiteness. However, whereas McDowell (2007) discussed the concept using cross-national comparison and historical references, I demonstrate that migrants from the same ethnic group and migrating to Britain in the same context, can experience whiteness differently. Fundamentally, we must recognise the intersectionality of race and social class. As I have discussed in my

## Chapter 9: Discussion and Conclusions

analysis, the latter had implications for the pupils' acculturation. The three acculturation profiles were characterised by a different set of behaviours and orientations towards the host society. This determined the interactions with their English peers and teachers which subsequently influenced their reception. Class was also connected to embodied cultural capital which understandably influenced how the pupils were viewed by their classmates and teachers. The intersection of social class and race determined the extent to which migrants were able to really blend in or differentiate themselves from the majority and also their ability to turn their whiteness into an advantage.

### 9.3 Polish immigration: an updated picture

My study offers a contribution to our knowledge and understanding of the changing nature of the post-2004 migration from Poland to the UK. The growing body of literature focusing on the phenomenon looked at, among other issues, the migrants' reasons for relocation, their future plans and networks of support among them (McGhee et al., 2012, Sumption, 2009, Eade et al., 2007, Janta et al., 2011, CRONEM, 2006, Ryan et al., 2008b). Initially, it was found that the proportion of Poles with dependents in the UK under the age of 17 had only been around 4% (Home Office et al., 2007) but more recently it has been argued that Poles are among the migrant groups with the highest number of births in the UK (ONS, 2012), and the rapid increase of Polish pupils in schools suggests that a significant number brought their dependents over to the UK (DfE, 2008, Lopez Rodriguez et al., 2010, Moskal, 2010, Ryan et al., 2010, IPPR, 2008 cited in White, 2009, Ryan et al., 2009, Sales et al., 2008, Smyth et al., 2009, Moszczynski, 2011, Cook et al., 2008). Certainly, the character of this migrant group has been changing within the decade since Poland joined the EU and this study contributes to revisiting some of the earlier arguments.

## Chapter 9: Discussion and Conclusions

I found that the majority of respondents, both adult and adolescent, thought of England as their home and displayed no intention of returning to Poland. Certainly the fact that I looked at families with children, for whom migration may be more of a commitment than single individuals, is not without an impact here but studies such as this of Sales et al (2008) intimated that Polish parents often live between two worlds and tend to see their future back in their homeland. In contrast, Poles participating in this study developed geographical connections with their English city and felt an increasing estrangement to the lives they had in Poland. They moved into more comfortable, private accommodation and bought properties in the UK which contrasts with the earlier picture of shared rooms, overcrowded houses or dorms provided by employers (Spencer et al, 2007). My study contributes to our knowledge of the settlement and attachment processes of a major migrant group. Young Poles in particular are likely to see England as their home in Europe, as their memories and connections to Poland are much more limited than their parents'. It is very probable that in a few years' time the majority will enter the English labour market, with higher language proficiency and UK's qualifications, which would place them in a very different position to that of their parents. My study I hope offers a significant contribution to our understanding of the acculturation of this group and the inequalities arising amongst them at this early stage.

### **9.3.1 Polish community? Social networks and inter-group distance**

This study provides an in-depth exploration of the diversity of social backgrounds and levels of acculturation as well as the differences in orientation to the UK found among Polish parents and adolescents. The discussion of inter-group stereotyping and distance offers a contribution to the discussion regarding the strength of social networks and mutual support amongst the migrants. To date, studies have discussed the impact social networks play in facilitating migration,



## Chapter 9: Discussion and Conclusions

finding employment and easing the search for accommodation (Ryan, 2011b, Janta et al., 2011, Ryan et al., 2008b, Osipowicz, 2002), or easing the process of moving abroad with children (White, 2009). However, initially the strength of social networks in the Polish community has often been taken for granted (Sumpton, 2009) perhaps due to the evidence of the relevance of such networks among other minorities (Shah et al., 2010, Modood, 2004). More recently, studies began questioning the significance and strength of such ties and started to recognise the internal divisions, competition and mistrust within (Gill and Bialski, 2011, Ryan et al., 2008b, McGhee et al., forthcoming) as well as the lack of contact between the post-2004 migrants and earlier cohorts, including that from the Second World War (Garapich, 2008, Garapich, 2006b). Torunczyk-Ruiz (2008 cited in McGhee et al., forthcoming) described Poles as 'individualistic migrants' who are not interested in constructing and maintaining community ties. Smyth's (2009) study with Poles found that they often involved their neighbours or friends in acts such as interpretation or provided them with information. This, to some extent, was the case amongst my most disadvantaged and socially isolated participants but I found that the sources of information were very often random and potentially unreliable which could put these individuals at the risk of getting misleading advice. In addition, some respondents relied on their children for language support and information about their own schooling (Moskal, 2010, Sales et al, 2008) which would pose serious challenges to the parents' ability to form a realistic picture of their children's performance and also places considerable pressure on the adolescents. Overall, my thesis found evidence of very low levels of mutual support and limited trust in social networks amongst Poles. This, as I have illustrated, could have significant implications for the educational opportunities available to Polish families and their need to get involved in schooling.

### 9.4 The ethnic capital of immigrant groups

Social networks and the channels of information they facilitate is an important component of ethnic capital, particularly if these networks cross class divisions and connect the poorly-informed with those with knowledge and contacts (Shah et al., 2010, Shah, 2007). Shah (Zhou, 2000, Shah, 2007, Shah et al., 2010) stressed the role of religious institutions and community centres in facilitating such networks. I found that the local Polish club and the Catholic Church failed to encourage such connections and that the Polish community, characterised by high levels of mutual mistrust, generally lacked this resource which was found to be so helpful among other ethnic minorities (Modood, 2004, Shah, 2007, Shah et al., 2010, Zhou and Bankston, 1994). In terms of the other elements of ethnic capital, particularly 'intergenerational closure' (Zhou and Bankston, 1994, Zhou, 2000) and 'transmission of aspirations' (Modood, 2004), I found that these were indeed relevant in the case of Poles. Whereas this was a useful resource, which for instance many of the white, British working-class adolescents would not have access to, it worked to increase aspiration but it did little to translate into actual results. Similarly, 'norm enforcement' (Zhou, 2000, Zhou and Bankston, 1994) was noticeable, particularly in the fact that many participants wanted to bring their children up within the Catholic faith and taught them about the value of hard work. This was however of limited impact if the parents did not understand the educational system and were unable to monitor their children's performance and verify results. Those who were most withdrawn and who relied on their children to translate school documents and who did not understand streaming and grades, despite having high hopes for their children, were not able to enforce them. In the face of the deficit of cross-class support networks, these migrants were very vulnerable and their agency in the system remained limited. Altogether, the Polish community appeared very divided along the lines of class and taste difference. As such, we cannot really speak of ethnic capital in the case of this group.

## Chapter 9: Discussion and Conclusions

This is an important challenge, particularly if we consider that some Poles had a very good understanding of the system and were able to be very strategic about their children's education. Sharing these resources could significantly improve the migrants position within education, as research among other minority groups has illustrated (Modood, 2004, Shah et al., 2010, Zhou, 2000, Zhou and Bankston, 1994).

### **9.5 Conclusion: Aspiration and ability to realise goals**

I now conclude this thesis and attempt to answer its primary questions. Polish migrant parents displayed a high academic aspiration and attach high hopes to their children's future, assuming that it was the young people who would be able to access the benefits of migration to a greater extent. This finding is consistent with literature on aspirations amongst other migrant groups (Modood, 2004, Tomlinson, 2005, Bhopal, 2011, Shah et al., 2010, Strand and Winston, 2008). I have discussed how the Poles' past, perceptions of the UK and desire for life improvement translated into shaping these aspirations. Irwin and Elley (2013) recently argued that whereas it is well-known that parental aspirations can play a significant role for children's future, little is still known about the processes shaping such aspirations and how these are negotiated between parents and children. My study contributes to the gap in this knowledge as I also explore how aspirations are transferred to the children and how the parents' perceptions of opportunities in England and Poland are reproduced in the accounts of the adolescents. Polish parents appear enthusiastic and positive about the future opportunities available to their children in England as well as the country's educational system, which contradicts some earlier studies (Sales et al, 2008) but supports other recent investigations which found that Poles appreciated certain aspects of the English system such as a more relaxed atmosphere, free provision of educational resources, creative learning and the availability of support with child care (Trevena,

## Chapter 9: Discussion and Conclusions

under review). However, as I have observed, Poles' perceptions of England are often idealised imaginings. Some migrants appear to assume that, given that it is easier to survive on a minimum wage in England than in Poland, access to high-powered jobs is similarly easier. They lacked accumulated cultural capital which could have created an unrealistic picture of the ease of life in the UK.

Ryan et al (2010) found many of their key informants to describe Poles as confident and assertive in their contacts with schools which had a positive impact on their position within English education. Moskal (2013) found Polish parents to have an ethos of hard work and to be very involved in their children's education which, she argued, put them in a privileged position in comparison to other minorities and English working-class families. On the other hand, a number of other studies discussed and problematized the Poles knowledge of English education and their ability to engage with it (Lopez Rodriguez et al., 2010, Sales et al., 2008). My contribution in this debate is to recognise the complexity of the problem and to show the scope of the disparity in the migrants possession of useful resources and their abilities to pursue their goals. Rather than presenting a biased view, I have emphasised the importance of a nuanced intersectionality of class, race, acculturation and various types of capital which places some migrants in a distinctly advantageous position and which significantly reduces the ability for realising aspirations for others, making them virtually excluded.

As such, some migrants were able to use their whiteness, embodied cultural and social capital to improve their educational outcomes and consequently manoeuvred through the system surprisingly well given their short time in England. Others struggled to do so and, through their choices and isolation, have put themselves in a disadvantaged position. The socio-economic background of the family appeared to be the most significant determinant of the family ability to turn their aspirations into outcomes. This echoes findings of studies into other minority groups, which also found social background to play a crucial role for

## Chapter 9: Discussion and Conclusions

determining migrants' agency within educational system (Abbas, 2007, Modood, 2004, Shah et al, 2010). Furthermore, my thesis has argued that the problems of communication between school and the parents reached beyond linguistic limitations and touched upon cultural misunderstanding. This was found to be a significant concern, seriously impacting on some of the parents' views of their children's progress at school. This is something which has not really been explored in the literature and which certainly deserves more attention. Altogether, with the theoretical support of Bourdieu's sociology and Berry's acculturation theory I hope to have demonstrated the complexities and contingencies of aspiration and resources of this sizeable, white, new minority in English schools.

### **9.6 Implications and Future Research**

The findings of this research carry implications for policy and practice. One of the important challenges identified by the study relates to miscommunication between some Polish parents and their children's schools. This is partly influenced by a lack of English language proficiency but the problem has a deeper, cultural foundation. The different motivational practices adopted by educational institutions in the two countries are misinterpreted by many parents who consequently built an unrealistic picture of their children's performance. This could potentially be problematic for other minority groups too and it is important that schools recognised the challenge. An awareness and insight into the problem could enable teachers to communicate with parents more effectively. Polish teaching assistants could play an important role in both facilitating this communication and making parents aware of the differences.

In addition, the research found a significant level of misinformation regarding the more practical issues, including the level of education required for professional positions (to which many aspire) or the

## Chapter 9: Discussion and Conclusions

workings of post-16 education in England. This was prominently shown by the fact, that many pupils who aspired to go to university were unknowingly choosing a college which would not provide them with A-levels. These ill informed choices will have long-term consequences for these individuals and it is crucial that the flow of information is improved. Schools as well as Polish community centres and local charities supporting migrants can play a vital role in disseminating the knowledge and facilitating contact and support between the more and less knowledgeable migrants so as to empower them to make more informed decisions.

Finally, the study found notable divisions between many Polish and English pupils which could have a number of negative implications. They were a source of ethnic tension, challenging the cohesion and occasionally causing conflicts with the school. The teachers admitted that they felt the English pupils pressured them to address the problem (particularly the issue of speaking Polish) and were left without the tools to do so. Furthermore, the isolated Polish pupils were not in a position to embrace convertible bridging social capital, thus lacked linguistic and accumulated cultural capital. At the same time, Poles who had positive experiences of contact with English peers (such as through the 'buddy system') were more likely to later engage with them. As such, schools could facilitate these initiatives more thoroughly; encouraging deliberate mixing and cross-cultural education, thus mitigating the distance. This would benefit both the schools by improving the atmosphere and social cohesion, and the individuals by opening their access to information and convertible capital.

Given the importance of social networks for convertible capital, future research could investigate whether their formation varies in schools with a smaller proportion of Poles. The availability of a large group of co-nationals could have invited the separationist attitudes of the *isolated* pupils. Many of the *assimilated* and *integrated* pupils attended primary schools which had a small number of their co-nationals and this

## Chapter 9: Discussion and Conclusions

facilitated the formation of friendships with English pupils. It would therefore be worthwhile to conduct a comparative study of network formations in an institution where co-ethnic contacts are not as easily available.

Further research could also take a longitudinal perspective, exploring these aspirations and resources, to then assess how they translated into actual choices.

## Appendices

### Appendix A Ethics Committee Application Form

July 2008

#### ETHICS COMMITTEE APPLICATION FORM

**Please note:**

- You must not begin your study until ethical approval has been obtained.
- You must complete a risk assessment form prior to commencing your study.

**1. Name(s):** Daria Tkacz

**2. Current Position:** Postgraduate Research Student

**3. Contact Details:**

**Division/School** Sociology and Social Policy/ Social Sciences

**Email** dmt106@soton.ac.uk

**Phone** 075 0689 2769



## Appendix A

4. **Is the proposed study being conducted as part of an education qualification (e.g., PhD)**

Yes ☒ No ☐

5. **If Yes, state name of supervisor (the supervisor should complete the declaration at the end of this form)**

Prof Derek McGhee; Prof Pauline Leonard, Dr Charlie Walker

6. **Title of Project:**

‘On the way to social mobility? The educational aspirations and career pathways of Polish teenagers in English secondary education’

7. **What are the proposed start and end dates of the study?**

October 2010– October 2013, with fieldwork conducted between November 2011 and June 2012

8. **Briefly describe the rationale, study aims and the relevant research questions**

Following the EU enlargement of May 2004, we witnessed a large-scale economic migration from new Accession States (A8) into the Western Europe. The UK, along with Ireland and Sweden were the only countries to open up their labour markets to the A8 nationals with no restrictions. As a consequence, a vast number of migrants from new Member States, most notably from Poland, moved to the UK.

According to the ONS’ (2010) data on Polish-born population in the UK, the number has increased nearly sevenfold between December 2003

and June 2010, rising from 75,000 to 520,000. The scale of the influx significantly exceeded official estimations which were drawn prior to May 2004.

Whereas initially the majority of newcomers were young and did not have dependents in the UK, after finding reliable employment and accommodation, many Poles were joined by their relatives and children (Lopez-Rodriguez, 2010). Consequently, many schools, particularly in the areas popular among migrants, faced a very sudden influx of large number of Polish pupils. Considering that many of the children arrived 'straight from Poland' and had no or very limited skills in English, it proved to be a challenge for British educational institutions which had to address the needs of this new, sizeable group and facilitate communication with the Polish parents.

Unsurprisingly, the problem triggered a considerable interest in academia. So far, the discussions have focused especially on the general challenges and benefits of the influx, school strategies for supporting young Poles, and parents' involvement in schooling (Sales, Ryan, Lopez-Rodriguez, D'Angelo, 2008, Moskal, 2010, Lopez Rodriguez, 2010). The majority of academic papers tended to focus on children in primary education.

It is important to note that the rate of immigration from Poland has declined and the numbers of Poles in the UK have remained relatively stable since 2007 (ONS, 2010). Following from this, Polish pupils who are currently enrolled in English schools are rarely 'fresh' newcomers as the majority is more likely to either have been born in England or to have spent a few years in the country. This was reflected in my pilot study as I found that whereas Poles continue to enter schools, their experiences are different from those of children who arrived few years ago and who were transferred from Polish to English education.

While there is a notable body of research exploring the challenges faced by Polish pupils in the English education system, there is virtually no information regarding their achievement at GCSEs and their career choices after finishing compulsory education. In the light of this gap in knowledge, as well as the fact that the nature of the intake of Polish

## Appendix A

pupils has changed, the issue of their educational outcomes appears an important one to explore.

Recent research among Polish migrants suggests that children's education is often an obstacle to coming back to homeland and that many Poles who were initially planning to stay in the UK temporarily, are now settling down here to ensure the continuity in schooling. The question remains whether after gaining English qualifications the young Poles will be able to adapt to the Polish labour market and whether they will actually want to go back to the country, which may grow increasingly foreign to them. It could be that many families will remain in the UK, and that young Poles will enter British universities and the labour market as a second generation of post-2004 migrants.

My intention is to explore what kind of aspirations Polish teenagers have for their professional futures and how do their plans interact with parents' ambitions and ability to support their children through the system. I will then attempt to investigate how these aspirations are translated to the reality of school achievement and the choice of post-16 pathways. The concepts of parents' social and cultural capital as well as teenagers' agency and the limitations of structure will provide the theoretical framework in the study. Ultimately, I will aspire to explore whether any upward social mobility can be expected among the Poles.

The study could provide an important and contemporary voice in the debates on Polish migrants in the UK, and minorities in British education more generally. There is a considerable body of research on schooling of various ethnic minorities and their access to social mobility. The recent case of Poles could provide an interesting comparison with the previous migrants from Ireland, Pakistan or India and their whiteness could add an interesting dimension to the study.

The research questions are as follows:

- **What are the attitudes to education and employment of young Polish males and their parents?**

The primary goal of this thesis is to explore the educational and career aspirations of young Poles and their parents. The thesis will

discuss how these ambitions are influenced by migration experiences, the parents current social status in England as well as a families perceptions of the English labour market and what is achievable within it in comparison to Poland. Further, given my focus on masculinity, I aim to uncover how it intersects with ethnicity to produce specific attitudes to education. Finally, I will discuss how a migrant parents' educational values are transferred to their children and to what extent the children shape their own expectations.

- **What resources do Polish families have to support their children and how are these resources deployed to pursue educational aspirations?**

A number of studies have highlighted the challenges faced by immigrant parents and their children in the British schooling system (Abbas, 2007, Crozier and Davies, 2006, Moskal, 2010, Ryan et al., 2010). These included, most notably, a lack of English language skills and knowledge of the system, together with the absence of social networks with more informed actors. So far, little attention has been paid to Poles' ability to utilize their existing resources to realise their educational and professional goals (Lopez Rodriguez, 2010). My thesis will attempt to fill this lacuna by considering how Polish migrants, both adult and adolescent, draw on their social, educational and cultural capital to fulfil their aims. I will explore if factors such as social class and length of residence in the UK have an influence upon attitudes to education and employment. And further if these in turn impact upon the Polish ability to understand and negotiate the educational system in the United Kingdom.

## Appendix A

### 9. Briefly describe the design of the study

The fieldwork will be conducted in Southampton and neighbouring cities and it will consist of three stages of data collection, the details of which are provided in the research proposal.

In the first stage, I intend to conduct no more than ten expert interviews with secondary school and college teachers. This will be treated as a continuation of the pilot study which I undertook a few months ago as I will attempt to further explore some of its initial findings. The interviews will serve primarily to explore the issues captured in the first research question and they will focus on teachers' perceptions of Polish pupils' achievement; their progress in English; overall behaviour and attitude to school; and the level of their integration with English peers as well as other minority pupils. This should hopefully provide me with a realistic picture of students' performance and their status within the school. I intend to investigate whether schools provide any career guidance to their pupils, and if young Poles take advantage of such support. Additionally, the interviews should give a chance to assess whether teachers view Polish students as ambitious and motivated learners and how they perceive parents' involvement in children's schooling. These findings can then be compared with the conclusions of further stages of the fieldwork which should offer a more objective and realistic picture of the situation.

Following from this, the second stage of the fieldwork will focus on Polish pupils and the second research question. The sessions will start with a group interview. An informal discussion with me, in a peer group, should provide the participants with a comfortable environment and help to establish the rapport. The group interview will focus on pupils' perceptions of their school, the career advice and guidance available to them, and their relationships with teachers. I will also try to explore if there are any shared feelings with regards to further education and the British labour market.

Further, I intend to ask my participants to create a group blog focusing on their career aspirations and plans for when they finish school. I would like to find out what kind of professions they are interested in,

what they do or plan to do to achieve their goals, what sort of support they receive and where from, and what obstacles and uncertainties they face in the final years of their school. The blog will include a survey, a movie created by the students, and a forum.

The survey will consist of a few general questions concerned with, for instance, what do the pupils intend to do after finishing school, whether and where they would like to continue their studies, what subjects they struggle with, whether they find English school difficult and what they like about it. The draft of the questionnaire is attached however it may be altered after discussions with the pupils. The survey data will be gathered by two student volunteers. This should ease some access issues and importantly, make the pupils more involved in the project.

Further, the pupils will be asked to make a video focused on their experiences and perceptions of British school. The topic of the project will be specified at a later stage, during the discussions with students. The video will then be published on the blog, which will hopefully provide a stimulus for discussion on the forum.

The forum will be an essential part of the blog. It is intended to provide a platform for communication, where students can discuss issues related to their exams and future career plans as well as the research project. Additionally, the forum will enable the pupils to communicate with me easily should they have any questions about the study or their participation in it.

I would also like to invite between 5–10 pupils in each school to take part in interviews. These should give me a chance to explore individual experiences, problems and perspectives in greater depth and to clear any ambiguities on the spot.

Finally, at the end of my fieldwork in schools, students will also be asked to produce a short piece of text or artwork on where they see themselves in a few years' time. This could potentially provide an exciting insight into students' perspectives on the future and reveal to what extent they consider the current economic situation and other external restraints in the process of visualising their future.

## Appendix A

The third research question will be addressed in the final stage of the fieldwork conducted among Polish parents. Firstly, I intend to organise a maximum of two focus groups with parents of children enrolled in each school involved in the research. The aim will be to verify whether there are any group solidarities and feelings of shared positioning within the foreign schooling system. Additionally, the focus groups could highlight mutual help within the community and the social networks among parents. The discussions could also reveal possible differences in attitudes to education and their relationship with social class. Interviews on the other hand will serve as a tool for a more detailed exploration of parents' perspectives within their individual contexts. I would like to investigate how educational decisions are made within the households, how parents' personal experiences with schooling are reflected in their attitudes to child's education, and how social and cultural capital influence their feeling of power within the system. Hopefully the interviews will enable the parents to share personal experiences and views which are not always readily expressed in a group context.

### **10. Who are the participants?**

- Teachers in secondary schools and colleges in Southampton and surrounding cities
- Polish teenagers aged between 14–18
- Polish parents

### **11. How will they be identified, approached and recruited to the study?**

*(please attach a copy of the information sheet if you are using one)*

I intend to negotiate access with two secondary schools and one 6<sup>th</sup> Form College by approaching school principals and providing them with the information sheet (Appendix III). The letter which will be sent to school principals is attached as Appendix II. I have already undertaken some pre-eliminary steps to arrange the access, while conducting my pilot study. I will aim to involve schools differentiated according to the proportion of Polish pupils and their status in Ofsted reports but I am

aware that achieving this ideal may be challenging and that it may have to be compromised.

Once the access to schools is secured, I will approach teachers who work with Polish pupils and encourage them to take part in the interviews. Following from this, I will negotiate my access to pupils. In the case of students under the age of 16, their parents will be asked for permission for their participation in the research. I intend to arrange this either by attending parents meeting where I will have a chance to approach the parents, tell them about the research and answer their questions; or by asking the schools to send them letters with the information sheet and the consent form, both translated to Polish. At the same time, I will invite parents to participate in the study. Should I have any problems recruiting parents to participate, I can approach them through Polish Saturday School, adverts on Polish shops or Polish parents groups.

After I gain parents' consent I will arrange to meet the students within the school for an explanatory session. I will then introduce myself to students, explain what my research is concerned with and what their participation would involve.

## **12. How will you obtain the consent of participants?**

*(Please attach a copy of the consent form if you are using one)*

All teachers, pupils and parents participating in the research will be provided with a consent form (Appendix V) which they will need to sign after reading the information sheet (Appendix III for teachers and Appendix IV for parents) or, in the case of students, after attending the introductory session. Additionally, the pupils under the age of 16 will also require the consent of their parents in order to participate.



## Appendix A

### **13. Is there any reason to believe participants may not be able to give full informed consent? If yes, what steps do you propose to take to safeguard their interests?**

All teachers and Polish parents will be told what their participation involves. In addition, they will be provided with information sheet and opportunity to ask questions regarding the research process. They will also be informed about privacy issues and their right to withdraw from the study. I am therefore confident that they will be able to give full, informed consent.

In the case of younger participants, the issues of informed consent may prove more challenging. This is both due to the age of respondents and the nature of my chosen methods. I intend to arrange an introductory session where I will have a chance to explain in details what is expected from the participants at different stages of fieldwork, discuss voluntariness and privacy issues, and to address any arising questions. In addition, after each session at the school, the pupils will have an opportunity to approach me individually during the break time. This will enable me to address concerns which the students may not want to express in the group context. I am convinced that this will be a more effective way of ensuring the informed consent, than merely providing the pupils with an information sheet. Additionally, a short information explaining the purpose of the research and the details of different stages of participation will be placed on the welcoming page of the blog, before logging in.

In terms of student surveys, as was stated before, no formal written consent will be required. However, the volunteers administering the questionnaire will be instructed to allow the respondents to fill it in themselves; to refrain from making any notes that could lead to participants' identification; and to respect peers' right to refuse to fill in the survey. In addition, the questionnaire will contain information explaining that it is conducted as a part of a doctoral study, undertaken at the University of Southampton. Further, a website address will be provided for those interested in the details.

In the case of the video, the pupils will be asked not to record any children who are not involved in the study and who did not sign the consent form during the introductory session. They will be able to record adults, such as the staff of the school, providing they obtain a written consent from the potential participants (Appendix V). By engaging children in the ethical aspect of the study, I recognise their own 'moral agency' (Mayall, 2002, cited in Lomax et al, 2011).

- 14. If participants are under the responsibility or care of others (such as parents/carers, teachers or medical staff) what plans do you have to obtain permission to approach the participants to take part in the study?**

As I will be conducting research with secondary school and 6<sup>th</sup> Form College pupils I will approach the school principals and ask for their consent prior to the process. This is also noted in the information sheet (Appendix III) and in the letter to school principals (Appendix II). In addition, in the case of the students aged under 16 years old, I will seek the consent of their parents. I hope to be able to use school space for collecting the data and this will be negotiated with the principals prior to the start of fieldwork.

- 15. Briefly describe what participation in the study will involve for study participants. Please attach copies of any questionnaires and/or interview schedules to be used**

The teachers will be required to take part in a short interview. The interview schedule is attached as Appendix VII. The parents will also be interviewed and the schedule is attached as Appendix VIII. In addition, some parents will take part in a focus group, arranged in the school. The schedule for focus group questions is attached as Appendix IX.

The pupils will be asked to take part in a group interview, which will be audio-recorded should everyone agree to this. The schedule of group interview questions is attached as Appendix XIV. Next, they will be asked to co-operate with me during the process of creating the blog, by choosing its name and graphic layout. Following from this, I will be

## Appendix A

seeking two volunteers who will agree to conduct a questionnaire among their Polish peers. The respondents who will be happy to fill in the survey, will need to answer a few short, general questions regarding their fluency in English, number of years spent in the UK and future plans. The draft of the survey questions is attached as Appendix X. However, it is likely to be altered since I intend to discuss the schedule with the pupils and ask for their suggestions on the issues which the questionnaire should tackle. I then intend to ask pupils to make a video revealing their perceptions of English school and their final years in it. The details of the themes that the project will touch upon will be established during my sessions with the students as I would like to ensure their independence and offer them a chance to reflect on their own priorities and views. I will also encourage the pupils to participate in discussions on the forum which will be placed on the blog, and create rules of respectful communication therein. Finally, the students will be asked to produce a short piece of text or artwork on where they see themselves in a few years' time.

### **16. How will it be made clear to participants that they may withdraw consent**

#### **to participate at any time without penalty?**

The parents and teachers will be informed about it verbally prior to the start of interviews and focus groups. In addition, the information sheet and the consent form also contain a statement about the right to withdraw from the study.

The pupils will be informed about it during the introductory session, and they will also be required to sign a consent form which contains the statement. Moreover, the respondents participating in the interview will be reminded before its start that they can refuse to answer specific questions or withdraw consent altogether. The information will also appear on the opening page of the blog, together with the short summary of the study objectives.

- 17. Detail any possible distress, discomfort, inconvenience or other adverse effects the participants may experience, including after the study, and how this will be dealt with.**

### **Teachers**

It is likely that my respondents will be very busy due to the demanding nature of their work. Every effort will be made to ensure their convenience. The meetings will be arranged at the time and place chosen by participants and they will last no longer than 30 minutes.

In the interviews, the participants will be asked to describe some of their work experiences and reflect upon them. These could involve discussing difficult and stressful situations which could potentially cause emotional discomfort for the respondents. I will ensure that the interviewees are aware that they can refuse to answer any question. In the unlikely event of the participant becoming distressed, I will terminate the interview without suggesting re-arranging it and I will offer my sympathy. Additionally, prior to interviews I will ask the school principal for the details of a person who could provide emotional support in case any of my participants become distressed. I can then offer the respondent to contact this person for comfort.

### **Parents**

As with the teachers, I will try to ensure maximum convenience of my respondents and arrange the interviews at the time and place chosen by participants. Arranging focus groups may prove more challenging in this respect but I will consult the potential participants regarding the most suitable times.

It is possible that some of the issues discussed in the interviews will be considered sensitive and personal by the respondents. These could include for instance, reasons for moving to the UK or current socio-economic position. I will pay attention to ensure that all interviewees are aware of their right to refuse to answer questions which they find uncomfortable. Should I observe any signs of discomfort, I will move to a different question. If participant becomes distressed I will offer to

## Appendix A

terminate the interview without re-arranging another meeting and make all efforts to comfort the respondent.

The risk of tensions and conflicts based on different personalities, life experiences or socio-economic position is unavoidably implicated in focus groups. This could consequently cause some stress and discomfort to participants. I will therefore open each session by kindly asking the respondents to respect each other's opinions and to give everyone a chance to express their views. I will also remind the participants that they are free to withdraw their consent to participate, and leave the group if they experience distress. Should I notice any conflicts arising, I will act immediately by shifting the discussion into a different subject. In extreme cases, I will offer to terminate the focus group.

### **Pupils**

The survey will focus on general issues, rather than sensitive matters. The two student volunteers responsible for collecting the data will be instructed to respect their peers' anonymity and their right to refuse to participate. I will also ask them to inform the participants that they do not need to respond to every question if for any reason they do not wish to do so.

The group interview will focus on broader issues of pupils' perceptions of their school and their views on further education and the labour market opportunities in Britain. No sensitive questions will be asked. I will however need to be careful while moderating the discussion to ensure mutual respect of the participants and avoid any upsetting confrontations.

Similarly, the video project is not anticipated to explore any delicate issues or personal experiences. Rather it is intended to be a fun and creative way of capturing the group perspective on their everyday life in English school, and the facilities and resources that support their learning. Depending on the group dynamics, I may assist the pupils

while they divide the tasks and discuss the direction of the project so that the possibility of tensions and conflicts is minimised.

In terms of creative writing, the pupils will be informed that they do not need to share any experiences that they find upsetting or uncomfortable. They will be asked to create short (no more than 700 words) piece of text or artwork focused upon their future career plans. This will be done in the comfort and safety of participants' homes. I will ensure that no-one can access pupils' works to safeguard their privacy.

With respect to participants' comfort, I expect that the forum is the most challenging part of the fieldwork with the pupils. After thoughtful consideration, I decided that the students can use nicknames but these must remain transparent to other participants. Discussions on various internet forums and websites exemplify how full anonymity can lead to very offensive comments and cause significant distress to other commentators. I cannot take the risk of making the pupils feel upset and insecure, or generating conflicts within the classroom. At the same time, the existence of nicknames known only to the group of participants will present an additional safety measure. The forum will be protected by a password but in the case of someone gaining unauthorised access the risk of identification will be decreased. In addition, I will moderate the forum and should any inappropriate or offensive comments appear, they will be removed as soon as possible. Hopefully this will not be the case, as the rules of respectful communication will be established communally with the pupils during the introductory session.

Finally, in the interviews some personal experiences will be discussed which may prove challenging to some respondents. I will make sure to inform each interviewee that they can refuse to answer any question or stop the discussion without providing a reason. I will be carefully observing students' reactions and facial expressions and should I notice any signs of discomfort I will change the subject, suggest a break or terminate the interview. In the latter case, I will also provide my sympathy and offer to take the interviewee to a member of staff responsible for providing emotional support.

### **18. How will participant anonymity and confidentiality be maintained?**

Transcripts of all interviews and focus groups, as well as pupils' essays will be kept securely in my desk, in a locked drawer and on my computer, protected by password. All names, including the names of the institutions participating in the research, will be changed to ensure anonymity.

Anonymity is often a challenge in focus groups and group interviews, where participants' identity cannot be disguised. Respondents will therefore be informed that they do not need to reveal any aspects of their lives, which they do not wish to share in a group context. In addition, I will kindly ask the participants to respect each other's privacy and to not share the details of the discussion with outsiders.

In terms of student surveys, the two volunteers will be instructed not to note respondents' names or mark the questionnaires in any way enabling identification. The pupils participating in the discussions on the forum will be encouraged to use nicknames known only to other participants and myself. Moreover, the blog together with all its content except from the information on the research will be protected by password known only to the participants. The access to the blog will be blocked a week after the end of the fieldwork, which will be announced to the pupils.

The video project could potentially present some challenges to anonymity. The students will be instructed not to record any children who do not participate in the study, and to only record the school staff after gaining a written consent. The video will be viewed before publishing it on the blog, and if these rules are broken it will be edited to remove the parts involving individuals who did not intend to appear on the recording. After appearing on the blog, the material will be protected by password.

**19. How will data be stored securely during and after the study?**

All transcripts of the interviews and focus groups will be inaccessible to anyone except from me and my supervisors. The printed version will be stored in a locked cupboard in my office, and the electronic copies will be kept on my work computer, protected by password. I will ensure that there are never any confidential papers left on my desk unattended. All names will be changed during the process of transcribing to avoid identification.

The blog will be published on-line only for a limited period of time, as it will be removed from the internet a week after the end of the fieldwork. It will be protected by password known exclusively to the study participants and myself, and the pupils will be encouraged to adopt nicknames which will only be known to the participants.

**20. Describe any plans you have for feeding back the findings of the study to participants**

While negotiating my access with school principals I will certainly offer feedback on the findings. This could be delivered to the school staff through a short seminar with a chance to discuss and reflect upon the conclusions.

In terms of the Polish parents and pupils, they will have a chance to request the feedback on the consent form. Those interested in the findings, will receive a short summary to their e-mail address.

**21. What are the main ethical issues raised by your research and how do you intend to manage these?**

In the interviews, the respondents will be asked to speak about their experiences with children and their parents. This is an important ethical issue, as the third parties will not be aware that the situations they were involved in are discussed for the purposes of academic research. More to this, because of the confidential nature of the issues such as school performance, and the fact that children will be the primary matter of



## Appendix A

discussion I must be particularly careful to ensure anonymity. This problem should be eased, as I will inform the speakers that they do not have to use real names while they talk about other people, and all names will be anonymised. While writing up and disseminating my findings I will also make sure to avoid using direct quotes if there is any risk of identification of the speaker or people who he or she refers to.

There is also a low risk of participants experiencing distress while talking about difficult experiences. This is often the risk in the interviews as respondents are asked to reflect upon the events that could affect them in the ways which the interviewer does not anticipate. All efforts will be made to minimise this risk, as participants will be informed about their right to refuse answering a question and withdraw from the study at any point. On the other hand, if a positive and friendly atmosphere is established during the interview, the respondents may reveal more than intended. However, all interviewees will have a copy of a consent form with my contact details so that they can get in touch with me after the interview if they feel they have revealed too much. If there is anything that they do not want me to include in my thesis, I will not use this information.

Since the research will include young people under the age of 16 special safety measures must be adopted. A CRB check will be undertaken prior to the start of the fieldwork. All sessions with the pupils will take place in the school, during the normal opening hours. A member of staff will know when and in which room each session takes place. Any form of physical contact will be strongly avoided. Should the participants reveal information that indicates they are in the risk of getting harmed by themselves or someone else, a member of staff will be informed.

There is also the matter of researcher's safety. The interviews are likely to take place at schools or in other public places. However, since I am committed to ensuring the convenience of my respondents it could happen that the discussion will be arranged at participant's home (only in the case of adult participants). In this unlikely event, I will make sure to inform someone else where I am, and what time I should return.

**22. Please outline any other information you feel may be relevant to this submission**

**Please include your research proposal with this form**

**Supervisor/Grant-holder Declaration**

**I have discussed this application with the applicant and support it.**

**Any further comments:**

**Name:**

**Date:**

## Appendix B Letter to School Principals



{date},  
Southampton

### Letter to School Principals

*'The educational aspirations and career pathways of young Poles in English secondary education'*

Dear Sir/Madame,

My name is Daria Tkacz and I am a PhD student at the University of Southampton. I am currently conducting research exploring the educational outcomes and post-GCSE pathways of Polish pupils. The study focuses on professional plans and educational aspirations of young Poles in English secondary schools and Sixth Form Colleges.

I would like to kindly invite you to take part in my research. This would involve a 30 minutes long interview regarding the reception and educational performance of Polish pupils. Your experience and knowledge of school practices would offer a vital contribution to the study and inform its future direction. Your views would provide me with invaluable insights on my topic and would also help me to develop my research. Should you be unavailable, perhaps you agree for me to interview one of the teachers who work directly with young Poles. In return I would be more than happy to provide you with the summary of findings once my analysis is completed. Perhaps I could also deliver a seminar if you were interested in the details.

I would really appreciate if you also allowed me to conduct research with Polish pupils in your school and to interview a few Polish parents. The details of my research methods are provided in an information sheet. Finally, the safety and comfort of all participants are vital for me. I would therefore like to ask for your permission to use the school space during the interviews with teachers and the research with pupils.

I would be very grateful if you agree to meet with me, so I could provide you with more details on the research goals and the conditions of participation. Please contact me using my contact details detailed below.

Please note that the participation in the study is governed by the University of Southampton Ethics Committee. This means that the confidentiality and anonymity of all respondents, institutions and all those mentioned in the interviews will be ensured. The participation is entirely voluntary and the participants can withdraw at any time without stating a reason.

A research information sheet attached to this letter explains the study aims and the conditions of participation in greater detail. I am very much hoping you will agree to enrich my study with your expertise.

## Appendix B

Yours sincerely,

Daria Tkacz

Postgraduate Research Student

Building 58, Room 2059

University Road

Southampton, Hampshire SO17 1BJ

E-mail: [dmt106@soton.ac.uk](mailto:dmt106@soton.ac.uk)

Contact number: 07906892769

## Appendix C Information Sheet for School Principals and Teachers



{date}, Southampton

### **Study Title:** 'The educational aspirations and career pathways of young Poles in English secondary education'

*You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand what the purpose of the research is and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.*

The research focuses on professional plans and educational aspirations of Polish pupils in English secondary schools and Sixth Form Colleges. The primary aim of the study is to explore how pupils perceive their future career opportunities, whether they are more likely to stay in England, return to Poland or migrate elsewhere, and whether many of them intend to continue their education after 16, through vocational courses or higher education. I would like to verify how young Poles perform in English schools and what they do to realise their educational ambitions.

The research will begin by interviewing one of the school's teachers who has the experience of working directly with the Polish pupils. The interview will last approximately 30 minutes and it will be audio recorded. The issues discussed will relate to Poles' educational performance and their school conduct.

Following from this, I intend to conduct research with the Polish pupils. Firstly, the students will be asked to participate in a questionnaire. Further, they will be setting up a password protected internet blog where various issues relating to their career plans will be discussed through the medium of a virtual forum. As a group, they will also be asked to produce a video revealing their perceptions of the school. The equipment will be provided by me, and I will be supervising the process. The video and the results of the survey will then be published on the blog to provide an incentive for discussion on the forum. The pupils will also be asked to create an artwork or a short essay revealing their dream careers. Finally, a few students will also be invited to participate in interviews.

The last stage of my fieldwork will focus on Polish parents. I would like to approach them through the school in order to arrange interviews and a focus group. I intend to explore how confident Poles feel in British schooling system, how they support their children's education and career planning and what kind of aspirations they have for their children's future.

Please note that the full confidentiality is guaranteed. The names of all participants and schools taking part in the research, as well as the names of all people who the participants refer to in the interviews will be changed to ensure complete anonymity. In the event of the research getting published, the identification of the participants will therefore be impossible. All data will be kept securely and accessed only by me and my supervisors. Participation in the study is entirely voluntary and if you agree to take part

## Appendix C

you will have a right to withdraw at any time without justification. All research will be conducted by me, after acquiring a CRB check.

The research is conducted as a part of an academic qualification (MPhil/PhD) and it is planned to run from October 2010 to October 2013. The funding body is the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). If you wish, I could provide you with a copy of summary of findings, once I complete the analysis.

Should you have any questions, please contact me at: [dmt106@soton.ac.uk](mailto:dmt106@soton.ac.uk) or 07506892769

If you have any concerns regarding the study, please contact Professor Derek McGhee (primary supervisor) at: [D.P.McGhee@soton.ac.uk](mailto:D.P.McGhee@soton.ac.uk).

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet.

Daria Tkacz (Postgraduate Research Student)

## Appendix D Information Sheet for Parents (in English and in Polish)



{date}  
Southampton

### **Study Title: ‘The educational aspirations and career pathways of young Poles in English secondary education’**

*You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand what the purpose of the research is and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.*

The research focuses on professional plans and educational aspirations of Polish pupils in English secondary schools and Sixth Form Colleges. The primary aim of the study is to explore how pupils perceive their future career opportunities, whether they are more likely to stay in England, return to Poland or migrate elsewhere, and whether many of them intend to continue their education after 16, through vocational courses or higher education.

I would like to kindly invite you to participate in my study. Hearing the views of Polish parents and recognising their perspectives on the education of their children in a foreign schooling system is an essential part of my study. I therefore intend to set up a focus group, where the parents will be able to discuss their experiences with English education. Further, I will invite a few parents to take part in an individual interview, where we will discuss your perspectives on the education of your child. These will be arranged in a place and at the time convenient for the interviewees to ensure their comfort and relaxed atmosphere. All interviews will be conducted by myself in Polish unless English is preferred. Participation in the focus group does not commit you to take part in the interview. You can choose one form of communication, or take part in both.

I would really appreciate if you decided to dedicate a bit of your time to take part in the study. I am really interested in your views and thoughts on your child’s school performance and professional future.

The research is conducted as a part of an academic qualification (MPhil/PhD) and it is planned to run from October 2010 to October 2013. The funding body is the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

Please note that the full confidentiality is guaranteed. The names of all participants and schools taking part in the research, as well as the names of all people who the participants refer to in the interviews will be changed to ensure complete anonymity. In the event of the research getting published, the identification of the participants will therefore be impossible. All data will be kept securely and accessed only by me

## Appendix D

and my supervisors. The participation in the study is entirely voluntary and if you agree to take part you will have a right to withdraw at any time without justification.

Should you have any questions, please contact me at: [dmt106@soton.ac.uk](mailto:dmt106@soton.ac.uk) or 07506892769.

If you have any concerns regarding the study, please contact Professor Derek McGhee (primary supervisor) at: [D.P.McGhee@soton.ac.uk](mailto:D.P.McGhee@soton.ac.uk).

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet.

Daria Tkacz (Postgraduate Research Student)





{date}  
Southampton

**Study Title: 'Aspiracje edukacyjne i plany zawodowe młodych Polaków w angielskich szkołach ponadpodstawowych'.**

*Został(a) Pan(i) zaproszony/a do udziału w badaniu socjologicznym. Zanim zdecyduje Pan(i) czy wziąć w nim udział, warto zapoznać się z krótkim opisem celów badania oraz warunków uczestnictwa. Proszę poświęcić chwilę na przeczytanie poniższych informacji.*

*Badanie skupia się na planach zawodowych oraz ambicjach edukacyjnych polskich uczniów w angielskich szkołach gimnazjalnych (secondary schools) oraz licealnych (Sixth Form Colleges). Głównym celem badania jest ustalenie jak polscy uczniowie postrzegają swoje przyszłe możliwości zawodowe; czy planują pozostać w Wielkiej Brytanii, powrócić do Polski czy też wyjechać do innego kraju; oraz czy planują kontynuować naukę po ukończeniu 16 lat, poprzez kursy zawodowe lub szkolnictwo wyższe.*

Chciałabym zaprosić Pana/ią do udziału w moim badaniu. Poglądy polskich rodziców na edukację ich dzieci w obcym systemie nauczania są dla mnie bardzo istotne. Chciałabym zatem zachęcić Pana/ią do udziału w grupie dyskusyjnej z innymi rodzicami, gdzie będziecie Państwo mieli okazję porozmawiać na temat Państwa doświadczeń z angielskim systemem szkolnictwa. Następnie chciałabym zaprosić kilku rodziców do udziału w indywidualnych wywiadach, gdzie będziemy mogli porozmawiać o Pana/i perspektywie na edukację swojego dziecka. Wywiady będą organizowane w miejscu i o czasie odpowiadającym respondentom, by zapewnić im wygodę i zrelaksowaną atmosferę. Grupy dyskusyjne i wywiady będą prowadzone przeze mnie w języku polskim, chyba że woli Pan/i rozmowę po angielsku. Udział w grupie dyskusyjnej nie zobowiązuje do udziału w wywiadzie i odwrotnie. Może Pan/i wybrać preferowaną formę rozmowy, lub wziąć udział w obu.

## Appendix D

Byłabym bardzo wdzięczna gdyby zdecydował/a się Pan/i poświęcić chwilę na udział w badaniu. Jestem bardzo zainteresowana Pan/i poglądami na szkolnictwo Pan/i dziecka i jego/jej możliwości zawodowe.

Badanie jest przeprowadzane w ramach pracy doktoranckiej i odbywa się między październikiem 2010 i październikiem 2013. Badanie jest fundowane przez Ośrodek Badań Ekonomicznych i Społecznych (ESRC).

Badanie jest całkowicie anonimowe. Imiona wszystkich respondentów, szkół biorących udział, jak i imiona wszystkich osób wspomnianych w wywiadach i grupie dyskusyjnej zostaną zmienione. Jeżeli wnioski badania zostaną opublikowane, identyfikacja respondentów będzie zatem niemożliwa. Wszystkie informacje będą przechowywane w bezpieczny sposób i dostęp do nich będę miała wyłącznie ja oraz moi promotorzy. Udział w badaniu jest dobrowolny i jeżeli zgodzi się Pan/i wziąć w nim udział, ma Pan/i prawo wycofania się z badania w każdym momencie, bez usprawiedliwienia.

Jeżeli ma Pan/i jakiekolwiek pytanie, proszę skontaktować się ze mną poprzez email ([dmt106@soton.ac.uk](mailto:dmt106@soton.ac.uk)) lub telefonicznie (07506892769).

Jeżeli ma Pan/I jakiekolwiek wątpliwości dotyczące celów i etyki badania, proszę skontaktować się z profesorem Derekiem McGhee (mój promotor) poprzez email ([D.P.McGhee@soton.ac.uk](mailto:D.P.McGhee@soton.ac.uk)).

Dziękuję za poświęcenie czasu by przeczytać tę informację.

Daria Tkacz (doktorantka na University of Southampton)

## Appendix E Consent Form for Research Study (School Principals)

**Title of Project:** *'The educational aspirations and career pathways of young Poles in English secondary education'*

Name of Researcher: Daria Tkacz

**Please tick to confirm and initial next to the box**

- I confirm that I have been provided with written information and have also been verbally informed about the aims of the study and what is required from its participants. ☐
- I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily. ☐
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason. ☐
- I understand that my name and the name of the institution I work for will be anonymised. ☐
- I agree to take part in the above research study. ☐
- I agree to be audio/video taped. ☐

**If you would like to receive feedback on the findings of the study, please provide your e-mail address below. Otherwise leave the space blank.**

## Appendix E

### **Interviewee:**

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Name

---

Date

---

Signature

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E-mail address (if you wish to receive feedback)

## Appendix F Parental Consent for Children's Participation in Research (in English and Polish)

### Consent Form For Research Study

**Title of Project:** *'The educational aspirations and career pathways of young Poles in English secondary education'*

My name is Daria Tkacz and I am a postgraduate research student of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Southampton. As part of my educational qualification, I am currently undertaking a research focusing on professional plans and educational aspirations of Polish pupils in English secondary schools. The primary aim of the study is to explore how the pupils perceive their future career opportunities in the UK, Poland and Europe, and whether many intend to continue their education after 16, through vocational courses or higher education.

I will be conducting my research among teachers and Polish parents, as well as Polish pupils. For this reason, I am kindly asking for your consent to involve your child in the study. The participants will be asked to produce an artwork and to take part in a group discussion which may be audio recorded (with pupils' consent). The record aims to ease the transcribing process and no one except for me will have access to it.

All fieldwork will be arranged within the school environment and a member of staff will be informed about each session. Full confidentiality is guaranteed, as names of all participants and institutions will be changed.

Should you have any questions regarding the study, please do not hesitate to contact me at [dmt106@soton.ac.uk](mailto:dmt106@soton.ac.uk) or 07906892769.

Please tick and initial the relevant box.

**I agree for my child to take part in the research**

☐

**I give consent for my child to be audio recorded**

☐

Name and date:

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Signature:

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## **Zgoda na udział w badaniu**

### **Tytuł projektu: “Aspiracje edukacyjne i plany zawodowe młodych Polaków w angielskich szkołach ponadpodstawowych”.**

Nazywam się Daria Tkacz i jestem studentką socjologii i polityki społecznej na University of Southampton. W ramach mojej pracy doktorskiej, przeprowadzam obecnie badanie dotyczące planów zawodowych i aspiracji edukacyjnych polskich uczniów w angielskich szkołach gimnazjalnych (secondary schools). *Głównym celem badania jest ustalenie jak polscy uczniowie postrzegają swoje przyszłe możliwości zawodowe w Wielkiej Brytanii, Polsce i Europie; oraz czy planują kontynuować naukę po ukończeniu szesnastego roku życia, poprzez kursy zawodowe lub szkolnictwo wyższe.*

Badania są przeprowadzane wśród nauczycieli, polskich rodziców oraz polskich uczniów. Chciałabym zatem poprosić Pana/ią o zgodę na udział Pana/i dziecka w badaniu. Uczniowie będą poproszeni o wykonanie pracy plastycznej oraz wzięcie udziału w krótkiej dyskusji grupowej, która może być nagrywana za pomocą dyktafonu (za zgodą uczniów). Nagranie ma na celu ułatwienie transkrypcji i nie będzie udostępnione nikomu poza moja osobą.

Wszelkie badania z uczniami będą odbywały się w szkole i będzie o nich wiedział nauczyciel. Imiona wszystkich uczestników oraz szkół zostaną zmienione by zagwarantować anonimowość.

Jeżeli ma Pan/i jakiegokolwiek pytania dotyczące badania, proszę śmiało kontaktować się ze mną e-mailowo ([dmt106@soton.ac.uk](mailto:dmt106@soton.ac.uk)) lub telefonicznie (075 0689 2769).

Proszę zaznaczyć i podpisać inicjałami poniższe okienka.

**Zgadzam się by moje dziecko wzięło udział w badaniu**

☐

**Zgadzam się by moje dziecko było nagrywane za pomocą sprzętu audio**

☐

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Nazwisko oraz data

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Podpis

## Appendix G Interview Schedule: Teachers

<b><u>Interview Schedule– Teachers</u></b>	
<b>Lead Questions</b>	<b>Side Questions</b>
<p><b>Do Polish pupils integrate well with English children and immigrants from other countries?</b></p>	<p>When they arrived at your school, did Poles seek to establish contacts with other pupils, or did they stay in their Polish environment?</p> <p>And nowadays, would you say that they build friendships primarily among their co-nationals, or nationality does not make a difference?</p> <p>Who do they tend to spend their time with during break times?</p> <p>Do Poles happily mix with other children when it comes to team work, group projects and similar initiatives?</p> <p>Did you observe any mutual help between Polish and other children in terms of their school work?</p>



	How is Poles' school conduct seen?
<b>Do Polish pupils achieve well in comparison to other students?</b>	<p>Do you think that Polish pupils, being relatively new to English education, face any particular challenges that could influence their achievement? (such as language, or adverse economic situation)</p> <p>Are there significant differences in achievement between Poles?</p> <p><i>If yes:</i> Do you think that this is mostly due to individual abilities or external factors? (such as length of stay in England, availability of home support)</p> <p>Do Polish pupils tend to improve their achievement after spending some time in English school, or does it remain relatively stable?</p> <p><i>If improves:</i> Are you able to say how long, on average, does it take to notice improvement? Or is it highly differentiated between individual pupils?</p> <p>Are there any subjects at which Poles tend to be good at, or which they struggle with? (for instance, subjects where less English is necessary)</p>
<b>Do you think Poles are generally</b>	How would you describe Poles'

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<p><b>motivated learners?</b></p>	<p>attitude to school? Is it highly differentiated depending on individual?</p> <p><i>If differentiated:</i> What do you think could influence this?</p> <p>When they first arrived in your school, how was Poles attitude to education in England?</p> <p>Regardless of their grades, how do you see Poles?</p> <p>How is Poles' work ethic perceived?</p> <p>How does their attitude compare to English pupils and other migrants groups?</p>
<p><b>Are the problems with English still a challenge among Polish pupils?</b></p>	<p>When they first enrolled to your school, did many Poles speak some English?</p> <p>How is the situation now? Do any pupils struggle with understanding the content of lessons or doing their homework because of language limitations?</p>

	<p>Do Polish pupils require any language support? (for instance during tests)</p> <p>Do you think that language can prevent some of the pupils from building relationships with non-Polish pupils?</p>
<b>Are Polish parents involved in the school life?</b>	<p>Do many Polish parents in your school have problems with communication in English?</p> <p>How do you communicate with this group? (do you use translators, Polish staff, send letters, organise meetings for them?)</p> <p>Do Poles attend parents' evenings? How about parents who do not speak English?</p> <p>Are Polish mothers more involved in schooling than fathers or is it shared?</p>
<b>Are Polish parents very involved in their children's education?</b>	<p>How would you describe Polish parents attitudes to their children's education?</p>

## Appendix G

	<p>From your observations, do Poles support their children with homework?</p> <p><i>If yes:</i> What about parents who do not speak English?</p> <p>Have you ever been approached by Polish parents seeking advice regarding further education, recruitment, exams etc?</p> <p>Would you say that Poles are confident within the English schooling system?</p>
<p><b>Do you think that many of the Polish pupils will move back to Poland?</b></p>	<p>Do Polish pupils speak about such plans?</p> <p><i>If so:</i> Is it to continue education/find employment?</p> <p>Or do you feel they are now well adapted into Britain and prefer to stay here?</p> <p>Do you know if many Poles plan to continue their education after GCSEs/A-levels?</p>

	<p>Do many Polish pupils speak about going to university? Do they focus on English universities?</p> <p>Does the rise of university fees and the current economic climate influence attitudes to higher education among Poles? And among other children?</p> <p>Do you know if many Polish parents plan to go back to their homeland after final examinations?</p>
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## Appendix H Interview Schedule: Parents

<b><u>Interview Schedule: Polish Parents</u></b>	
<b>Lead Questions</b>	<b>Side Questions</b>
How do you find Southampton?	Is it a good, safe place to live?
Could you tell me a few words about your life back in Poland?	<p>Where did you live?</p> <p>Did you work? Where?</p> <p>Did your partner work?</p> <p>Did you live with the closest family only or shared accommodation (further family etc.)?</p>
How did you decide to move to the UK?	<p>When did you move?</p> <p>Was Southampton the first place you moved to?</p> <p>Why did you choose Southampton?</p> <p>Who took the decision to go? How was it negotiated?</p>

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	<p>How long did you intend to stay for when you first came?</p> <p>Did you know anything about the city before you came ?</p> <p>Did your child(ren) come with you when you first came, or did they join you later?</p> <p>How did they react to your decision to move?</p>
<p>Was your current dwelling the first one you moved to?</p>	<p>If not: How many times have you changed your address many times?</p> <p>Do you like your current neighbourhood?</p> <p>Who do you live with?</p> <p>Do you plan to stay in the same place for longer?</p> <p>Have you considered buying a property in the UK?</p>
<p>Do you speak English?</p>	<p>Does your partner?</p> <p>How well did you speak when you arrived in England?</p>

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	<p>Do your friends or children ever help you with translation, for instance– official documents or practical situations?</p> <p>If doesn't or didn't speak English– How do you or how did you deal with the communication with school?</p>
<p>Are you currently working?</p>	<p>If yes: Where do you work?</p> <p>Is it a full time job?</p> <p>Did you work in a similar job in Poland?</p> <p>If not: Are you looking for a job?</p> <p>Does your partner work?</p>
<p>Who do you spend your spare time with?</p>	<p>Who would you say dominate in your circle of friends? Poles/English/other?</p> <p>How would you describe your relations with British people and other immigrants?</p> <p>Have you ever felt treated differently as a Pole?</p> <p>Do you keep in touch with any other parents? (Poles...?)</p>



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	<p>Do you attend any community events, such as those organised by the Polish club?</p> <p>Have you got any family here, other than your children/partner? If so, do you keep in touch regularly? How?</p> <p>Do they get engaged in the education and care of your child?</p>
<p>How did your child deal with the transition from Polish to English school?</p> <p>(providing the child did not start formal education in England)</p>	<p>How old was your child when he moved school?</p> <p>Was he feeling positive about going to an English school? Was he worried/scared? Could you describe the first days?</p> <p>How did he cope in the Polish school?</p> <p>How did he cope at the beginning in the UK (in terms of learning progress and settling down)?</p> <p>What was his attitude to learning in the UK?</p> <p>What was most challenging?</p> <p>Did he receive any support from the</p>

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	<p>school?</p> <p>Did he learn English before coming to the UK?</p> <p>How did he deal with the language barrier? How long did it take him to get rid of it?</p> <p>How does he cope now? (language and school overall)</p> <p>Did it take him long to adapt and find friends?</p> <p>Does he socialise with English peers?</p> <p>Would you say that he feels positive about his school?</p>
<p>Given the foreign context, was it challenging to participate in your child's education at the beginning? (both system's differences and language)</p>	<p>Have you received any support from the school?</p> <p>Have you ever asked your friends or child to act as a translator at school, or have you received any help/advice from friends/family/other people from outside of the school?</p> <p>Do you feel confident in the English schooling system now?</p>

<p>How did you choose the primary school for your child? (recommendations, child's preference...?)</p>	<p>Was the process easy?</p> <p>Were you pleased with the school?</p> <p>How did you choose the current school? What were the motivations for the choice? Did you look at prospectuses etc?</p> <p>Was it important for you that the school is Catholic? Do you think it generally matters to the parents? Why?</p> <p>How do you find the school? (discipline, support, communication, all boys school...)</p> <p>Do you find it helpful that there is Polish staff working at the school?</p> <p>Do you see it as a positive that there are so many Polish students in the school?</p> <p>Do you feel you have a sufficient access to information on your child's progress and his/her activities at school?</p> <p>Do you feel you can support your child in learning? Do you do so? If so, in which aspects?</p>
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	<p>Are there any subjects which he is particularly good at, or find especially challenging?</p> <p>How does he cope with Polish?</p>
Where do you think your child would have better educational opportunities: in Southampton or your home town in Poland?	<p>How do you find the English schooling system? And in comparison to Poland?</p> <p>Did you know anything about the English education system before moving to the UK?</p> <p>How did you gather your information?</p> <p>Do you feel confident about your understanding of the British education system?</p>
What kind of education would you like for your child?	<p>What do you think your child is going to do after finishing his secondary school?</p> <p>Have you thought about the choice of colleges? Did you make any decisions? If so, how was decision made, who made it, what were the reasons for the choice?</p> <p>Did you look at prospectuses, league tables etc?</p> <p>Do you feel you have access to information about school recruitment processes and</p>

	<p>the grades that your child needs to get to secure a place in the chosen school?</p> <p>Do you think English and Polish qualifications are equally acknowledged in Europe?</p> <p>Do you get involved in the school life?</p> <p>Who is more involved in your child's schooling- you, your partner, or is it shared?</p> <p>Would you like your son to go to university? If so- where?</p> <p>Why is it important that he gets higher education?</p> <p>Are there any particular subjects that you think are more beneficial to study, or is it just the higher education diploma that matters?</p> <p>How do you feel about the rise of university fees?</p> <p>Do you plan to have more children in the future?</p> <p>If so: Where would you like them to go to</p>
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	school?
Did you seek any advice on schooling in the UK from your friends or family in the UK?	Was it from Polish or English friends?  Do your friends or family support you or your child in schooling? In what way?
What do you think it takes to achieve success in the current labour markets?	What does success mean to you?  Do you think UK labour market offers good work opportunities?
How would you describe your own educational experiences in Poland?	What qualifications did you get?  What about your partner?
Do you plan to stay in the UK? Why?	Did your plans change since you first came to the UK?  Do you think your child will continue education/seek employment in the UK?  Do you often visit Poland?
Do you feel attached to Poland?	Is it important to you that your children maintain the Polish culture?  If so, do you encourage their involvement in it? (for instance, through Polish cuisine, Polish celebrations, books, movies, music, participation in community events etc...)

## Appendix H

	Would you say that your son changed after moving to the UK? (in terms of behaviour, character, style, language)
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## Appendix I Interview Schedule: Pupils

<u>Interview Schedule: Polish Pupils</u>	
Lead Question	Side Questions
How do you like Southampton?	<p>Is it a nice city to live in?</p> <p>Are there things to do in the spare time?</p> <p>What are your favourite places in the city?</p> <p>Do you feel safe here?</p> <p>Do you feel that Southampton is your home?</p> <p>Do you like your neighbourhood?</p> <p>Is it very different from Poland? How were your home and your area in Poland?</p> <p>Would you like to stay in the same house for longer?</p>



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<p>What were the circumstances of your migration to England?</p>	<p>When did you come to England?</p> <p>Were you enthusiastic about moving abroad? Were you scared of anything?</p> <p>What were your first impressions of Southampton?</p>
<p>Did you speak any English when you moved to the UK?</p>	<p>Was the communication challenging at the beginning?</p> <p>How do you feel about your English now?</p> <p><i>If improved:</i> How did you learn? (English peers; teachers' support; practise at home)</p> <p>Do you feel you can always express yourself fully?</p> <p><i>If not:</i> What situations are challenging?</p> <p>Do you find it difficult to learn all school subjects in English?</p> <p>Do you think it has any impact on your grades?</p> <p>Do you think it could be an obstacle during your exams, and in the future?</p>

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<p>And what about your Polish?</p>	<p>Do you read and write in Polish?</p> <p>On a normal day– do you use Polish or English more?</p> <p>In what kind of circumstances is Polish used, and in which situations you use English? (social, school, family, etc.)</p> <p>Do you think in Polish or in English?</p>
<p>How did you imagine English schools before you came?</p>	<p>How did these images compared to the reality?</p> <p>Can you describe your first days in English school? (the present school, or previous school depending on how long the pupil has been in the UK)</p> <p>Did you find it difficult at the beginning?</p> <p>Was communication in English challenging?</p> <p>Did you receive support from the school staff?</p>
<p>How do you feel about your school in England?</p>	<p>How did you choose St. George's?</p>

	<p>Do you find the atmosphere of the school friendly?</p> <p>What are your favourite/least favourite subjects?</p> <p>Do you participate in any extra-curricular activities?</p> <p>Is there any career guidance sessions at school? (including taking pupils to college/university open days etc.)</p> <p>What are the best aspects of going to a school in England?</p> <p>Is your current school very different from the school you went to in Poland?</p> <p>(this question could relate to issues such as: teachers' support; school ethos; workload; style of teaching and learning; the level of stress; opportunities to develop skills and interests; resources available)</p>
Did you like your Polish school?	<p>What school did you go to in Poland?</p> <p>Would you like to go back there if it was possible?</p>
Do you like your school mates in Southampton?	<p>When you first arrived in the UK, were there many Polish pupils in your school?</p>

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	<p><i>If yes:</i> Did you find it helpful to have them around?</p> <p>Are you happy having a lot of Polish pupils in your current school?</p> <p>Who do you spend your time with at the school? (Are they Polish/English/other immigrant pupils? Maybe there is no distinction?)</p> <p><i>If only Poles are mentioned:</i> How would you describe your relations with English/other immigrant pupils?</p> <p>Who do you spend your time with outside of school?</p> <p>Have you ever felt to be treated differently as a Pole?</p>
<p>How do you perceive English pupils in general?</p>	<p>Are there any cultural/style/behaviour difference between Polish and English boys?</p> <p>What about their clothes...?</p> <p>And what do you wear outside of school?</p> <p>What can style of clothing tell you about a person?</p>

## Appendix I

	<p>Have you got any divisions in school based on it- like cool kids?</p> <p>Do any Polish boys look like the English ones? Adopt their style?</p>
Does your family/friends help you with your school work?	<p>Do you have siblings?</p> <p><i>If yes:</i> Are they younger or older?</p> <p>Do they go to the same school?</p> <p>Do you help them with learning/ do they help you?</p> <p>Have you got any further family here? (uncles/aunts, grandparents, etc.)</p> <p><i>If yes:</i> Do they get involved in your schooling?</p> <p>Do they help you with your school work?</p> <p>Do both of your parents work?</p> <p>Do they speak English?</p> <p>Do you know how the school communicates with them? (for instance, through letters, parents evenings etc.)</p> <p>How do you think, what would your parents like you to do after your exams?</p>

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	<p>Do you often get grades in your current school?</p> <p>Do you go to any tutorials outside of school?</p>
Who would you like to be in the future?	<p>What do you plan to do after your exams?</p> <p><i>If further education is mentioned:</i> Which school/university do you want to go to? Why? (for instance– school's reputation; good first impressions; many friends going there too; parents' advice) Did you do a lot of research about it?</p> <p>How does your family feel about your plans?</p> <p>Have you got any role models, does someone inspire you?</p> <p>How are you trying to achieve your goals?</p> <p>Would you like to stay in the UK? How about in Southampton?</p> <p>Do you consider ever going back to Poland?</p> <p>How about moving to another country?</p> <p>Do you still feel attached to Poland?</p>

## Appendix I

	<p>Do you watch Polish TV/movies, do you listen to Polish music?</p> <p>What music do you like?</p> <p>Do you feel Polish/English/European?</p>
What do you think it takes to succeed in the current labour markets?	What is success? What does it mean to you?

## **Appendix J      Consent form for research (School Principals)**

### **Consent Form For Research Study (School Principals)**

**Title of Project:** *‘The educational aspirations and career pathways of young Poles in English secondary education’*

Name of Researcher: Daria Tkacz

**Please tick to confirm and initial next to the box**

- I confirm that I have been provided with written information and have also been verbally informed about the aims of the study and what is required from its participants. ☐
- I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily. ☐
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason. ☐
- I understand that my name and the name of the institution I work for will be anonymised. ☐
- I agree for Daria Tkacz to access the school, and conduct her research with teachers, Polish pupils and their parents on the conditions which we have agreed upon. ☐
- I agree to take part in the above research study. ☐

**If you would like to receive feedback on the findings of the study, please provide your e-mail address below. Otherwise leave the space blank.**

**Interviewee:**

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Name

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Date

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Signature

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E-mail address (if you wish to receive feedback)

## Appendix K Information Sheet for Pupils (in English and Polish)



{date}  
Southampton

### **Study Title: 'The educational aspirations and career pathways of young Poles in English secondary education'**

*You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand what the purpose of the research is and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.*

The research focuses on professional plans and educational aspirations of Polish pupils in English secondary schools and Sixth Form Colleges. The primary aim of the study is to explore how pupils perceive their future career opportunities, whether they are more likely to stay in England, return to Poland or migrate elsewhere, and whether many intend to continue their education after 16, through vocational courses or higher education.

I am kindly inviting you to participate in my research. Hearing the views of Polish pupils is absolutely essential for my study. I would like to learn about your experiences in British education, your ambitions and career plans, and your strategies for realising these aspirations. Up to date, very little is known about professional plans of young Poles and therefore you have a chance to make an original contribution to knowledge.

As a participant you will be taking part in a few fun and creative activities. These will involve launching an internet blog, making a video and taking part in discussions on an on-line forum. You will also be asked to write a short essay or make an artwork focused on your dream career. Additionally, you will be required to fill in a short questionnaire. Finally, some of the pupils will be invited to take part in a one-to-one interview with me.

I would really appreciate if you decided to dedicate a bit of your time to take part in the study. I am extremely interested in your views and experiences. If there is any questions you have about the study, please do not hesitate to contact me at: [dmt106@soton.ac.uk](mailto:dmt106@soton.ac.uk) or 07506892769.

Please note that the full confidentiality is guaranteed. The names of all participants and schools taking part in the research, as well as the names of all people who the participants refer to in the interviews will be changed to ensure complete anonymity. The participation in the study is entirely voluntary and if you agree to take part you will have a right to withdraw at any time without justification.

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet.

Daria Tkacz (Postgraduate Research Student)



{date}  
Southampton

**Study Title: ‘Aspiracje edukacyjne i plany zawodowe  
młodych Polaków w angielskich szkołach  
ponadpodstawowych’.**

*Zostales zaproszony do udziału w badaniu socjologicznym. Zanim zdecydujesz czy wziąć w nim udział, warto zapoznać się z krótkim opisem celów badania oraz warunków uczestnictwa. Proszę poświęcić chwilę na przeczytanie poniższych informacji.*

*Badanie skupia się na planach zawodowych oraz ambicjach edukacyjnych polskich uczniów w angielskich szkołach gimnazjalnych (secondary schools) oraz licealnych (Sixth Form Colleges). Głównym celem badania jest ustalenie jak polscy uczniowie postrzegają swoje przyszłe możliwości zawodowe; czy planuje pozostać w Wielkiej Brytanii, powrócić do Polski czy też wyjechać do innego kraju; oraz czy planują kontynuować naukę po ukończeniu 16 lat, poprzez kursy zawodowe lub szkolnictwo wyższe.*

Serdecznie zapraszam Cię do udziału w badaniu. Zapoznanie się z poglądami polskich uczniów jest najważniejszym elementem mojego projektu. Chciałabym dowiedzieć się czegoś na temat Twoich doświadczeń z angielskim systemem edukacji, Twoich ambicji i planów zawodowych, oraz strategii do realizacji tych planów. Jak dotąd nie wiele wiadomo na temat planów zawodowych młodych Polaków w Anglii. Masz zatem szansę by wnieść oryginalny wkład w kształtowanie wiedzy.

Jako uczestnik badania, weźmiesz udział w kilku kreatywnych i zabawnych zajęciach. Wraz z kolegami, będziesz miał okazję stworzyć bloga, nakręcić krótki film oraz wziąć udział w dyskusjach na internetowym forum. Będziesz miał również szansę napisania krótkiego eseju lub wykonania pracy artystycznej poświęconej Twojej wymarzonej karierze. Dodatkowo, poproszę Cię również o wypełnienie krótkiej ankiety. W końcu, kilkoro uczniów zostanie poproszonych o udzielenie wywiadu.

Byłabym bardzo wdzięczna gdybyś zdecydował się poświęcić chwilę na udział w badaniu. Jestem bardzo zainteresowana Twoimi poglądami. Jeżeli masz jakiegokolwiek pytania dotyczące badania, śmiało skontaktuj się ze mną e-mailowo ([dmt106@soton.ac.uk](mailto:dmt106@soton.ac.uk)) lub telefonicznie (07506892769).

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Badanie jest przeprowadzane w ramach pracy doktoranckiej i odbywa się między październikiem 2010 i październikiem 2013. Badanie jest fundowane przez Ośrodek Badań Ekonomicznych i Społecznych (ESRC).

Badanie jest całkowicie anonimowe. Imiona wszystkich respondentów, szkół biorących udział, jak i imiona wszystkich osób wspomnianych w wywiadach zostaną zmienione. Udział w badaniu jest dobrowolny i jeżeli zgodzisz się wziąć w nim udział, masz prawo wycofania się z badania w każdym momencie, bez usprawiedliwienia.

Dziękuję za poświęcenie czasu by przeczytać tę informację.

Daria Tkacz (doktorantka na University of Southampton)

## Appendix L      Pupils Group Interview Schedule

Pupils' Group Interview Schedule	
Lead Question	Side Questions
Do you like your school?	<p><b>What do you like about it?</b></p> <p><b>In comparison to Poland, how is it to study in England?</b></p> <p>What is the workload like?</p>
When you first came to the UK, how did you find the transition from Polish to English school?	<p><b>What was the most challenging?</b></p> <p><b>How did you find communicating in English?</b></p> <p><b>How long did it take you to understand the content of the lessons and participate fully?</b></p> <p><b>Would you say you communicate comfortably now?</b></p> <p><b>Did you receive any support from the school? Was it helpful?</b></p> <p>Were there any other Polish pupils in the first school that you went to? If so, was their company helpful for you?</p> <p>Was there any Polish-speaking staff? If so, was it helpful to have them around?</p> <p><b>Is it helpful to have a Polish teacher</b></p>

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	<b>available in your current school?</b>
How do you feel about your relationship with the teachers?	<p>How would you describe teachers' attitudes to students in general?</p> <p><b>Do you feel you get enough attention, stimulation and advice?</b></p> <p>Are the teachers demanding?</p> <p><b>Do you feel you are being treated in the same way as other pupils?</b></p>
What about the contact with other pupils– who do you spend your time with?	<p>(if it appears that they spend a lot of time with Polish students, which seem to be the case: ) <b>Is there any reason for this?</b></p> <p><b>How do you get on with other (non-Polish) pupils?</b></p> <p>Do you have friends among people from England and other countries as well?</p> <p><b>Have you ever experienced any negative stereotyping or discrimination on the basis of your nationality?</b> If so, how have you dealt with this? (Was any action taken?)</p> <p>And how do you perceive the international character of the school?</p>
How do you feel about the upcoming exams?	<p>Is there any support available in the process of preparation for the exams?</p> <p>What kind of support is there? Do you take advantage of it?</p>

	<p><b>Do you feel you receive sufficient support from your school? If not, what would be helpful?</b></p> <p>Do you feel confident about the exams, and taking them in English?</p>
Have you considered going to university?	<p>How do you feel about the rise of university fees in the UK?</p> <p><b>Have you considered studying in Poland or somewhere else in Europe? What are your motivations?</b></p> <p><b>Do you think higher education helps to get a better job? Or is it the practical skills that matter?</b></p>
How do you feel about the opportunities of the British labour market, do you think it's easy to find a job in England?	<p><b>What do you think it takes to succeed in the labour market at the moment?</b></p> <p><b>What does success mean to you?</b> (is it about having stability/family/money – see what they say with peers around)</p> <p><b>What kind of job would you like to have?</b> (this is not a question about who you want to be, but rather what features would make the perfect job: flexibility/travel/creativity/stability etc.).</p> <p><b>Would you like to work in the UK in the future? Why/why not?</b></p> <p><b>Would you like to work somewhere else in Europe/World? Where? Why?</b></p>

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	<p><b>How do you feel about moving abroad in search of employment?</b></p> <p><b>Do you consider moving back to Poland? Do you feel attached to it? Do you feel Polish or/(and) English, European?</b></p>
Do you know which school you would like to go to after you finish?	And what are the motivations?
What kind of music do you listen to?	<p>Do you ever listen to Polish music? Do you watch Polish movies?</p> <p>What do you do at weekends?</p> <p>What is your favourite brand of clothes?</p>





## Appendix M Pupils' Survey (in English and Polish)

My name is Daria Tkacz and I am a student of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Southampton. I kindly invite you to take part in this survey, which is part of a research project dedicated to exploring the educational experiences and career aspirations of Polish pupils in English schools.

The survey is anonymous and it consists of 23 questions. Some require you to choose an answer from the options available. Please do so by putting a cross (X) in an appropriate box. Only choose one option, unless it is stated in the question that you can choose more than one answer. Other questions are open, and require you to answer independently in the space provided.

Thank you!

### Pupils' Survey

**1. How old are you?**

.....

**2. Where were you born?**

☐ In Poland

☐ In the UK

☐ Elsewhere: .....

**3. If you were not born in the UK, how long have you been in the UK?**

☐ less than 6 months

☐ between 6 months and 1 year

☐ between 1 and 2 years

☐ between 2 and 4 years

☐ between 4 and 6 years

☐ over 6 years

**4. Was Southampton the first city in the UK that you moved to?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

**5. Have you attended a school in Poland?**

☐ Yes, I started primary school (but I did not finish it in Poland)

☐ Yes, I finished primary school in Poland

☐ Yes, I finished primary school and started secondary school in Poland

☐ No, I have not attended a school in Poland

## Appendix M

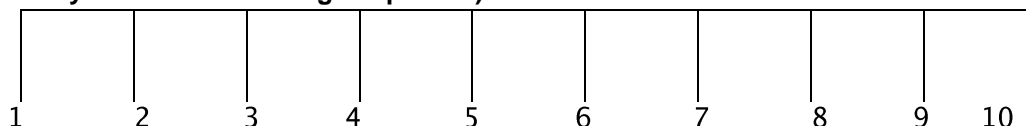
- 6. Did you attend any other English school before coming to St. George's?**
- ☐ Yes, primary school
  - ☐ Yes, another secondary school
  - ☐ No
- 7. Who lives in your house? (for instance: mother, younger brother, parents' friends, unrelated people)**
- .....
- .....
- .....
- 8. Other than the family who lives with you, do you have any other relatives in Southampton? If so, please state which relatives are they (for instance: grandparents)**
- ☐ Yes: .....
  - ☐ No
- 9. Does anyone help you with homework and making decisions regarding schools (for instance, which GCSEs to take, which school to apply to in the future)? You can choose more than 1 answer**
- ☐ No, I do all of this by myself
  - ☐ My parents help me
  - ☐ My siblings help me
  - ☐ My further relatives help me
  - ☐ My friends/neighbours/family's friends help me
  - ☐ Other: .....
- 10. Can your parents/carers (one or both of them) communicate in English?**
- ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
- 11. Who do you spend most of your time with AT school? You can choose more than 1 answer**
- ☐ Polish pupils
  - ☐ English pupils
  - ☐ Other immigrant pupils
  - ☐ Other: .....
- 12. Who do you spend most of your time with OUTSIDE of school? You can choose more than 1 answer**
- ☐ Polish friends
  - ☐ English friends
  - ☐ Other immigrant friends
  - ☐ Other: .....
- 13. What do you like the most about your current school?**

.....  
 .....  
 .....  
**14. Is there anything that could be improved in your current school?**

.....  
 .....  
 .....  
**15. What are your favourite subjects?**

.....  
 .....  
 .....  
**16. Are there any subjects which you find particularly challenging? If so, which ones?**

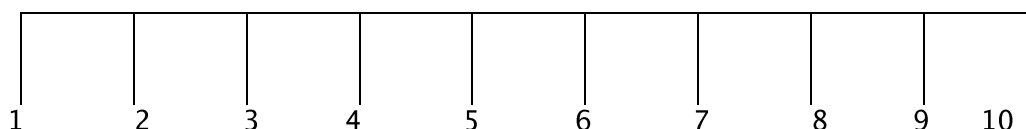
.....  
**17. On a scale from 1-10, how would you rate your ability to speak English in your everyday school context? (1 indicates lack of ability to speak and 10 indicates fluency at a level of an English person)**



**18. On a scale from 1-10 how would you rate your ability to understand spoken English in your everyday school context? (1 indicates lack of ability to understand and 10 indicates full understanding at a level of an English person)**



**19. On a scale from 1-10 how would you rate your ability to understand written English in your everyday school context? (1 indicates lack of ability to understand and 10 indicates full understanding at a level of an English person)**



**20. What GCSEs/A-levels do you plan to take?**

.....  
 .....  
 .....

## Appendix M

### 21. What do you plan to do after finishing your school?

- ☐ Find employment in the UK
- ☐ Find employment in Poland
- ☐ Continue education in Sixth Form College (/University)
- ☐ Continue education in Further Education College or subscribe to vocational courses
- ☐ Continue education in Poland
- ☐ I do not know
- ☐ Other: .....

### 22. What is the most important in choosing a school for the future?

- ☐ School's reputation and league tables
- ☐ Specific courses offered by a school
- ☐ School's location
- ☐ Friends going to the same school
- ☐ Parents' opinion
- ☐ Other: .....

### 23. Who do you want to become in the future?

.....

Nazywam się Daria Tkacz i jestem studentką socjologii na University of Southampton. Serdecznie zapraszam Cię do udziału w poniższej ankiecie. Ankieta ta jest częścią projektu badawczego, który skupia się na doświadczeniach szkolnych i planach zawodowych polskich uczniów w angielskich szkołach.

Ankieta jest anonimowa i składa się z 25 pytań. Większość pytań wymaga wybrania **jednej** z podanych odpowiedzi. Wyjątkiem są pytania zawierające dopisek 'możesz wybrać więcej niż jedną odpowiedź'- te pytania pozwalają na wielokrotny wybór. Ankieta zawiera też pytania otwarte, w których należy odpowiedzieć samemu/samej w wykropkowanym miejscu.

## Ankieta dla Uczniów

### 24. Płeć

- ☐ Kobieta
- ☐ Mężczyzna

### 25. Rok urodzenia

.....

### 26. Gdzie się urodziłeś/-aś?

- ☐ W Polsce
- ☐ W Wielkiej Brytanii (przejdź do pytania nr. 4)

- ☐ Gdzie indziej  
(gdzie?): .....

**27. Jeżeli nie urodziłeś/-aś się w Wielkiej Brytanii, jak długo tu jesteś?**

- ☐ Poniżej 6 miesięcy  
☐ Między 6 miesiącami a 1 rokiem  
☐ Między 1 rokiem a 2 latami  
☐ Między 2 a 4 latami  
☐ Między 4 a 6 latami  
☐ Powyżej 6 lat

**28. Czy Southampton było pierwszym miastem w Wielkiej Brytanii, w którym zamieszkałeś/-aś?**

- ☐ Tak  
☐ Nie

**29. Czy chodziłeś/-aś do szkoły w Polsce?**

- ☐ Tak, rozpocząłem/-am szkołę podstawową (ale nie skończyłem/-am jej w Polsce)  
☐ Tak, skończyłem/-am szkołę podstawową w Polsce  
☐ Tak, skończyłem/-am szkołę podstawową i rozpocząłem/-am gimnazjum w Polsce  
☐ Tak, skończyłem/-am gimnazjum w Polsce  
☐ Tak, skończyłem/-am gimnazjum i rozpocząłem/-am liceum/technikum/szkołę zawodową w Polsce  
☐ Tak, skończyłem/-am liceum/technikum/szkołę zawodową w Polsce  
☐ Nie, nie chodziłem/-am do szkoły w Polsce

**30. Czy chodziłeś/-aś do jakiejś innej szkoły w Wielkiej Brytanii, zanim rozpocząłeś/-aś naukę w obecnej szkole?**

- ☐ Tak, do szkoły podstawowej (infant/junior primary school)  
☐ Tak, do secondary school  
☐ Tak, do innego collegu  
☐ Nie, nie chodziłem/-am do żadnej innej angielskiej szkoły

**31. Z kim mieszkasz? (np.: z mamą, młodszym bratem, przyjaciółmi rodziców, niespokrewnionymi współlokatorami)**

.....  
 .....  
 .....

**32. Czy poza rodziną, która mieszka z Tobą masz innych krewnych w Southampton? Jeśli tak, kogo? (np. dziadkowie)**

- ☐ Tak: .....  
☐ Nie

**33. Czy ktoś pomaga Ci przy pracy domowej lub nauce? Możesz wybrać więcej niż jedną odpowiedź**

- ☐ Nie, robię wszystko sam/-a

## Appendix M

- ☐ Pomagają mi moi rodzice
- ☐ Pomaga mi moje rodzeństwo
- ☐ Pomagają mi dalsi krewni
- ☐ Pomagają mi moi znajomi/sąsiedzi/przyjaciele rodziny
- ☐ Pomaga mi ktoś inny  
(kto): .....

**34. Czy ktoś pomaga Ci przy podejmowaniu decyzji związanych ze szkołą (np. z których przedmiotów zdawać egzaminy, do której szkoły złożyć papiery) Możesz wybrać więcej niż jedną odpowiedź**

- ☐ Nie, robię wszystko sam/-a
- ☐ Pomagają mi moi rodzice
- ☐ Pomaga mi moje rodzeństwo
- ☐ Pomagają mi dalsi krewni
- ☐ Pomagają mi moi znajomi/sąsiedzi/przyjaciele rodziny
- ☐ Pomaga mi ktoś inny  
(kto): .....

**35. Czy któreś z Twoich rodziców/opiekunów potrafi komunikować się w języku angielskim?**

- ☐ Tak
- ☐ Nie

**36. Z kim spędzasz większość czasu W szkole? Możesz wybrać więcej niż jedną odpowiedź**

- ☐ Sam/-a
- ☐ Z polskimi znajomymi
- ☐ Z angielskimi znajomymi
- ☐ Ze znajomymi z innych krajów
- ☐ Z kim innym (z kim?): .....

**37. Z kim spędzasz większość czasu POZA szkołą? Możesz wybrać więcej niż jedną odpowiedź**

- ☐ Sam/-a
- ☐ Z rodziną
- ☐ Z polskimi znajomymi
- ☐ Z angielskimi znajomymi
- ☐ Ze znajomymi z innych krajów
- ☐ Z kim innym (z kim?): .....

**38. Co najbardziej lubisz w swojej szkole?**

.....

.....

.....

39. Czy jest coś czego nie lubisz w swojej szkole?

.....

.....

.....

40. Jakie są Twoje ulubione przedmioty szkolne?

.....

.....

.....

41. Czy są jakieś przedmioty, które sprawiają Ci kłopot lub które są według Ciebie szczególnie trudne?

.....

.....

.....

42. W skali od 1-10, jak oceniłbyś/-abyś swoją umiejętność POROZUMIEWANIA SIĘ w języku angielskim w codziennych, szkolnych sytuacjach? (1 oznacza brak umiejętności, a 10 biegłe posługiwanie się językiem)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

43. W skali od 1-10 jak oceniłbyś/-abyś swoją umiejętność ROZUMIENIA angielskiego w mowie w codziennych, szkolnych sytuacjach? (1 oznacza brak umiejętności, a 10 całkowite zrozumienie)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

44. W skali od 1-10 jak oceniłbyś/-abyś swoją umiejętność PISANIA w języku angielskim, w szkolnym kontekście? (1 oznacza brak umiejętności, a 10 biegłe posługiwanie się językiem)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

45. Z których przedmiotów planujesz zdawać egzaminy (A-levels lub kwalifikacje zawodowe, np. NVQ)?

.....

.....

.....

46. Co chciałbyś/-abyś robić po ukończeniu szkoły? Możesz wybrać więcej niż jedną odpowiedź

- ☐ Znaleźć pracę w Wielkiej Brytanii
- ☐ Znaleźć pracę w Polsce



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- ☐ Znaleźć pracę w innym kraju
  - ☐ Rozpocząć studia
  - ☐ Kontynuować edukację poprzez kursy zawodowe
  - ☐ Kontynuować edukację w Polsce
  - ☐ Nie wiem
  - ☐ Co innego
- (co?): .....

**47. Co jest dla Ciebie najważniejsze w wyborze szkoły? Możesz wybrać więcej niż jedną odpowiedź**

- ☐ Reputacja szkoły
  - ☐ Miejsce w rankingach
  - ☐ Specjalistyczne kursy oferowane przez daną szkołę
  - ☐ Położenie szkoły (odległość od domu)
  - ☐ Gdzie idą moi znajomi
  - ☐ Opinia rodziców/opiekunów
  - ☐ Co innego
- (co?): .....

**48. Jaki zawód chciałbyś/-abyś wykonywać w przyszłości?**

.....

.....

.....

Serdecznie dziękuję za wypełnienie ankiety!

## Appendix N      Parents' Survey (in English and Polish)

My name is Daria Tkacz and I am a student of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Southampton. I kindly invite you to take part in this survey, which is part of a research project dedicated to exploring the educational experiences and career aspirations of Polish pupils in English schools.

The survey is anonymous and it consists of 22 questions. Most of the questions require you to choose one from the given answers. However, some have a comment attached stating that 'you can choose more than one option'. The survey also contains open questions which require you to answer by yourself in the space provided.

In the upcoming months I will be looking for parents who would be happy to speak to me about their experiences with the British education system and share their thoughts regarding career opportunities of their children. If you would be happy to have a chat with me, please provide your contact details (phone number or e-mail address) in the form which is attached to this survey.

### Parents' Survey

#### 1. Gender

☐ Male

☐ Female

#### 2. Year of birth:

.....  
**3. Place of last residence in Poland (please provide the name of the last city where you have lived for longer than 1 year):**

.....  
**4. How many children have you got:**

.....  
**5. Do all your children live in the UK?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

**6. How long have you been in the UK:**

☐ less than 6 months

☐ between 6 months and 1 year

☐ between 1 and 2 years

☐ between 2 and 4 years

☐ between 4 and 6 years

☐ over 6 years

**7. Which educational qualifications have you got:**

☐ No qualifications

☐ The diploma of technical/vocational education (technikum)

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☐ A-levels (Matura)

☐ BSc/BA (Licencjat)

☐ MSc/MA (Magistrat)

☐

Other: .....

**8. On a scale from 1-10, how would you rate your ability to speak English in your everyday situations? (1 indicates lack of ability to speak and 10 indicates fluency at a level of an English person)**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

**9. On a scale from 1-10 how would you rate your ability to understand spoken English in your everyday situations? (1 indicates lack of ability to understand and 10 indicates full understanding at a level of an English person)**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

**10. Would you say your social circle consist of:**

☐ Mostly other Polish immigrants

☐ Mostly English people

☐ Mostly other foreigners

☐ There is no distinction and my social circles are mixed

**11. Do you ever participate in social events organised by the Polish Club in Southampton?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

**12. Have you ever been a member of any groups affiliating Polish parents in Southampton? (such as Mother and toddlers group)**

☐ Yes

☐ No

**13. Has your child ever been attending the Polish Saturday School?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

**14. Have you ever exchanged information, help and advice regarding schooling in the UK with other Polish parents?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

**15. Have you ever exchanged information, help and advice regarding schooling in the UK with English parents and other, non-Polish, migrant parents?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

**16. What do you like about your child's school?**

.....

.....

.....

**17. How do you feel about British education more generally?**

.....

.....

.....

**18. Do you feel you have sufficient information on your child's educational progress?**

.....

.....

.....

**19. How did you choose the school which your child is currently attending? *You can choose more than 1 answer***

- ☐ Child's preferences
- ☐ Convenient location
- ☐ Schools' reputation and league tables
- ☐ Advice from Polish friends
- ☐ Advice from English and other non-Polish friends

☐

Other: .....

**20. What kind of education would you like for your child?**

- ☐ It's entirely his/her choice
- ☐ Vocational qualifications
- ☐ Higher education
- ☐ Other: .....

**21. Do you think that in the future your child would like to enter higher education?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know

**22. Do you intend to stay in the UK after your child finished the current school?**

- ☐ No, I intend to go back to Poland.
- ☐ Yes, I intend to stay until my child finishes college/university
- ☐ Yes, I intend to stay indefinitely
- ☐ It will depend on my child's career opportunities
- ☐ Other: .....

**Thank you for your participation!**

Nazywam się Daria Tkacz i jestem studentką socjologii na University of Southampton. Serdecznie zapraszam Pana/Panią do udziału w poniższej ankiecie.

## Appendix N

Ankieta ta jest częścią projektu badawczego, który skupia się na doświadczeniach szkolnych i planach zawodowych polskich uczniów w angielskich szkołach.

Ankieta jest anonimowa i składa się z 22 pytań. Większość pytań wymaga wybrania **jednej** z podanych odpowiedzi. Wyjątkiem są pytania zawierające dopisek 'można wybrać więcej niż jedną odpowiedź'- te pytania pozwalają na wielokrotny wybór. Ankieta zawiera też pytania otwarte, w których należy odpowiedzieć samemu/samej w wy kropkowanym miejscu.

W najbliższych miesiącach będę poszukiwała rodziców, którzy zgodzą się porozmawiać ze mną na temat ich doświadczeń z angielskim systemem nauczania oraz ich przemyśleń dotyczących możliwości zawodowych ich dzieci. Jeżeli zgodziłby/-aby się Pan/Pani na rozmowę ze mną, proszę wpisać swoje dane kontaktowe (numer telefonu lub e-mail) w formie, która dołączona jest do tej ankiety.

### **Ankieta dla rodziców**

**1. Płeć:**

- ☐ Kobieta
- ☐ Mężczyzna

**2. Rok urodzenia:**

.....

**3. Ostatnie miejsce zamieszkania w Polsce (proszę podać nazwę ostatniego miasta, w którym mieszkał/-a Pan/Pani dłużej niż rok):**

.....

**4. Ile ma Pan/Pani dzieci:**

.....

**5. Czy wszystkie Pana/Pani dzieci mieszkają w Wielkiej Brytanii?**

- ☐ Tak
- ☐ Nie

**6. Jak długo jest Pan/Pani w Wielkiej Brytanii?**

- ☐ Poniżej 6 miesięcy
- ☐ Między 6 miesiącami a 1 rokiem
- ☐ Między 1 rokiem a 2 latami
- ☐ Między 2 a 4 latami
- ☐ Między 4 a 6 latami
- ☐ Powyżej 6 lat

**7. Jakie posiada Pan/Pani wykształcenie?**

- ☐ Podstawowe  
☐ Zawodowe  
☐ Średnie (matura)  
☐ Licencjackie  
☐ Magisterskie  
☐ Inne: .....

**8. W skali od 1-10, jak oceniłby/-aby Pan/Pani swoje umiejętności POROZUMIEWANIA SIĘ w języku angielskim w codziennych sytuacjach? (1 oznacza brak umiejętności, a 10 płynne posługiwanie się językiem)**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

**10. W skali od 1-10, jak oceniłby/-aby Pan/Pani swoje umiejętności ROZUMIENIA języka angielskiego w codziennych sytuacjach? (1 oznacza brak umiejętności, a 10 całkowite zrozumienie)**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

**12. Pana/Pani krąg znajomych składa się:**

- ☐ Głównie z innych Polaków  
☐ Głównie z Anglików  
☐ Głównie z imigrantów z krajów innych niż Polska  
☐ Mój krąg znajomych jest bardzo zróżnicowany  
☐ Inna odpowiedź  
 (jaka?): .....

**13. Czy bierze Pan/Pani udział w wydarzeniach i imprezach organizowanych przez Polski Klub w Southampton?**

- ☐ Tak  
☐ Nie  
☐ Inna odpowiedź  
 (jaka?): .....

**14. Czy był/-a lub jest Pan/Pani członkiem organizacji zrzeszających polskich rodziców w Southampton? (np. grupa Matki i Niemowląt)**

- ☐ Tak

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- ☐ Nie
15. Czy Pana/Pani dziecko chodziło kiedykolwiek do Polskiej Szkołki Sobotniej?
- ☐ Tak
- ☐ Nie
16. Czy kiedykolwiek wymieniał/-a Pan/Pani informacje i porady w kwestii szkolnictwa w Wielkiej Brytanii z innymi polskimi rodzicami?
- ☐ Tak
- ☐ Nie
17. Czy kiedykolwiek wymieniał/-a Pan/Pani informacje i porady w kwestii szkolnictwa w Wielkiej Brytanii z angielskimi rodzicami lub rodzicami innych narodowości?
- ☐ Tak
- ☐ Nie
18. Co podoba się Panu/Pani obecna szkoła Pana/Pani dziecka?
- .....
- .....
- .....
19. Jak odbiera Pan/Pani edukację w Wielkiej Brytanii?
- .....
- .....
- .....
20. Czy czuje Pan/Pani, że ma wystarczający dostęp do informacji na temat rozwoju i nauki Pana/Pani dziecka?
- .....
- .....
- .....
21. W jaki sposób wybrał/-a Pan/Pani szkołę do której obecnie uczęszcza Pana/Pani dziecko? *Można wybrać więcej niż jedną odpowiedź*
- ☐ Moje dziecko samo wybrało szkołę
- ☐ Odpowiednie położenie szkoły (odległość od domu)
- ☐ Reputacja szkoły
- ☐ Pozycja w rankingach
- ☐ Preferencje dziecka
- ☐ Rekomendacja od polskich znajomych
- ☐ Rekomendacja od angielskich znajomych/znajomych narodowości innej niż polska
- ☐ W inny sposób
- (jaki?): .....
22. Jakiej edukacji chciałby/-aby Pan/Pani dla Pana/Pani dziecka?
- ☐ Nie mam preferencji, wybór całkowicie należy do mojego dziecka
- ☐ Kwalifikacje zawodowe oferujące konkretny zawód

- ☐ Wyższe wykształcenie
- ☐ Inna odpowiedź  
(jaka?): .....

**23. Jak Pan/Pani sądzi, czy Pana/Pani dziecko będzie chciało podjąć się edukacji wyższej?**

- ☐ Tak
- ☐ Nie
- ☐ Nie wiem

**24. Czy planuje Pan/Pani pozostać w Wielkiej Brytanii po ukończeniu przez Pana/Pani dziecko szkoły do której obecnie chodzi?**

- ☐ Nie, zamierzam wrócić do Polski
- ☐ Tak, zamierzam pozostać dopóki moje dziecko skończy college
- ☐ Tak, zamierzam pozostać dopóki moje dziecko skończy studia
- ☐ Tak, zamierzam zostać na stałe
- ☐ Będzie to zależało od możliwości zawodowych mojego dziecka
- ☐ Nie wiem
- ☐ Inne plany  
(jakie?): .....

**Serdecznie dziękuję za udział w ankiecie!**





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