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# **‘We inspire each other, subconsciously’: The circulation of attitudes towards difference between Polish migrants in the UK and their significant others in the sending society**

In this article, I explore how attitudes towards difference in terms of ethnicity, religion, sexuality and gender travel between Polish migrants to the UK and their significant others in Poland. In doing so, I bring together and critically engage with two disparate literatures – on social remittances and family and peer transmission of attitudes. I demonstrate that what occurs between Polish migrants and their non-migrant significant others is a complex process in which favourable and prejudiced attitudes are passed on, challenged, rejected or negotiated. While I stress that both migrants and non-migrants influence each other’s perceptions of difference, I show that non-migrants are more likely to assume the ‘correctness’ of migrant’s attitudes due to the construction of migrants as trusted experts.

Acknowledging the multidimensionality and simultaneity of such mutual influences, in the article I call for the use of the term ‘circulation’ to describe the mobility of ideas, values and attitudes between people and places.

Keywords: social remittances, transmission of attitudes, transnational circulation, difference, migrants as experts

## **Introduction**

The information and communication technologies (ICT) and relatively low travel costs have increasingly contributed to migrants and non-migrants sustaining close contact across national borders (Levitt 2001; Nedelcu 2012). This impacted on the mobility of ideas between sending and receiving societies, and encouraged a body of research into social remittances (Levitt 1998; Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2011; Boccagni and Decimo 2013;

Carling 2008; Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2013). The issues which have thus far attracted academic attention include, amongst others, organisational normativities (Levitt 1998; Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2011; Elrick 2008), family models and households (Burholt 2004; Vlasse 2013; Gruntz and Pagès-El Karoui 2013), legal practices (Kubal 2014; Pérez-Armendáriz and Crow 2010) and conceptualisations of time (Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2013). Against this backdrop, less attention has been paid to how ideas regarding sameness and difference in terms of ethnicity, religion, sexuality and gender travel between migrants and non-migrants. In particular, there remains little understanding of how and to what extent migrants and their significant others in a sending society influence, negotiate and challenge each other's attitudes towards social diversity. This is surprising given the fact that the effects of migrant encounters with embodied difference have been increasingly discussed (Cook, Dwyer, and Waite 2011a, 2011b; Fox 2013; McDowell 2008; McDowell, Batnitzky, and Dyer 2007; Phillips et al. 2013).

Crucially, the scholars looking at family and peer transmission of attitudes regarding diversity (Aboud and Doyle 1996; Carlson and Knoester 2011; Castelli, Zogmaister, and Tomelleri 2009; Huijnk, Verkuyten, and Coenders 2013; O'Bryan, Fishbein, and Ritchey 2004; Scourfield et al. 2012; Tizard and Phoenix 2002), have rarely investigated these issues in the context of transnational relationships and friendships. While there is emerging research on how understandings of sameness and difference may be discussed within migrant families (e.g. Maliepaard and Lubbers 2012; Brannen et al. 2014; Carol 2014), less is known about how such ideas are shaped by family members or friends residing in distinctive societies and national settings.

In response, in this article I explore the circulation of attitudes towards difference between Polish post-2004 migrants to the UK and their significant others in Poland. In doing so, I bring together, and contribute to, the migration literature on social remittances and the

family studies literature on intra-familial and peer transmission of ideas. In my discussion of how attitudes travel between people and places I advocate the use of the term circulation instead of social remittance or transmission. Being inspired by the emerging literature on transnational circulation of care (e.g. Baldassar and Merla 2013; Kilkey 2013; Reynolds and Zontini 2013), I find these terms problematic with regard to how migrants and non-migrants influence each other's attitudes towards difference.

In my discussion of how attitudes circulate, I emphasize the significance of a particular migratory context (i.e. migration from Poland to the UK). The UK has been described as a super-diverse society because of its ethno-national and religious heterogeneity being the consequence of an uninterrupted immigration throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century (Vertovec 2007). Polish society, on the other hand, is much less diverse as a result of the Second World War 1939-1945 and the communist regime 1945-1989 (Podemski 2012). Given the distinctiveness of both geo-historical contexts, migration from Poland to the UK is very likely to involve personal encounters with increased diversity and negotiations of difference (Jordan 2006).

This article draws upon the empirical material I gathered for a broader study looking at how migration impacts on Polish people's values and attitudes towards difference (Gawlewicz 2014a, 2014b, forthcoming). While in this study I investigated encounters with various axes of difference, in the article I focus on ethnicity, religion, sexuality, gender and the intersections of these categories. These notions were particularly salient in the interviews with both migrant and non-migrant research participants.

I begin the article with recalling some recent debates on international migration and management of close ties across long distances. Then, I critically engage with the social remittances and the family and peer transmission literatures and discuss the application of the concept of circulation to the studies of transnational mobility of attitudes. This is followed by

a consideration of the methodologies that I employed. Further in the article, I explore how attitudes towards difference travel between Polish migrants to the UK and their non-migrant significant others in Poland. Recognising the methodological challenges the analysis of such circulation poses, I firstly look at the migrant and then at the non-migrant side of the process.

### **Personal relationships in a ‘transnational social field’**

International migration has been argued to have a profound influence on the nature of relationships between the family members who move abroad and those who ‘stay’ in sending societies (Baldassar, Baldock, and Wilding 2007; Parrenas 2005; Kilkey, 2013; Pratt and Rosner 2012; McGhee, Heath, and Trevena 2013). Pratt (2012), who has studied gendered migration between the Philippines and Canada, felicitously described this relation in terms of ‘conflict of labour and love’. In these debates much attention has been paid to the role of ICT and decreasing travel costs in sustaining close ties over long distances. The affordable cost of air travel in Europe allows people who reside in distant countries to visit each other relatively often (Burrell 2011b), whereas the Internet access alongside inexpensive telephone services contribute to regular information exchanges. The rise of what has been termed the network society (Castells 1996):

...enabled new forms of migrant transnationalism characterised not only by the growing intensity of transnational exchanges and activities, but also by an ubiquitous system of communication that allows migrants to connect with multiple, geographically distant and culturally distinct worlds to which they identify and participate on a daily basis (Nedelcu 2012, 1341).

Against the backdrop of time-space compression, migrant contact with their significant others resident in a sending country has become normalised as an inherent element of transnational

coexistence. This is reflected in recent migration studies. Metykova (2010), for instance, suggests that the usage of various Internet media among the post-2004 Eastern European migrants to the UK allows them to sustain close contact with their respective home countries as well as relatives. Similarly, Francisco (2013, 16), who multiplies examples of how Filipino migrants in the United States partake in their family life away from home, argues that in the context of migration 'technology opens up the potential for intimacy and closeness through the visual register of communication technologies like Skype'.

The common attachment to mediated contact (e.g. via telephone, Internet) seems to intensify the cross-border circulation of information, knowledge, values and attitudes. Indeed, although the significance of direct contact between migrants and their significant others is broadly recognized (Mason 2004), some authors argue that the transfer of values and social *habitus* has been increasingly occurring in deterritorialised 'virtual' spaces (Levitt 2001; Levitt and Schiller 2004). In her recent paper, Nedelcu (2012) explores how Romanian skilled migrants in Canada pass cultural knowledge onto their family members in Romania during conversations online. White (2010), on the other hand, investigates how Polish migrants to the UK discuss aspects of their changing lifestyles with their relatives in Poland (presumably in both face-to-face and mediated conversations). In doing so, she also implies that migrants are likely to transfer ideas related to diversity and difference.

### **Transnational circulation of ideas**

Whilst the term circulation has been rarely employed in social sciences, scholars have increasingly studied what could be conceptualised as (transnational) circulation of ideas through their interest in social remittances and transmission of values, attitudes, behaviour or practices (e.g. Carol 2014; Elrick 2008; Kubal 2014; Levitt 1998; Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2011; Maliepaard and Lubbers 2012; Valentine, Jayne, and Gould 2012;). Levitt (1998, 926)

famously described social remittances as ‘the ideas, behaviours, identities, and social capital that flow from receiving- to sending-country communities’. The issue has been ever since explored by predominantly migration researchers. For example, Elrick (2008) investigated the socio-economic impact of Polish outward migration on origin communities. More recently, Kubal (2014) has looked at how the experiences of Ukrainian migrants in the UK, Netherlands, Portugal and Norway influence their attitudes and practices towards the law after their return to their home country. Importantly, however, attitudes towards difference in terms of ethnicity, religion, sexuality and gender have been largely excluded from these debates (with a few notable exceptions concerning gender e.g. Burholt 2004; Gruntz and Pagès-El Karoui 2013; Vlase 2013). There is also a rising discussion on the limitations of the concept which unhelpfully implies a one-way transfer of ideas rather than a two- or multi-sided process (Boccagni 2012; Boccagni and Decimo 2013; Carling 2008; Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2011). I will come back to this discussion further in this section.

It has been broadly acknowledged that attitudes are forged through everyday practices, experiences and interactions that involve family members and friends (Cavalli-Sforza et al. 1982; Maliepaard and Lubbers 2012; Morgan 1996). Family, in particular, has been identified as a space of transmission of values, attitudes, behaviours and routines (Carlson and Knoester 2011; Grønhøj and Thøgersen 2009; O'Bryan, Fishbein, and Ritchey 2004;; Scourfield et al. 2012; Valentine and Hughes 2012; Vedder et al. 2009;). Grønhøj and Thøgersen (2009), for instance, investigated the links between young people’s pro-environmental orientations and their parents’ pro-environmental values, attitudes and behaviours, and found that family socialization has a significant influence on young people’s perceptions of ‘greener’ lifestyles. Likewise, by exploring the generational transmission of drinking cultures, Valentine, Jayne and Gould (2012) demonstrated that attitudes towards alcohol consumption are largely shaped through intra-familial practices and norms.

Analogously to the case of the social remittances literature, attitudes towards difference are less visible in these debates. They also tend to be separately addressed by researchers of various disciplinary positionings – quantitative psychologists (e.g. Aboud and Doyle 1996; Castelli, Zogmaister, and Tomelleri 2009; O'Bryan, Fishbein, and Ritchey 2004) as well as sociologists and geographers of intergenerationality and parenting (e.g. Carlson and Knoester 2011; Scourfield et al. 2012; Phoenix and Hussain 2007; Tizard and Phoenix 2002). In addition, there is an imbalance in focusing on social actors involved. By looking at what is often argued to be intergenerational, but is in fact mostly 'parental transmission', this body of work has underappreciated the significance of other agents – be it peers, friends, further relatives – and, in particular, children. Although their role is recognized (Cavalli-Sforza et al. 1982; Maliepaard and Lubbers 2012), there is still relatively little understanding of how and in what circumstances such transfers may occur. Crucially, few authors – for example Maliepaard and Lubbers (2012) who have recently looked into migrant parents passing religion (Islam) onto their migrant children – speak of the process of transferring ideas post migration. Despite a growing interest in the issue most recently<sup>[1]</sup>, the transmission of attitudes towards difference between migrants and their family members and friends in sending countries remains largely underexplored.

Despite a remarkable mutual relevance of both sub-disciplinary areas, the literatures on social remittances and family/peer transmission remain isolated from each other. In this article, I argue that binding these bodies of work together may have a fundamental impact on how we understand mobility of ideas between migrants and non-migrants. However, given the gaps in both conceptual frameworks, none of the terms routinely employed within each field (i.e. social remittance and transmission) seems sufficient enough to embrace the complexity of this process. Therefore, being inspired by the insights from the field of transnational care (Baldassar and Baldock 2000; Baldassar and Merla 2013; Kilkey 2013), in



this article I advocate the use of the term *circulation*. In the context of international migration, the process of remitting or transmitting may imply a one-way transfer (cf. Boccagni 2012; Boccagni and Decimo 2013; Carling 2008; Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2011) and, as such, may encourage a simplified reading of what (and how) occurs between migrants and their significant others in sending countries. This may, for example, suggest that one side of the transmission process is granted agency (sends out information) while the other is not (as it only receives and perhaps absorbs it). By employing the term circulation to the study of attitudes, I emphasize that alongside transmission or the act of remitting other processes including negotiation, contestation or opposition are likely to take place. In addition, I draw attention to the agency of all social actors involved and acknowledge that a transmitted or remitted message may or not be accepted, internalized or provoke a response. Having said that, in the article I use the terms transmission and social remittances while referring to the instances when one-way transfer of ideas does, in fact, take place or when discussing other studies that explicitly utilise these concepts.

### **Study outline**

In this article, I draw upon a broader study exploring how international migration between a postcommunist society (Poland) and a postcolonial state (the UK) impacts on values and attitudes towards difference (Gawlewicz 2014a, 2014b, forthcoming). This research was based on 14 case studies each involving one migrant to the UK and up to three of his or her significant others in Poland. I understand the term significant other after George Herbert Mead ([1934] 1967) as any person who has a great importance to and impact on an individual's life, self-evaluation, emotional well-being and his or her reception of values, attitudes and social norms. Significant others are therefore these people with whom an individual has a meaningful relationship – family members and/or close friends.

In selecting the case studies I particularly tried to capture the diversity of people's understandings of difference and relationships with significant others as well as complex ways in which ideas circulated. Migrants (both men and women of various ages, social positionings and views on difference) were recruited from a wide Polish community in the ethnically and religiously diverse Northern English city of Leeds (Piekut et al. 2012). They actively assisted in further recruitment of their significant others resident in various locations in Poland. The implication of this sampling strategy was a variety of migrant (and non-migrant) attitudes towards difference in terms of ethnicity, religion, sexuality and gender I present in this paper. While this sample remains small and non-representative, these attitudes reflect the intricate nature (and, indeed, messiness) of social life and migrant identities.

Although in the project I utilised interviews, audio-diaries, visual methods and a supplementary survey, in the article I focus on multiple interviews with migrant participants (n=32) and single interviews with their significant others (n=19). The interviews with migrant participants explored understandings of difference prior to and post migration and the role of significant others in shaping and negotiating them. Significant others were asked to discuss their personal values and attitudes towards difference and the role of a migrant family member or a friend in shaping them post his or her migration. Such a design allowed to tackle the issue of how, when and why attitudes towards difference circulated between migrants and non-migrants.

Acknowledging that I researched people who stayed in close relationships, I paid special attention to the ethical aspects of the study and ensured that any information concerning a participant disclosed during the research would never be divulged, discussed with or passed on to his or her significant others. This approach was crucial not only to establish a trust-based relationship with the research participants, but also to make sure that their relationships with significant others would not be compromised by the participation in

the study. Although a number of respondents assured me that they had no secrets from their significant others, a few admitted withholding vital pieces of information from their family members or friends. One of my migrant participants, for example, never told her parents in Poland about her relationship with a Pakistani Muslim, because, as she claimed, she feared for their prejudiced reactions. Another migrant participant never disclosed to her aging grandparents that she gave up Catholicism post migration and became a Buddhist. Such secrets, white lies or unmentioned stories inevitably appeared in participants' narratives and required to be dealt with extra attention.

Furthermore, given that I explored personal attitudes towards difference, which are potentially sensitive issues, I also needed to consider the risk of compliance and concealment of actual views (in particular prejudice). The establishment of trust-based relationships with research participants, alongside frequent assurances of my non-judgmental approach and genuine interest in their 'real feelings', allowed me to create a space for relatively unrestrained expression of attitudes, beliefs and emotions. Moreover, the assumptions of shared migration experience some of participants made based on my positionality as a Polish migrant researcher (for details see Gawlewicz 2014a), seemed to further facilitate relative disclosure.

The quotations I explore in this article are extracted from my translated transcriptions of the interviews with migrants and non-migrants (the interviews were conducted in Polish - refer to Gawlewicz 2014a). I use ellipsis in round brackets to indicate that a small section of text has been removed to facilitate readability. All names are pseudonyms to ensure participants' anonymity.

## **Circulation of attitudes towards difference between Poland and the UK**

The data I collected through interviewing Polish migrants to the UK and their significant others in Poland suggest that attitudes towards difference circulated between migrants and non-migrants in what Levitt and Lamba-Nieves (2011, 3) call ‘a transnational social field’. While the ‘channels’ of circulation involved both direct contact (migrant and non-migrant visits) and mediated contact (e.g. phone/video calls, social media, e-mails, instant messaging clients), the non-migrant visit to the UK was often argued to intensify these exchanges. In non-migrant narratives such visits played a prominent role because of their capacities to facilitate encounters, even if fleeting, with diversity and difference.

The transnational circulation of ideas involved communicating, responding to and discussing a range of stances towards difference from hostility and prejudice, through greater familiarity and openness, to favourable and warm feelings. Importantly, both migrants and their significant others influenced (or attempted to influence) each other’s attitudes in various ways including expressing, challenging, negotiating or contesting opinions. Given the constraints of space, in this article I explore mostly the cases of migrants and non-migrants passing on ideas about difference. It is not my intention, however, to imply that transferring attitudes (by either migrants or non-migrants) exhausts the process of circulation. Indeed, some research participants admitted opposing and actively contesting the opinions expressed by their family members or friends (both prejudiced and favourable).

It is important to note that the circulation process was necessarily complicated by the fact that both migrants and non-migrants were emotionally involved in their relationships with relatives or friends abroad. This sometimes resulted in restricting or, on the contrary, facilitating the transfer of attitudes. A few participants, for instance, admitted holding substantially different views on difference than their significant others, and stressed that they refrained from discussing certain topics in order to sustain good relations and avoid potential

tensions. The extent and scope of attitude circulation was thus, in part, driven by emotional and normative-bases. It is also crucial to reflect on certain methodological limitations involved in analysing how ideas travel between people and places. Levitt and Lamba-Nieves (2011) suggest that difficulty lies in evaluating the impact of such circulation without focusing on one place at one point in time. Based on the analysis of the interviews I collected for this study, I wish to add that it is also very challenging to investigate how attitudes towards difference are discussed by migrants and non-migrants without concentrating on one side of the circulation process at a time. Hence, the structure of this article which looks firstly into the migrant side and then into the non-migrant influence - the latter occurring in my research to a lesser degree. Notwithstanding this distinction, I fully acknowledge the simultaneity and ‘messiness’ of attitudes continuously travelling between migrants and non-migrants engaged with distinctive socio-cultural and geo-historical contexts.

### ***Migrants passing on ideas about difference***

In my study, I have noticed that migrant participants impacted on their significant others’ understandings of difference by passing on a broad spectrum of cultural knowledge as well as values and attitudes towards difference. In particular, an active passing on of what was viewed as desirable attitude was frequently mentioned. This is illustrated below in the narratives of migrant Lena and her non-migrant mother Maria. By engaging with diverse communities in the UK, Lena has developed intercultural sensitivity towards religious and ethnic difference. Maria, on the other hand, is not aware of having personal contact with ethnic or religious minorities in her environment in Poland. While visiting Lena in the UK, Maria spotted a Muslim woman in burqa. As she prompted her son to take picture of that person, Maria was admonished for what Lena perceived as inappropriate behaviour.

I remember we went to a theme park and there was this woman dressed in black and all you could see was her eyes. And my mum commented on that. She said to my brother: “Take a photo. We’ll show it to aunt Basia”. And I said: “Mum, why are you treating this woman like if she was a gorilla in a zoo? Stop it! Don’t make a fool of yourself!” And later we discussed this religion [Islam]. (...) It was an attempt to show my mum that it wasn’t true that woman was a prisoner, that she was on a leash and didn’t have any rights. I explained that women usually do it because it’s their own choice and they want to dress like this. (Lena, migrant, female, aged 29)

I saw them [Muslim women in burqas] for the first time when I visited Lena [in the UK]. I turned around and watched. Lena told me to stop. I wanted to take a photo of them, but she told me to behave well. (Maria, non-migrant mother of migrant Lena, in her 50s)

The situation described in both narratives seems the reverse of the one in which child is socialised by parent to live within a certain hegemonic normativity. These extracts are significant for a few reasons. Firstly, they demonstrate that non-migrants can extend their cultural capital and knowledge about diversity through their relationships with migrants. Secondly, they exemplify the transmission between an adult child and a parent of what the child believes is an appropriate behaviour and attitude. This contributes to the literature on the intergenerational transmission of attitudes which tends to primarily focus on a one way transfer from older to younger family generations (Valentine and Hughes 2012; Valentine, Jayne, and Gould 2012; Walters 2001; Wickrama et al. 1999). Finally, they draw attention to the instances when (Polish) migrants develop and express favourable attitudes towards difference post migration. This complicates the discussion on responses towards ethnicity and religion among Polish migrants to the UK which has, thus far, largely focused on prejudice (Parutis 2011; Siara 2009; Cook, Dwyer, and Waite 2011b; McDowell 2008).

Importantly, however, alongside cultural capital and (what was viewed as) favourable attitudes or behaviour, some migrants did indeed transfer stereotypes and prejudices onto their significant others in Poland. This is exemplified below by migrant Marek and his non-migrant sister Aga. Ever since moving to the UK, Marek lived in predominantly diverse cities such as Leeds or Bradford – both being homes to substantial Pakistani, British Pakistani and other South East Asian communities. In contrast, his sister Aga has never encountered representatives of these minorities in her local environment in Poland. In the two quotes below both respondents describe how, what Aga fails to recognise as prejudice, is passed between siblings.

Some bits always slip out in conversations. Things like: whom you like or dislike. For example, Pakistani people and my [negative] views about them.  
(Marek, migrant, male, aged 32)

Marek says they [Pakistani Muslims] are so religious in their countries, but when they arrive to England they behave like if they left their religion behind. (...) That women actually do have tough lives but men... they go to a mosque, they pray and then they go crazy during the night – they have parties and so on because Allah doesn't see during the night. (...) He said woman is not respected much (...). That women have to sit at home and they can only meet other women for an hour to talk, but then they have to come back home. Anyway, he stressed that women are oppressed. (...) That man is a guru, right? (Aga, non-migrant sister of migrant Marek, in her 30s)

In the interviews, Marek openly expressed predominantly negative attitudes towards Pakistani Muslims. In his opinion, Pakistanis are religiously insincere, often involved in criminal activity and oppressive towards women. From what Aga says, it appears that all these prejudiced views were shared with her. Curiously, she believes – which was explicitly articulated in the interview – that Marek is a very respectful, open-minded and culturally

sensitive person. This belief, in Aga's eyes, legitimizes the 'correctness' of the attitudes her brother expresses (Valentine 2010). For this reason, she fails to recognise Marek's views as prejudice and never challenges them. This way, in - what could be described - *good faith*, Aga absorbs her migrant brother's prejudice without actually having any personal contact with Pakistani Muslims. In addition, and similarly to the case of Lena and Maria, this example demonstrates that the transfer of attitudes towards difference does not necessarily follow generational and gender lines as suggested by some previous studies i.e. of lifestyle and health (Walters 2001; Wickrama et al. 1999).

Crucially, not all significant others in Poland take migrant attitudes for granted. Even though some non-migrant participants might assume the correctness of migrants' attitudes towards difference (I will further elaborate on this issue in the next section), a few significant others in my study questioned or rejected views articulated by their relatives or friends resident in the UK. Zofia, for example, the sister of migrant Piotr, never internalised her brother's frequently articulated prejudice towards Black people. It is significant to mention here that not only Zofia's brother, but also her husband live abroad – in different, yet both multicultural, societies. Interestingly, Piotr as well as Zofia's husband developed very similar prejudices towards ethnicity post migration. Furthermore, they both openly familiarised Zofia with these views. She has, nonetheless, rejected them due to her own understanding of how attitudes shall be formed.

I've got my own opinions and I'm sure he [her brother] wouldn't influence me in such a way. (...) I need to experience stuff in order to have an opinion. I need to get familiar with something in order to change my mind. (...) My husband also tells me various things about living abroad, but I believe I need to experience such things - to live them on my own – in order to have an attitude. (...) When we all meet they [her brother and husband] talk about Black people's attitude towards work. (...) They say that Black



people are terribly lazy. That they want to take Polish people's jobs. (...) As I said, I don't have a huge experience with these people. And, they don't bother me (...) when I'm at my husband's or my brother's. (...) I absolutely don't feel I'm against them. (...) I'm tolerant and I believe we shouldn't discriminate people just because somebody else told us something about them, right? (Zofia, non-migrant sister of migrant Piotr, in her 40s)

The case of Zofia and her migrant brother (and husband) suggests that the cross-border circulation of attitudes is a complex and highly situated process. Although, earlier I have presented examples of attitude and stereotype take-over, it is crucial to recognise that in the process of circulation non-migrant significant others are, notwithstanding their assumed lack of cultural capital, active agents. They may, or may not, challenge, question, accept or disagree with migrants' views and behaviours. This is further explored in the next section.

### *Non-migrants passing on ideas about difference*

The interviews with Polish migrants to the UK and their significant others in Poland suggest that family members and friends in a sending country are likely counter-influence migrants' attitudes. They are active actors who respond to, react on and negotiate understandings of difference. Levitt and Lamba-Nieves (2011, 3) argue that:

What migrants bring and continue to receive from their homelands affects their experiences in the countries where they settle. This, in turn, affects what they send back to non-migrants who either disregard or adopt these ideas and behaviour, transforming them in the process, and eventually re-mitting them back to migrants who adopt and transform them once again.

Despite the fact that many non-migrants in my sample had less contact with certain ethnic or religious minorities in the Polish context (as in the cases of Maria or Aga), a number of them encountered differences one way or the other and expressed complex feelings towards them. In doing so, some non-migrants initiated negotiations of attitudes with migrants. The situation was further complicated by the fact that, likewise migrants, significant others in Poland were emotionally engaged with their relatives or friends abroad. Some of them, thus, felt particularly encouraged or discouraged to manifest their beliefs and views.

A telling example of non-migrant impact on migrant attitudes towards difference is Zofia cited earlier in this article. Zofia's migrant brother Piotr was one of the most prejudiced participants in my study. In the quote below, Zofia describes how she actively attempts to reduce his homophobic and racist views.

Speaking of gays – I think his attitude is a bit - I think he doesn't understand it. I tried to explain it to him. (...) But, he has a different opinion about that. He cannot imagine two men having sex. (...) And, I say: "Piotr, listen, (...) let's try to understand it". (...) I don't feel I should try to influence him by force. I [also] know that some of his friends share his [negative] attitude towards Black people. So, no - I don't try to influence him. Sometimes I only try to explain that not every person's the same. So, I say that not every Pole abroad is a thief... and that there are various Black people as well. (Zofia, non-migrant sister of migrant Piotr, in her 40s)

By 'explaining' rather than 'influencing by force' and employing an analogy Piotr could easily identify with ('not every Pole abroad is a thief'), Zofia tries to interrupt her brother's prejudice and tendency to essentialise difference. By doing so, she strives to change Piotr's negative attitude developed as a result of his encounters with increased diversity in the UK context.

While Zofia's case may be regarded as an attempt to pass on a favourable attitude, some significant others in my study transferred, or attempted to transfer, openly prejudiced views. This is evident in Magda's narrative below. Migrant Magda has been happily married to a Muslim immigrant from a Northern African country for several years now. Nonetheless, this has not refrained her best friend in Poland from repeatedly expressing her utmost unease about Magda's marriage.

Of all people in Poland my friend had the most negative attitude towards this [getting married to a Muslim person]. I don't know if that's related to her being very religious [Catholic] or whether there were other reasons. But she had this negative attitude for quite a long time. I don't know how she feels now, but we had been married for two years and she still sent me some articles about women who had very difficult experiences with their Muslim husbands. (...) At the beginning there were quite a lot. And, amazingly – two years after getting married I got something as well. An article. (...) It was about a woman who got married to a Muslim person and went through hell. (Magda, migrant, female, aged 28)

Unfortunately, despite many efforts to arrange an interview with Magda's friend, I did not manage to meet with her. Perhaps, she could shed more light onto why she found the situation disturbing enough to bombard Magda with letters containing press cuttings about women being oppressed by their Muslim husbands. This story is quite interesting for another reason, though. Namely, it is an example of a cross-border negotiation of attitudes that remains non-verbal. Magda explained that she and her friend in Poland never openly discussed this situation - and sending the anti-Muslim press cuttings in particular. Initially, Magda wanted to avoid tensions and later on there were hardly any opportunities to have profound discussions. Eventually, the correspondence stopped and now both women maintain largely banal Internet contact.

Notwithstanding many examples of significant others passing attitudes onto migrants, I would like to note that in comparison to the extent of migrant transmission, the transfer of ideas and beliefs from non-migrants occurred in my sample to a much lesser degree. One important reason for that may be the ‘expert’ status the majority of significant others ascribed to their migrant relatives or friends in the UK (cf. Carling 2008). In the eyes of non-migrant respondents, migrants were assumed to *know better* precisely because they were migrants and lived *elsewhere* – i.e. outside the comfort zone of a ‘familiar’ nation state. This is reflected in two short accounts below in which Zuza, the sister of migrant Magda quoted earlier and Hanna, the friend of migrant Julia, explain how they trust their sibling’s/friend’s judgement due to the fact that they (Magda/Julia) live in the UK.

I think that Magda has better contact with it [diversity], everyday contact. And, if she tells me something I do listen to her - I must agree with it, because I don’t have such contact myself and I simply don’t know how things work. (Zuza, non-migrant sister of migrant Magda, in her 20s)

I haven’t had opportunities to be among such people on a regular basis. Julia had and that’s why I do rely upon her experiences. I believe in what she says. (...) I don’t have such an experience as she has. (Hanna, non-migrant friend of migrant Julia, in her 20s)

These extracts draw attention to a few interesting assumptions many non-migrant participants in my study seemed to make. First of all, they appeared to believe that migrants were the source of the most accurate or ‘proven’ pieces of information about a receiving society simply because they lived there. They were, for example, frequently asked to explain how and why things worked in certain ways in the UK context. Secondly, migrants were assumed to have greater cultural capital and contact with difference due to their experiences in a society regarded as foreign, strange and distinctive from the home society. This resulted in

the construction of migrants as trusted experts whose knowledge could not be questioned. Indeed, Zuza and Hanna ‘must agree’ with or ‘do rely’ upon whatever their migrant relative/friend said about difference. In short, the migrant status legitimised their authority and credibility (cf. Carling 2008). The consequence of this was the reluctance by some non-migrants to challenge migrant’s attitudes and taking communicated ideas for granted.

Admittedly, the unwillingness to question the status of migrants as trusted experts requires a closer look. Elsewhere (Gawlewicz forthcoming) I have stressed that Polish migrants to the UK tend to construct this country as the multicultural Western empire ‘tolerant’ towards difference and therefore ‘superior’ to the supposedly ‘intolerant’ postcommunist Poland. This strongly resonates with broader discourses of the ‘backward’ postsocialist East necessarily needing to ‘catch up’ with the iconic West (Horolets and Kozłowska 2012; Kuus 2004; Mayblin, Piekut, and Valentine 2014; Owczarzak 2009; Burrell 2011a). In addition, some studies (Kuus 2004; Mayblin, Piekut, and Valentine 2014) suggest that especially in the 1990s, during the period of transition from communism to liberal economy and democracy, Polish society was particularly encouraged to internalize such orientalist gaze. Against this backdrop, the reluctance by significant others in Poland to challenge the appropriateness of attitudes of their migrant relatives or friends, appears interlinked with the broader postcommunist context and migration to the UK (as the archetypical West). In other words, the construction of the ‘better knowing’ migrants (who possess insider knowledge and become trusted experts due to their migration experience) is strongly situated within broader geo-historical circumstances. In the case of Polish migration to ‘Western’ societies, it seems to be further reinforced by the popular postsocialist discourse which casts Poland as ‘inferior’ towards the mythical West (Mayblin, Piekut, and Valentine 2014).

## **Conclusion**

In this article, I have looked at the circulation of attitudes towards difference in terms of ethnicity, religion, sexuality and gender between Polish migrants to the UK and their non-migrant significant others in Poland. By drawing attention to this largely underresearched aspect of transnational mobility of ideas, I have contributed to the migration literature on social remittances. Furthermore, by situating my study in the context of international migration, I have provided an important input to the literature on family and peer transmission. While I have focused on a specific migratory context (i.e. Polish migration to the UK), I believe it is illustrative of how ideas are likely to circulate between migrants to diverse societies and non-migrants in less heterogeneous origin communities. With regard to Europe, a drastic rise in mobility has been noted along the East-West axis, in particular the former communist and Soviet states and the postcolonial 'Western' countries (Black et al. 2010). Given the expanding literature on how this impacts on migrants' perceptions of diversity and difference (Cook, Dwyer, and Waite 2011a, 2011b; Fox 2013; McDowell 2008; Phillips et al. 2013; McDowell, Batnitzky, and Dyer 2007), we still know relatively little about the role of relationships with significant others in distinctive national contexts, as well as the role of social remittances, in shaping these understandings.

In addition, it is important to situate this discussion in a broader debate on family, friendship and intimacy. Relationships between people have been increasingly intertwined with spatialities and among the many ways of 'being together apart' are relationships that are maintained between people across national borders (Valentine 2008). In this context, it is necessary to understand how values and attitudes travel between, and among, people, places and societies and how in this process specific discourses, which stem from broader geo-historical circumstances, are utilised.

Although the disparate bodies of work on social remittances and transmission of attitudes remained, to date, largely isolated, I have argued that bringing them together extends our understanding of what occurs between migrants and non-migrants with regard to values, beliefs, discourses, practices and ideas more broadly. The critical discussion which has arisen around the issue of what are social remittances and how they travel across borders (Boccagni 2012; Boccagni and Decimo 2013; Carling 2008; Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2011) allows scaling up a well-established debate about family and peer transmission to the transnational level. This opens up possibilities to explore the circulation of ideas in the context of migration which positions relationships or friendships in between distinctive social settings.

While the notions of social remittance and transmission have been broadly utilised in their respective sub-disciplinary areas (e.g. Carol 2014; Elrick 2008; Kubal 2014; Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2013; Malepartt and Lubbers 2012; Valentine, Jayne, and Gould 2012), I have found them problematic because of the assumptions of linearity they are underpinned by. What happens between Polish migrants to the UK and their significant others in Poland is much more complex. Beyond one-way transmission, both migrants and non-migrants tend to challenge, oppose or negotiate each other's attitudes. These practices are commonly applied to both favourable and prejudiced views. Furthermore, the agency is often granted to many actors in various types of relationships – parents, children, siblings, further relatives or friends - at the same time. This evidences that the cross-border circulation of attitudes, and ideas, behaviour and discourses more broadly, is multi-layered, analytically challenging and, indeed, 'messy'. This messiness, which is, in part, reflected in the studies of transnational intimacy and care (Baldassar and Baldock 2000; Baldassar and Merla 2013; Kilkey 2013) is better described by the concept of circulation.

Notwithstanding the two- or multi-sidedness of the circulation process, I have shown that there is an imbalance (in favour of migrants) in the extent to which attitudes are passed

on. The reason for this may be the assumption of migrant credibility that appears to underlie the common understanding of international mobility and the contextualised East-West migration in Europe. The construction of migrants as trusted experts legitimises the ‘correctness’ of their views and behaviour (Carling 2008). Consequently, significant others in home societies appear more willing to internalise the values and attitudes towards difference that migrants express.

Finally, in the article I discuss a range of responses towards difference including favourable and unfavourable attitudes. I particularly show that Polish migrants mediate ideas about difference and these ideas evolve with their experiences. This nuances the debate on prejudice among Polish migrants to the UK (cf. Parutis 2011; Siara 2009; Cook, Dwyer, and Waite 2011b; McDowell 2008) and illustrates that migrant attitudes are, indeed, complex and diverse. While I acknowledge the limitations of this study with regard to result generalization, I consider this finding particularly consequential for the emerging debates on the influence of social remittances on the construction of difference. Indeed, it appears that ideas about difference are likely to travel between cultural contexts and national settings through the agency of migrants and their relationships with non-migrants. While such mobility brings many positive social changes (e.g. transfer of democratic cultures, transnational activism of human rights), it may also raise new challenges for people’s capacities to live with difference. These challenges include proliferation of prejudiced attitudes such as racism, Islamophobia or homophobia across national borders (e.g. Valentine et al. 2013). In the context of accelerated migration flows in Europe and globally, proliferation of such prejudices is likely to become a key issue in academic as well as policy debates.



## Note

- [1] This is evidenced by recent research programmes such as *Diffusion of Culture Through Social Remittances between Poland and The United Kingdom* [2012-2015] at the University of Warsaw, Poland or *Transforming Migration: Transnational Transfer of Multicultural Habitus* [2013-2017] at Humboldt University, Germany.

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