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Family and Mobility in Second Modernity: Polish Migrant Narratives of Individualization and Family Life

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Abstract

This paper re-visits the individualization debate in the context of Polish migration to the UK. Drawing on empirical research with young Polish migrants in Scotland and Poland, I argue that as new opportunities for migration have shaped Polish family life, the family plays ideological, affective and practical roles in shaping and supporting young people's mobilities. The pursuit of an apparently individualistic, mobile life in the context of post-accession Polish mobility is confounded by the persistence of family structures and relations that underpin and shape individual decisions and mobility pathways. I discuss three 'ruptures' to the individualization thesis (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001) that relate to the process of migration over the lifecourse: 'moving out', 'keeping in touch', and 'coming back'. Through these discussions I argue that individual mobility is a relational process and one that can and should be analysed alongside family structures rather than separate from it.

Keywords: Family, Gender, Individualization, Mobility, Modernity, Transnational Families

INTRODUCTION

> *'Men and women are...forced, under pain of material disadvantage, to build up a life of their own by way of the labour market, training and mobility, and if need be to pursue this life at the cost of their commitments to family, relations and friends'* (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995, p.6)

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's thesis of individualization postulates that the modern family is a de-traditionalised and globalised phenomenon (Beck, 1994; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001; Beck, 2012). In this condition, individuals are compelled to 'cobble together' their own biographies at the expense of the family as a way of confronting global risks associated with Second Modernity (Beck, 1994, p.13). New types of 'elective family relationships' that extend beyond immediate kin are, they say, taking the role of the traditional family, evidenced by high divorce rates, re-marriage, single person households and lesbian and gay families (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001, p.97). This paper argues that these forecasts create a false dichotomy between the family and individual mobility which does not take account of the central role of family in the process of individual mobility. Drawing on literature on transnational families and networks I argue that for young Polish people, family structures and values are integral to the forming of aspirations for mobility, the practical decision to move and the outcomes of mobility. Rather than a social form in decline through a pervasive 'moral individualism', the family performs ideological, practical and affective roles that shape individual mobility across the lifecourse.

The paper begins with a theoretical discussion of individualization in the context of Polish migration scholarship showing the intersection of these fields. Following this, I discuss a range of socio-political representations of the Polish family to show how it has been constructed in relation to particular ideologies in state and society. I will then demonstrate, through empirical analysis of migrant narratives, three ruptures to the Individualization thesis as it relates to the Polish family. Firstly, the experience of 'moving out' of family life is whereby mobility is represented as emancipation from sedentarist routines and normative structures of family life. Secondly, 'keeping in touch' with family is discussed showing how family networks and practices shape mobility choices[i]. Here I draw on existing scholarship on transnational families (Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002; Goulbourne et al, 2010) and contribute to the growing body of work on intra-European transnational families (Moskal, 2011; Ryan et al, 2009; Zontini, 2007). Next, the question of return migration is considered in 'coming back' to family and the associated responsibilities of transnational care and familial security. The paper

concludes by arguing that in spite of the emergence of new kinds of family in transnational form, young Polish people continually negotiate the balance of familial intimacy, habit and obligation with autonomous individual mobility across the lifecourse demonstrating that mobility is a relational process[ii].

Polish Migration and Individualization

Polish migration to the UK has received growing attention among scholars since 2004 when the accession of Poland to the European Union (EU) generated a significant increase in the number of Polish migrants arriving, and settling, in the UK. Although there had been influential studies on Polish migration prior to this (Iglicka, 2001; Morawska, 2003), over the past decade research on the history, sociology and geography of Polish migration has burgeoned into a fully-fledged, interdisciplinary sub-field of migration studies (Burrell, 2009; Eade et al., 2007; Garapich and Eade, 2009; Morokvasic, 2004; Ryan et al., 2009; White, 2011). Some of this research focuses on the experiences of young, single people often with emphasis on patterns of individualised mobility as characteristic of post-accession migration (Fihel and Kaczmarczyk, 2009; Garapich, 2008; Eade et al, 2007; Jordan, 2002). The self-motivated, aspirational and flexible characteristics of young Polish migrants in the UK are drawn out, suggesting 'new' mobile subjectivities that coincide with the opportunity to make a 'good start' in a neoliberal meritocracy (cf. Lopez-Rodriguez, 2010). The 'meritocratic zeal' of Polish migrants is seen by some as a product of growing up during post-socialist transition and/or engaging in discourse on the process of de-communisation in Poland (Galasińska, 2010). Others have analysed Polish family migration paying attention to the different transnational strategies and networks that facilitate familial connections between the UK and Poland (Ryan et al., 2009; Ryan, 2010; White, 2010). The experiences of mothers, fathers and children as household actors have also been analysed, highlighting the gendered dimensions of migration strategies (Lopez Rodriguez, 2010; Moksal, 2010; Ryan et al., 2009). In some of these accounts there is a notional engagement with theories of individualization, yet few offer a detailed critical focus[iii]. This paper suggests that critical analysis of the theoretical contribution of individualization to the Polish migration context is a valuable addition to the field.

Individualization is simultaneously a structural process borne out by institutional pressures of Second Modernity and a reflexive project of the self (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001). Second Modernity is presented as a de-territorialised space in which nation states are losing power, individuals no longer fit into traditional categories, like class or family, but are compelled to negotiate a new economy of insecurity, flexibility and deregulation (ibid.). It is proposed that collective sources of meaning are 'suffering from exhaustion, break up or disenchantment' as individuals carve out their own life-worlds to create new ways of confronting the effects of a 'risk society' (Beck, 1994, p.7).

> "*Individualization [is] ...the dis-embedding and...the re-embedding of industrial society ways of life by new ones, in which the individuals must produce, stage and cobble together their biographies themselves*" (Beck, 1994, p.13).

Mobility is central to Beck's thesis as he views the 'readiness to be mobile' as a key requirement of the individual in Second Modernity. The expectation and demand for labour market mobility contributes to the breakdown of place-based kinship networks where the requirement to develop new non-static social forms is paramount. Writing with Beck-Gernsheim, the traditional family is re-calibrated to encompass a multitude of fluid family forms and 'elective family relationships' that extend beyond immediate kin, evidenced by trends in marriage and divorce.

> "*The family is becoming more of an elective relationship, an association of individual persons, who each bring to it their own interests, experiences and plans and who are each subject to different controls, risks and constraints*" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001, p. 97).

However, despite the meta-change posited here, the authors do recognise the individual desire for intimacy as a counterweight to the disintegration of the family unit, suggesting that rather than disappearing, the family is 'losing the monopoly it had for so long' and undergone a re-shaping or re-constitution into a 'post-familial family' (ibid., p.98).

Individuals are not perceived to be floating alone, egoistically disconnected from others but rather, relationships are different now – familial ties are negotiated, multiple and experimental in relation to new universal 'risky freedoms' rather than old traditions (Beck-Gernsheim, 2002).

Critics of the individualization thesis have drawn attention to the ambiguities and lack of empirical rigour in the authors' claims (Smart, 2007; Jamieson, 1998; Atkinson, 2010). For instance, Smart (2007) presents a convincing critique of the temporal ambiguities of the 'traditional family' in relation to past, present and future. The fate of the family is linked more broadly to large scale social transformation of 'Second Modernity' rather than specific histories and geographies. As a result we are left with a loose sense of the traditional as modern, industrial, nationalist where collective sources of meaning dominate the individual senses. In this paper, the particular histories and geographies of the Polish family are considered to provide a temporal and spatial context to the personal meanings of the traditional, the national and the mobile.

In recent work Beck (2012) re-introduces the idea of family in the form of 'global families' which are the product of long-distance intimacies, characterised by dual nationality couples, migrant families who live across borders and global care chains. While this conceptualisation builds on previous writings and draws on ideas developed in the scholarship on the transnational family (Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002; Goulbourne et al, 2010), Beck links the 'global family' to processes of cosmopolitanization and 'cosmopolitan love' that are features of Second Modernity. In this sense, Beck's global families are controvertibly cosmopolitan families, and he opens himself up to further critique for the privileging of particular subjectivities (Skeggs, 2004). It is also unclear whether Beck's notion of global families is a refinement of the individualization thesis or a rhetorical comment to re-vitalise existing work on globalisation and transnational families. For instance, there appears to be little acknowledgement of the scholarship on transnational families and the ways in which the two intersect (Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002; Goulbourne et al., 2010). While there is not space to present the debates in full here it is an important intersection to consider. The scholarship on transnational families

supports and disrupts the individualization thesis at different analytical scales. Transnational families have been defined as 'families that live some or most of the time separated from each other, yet hold together and create something that can be seen as a feeling of collective welfare and unity, namely 'familyhood', even across national borders' (Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002, p.3). The very existence of transnational families, as defined here, support some Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's claims since it points to that which is different to the traditional or geographically bounded notion of family. For Bryceson and Vourela the transnational family is perceived to be synonymous with trends in globalization and is becoming more commonplace in 'late modernity'. Goulbourne et al (2010) also acknowledge Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's conviction in the plurality of new family forms and the growth of personal autonomy. Yet both authors maintain that transnational families are made up of relational ties and point to their sustained existence as evidence against the fragmentation of family (ibid). In this sense, they offer a critical intervention to the pessimistic forecasts of the declining importance of the family and are useful theoretical tools to incorporate to the debate on migration and family. The main conceptual aim of this paper is to integrate these ideas with my own empirical work to stimulate critical thinking on how the individualization thesis, and theories of modernity more generally, can contribute to the study of Polish migration.

The Polish Family – A Remedy or a Cause of Individualization?

It is important to consider the national framing of the Polish family in order to contextualise how national ideologies of family shape young people's transnational experiences. As Goulbourne et al (2010) point out, nationality is crucial to understanding how transnational families work. This section is not intended to essentialise the Polish family but rather to trace some of the socio-political influences on how it is represented in narratives of state and society, attending to the particular histories and geographies of post-socialist transformation. In Polish sociological studies the family is positioned at the top of a hierarchy of values (Bednarski, 1987; Buchowski, 1996). It is perceived by many as 'a sanctuary in a hostile sea of social relations' (Buchowski, 1996, p.84), symbolically connected to the Catholic faith and the Polish nation. Poland is romanticized as both 'fatherland' and 'mother', aligned to iconography of the 'Our Lady of Częstachowa', a

national symbol crowned as 'Queen and Protector of Poland' (Ostrowska, 2005). This imagery has been seen as projected onto the Polish mother or 'Matka Polka', who is celebrated as 'the heroic mother of sons, a sign situated between myth and stereotype, central to the country's national identity and it's homosocial dimension' (Graff, 2009, p136). Graff (2009) argues that this gendered nationalism is central to the traditional idea of Polish family and the position of women in the household. This representation has been re-affirmed through restrictive policies on reproductive rights, employment rights and care during the socialist and post-socialist era (Hardy 2009).

After the collapse of state socialism, however, the rapid removal of state supported welfare in the context of high unemployment had profound impacts upon the family and, as Siemieńska (2010, p.6) stresses, 'getting by became, above all, the concern of individuals'. The family was perceived as an institution in crisis with some claiming that the 'anomie of individuals' had led to 'the destabilisation of contemporary families' (Ornacka and Szczepaniak-Wiecha, 2005, p.217). Echoing the forecasts of Beck (1994), the corrosion of the family is charted alongside neoliberal transformation, the decline of traditional occupations and a pre-occupation among young people with personal wellbeing and individual success (Ornacka and Szczepaniak-Wiecha, 2005). Add to this Poland's accession to the EU and the dramatic emigration flows that followed and the unyielding position of the family in Polish social life appeared to be under threat. As a result, an emphasis on preserving 'the family' in the context of EU accession has become well-versed political rhetoric among ruling parties and in some areas a revival of conservative nationalist parties has occurred (Graff, 2009; Hardy, 2009)[iv]. Within these campaigns migration has been a sensitive issue with different moral valuations on different migratory patterns (Garapich, 2008; White, 2011). For example, leading religious clerics have criticised labour migration as contributing to the erosion of family values, buffeted by media representations of abandoned 'euro orphans' following post-accession emigration (White, 2011) [v]. However, the support for this alarmist rhetoric is in decline, attributed in part to a shift in public opinion towards pro-EU parties (Szczerbiak 2007) and policy changes incorporating both tradition and modernity to re-locate the family as a bastion for the market in a changing neoliberal society.

Young people's perspectives on the Polish family have been influenced by these ideologically guided representations and many speak out in opposition to them. For example, despite the mainstream belief in hetero-normative family practice both in Poland and among many Polish people in the UK, the willingness to discuss, protest on, or at the least 'tolerate', diversity in family policies disrupts traditional meanings of family (Binnie and Klesse, 2011). In the narratives set out in this paper young people position themselves for or against representations of the 'Polish family' as traditional, normalised and immobile. It could be argued that the family is both a remedy and a cause of individualization as young people construct their biographies in relation to family values, histories and experiences. For example, inter-generational experiences of exile and labour migration were represented as important signifiers of a mobile heritage, particularly in the context of sustaining family livelihoods during socialist oppression. For others the relative immobility of parents prior to 1989 led to an almost guilty sense of opportunity in comparison. As Maria reflects,

> *'Your parents are always repeating 'you are so lucky you have this passport and you can go wherever you want' and if you hear this through your youth…if I stay at home I would feel a bit like I didn't use the opportunity given' (Maria, age 30, Edinburgh).*

Here, aspiration for mobility occurs in response to new opportunities and the relative freedoms of post-socialist life. These related to opportunities for both spatial and social mobility with, as Dorota reflects: *'education was the door for better life'*, a value instilled by parents who '*never had this opportunity to go somewhere*'[vi]. Buchowski (1996, p92) claims that 'there remains the conviction that the [Polish] family is still the only sphere that counts in realising one's aspirations' suggesting that it is a valued space for shaping future orientations for mobility.

Narrating Family and Mobility

The empirical data presented in this paper is drawn from a study of young post-accession Polish migrants moving between Poland and the UK in 2010. The research adopted a multi-method approach incorporating biographical-narrative interviews, photo elicitation, semi-structured interviews with migration industry informants and participant observation at a Polish community centre in Edinburgh. This approach was adopted in order to understand the biographies of migration, not to see migration as a 'one off event', but to acknowledge how these mobilities relate to the lifecourse and to broader social narratives (Smith, 2004, p.268). A key aim was to reveal the 'imaginative mobilities' of young people (Urry, 2007), relating to memories, aspirations and representations. As such, categories like the 'traditional' or 'normal' family were simultaneously constructed and destabilized suggesting, as Bourdieu (1986) contends, that family is to some extent a 'verbal construct' or a 'well founded fiction'.

Interviews were conducted with 16 current migrants living in Edinburgh and 16 return migrants living in Kraków and Katowice. Though the returnee and current migrant perspective are not directly comparable the inclusion of both allows for a richer portrait of post-socialist subjectivities and the diverse experiences of EU mobility at different points of the migration process. Table 1 presents the demographic breakdown of the research sample.

Table 1: Demographic breakdown of sample

Category		Percentage of Sample
Age	18-24	6%
	25-29	50%
	30-35	44%
Gender	Male	41%
	Female	59%
Education	High School	12%

	Graduate	47%
	Post-graduate	41%
Marital Status	Single	31%
	In relationship	16%
	Co-habiting	28%
	Married	25%
Children	None	81%
	1-2	13%
	3+	6%

The age range of the sample is broadly defined as encompassing young people aged between 18-35 to factor in the high incidence of youth migration to the UK (Fihel and Kaczmarczyk, 2009). This range enabled an analysis of young people's experience of growing up against a backdrop of post-socialist transformation in Poland. Burrell (2011, p.413) argues that the way in which young people remember opportunity and uncertainty during transformation relates to a 'potentially destabilizing double transition' of societal and life-course changes. Through migration young people experience the multiple transitions of societal upheaval, emigration and broader transitions of the lifecourse.

The following sections discuss young people's representations of the Polish family and the ways in which these narratives chime with the individualization thesis as a potentially useful conceptual frame in Polish migration studies. I see three 'ruptures' to individualization that require further analysis: moving out from family; keeping in touch with family; and coming back to family. This is not meant to imply a linear narrative of an individual lifecourse but rather the different chapters of migration that relate simultaneously to opportunities for individual autonomy and familial structures.

Moving Out

In Poland, it has become increasingly common for the first move out of the family home to be a move abroad, suggesting a double flight of young people from the family. This flight appears to justify the claims of Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2001) since it illustrates

'freeing' oneself from the family, the associated institutional negotiations of work and housing and increased mobility of the individual. However, there is an inherent relationality to this mobility as it is connected to perceptions of normal family life and the habits and rituals of family that enable this freedom to be imagined and embodied. In this sense, layers of family experience, norms and values influence, support and reify mobility as a lifestyle choice for young people.

For graduates in particular, moving out of the family home is a key driver for emigration, as Dawid claims *'leave mother, leave the family home and start my own life, it was the main reason to go'* (Dawid, age 29, Kraków). Eade et al. (2007) suggest that mobility is almost a graduate 'rite of passage'whereby spatial mobility is perceived as a 'good start' in relation to social mobility (Fihel and Kaczmarczyk, 2009, p.38). Poland's entry to the EU has arguably extended young graduates' imagination of mobility as it is now both a practical possibility and a realistic aspiration. In contrast, youth unemployment and unstable housing markets have also cultivated a culture of dependent living for many young people in Poland who live at home well into their twenties (Stenning et al., 2010). Jola reflects on her migration as an opportunity to rent her own flat and gain independence from family structures.

> *'That's another thing I like about Scotland, I have my own independence…Hiring a flat in Poland is rarely done…maybe it's more of a family system – strong family connections. It's quite a big part of life'* (Jola, age 27, Edinburgh).

In this respect becoming mobile was perceived alongside becoming an individual and seeking independence from normative family structures. Similarly, Maria contends that

> *'I wasn't quite ready to do the other part of Polish traditional typical life which is finish Uni, find yourself a boy, get a house and all the marriage stuff…in Poland to be honest, it would have been my only alternative'* (Maria, age 30, Edinburgh).

Maria refers to the normal or 'typical' life in Poland, with mobility as a catalyst for something different. To Maria, the normal life means marriage and procreation, bound to family and peer expectations at a particular life stage. This construction of normality runs contrary to much theorising of Polish migration and transformation. In studies on post-socialist transformation, for example, the aspiration for 'normality' is read as a rejection of the uncertainties and challenges of a transitory political climate and 're-constructed in association with the solid ordinary comforts of northern Europe' (Rausing, 2002 as cited in Galasińska and Kozłowska, 2009, p.87). Whilst normality here is conceived on a macro scale in relation to social and political change, others have suggested that it is also infused in the micro narratives of post-accession Polish migrants in search for 'normal life' in the UK (Galasińska and Kozłowska, 2009; Rabikowska, 2010; Lopez-Rodriguez, 2010). Rabikowska (2010) suggests that for Polish migrants, normality represents that which is known, a state of 'stabilisation' or 'achievement' and as such, the search for normality in the context of mobility is an aspirational value for the future. Similarly, in the narratives presented here normality is relationally constructed by young people according to a set of behavioural values and norms. However, moving to the UK represented a break from a normal, family-oriented life of the past towards a search for difference and a celebration of the potential uncertainties in their future migrations rather than a 'new version' of normality in the UK (Rabikowska, 2010, p.287). In this respect normality becomes a reactive push factor related to family habits and norms rather than an aspirational pull factor for migration.

Some saw 'the pressure of tradition' as setting their parents apart from themselves, often with regard to the 'family display' in celebrating particular customs and religious holidays (cf. Finch, 2007; Heath et al, 2011). Here Ania reflects on the gendered expectations that accompany religious celebration in her family.

> *'My mother's approach to holidays and celebrations were it's a really hard job – she felt she had to clean the windows, scrub the floor …. She wasn't a big housewife or something, she wasn't keen on cooking or baking but she felt the pressure of tradition or other generations' (Ania, age 34, Edinburgh).*

The representation of tradition as something fixed and routinised is expressed by Ania at a particular juncture in the lifecourse. She is at an age of, 'emerging adulthood' with a heightened sense of 'independent exploration' of a life that is full of possibility (Arnett, 2000 as cited in Hopkins, 2010, p. 232). As such, the habits of home are recalled as an immovable irritation and she positions herself outside the rituals of family life, as a reflexive onlooker waiting to leave. However, since her migration and the death of her grandmother in the past few years, Ania reflects on the how family habits have changed.

> *'There are just three of them, I am here, the main core of the family is not there... there used to be more, it used to be different. It used to be more celebration, more gathering, more holiday, more family'.*

Here, Ania's narrative is both a critique on the *'pressure of tradition'* and a lament for its loss and, with echoes of post-communist nostalgia (Todorova and Gille, 2009), a longing for the family life now gone. Her memories dart between the everyday duties and gendered role playing of holiday preparation and the intimacies that are formed through family togetherness. Ania's mobility signals a break from tradition and a stance against it, yet her absence is a source of tension for the family as things inevitably change.

At first sight these narratives support the 'individualization' thesis. Mobility is entwined with the desire or compulsion to cultivate the self away from normal familial structures, it is perceived as a route to financial autonomy and a private space for the individual to 'build up a life of [one's] own' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995, p.6). However, mobility as a retreat from what was deemed normal family life invariably relates to particular memories of family relationships. Aspirations for alternative selfhood are relationally constructed in opposition to particular family habits, cultures and values (cf. Mason, 2004). Moreover, what was perceived as a 'normal' family life was highly variable. In this sense, the Polish family is not a normative frame but a 'discursive device' to construct particular subjectivities in relation to it (Chambers, 2001, p.17). The family, then, becomes a space through which mobility is constructed as the alternative to normal or traditional expectations, mobility becomes a de-normalizing process.

Keeping in Touch

The second rupture of individualization relates to the way in which migrants keep connected to families in Poland. The existence of transnational networks and practices between Poland and the UK since 2004 point to the central role of family in the practice of post-accession mobility[vii]. Recent scholarship on transnational family networks, strategies and practices has been integral in bridging sociological theory on transnational families (Bryceson and Vourela, 2002; Goulbourne et al., 2010) with Polish migration studies offering new ways of theorising the family in the context of intra-European mobility (Heath et al., 2011; Moksal, 2011; Ryan et al. 2009). The role of family in supporting mobility has been strongly evidenced in different European contexts (Lopez Rodriguez, 2010; Ryan, 2010; Zontini, 2007; Charles et al, 2008). In the Polish case, Ryan et al., (2009) point to a wide range of intimacies that go beyond conventional visions of the geographically bound nuclear family unit. The perceived successes of siblings and cousins are seen to be particularly influential to young, single people in their decisions for mobility, as well as supporting the practical move, often in gendered ways (ibid.). The narratives in my study also emphasise the role of gender in the networking of migration. Here Jozef reflects on the role of his female relatives in his migration strategy.

> *'At the time the work wasn't really good money but it was never about the money...there was an opportunity, I remember my cousin came and talked with my mother and maybe decided that I follow her there. I was just directed probably, diverted"' (Jozef, age 33, Edinburgh).*

Jozef reflects on his cousin's promotion of the UK as an 'opportunity' in the context of limited employment opportunities in Poland. He says he was 'directed' towards mobility by his female family members and reflects an almost ambivalent acceptance to 'follow' his cousin to the UK, subverting gendered notions of the 'trailing spouse' effect of migration (Lichter, 1983). Furthermore, the idea of men 'following', or being directed by, women reflects the considerable agency among women in and the management and organisation of family migration (Kofman, 2004; Moksal, 2011; Morokvasic, 2004).

Similarly, Maria recalls a phonecall from her mother after her cousin lost his business in Poland

> *"My cousin lost his business at this time and my mother was saying 'please find something for him', so he came over" (Maria, age 30, Edinburgh).*

The Edinburgh narratives also revealed a feminisation in relation to the transnational practices of migrants. Wanda and her partner Grzegorz moved to Edinburgh from Białystok, a region of high unemployment in Eastern Poland, in 2005. They have eight children between them, some of whom have returned to Poland to study. Wanda feels responsible for the family in spite of distance and regularly remits money to fund her children's studies, a commitment that mediates her own longing for return.

> *'...it's not possible to go back to Poland...how would we help them? To go back to Poland for our life – of course, but we know we got kids and we are responsible for them' (Wanda, age 35, Edinburgh).*

This extends Zontini's (2004) notion of 'transnational mothering', Wanda continues to provide financial support for her adult children suggesting a continuation of mothering beyond the typical age of dependency, reflecting the gendering of care across particular socio-spatial contexts (Duncan and Edwards, 1999; Parrenas, 2005). In her work on Polish migrant mothers Lopez Rodriguez (2010) suggests that migrant mothers often experience downward social mobility as a path to securing a better future for their children. An emphasis is put on meritocratic outcomes in order to achieve this, whereby a good education is instrumental to success. Extending this, the example of Wanda suggests that these ambitions are transnationally realised and rather than seeing the UK as a 'meritocratic paradise' (Daily Mail, 2007 cited in Lopez Rodriguez, p.343), Wanda's family re-invest their remittances from the UK into the Polish education system.

These examples reflect how gendered family values and practices intersect with the making of individual biographies of mobility. They strongly support existing work on the

gendered decision making in migration (Ryan et al., 2009; Lopez Rodriguez, 2010), with mothers and female cousins responsible for seeking out and supporting new transnational economic opportunities for relatives. More broadly, theories on the feminisation of migration and the influence of extended family in shaping migration decisions are clearly supported by these narratives (Boyle et al, 1998; Kofman; 2004; Phizacklea, 1999; Morokvasic, 1984). However, in both examples there is a clear sense that the family is responsible for rehabilitating the individual, irrespective of whether this opportunity provides gains for the rest of the family. The household is not a 'unified strategic actor' (cf. Goss and Lindquist, 1995) but subject to many gendered proscriptions and practices that extend beyond the home and family. These transnational networks and practices demonstrate that the family is not just something one leaves to seek a mobile life away from a perceived sedentary existence, but rather a central mechanism in the decision and experiences of moving to and settling in a new place. Aspirations for spatial and social mobility are inherited through intergenerational values, realised through networked migrations in the UK and practically supported through transnational connections, showing the complex ways that the family is tied to individual mobility choices.

Coming Back

The final rupture to the Individualization thesis relates to the issue of return. While this is by no means a full analysis, it serves to open up new lines of thinking on the sustainability of transnational ties through the question of return migration and the associated intimacies seemingly under threat at a distance. Moreover, the process of resettlement upon return brings with it a range of complex family negotiations which demonstrate how individuals fit back into the family life they have yearned for. This demonstrates the active process of re-connecting and carving new spaces for family in individual biographies.

For current migrants in Edinburgh duration of stay in the UK is an on-going question and the pull of return is something many young people grapple with. In many cases the opportunities for mobility and independence from the family home were counterbalanced by a sense of family responsibility and caring duties (Baldassar et al., 2007). Ryan et al.

(2009) suggest that a duty of care for ageing parents and elderly relatives is a particular concern for older Polish migrants in the UK. In these narratives it is apparent that for young people too the formidable expectation to return for care-giving presents future uncertainties for permanent settlement in the UK. Dorota, who has lived in Edinburgh for five years, explains that *'the only reason when I would be forced to go'* would be to care for her parents as they become elderly because care in Poland is '*always within the family'*. Stenning et al. (2010) argue that the 'neoliberalization of care' in post-socialist Poland has led to an emphasis on the provision of care in the family resulting in variable quality of state care provision in Poland. Kasia works in a residential care home in Edinburgh and makes a comparative assessment between practices of care in the UK and Poland.

> *'I'm assuming that as soon as [my parents] retire they're going to need help and I'm planning to help them. It's normal in Poland. That's the big difference for me and my work makes it possible to see in that in here [UK]children aren't so involved with their parents' care' (Kasia, age 28, Edinburgh).*

Kasia claims that there is a polarisation of care in Poland due to poor quality state provision and an obstructive premium on private healthcare, making it a common dilemma for young people as their parents get older. In their own way, both Kasia and Dorota's sense of duty suggest particular 'gendered moral rationalities' (Duncan and Edwards, 1999) that affect their decisions about care, seemingly unaffected by processes of individualization. The values that underpin their sense of duty reflect a 'kinship morality' that informs their behaviour (Finch and Mason, 1993; Goulbourne et al., 2010) that is reinforced by the state. Here, Beck's 'global families' seems problematic. Kasia is performing precisely the global care work posited by Beck as a Polish carer working in Scotland for Scottish families. However, she does not envisage this type of practice for her own family but plans to return to Poland to perform this caring role herself when it is required. As such there is little sense of a global or transnational notion of care but one that is guided by absence of state provision and the consequent expectation for return. While transnational family networks and practices seemingly enable familial intimacy

across borders, the politics and economics of family life re-emerge in transnational spaces bringing with them obligations and/or yearnings to return to perform traditional family roles, such as care-giving, in physically co-present settings.

Among those that had returned, the loss of proximal support of family was perceived to be the biggest challenge of mobility often irrespective of financial incentives, as Szymon reflects.

> *'It's a big opportunity but on the other hand it's also some threat...Maybe here they have less money but they will be with their families' (Szymon, age 33, Kraków).*

The unwillingness to sacrifice a *'stable family life'* was backed up with anecdotal stories of friends who had broken marriages and the existence of *'euro-orphans'*. Marcin explains that he found the *'separation'* from family the most challenging aspect of his migration experience, a commonly cited reason for return migration (Parrenas, 2005).

> *'I think the worst thing was the separation, for other people it is the same. So half of family live abroad and half live here so I think there are a lot of people who live like this. (Marcin, age 34, Kraków).*

In the UK Marcin worked as a residential care worker, while in Poland he is the primary care-giver at home looking after two small children while his wife is the main breadwinner. However, Marcin describes his own economic position as 'unemployed' suggesting that despite his caring role he has the intention of performing a breadwinning role for the household outside the home. He talks of his caring commitments as accidental in light of his unemployment suggesting there are still gendered intra-household tensions upon re-settlement.

Many return migrants reflected on the satisfaction of settling back into family life and this often coincided with a diminished sense of transnationalism as connections to the UK

weakened. Ryszard recalls his reasons for return and the gradual depletion of friendships in London,

> "*I had the realisation that the serious job I had was not the thing I wanted and of course [Agata] being here and me being there …almost everyone is back in Poland, two people stayed and they don't get along anymore, they are not in touch anymore"* (Ryszard, age 33, Krakow)

Ryszard recognises the value of migration but it is recalled as a memory or a finished experience rather than a continuing transnational experience. He is now living in Krakow with his partner, Agata, and his son, developing a small business. While transnational networks are important during the migration experience, for many who have returned these connections weaken over time bringing into question the sustainability of transnational ties at particular points in the lifecourse. All of the examples here relate to men with partners and young children in Poland suggesting equating re-settlement in Poland to broader transitions of settling down and starting a new family. In this sense, individual mobility is suspended at the behest of new family set ups and expectations.

CONCLUSION

This paper offers a critical intervention to the field of Polish migration studies by assessing the usefulness of the individualization thesis in analysing Polish migrants and their families. I have argued that theoretical forecasts of the family as a declining institution and one that is dichotomous to individual mobility are misplaced and do not account for the central role that the family plays in individual mobility. I have considered three ruptures to the individualization thesis using particular chapters of the lifecourse to demonstrate this: Moving out, keeping in touch, coming back. These chapters make evident the ideological, affective and practical roles that family plays in an individuals' experience of mobility. Families are not perceived as 'elective' in response to the demands of individual mobility, choices for mobility are themselves borne out of familial histories and geographies of mobility. These histories and geographies are simultaneously connected to the national habitus, whether related to a heritage of political exile, labour migration or the fate of socialist immobility. As such individual experiences of mobility

are intricately bound to geopolitical structures of post-socialist transformation and relationally constructed around ideologically guided norms, values and experiences.

The practice of mobility is also fabricated through the structures of family life. Individual experiences are insured through family networks and practices to support and reify mobility choices for the individual. A focus on the gendering of these processes serves to elicit not only the present commitments for family mobility, but also how gendered notions of family are rationalised and enacted through transnationalism. This is particularly resonant in narratives of return which are guided by gendered economic rationalities for care in later life, and unwillingness to 'sacrifice' familial intimacy for household gains. The pursuit of individual autonomous mobility does not dismantle the family and its associated structures but is in fact mediated by familial responsibilities and expectations. Furthermore, while mobile individuals may outwardly deconstruct a collective heritage in search of their own path (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995), the reconstitution of familial traditions and values and the new layers of family that are made in migration destinations and upon return demonstrate that the family is not yet an institution in the mire.

A broader aim of this paper has been to stimulate further thinking about how theoretical tools of the social sciences can be critically employed to explore the growing field of Polish migration studies. The Polish case offers a unique insight into the complexities of intra-European transnationalism on family migration and enables an analysis of the ways in which national identities permeate borders. Freedom of movement in the EU modifies distance due to the relative ease of border crossings and the imaginative opportunities for young people's mobility in particular. Yet the ideological values, affective bonds and practical care requirements of Polish family life induce an expectation for proximal support that challenges transnational living. Further questions arise about the sustainability of transnationalism through return migration and the meaning and negotiation of household relations during the process of re-settlement.

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[i] I deliberately did not impose categories for what constitutes a 'family' upon the research participants, but rather encouraged their own interpretations of what family meant to them. As such the *personal* meanings and practices of family are reflected in this paper, from important intergenerational relationships that extend beyond the nuclear family unit, to cross border management of familial intimacies.
rather encouraged their own interpretations of what constitutes a family to them. As such the *personal* meanings and practices of family are reflected in this paper, from important intergenerational relationships that extend beyond the nuclear family unit, to cross border management of familial intimacies.
[ii] Throughout the paper I employ the term 'mobility' rather than 'migration' in discussing my empirical research. This is an intentional conceptual delineator and relates to an understanding of mobility as cross-cutting the spatial and the social. In the biographies of young people mobility is discussed as both, with

often interchangeable meanings. Aspirations of a move abroad relate implicitly to a step up in terms of occupational or perceived social status. Conversely, a move back home is often expressed as a 'backwards step'. In this sense I conceptualise mobility as integrating different forms of movement, both spatial and social, drawing on theoretical resources from the' mobility turn' in the social sciences (Urry, 2007).

[iii] Although, many have drawn on other conceptual frames, such as Lopez-Rodriguez (2010) analysis of Polish mothers using Bourdieu

[iv] For example, in the run up to EU accession the League of Polish Families (LPF) became part of the governing coalition between 2005 and 2007. The LPF discursively constructs the Polish family as a hetero-normative space of patriotic and pious tradition, vehemently opposed to European integration, reproductive rights for women and LGBT rights.

[v] 'Euro Orphans' is a media created term meaning: a) children whose parents have migrated abroad, they are dubbed 'orphans' in the sense of abandonment they feel as a result of the separation from parents; b) Children who are left in orphanages following parental emigration.

[vi] Lopez Rodriguez (2010) argues that education is a widespread aspirational value among Polish parents irrespective of class background and relative privilege due to the meritocratic values

[vii] For a supporting discussion of the transnational family networks of Polish migrants see Ryan et al., 2009.